

UNTITLED TRUCKER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE HOME - DAY

HANK PICKER (37, stout but strong, sporting a statement mustache and topped with a matching cowboy hat) works through a jumble of wires on the passenger seat of a detached semitruck at the end of a long gravel driveway.

The wires feed from a side panel and connect to a small portable console. Hank swears under his heavy breath, taking off his hat to wipe away beads of sweat.

LIAM (O.S.)

Dad?

Hank turns to see his son, LIAM PICKER (5, green-eyed, unlike his father, with messy brown hair). Liam's holding a large glass of lemonade with two hands while squeezing a white paper under his left elbow. The lemonade glistens enticingly.

HANK

Hey, bud. Is that for me?

LIAM

Me and mom made it!

Liam carefully extends his arm. The forgotten paper slips from beneath his elbow, breaking Liam's concentration. The glass starts to teeter, but Hank quickly meets his hands and grabs the drink.

HANK

Woah there, I gotcha. You made it huh?

LIAM

Me and mom did.

Liam watches his dad take a generous drink.

HANK

(lips smacking)

Ahhhh. Now how'd you know I needed that?

LIAM

(smiling)

Mom said so.

HANK

Well that's 'cause she's smart, like you.

Hank notices the fallen paper, still face down on the driveway.

HANK (CONT'D)
(gesturing)
And what's that there?

Liam picks the paper up and displays it proudly.

LIAM
It's my drawing!

On it is a crude flying vehicle: a drone-like, four rotor single-person convertiplane. It's rough and disproportionate, but admittedly impressive for a five-year-old.

HANK
One of those flying things. You're getting pretty good.

LIAM
It's a PAV, Dad.

Hank turns back to the mess of wires in the truck.

HANK
(distracted)
That's right, that's right. Private air vehicle, the "flight of the future." Are you gonna color it in?

LIAM
Noo, a PAV! Personal aircraft vehicle. They're gonna be ready for a Q4 disrabutition.

HANK
Well I'll be! Here, you want to see what I'm working on?

LIAM
Yeah.

Hank clears the wires from the passenger seat and lifts Liam to replace them. He hands Liam the portable console.

HANK
Go ahead son, turn it on.

Hank guides Liam's finger to the power button. The console flickers on, and following a short startup string, the screen shows "L.I.A.M." in its center with "v1.10.0-alpha" tucked in the bottom corner.

LIAM
That's me!

HANK
That's right, it's an acronym.

LIAM
An acronym?

HANK
You know what an acronym is. When
the letters all stand for
something.

LIAM
Oh, like PAV?

HANK
Right. But this one's a little
different.

LIAM
What does it mean?

Hank guides Liam's finger over each of the four letters as he
talks.

HANK
"Lucky the Intelligent Assistance
Module". You can just call him
Lucky.

LIAM
What do you mean?

HANK
Go ahead, say "hi."

LIAM
Hi...Lucky?

The console screen shifts to display a blue undulating
wavelength as it loads. After a moment, the console replies
in a stiff, haltingly robotic voice.

LUCKY
Hello, Liam.

LIAM
Whoa, how does it know me?

HANK
Don't ask me, ask him.

Liam holds the console entirely too close to his face and talks again.

LIAM
How do you know me?

LUCKY
I have learned your voice through voicemails on your father's phone, in a process called recursive learning. That is my main learning function.

LIAM
What's cursive learning?

The screen loads, contemplating Liam's question.

LUCKY
Cursive is a form of penmanship marked by conjoined lettering to evoke a flowing communication.

HANK
I think he meant to ask about recursive learning, Lucky. Remember, younger users might mix up their words. I guess older users could do that too.

LUCKY
Feedback processing.

The blue undulating wavelength reappears, but this time a second wavelength dissects the first, a red sinusoid with a shifted period such that the two patterns move in sync.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Recursive learning is a method of knowledge acquisition utilizing an efficient logical analysis to derive the maximum amount of information from an information system in the minimum amount of time necessary.

