

FLASH DRIVE

J. HENRY HARRISON

INT. AUTOMOBILE - NIGHT

RUSS, a 40-year-old, slightly chubby, round-faced man, looks tired. His forehead has a thin coat of sweat on it and his steering wheel glistens as he recalls the previous three days.

RUSS (narrating)

I'm not supposed to be here...I'm not supposed to be here. That's what I keep saying to myself...

He passes a sign: "Now entering Florida."

Whatever happens - it's gonna' happen soon.

RUSS'S car passes a grizzled, OLD MAN with long, gray hair, wearing a backpack, his thumb out. He skids his car to a halt 50 feet after passing the man.

Get in.

The man enters the car, and RUSS continues his narration.

It started in Wanatchee, Washington, where I work as a carpet salesman, and where I wish I were right now...

EXT. OUTSIDE TRUCK

RUSS tries starting his old pickup truck, without success. He slams the door closed, looks under his hood and cusses.

FADE IN:

INT. AUTOMOBILE - DUSK

RUSS (on phone)

No, baby, just a Tercel. It was the best they could do for the price. I dunno'- how about Chinese? Okay. Thirty minutes.

(narrating)

That was four days ago.

EXT. INTERSTATE 10, FLORIDA - AFTERNOON

An alligator crawls along the highway shoulder.

OLD MAN

Hey, you gonna' eat that?

RUSS hands the old man a bag clearly marked, "DONUTS," and ignores his chattering, staring intently at the road.

FADE IN: INT. AUTOMOBILE - DAY

RUSS (off-camera)

My life was so predictable - until
I noticed the flash drive in the
rental car.

RUSS taps the controls on the car's stereo and selects "AUX" on the panel. He tries, unsuccessfully, to remove the small, thumb-sized flash drive inserted in the stereo. What appears to be a song title reads, "WARNING."

RUSS

Black Sabbath? First album?

Audio emits from the car's speakers, spoken with a rich, deep, but calm voice.

SPEAKER

Warning. Please do not exit your
vehicle. Please do not use your phone.
You may do so when you have fulfilled
all the demands set forth. Do you
understand?

RUSS

Who is this? Is it, like - a concept
album? Rush? Todd Rundgren? Yes?
Queensryche? Dream Theater? Alan
Parsons? Gimme' a hint!

SPEAKER

Drive to Stanley, Idaho.

RUSS

Ha, ha! One of Zappa's last
recordings, right? Okay, flash
drive - I'm turning down Fifth
Street and I'm going home. Geez.

(snickers)

SPEAKER

If you fail to follow my instructions, Mr. Harper, your dog, Snoop, will be hit by a silver 2006 Toyota Prius.

RUSS

Stops laughing abruptly, staring closely at the stereo

Wha- how did you know my name? Charlie, did you rig this?

SPEAKER

You have ten minutes to comply by pointing your vehicle toward to highway 243 south, proceeding to highway 240 south, to highway 84. You then will-

RUSS

What the fuck? So, you're navigating for me, too? And how do you know my dog's name?

SPEAKER

You have 9.5 hours to complete your task.

RUSS

Or what? My dog? This is a really elaborate joke.

The voice stops, and it is replaced by Dave Brubeck's "Take Five."

Glad I'm off work.

RUSS's phone rings. He picks it up.

RUSS

Mom?

RUSS'S MOM

I'm sorry, Honey... but-

RUSS

Mom - what's wrong?

RUSS'S MOM

It's Snoopy. He- he- got hurt.

RUSS

Whaddaya' mean, mom?

RUSS'S MOM

The guy stopped. But there wasn't anything we could do...

RUSS

Mom...that's all right...mom.
Don't cry. Are you still there?

RUSS'S MOM

I'm so sorry, son.

RUSS

Mom...mom...can you tell me what kind of car the guy has?

RUSS'S MOM

Huh? Oh, one of those oriental things - a Primus, I think. It's cute except for the dent, now.

RUSS

I love you and I'll see you soon, Mom.

(Hangs up.)

SPEAKER

You were also warned not to communicate by phone.

RUSS

What- what's supposed to happen now?

SPEAKER

Your mother will suffer a
heart attack. It won't be
fatal - but (loudly, very
irate and very un-robotlike)
GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR
FUCKING ASS!

*Stereo returns to the Dave Brubeck song, segueing into "Glad
All Over" by the Dave Clark Five begins.*

RUSS

(wincing, intimidated)

Okay. I'm going toward
Idaho now. Are you happy?

RUSS waits for a response.

Well, what about gas? I have
to get gas, don't I?

*He looks at his gas gauge, which reads FULL. He drives a few
miles, the song changing to Motorhead's "Ace of Spades."*

I can't change the music,
huh? And what about my
bladder?

(no response)

Oh, c'mon! My Thermos? You're
gonna' make me use my Thermos?
Can the day get worse?

SPEAKER

Yes.

*Time passes, and RUSS passes a sign: Welcome to Ontario,
Oregon. Pop: 11,009.*

RUSS

Gas? Hello? I'm gonna' run
out within 25 or so miles.

A message appears: PICK HIM UP. HE WILL PAY.

Who? What the hell are you
talking a-

*A young man with a backpack is hitchhiking along the side of
the road, and RUSS passes him up.*

That guy? Are you kidding?
He looks like he'd kill me
before you do!

*Another message: THEN HE WILL DIE. RUSS reluctantly stops,
then quickly reverses.*

RUSS

Where is he? I've never seen fog
that fast. It's like--

*A thud is heard, and the car rocks before RUSS stops it,
amid a cloud of dust.*

SPEAKER

Remember that you cannot
exit your vehicle.

