Shine Brighter Terminale

FlashFile 12 Driverless

Extrait p.108 – Roman, “*Sally*”, Isaac Asimov, 1953

The narrator is Jake, a former chauffeur who works at Samson Harridge’s car farm, a place where autonomous cars live freely.

Sally was a 2045 convertible with a Hennis-Carleton positronic motor and an Armat chassis.

She had the cleanest, finest lines I’ve ever seen on any model, bar none. For five years, she’d been my favorite, and I’d put everything into her I could dream up. In all that time, there’d never been a human being behind her wheel. Not once. […]

I can remember when there wasn’t an automobile in the world with brains enough to find its own way home. I chauffeured dead lumps of machines that needed a man’s hand at their controls every minute. Every year machines like that used to kill tens of thousands of people.

The automatics fixed that. A positronic brain can react much faster than a human one, of course, and it paid people to keep hands off the controls. You got in, punched your destination and let it go its own way. […]

Of course, the automatics were ten to a hundred times as expensive as the hand-driven ones, and there weren’t many that could afford a private vehicle. The industry specialized in turning out omnibus-automatics. You could always call a company and have one stop at your door in a matter of minutes and take you where

you wanted to go. Usually, you had to drive with others who were going your way, but what's wrong with that?

Samson Harridge had a private car though, and I went to him the minute it arrived. The car wasn't Matthew[1] to me then. I didn't know it was going to be the dean[2] of the Farm some day. I only knew it was taking my job away and I hated it.

I said, "You won't be needing me any more, Mr. Harridge?"

He said, "What are you dithering[3] about, Jake? You don't think I'll trust myself to a contraption[4] like that, do you? You stay right at the controls."

I said, "But it works by itself, Mr. Harridge. It scans the road, reacts properly to obstacles, humans, and other cars, and remembers routes to travel."

Isaac Asimov, "*Sally*", 1953

[1] name he will give to this new car
[2] doyen
[3] hesitating
[4] machine