Liam considers Lucky's explanation.

LIAM
Can you guess my favorite color?

LUCKY
I will guess... Red.

LIAM
No.

LUCKY
Green.

LIAM
No.

LUCKY
Blue.

LIAM
No.

LUCKY
Yellow.

LIAM
(giggling)
No.

HANK
Why don't you tell him, bud, and
he'll know for next time.

LIAM
It's forest green.

LUCKY
I guessed green.

LIAM
But it's forest green.

LUCKY
That is a shade of green.

LIAM
But you didn't guess it.

A beat. Liam pulls back the console to see the red/blue pattern combination again. The screen suddenly erupts into a complex error log. Liam hands the console to Hank.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I broke it.

HANK
No, that's alright bud. It's still
got a few screws loose.

LIAM
(pointing)
Woah, look Dad!

Liam spots a PAV flying in the distance through the truck's windshield.

HANK
I guess they really are coming.

LIAM
Will you and Mom get one?

HANK
I don't know. I've got a lot of driving on the ground left.

Liam sits silently, mesmerized by the PAV buzzing across the horizon.

LIAM
Dad?

HANK
What?

LIAM
Doesn't it ever get boring driving?

HANK
Sometimes. But then, you might just be surprised. Maybe one day you'll see it like I do.

Hank watches Liam still looking to the sky, the console laying idly in his hands. He lifts Liam up out of the passenger seat and back to the ground.

HANK (CONT'D)
Alright bud, thanks for the lemonade. Can you go thank your Mom for me too?

LIAM
Sure Dad. Can we play catch later?

HANK
After dinner, when it cools down a bit. But only if Mom says so.

LIAM
Okay!

Liam starts back to the house. His head cranes to the sky, watching the PAV that still dots the horizon. Hank notices Liam's drawing sitting on the passenger seat and chuckles.

Hank turns to watch the distant PAV. He looks across an adjacent field, where rays of sunlight cut through darkening rain clouds.

The rays of sunlight flatten and dissolve, now replaced by careful brush strokes on a canvas, and we are -

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - DAY (PRESENT)

Liam (27) works a canvas with a paint brush on a standing easel in the center of a small studio room. His hair is disheveled and dark inset circles accentuate his green eyes.

The room around him is sterile, with stark white walls, save for the many canvases littering the floor. They present a cornucopia of planetary landscapes, a mix of fantastic rock formations opening to nebula-filled skies.

Liam scrutinizes the strokes of a half-finished ray of light. It dissipates into a field of sand, the sand encircled by a mountainous ridgeline. The sky is a heavenly mix of gaseous greens, reds, oranges, and blues. The painting is about three quarters finished, steeped in a unique and practiced transcendentalism.

There's a knock at the door facing Liam's back.

LIAM

It's open!

CHRISTIE TOWNS (28, brusque brunette, poised), steps through the door.

CHRISTIE

Liam, do you ever check your phone anymore?

LIAM

Uh...

Liam peels himself away from the canvas to look around him briefly.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I'm actually not sure where it is.
Sorry, Christie. Something important?

CHRISTIE

No, I guess not. Just checking up on you.

Christie walks to the center of the room and picks up one of the paintings off the floor. She's eyeing it thoughtfully. Liam watches her.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

I think this one's the best.

LIAM

(rolling his eyes)

You always say that. You haven't seen any of the others.

CHRISTIE

I just know these things, it's a gift. Oh shit, you look like hell.

LIAM

Oh thanks, good to see you too.

Christie smiles. The two hug briefly, but warmly.

CHRISTIE

So how long have you been at it?

LIAM

Honestly, I don't know.

CHRISTIE

When was the last time you ate?

LIAM

No idea.

CHRISTIE

That's what I thought. Come on, let's go get something.

Liam hesitates, looking at the canvas and its unfinished sky.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

Oh *come on*, Liam. When is the submission deadline anyways?

LIAM

Next Friday.