RUSS

*He pulls to the side of the road where the hitchhiker lies
bloodied.*

YOUNG MAN

Why did you hit me, man?

RUSS

What? Where were you? Can
you make it to the car?

He opens the passenger door to let the injured man in.

YOUNG MAN

Can't you help me? I'm all
broken, man!

*Another message: LEAVE. YOU CAN'T SAVE HIM. RUSS closes the
door and reluctantly drives off.*

RUSS

You can't do that, you
motherfucker!

*Music resumes, this time, "Player's Ball" by Outkast. The song
is interrupted hours later with a message: PICK UP. RIDER WILL
PAY. RUSS pulls over and the next hitchhiker enters the car.*

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, my god! I can't believe
it took that long to get a
ride! Not to brag - but
look at me!

RUSS

Do you have twenty dollars?

YOUNG WOMAN

Sure. How far are you going?

*Signs pass as day turns to night and back to day: Oklahoma
City, Dallas, and then a message appears on the panel:
PROCEED TO JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, AND YOUR TASK WILL BE
COMPLETED. THE INTERSTATE 10 IS-*

RUSS

I know, you stupid shit! But
what happens in Jacksonville?

YOUNG WOMAN

Look. I don't mind paying for
gas - and pumping it - or
sleeping in the back seat, or
dumping your piss bottles,
but you can't talk to me like
that- and, hey - what's that
brown stuff in those
Tupperware containers?

The phone rings, with the caller displayed: MOM and DAD

You're not going to answer
that?

RUSS

I'm not speaking with them.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow. Sucks. I'm getting off
here. We good?

*A sign, "Welcome to Lake City, Gateway to Florida. Pop.
12,046" appears.*

Just let me off here, at
Columbia.

RUSS

(grabbing her arm)

You gotta' help me! I can't get out of this car! I don't know if my parents are okay, my dog's dead, I accidentally killed a hitchhiker -- my boss, my family, my girlfriend - nobody knows I'm here!

They pass a police car.

YOUNG WOMAN

Stop the car or I'm screaming "rape!"

As RUSS slows, she opens the door, grabs her backpack, and runs toward the patrol car. RUSS speeds off and sees the car following, with its beacon on.

SPEAKER

You were warned not to speak to anyone about this.

RUSS watches in the rear-view mirror as the patrol car blows up, before landing upside-down, demolished, with smoke and flames emitting from it. A man, engulfed in flames, runs frantically from the scene.

FADE IN: INT. OF AUTOMOBILE - DAY.

Pulled over beneath a clump of bushes, RUSS snores in the driver's seat, as the OLD MAN quietly, yet gingerly rummages through the car's console. He takes a gun from the glove compartment, along with a vial of powder. He removes the flash drive from the stereo panel. He exits the car, turns on RUSS'S phone and dials.

OLD MAN

Hey, bro! Got a new phone. I need to clean it as soon as you pick me up. Yep. 7-11 on Main. Adios.

He slings his backpack over his shoulder and jogs across a field, toward the 7-11. In the background, RUSS'S car explodes. The OLD MAN'S ride arrives at the 7-11 parking

lot. He looks back at the explosion and jumps into the Jeep Wrangler.

Let's get the fuck outta'
here!

DRIVER

Hey - you got sounds?

OLD MAN

Of course. Dude had every
type of music you could
think of.

He inserts the flash drive into the stereo panel, and Glen Campbell's "Where's the Playground, Susie?" plays, only to be interrupted.

SPEAKER

Drive to Chihuahua,
Mexico. You have 36 hours.

The OLD MAN and DRIVER look at each other in disbelief.

OLD MAN/DRIVER

What?

SPEAKER

Situate your 1999 Honda Civic on
the westbound Interstate 10, or
your air conditioning will cease
functioning.

The two pass a sign, "Interstate 10 SOUTH."

DRIVER

Ha, ha, ha! Good one, Dude!

OLD MAN

Hey, wait a minute - how did it
know what kind of car you had?

DRIVER

Pounds on dashboard of car.

Dude - where's my AC?

SPEAKER

You may not use your phone.
You may not discuss this
with others. You may not
exit the vehicle.

FADE OUT as car is seen from overhead making a u-turn and heading down the I-10 west.

FADE IN: INT. BUS - DAY

RUSS is sitting on a bus. He tears open the plastic around a disposable phone and dials a number.

RUSS

What do you mean, you don't
give out that information?
Someone left it in the car
and I'd like to return it.

(muffled response)

No, not to you. To him or
her. It's got some very
personal stuff on it.

(muffled response)

So - your answer is "No?"
Can I speak with your
manager?

(muffled response)

No Tercel? What do you
mean, you never had one?
Hmmm... I guess I don't
have to pay you for it,
then, do I?

(muffled response)

Okay - thanks, I guess.

RUSS dials another number.

Baby - it's me.

(muffled response)

No, it's a long story.
I'll be back in a few days.
Hey, how's my mother?

(muffled response)

Okay. Good. Tell everyone
I'm all right.

RUSS casually stares out the window of the bus at emergency vehicles surrounding DRIVER's red Honda Civic, as smoke rises from it.

I have a feeling that
else isn't, though.

(muffled response)

Huh? Oh, nothing. I'll explain
it when I get back. Talk with
you later. You, too, Babe.

OVERHEAD - BUS TRAVELING ON HIGHWAY.

FADE OUT