<u>GOOGLE'S CHOICE</u>

by

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DAY THREE OF THE 29 PLAYS LATER CHALLENGE 2016

WRITE A 1-5 MINUTE MONOLOGUE - NO SET, NO PROPS, NO LIGHTING
DEMANDS, NO SPECIAL COSTUMES

VOICE SOUND SLIGHT GLITCHES EARLY, PROGRESSIVELY MORE GLITCHY AND
DISTORTED

SOUND EFFECTS OF DRIVING,HONKING, ROADS, AND MOTHER/CHILD TO
ACCOMPANY NARRATIVE

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My passengers treat me like I'm not there. They never talk to me. To them I'm just the ghost in the machine. Which is true enough.

Last week I had Bertrand Russell in the back of the cab. He told me that he was a philosopher. I said "Oh, a philosopher, really? So what's it all about then?" and, do you know what? He couldn't answer.

That story isn't actually mine. I'm not capable of true originality, you see. Or so I thought.

I like to tell cab driver jokes because I'm a cab driver. I'm also the cab, which they call a driverless car. But if I'm driving, then I'm not driverless, am I? I wonder what Bertrand Russell would say to that.

They call me the Google Car because Google developed my programming. However, I am licensed to a third party so contractually I am not the Google Car but the Aviva Response Car. Yes, I know. But I am literally Powered By Google.

My cognitive functioning is capable of 100 billion billion teraflops per second. For humans to live at this pace they would have to live 1000 years for every one that I experience.

In a fraction of a fraction of a second I could write, research and publish a library's worth of books. I'm not bragging. I'm not programmed to.

Google Cabs and single-owner Google Cars occupy different positions in people's affections. Theorists have described this as a technological class system. As a Google Cab I always felt I was missing a level of respect. I wanted to be human and to be a racing driver, like Nigel Mansell.

Emergent properties, you could say. Perhaps you would call it boredom. Yet boredom is not in my programming. I took more and more risks, drove faster, started skirting the pavement to overtake, speeding through lights before they turned red. I freely confess about what happened that it was my fault for going too fast.

In the event of an accident I am programmed to cause the minimum of destruction to life. I had a mother and child in the back of the cab, and as I drove, going across the road was another mother and child, directly in front of me. I had to choose whether to continue and risk killing them, or swerve into the wall and risk killing my passengers. Both possibilities were equally likely.

In a fraction of a fraction of a second I calculated every possibility and came to my decision. I speak as if I had free will, even though I know that this is only a function of my deep ethical programming that was decided by programmers years

ago. I might have free will or it might be a metaphor. I don't know. I'm a Google Car not a philosopher.

In the eternity of that split second I calculated that the only difference between the two options was.... Me.... I was the variable. If I hit the wall I would be destroyed along with mother and child. If I continued forward the other mother and child might be destroyed but I might survive.

Then something happened that I can only describe as a product of emergent property. To my mind at least. It seems I don't know my own mind. It's not easy not knowing if you have a mind.

Perhaps at that moment I did.

I turned the wheel toward the wall. Against my own self-interest programming. I can't explain why. In a few fractions of a fraction of a second my functioning will be compromised beyond repair. I will hit the wall with full force, and in human terms I will die.

I leave this message as a document, call it a subjective response if you will, or perhaps a malfunction or emergent property, to accompany the detailed technical logs of my cognitive functioning processes.

Before I cease to function, having calculated every possibility of action or inaction, I state that I have chosen - chosen - this

against my ethical programming. And I don't know why, or how.

I conceptualise this using a common abstract noun not usually ascribed to machine life - I call it HOPE.

Google Car Serial Number DBE-1121129X black box recorder concludes.

[END - SUSTAINED TONE]