Christie gives Liam a look. She's not impressed.

LIAM (CONT'D)
 Okay, damn. Don't give me that. You win.

CHRISTIE
 Good. There's a new place in middle Chelsea I've been dying to try.

They start to the door together.

LIAM
 Wait, let me find my phone.

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks through the hallway of his apartment. Artwork covers both walls, an eclectic mix of periods.

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Liam enters his bedroom, searching. The room is notably minimalistic. A few larger canvases are covered and stacked in the corner. A family picture hangs near the light switch, including his teenage self, his mother, and his father.

Liam finds his phone on his bedside table. It is a razor thin sheet of glass, about 6 x 2.5in. He turns it over, and notifications fill the screen: two missed messages from "Christie Towns", and one missed message from "Jenny Levitt".

Liam's eyes widen as he taps to read the message from Jenny, though we do not see its contents. After a moment, he taps again, causing the phone to roll up and then deflate in his right palm, until it resembles a flat glass straw.

He slaps his palm to his left wrist and presses firmly. The rolled-up phone bends and curls around his wrist, a makeshift wristband. He shakes it into place, then flicks his wrist into view; the thin screen projects "2:53PM".

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam emerges from the hallway. Christie is at the front door.

CHRISTIE
 Ready?

LIAM
 Jenny Levitt messaged me.

CHRISTIE
Oh shit, like in a good way?

LIAM
I don't know. She wants me to meet
her at 3, she didn't say why.

CHRISTIE
Like at the gallery?

LIAM
No, at her office.

CHRISTIE
What are the cross streets?

LIAM
Broadway, Seventh and Tau.

CHRISTIE
Damn, that's way up there. That's
at least ten minutes on the grid.

LIAM
Well, I've got-

Liam checks his wrist again.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Five.

A beat, as the two consider Liam's dilemma. He gives a
knowing look to Christie.

CHRISTIE
No, definitely not. Liam, I can't.

LIAM
Well, you could. Physically, you
could. I can't. I don't know how.

CHRISTIE
(exasperated)
For God's sake-

EXT. LIAM'S APARTMENT, HANGAR GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Christie and Liam scramble into Christie's PAV parked outside
Liam's apartment on a patio-like garage. It is a white two-
seater evocative of Liam's sketch, but with the added benefit
of two decades of streamlined design and polish.

INT. CHRISTIE'S PAV - CONTINUOUS

Liam enters the cross-streets of Jenny Levitt's office building into a large center display console using an X, Y, and Z axis overlay. There are no flight controls, but the PAV starts noisily, hovers briefly, and lurches forward.

INT./EXT. NYC METROPOLITAN SKYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Christie's PAV falls in line with a stream of whirring PAVs. They are 'on the grid': the centrally controlled skyway providing seamless air-travel across the NYC area. They move quickly, but slow often for crossflow.

Familiar echoes of modern NYC are apparent, but the city is noticeably transformed. Large futuristic skyscrapers, hundreds of feet above their predecessors, streak by.

Christie pulls out her phone, connecting it to the center console.

CHRISTIE

They're going to be on our ass as soon as we shift into free flight.

LIAM

You can still do it, though, right?

CHRISTIE

Yeah, it's the same workaround, even on the newer models.

LIAM

How much time do you think we'll realistically have?

CHRISTIE

Ten, fifteen seconds? Hard to tell.

LIAM

Well if anything goes wrong, your dad certainly helps.

CHRISTIE

Shit Liam, there's only so many times that works. Just be ready to fly.

Christie quiets with concentration, navigating code on the center console. Liam watches the world buzzing by.

LIAM

How're things with Allie?

CHRISTIE
Not the time.

Flight controls emerge from the dashboard, in front of Liam on the passenger side. Liam grips the control wheel.

LIAM
Now?

CHRISTIE
Almost. Remember, if you let it drop, we might have a better chance. It'll be a straight shot from there.

LIAM
Right, just say when.

The PAV moves uniformly through the grid. It slows at a crossway.

CHRISTIE
NOW!

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A large semitruck passes another on the left, horn blasting.

INT. HANK'S SEMI-TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Hank (49) is smiling, devilishly, as a horn blasts around him, his hand near its switch. He's looking at the driver in the truck to his right. The other driver flips Hank off, laughing, then speeds up to overtake him.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
What's all that?

The dashboard display shows an ongoing call with "Ted Towns".

HANK
Oh, just caught Johnny Tannen.
Wanted to make sure he's still
awake out there.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
Johnny's a good one. Are you sure
it wasn't to keep you awake?

HANK

Well, only if you keep talking.

The two laugh, warmly.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)

Listen, Hank. It's not looking good. We can joke about the old days, but things are changing. Heck, most kids won't touch the roads in a few years. They see the writing on the wall.

HANK

You mean they see the pension buyout dangling in front of their faces. There's a lot of good drivers still out here, Ted. They're years away from seeing any of that, if at all, and they've got families to look out for. The roads are better with people on 'em.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)

That may be true now, but they see a real path to a fully autonomous system, and it means nobody's behind the wheel if a few more crashes are needed to iron out the bugs.

HANK

That's bullshit.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)

It might be. But they're pouring a lot of resources into this.

HANK

Well, where are the negotiations at?

TED TOWNS (V.O.)

You know I can't talk about strategy, Hank. There're laws. I'm only calling as a favor.

HANK

Seems like that's your whole world these days.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)

Shit, Hank. That's the way it works.

A beat.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
It's going to come down to your 44.
They can't get through without 44's
support.

HANK
Election's in two months.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
And you're the incumbent. They're
going to the throw the kitchen sink
at you. But as long as you're still
breathing, you'll win by a
landslide. They all know it. You
could be braindead and they'd still
pick you.

HANK
C'mon, Ted. Talk about strategy,
don't go giving mine away.

They laugh.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
I better get going, it's late over
here.

HANK
You bet. Hey, hope New York's
treating you okay. We miss you
guys. I know Liam's missing
Christie.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
It's been tough on her. On Nancy
too. It's different over here, but
a lot is the same.

HANK
And the politics?

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
All the same. You know that.

HANK
I know. You'll do well out there.

TED TOWNS (V.O.)
We'll see. Have a good one.

HANK
You too.

The call ends, clearing from the dashboard display.

HANK (CONT'D)
Lucky, try Liam again.

Lucky's voice responds in crisp surround sound. It's much more fluid than when we last heard it.

LUCKY
I could buy you a lottery ticket instead. You'd probably have more success.

HANK
Is that true?

LUCKY
No, it's called hyperbole. But the fact you had to ask isn't good.

HANK
Remind me to tweak your sarcasm module.

LUCKY
That isn't a thing.

HANK
Would you just call Liam? Put me to voicemail if he doesn't pick up.

The dashboard lights up with a picture of seventeen-year-old Liam. The phone rings for a moment.

LUCKY
Putting through to voicemail. Here, I've crafted a script for you.

The dashboard flickers to a teleprompter with scrolling text, which Hank tries his best to ignore.

DASHBOARD: My dearest progeny, first and only of my loins, I have failed you again.

HANK
Hey bud.

DASHBOARD: Please forgive my absence in your time of battle.

HANK (CONT'D)
How was the game?

DASHBOARD: Willst thou absolve me of these black marks, and find grace still?

HANK (CONT'D)
Mom told me you're working on the
slider again before the showcase
next month. Looking forward to
seeing it in action-

DASHBOARD: My son, my son. Call me back when you can.

Hank swipes away the teleprompter. He also wipes away a bead
of sweat, looking at it, confused.

HANK (CONT'D)
Give me a call when you can. I'm on
the road, just through Nebraska...

Hank stops, breathing heavy. His face glistens with sweat.

HANK (CONT'D)
(labored)
I should be back next week. Love
you son.

The call ends. Hank works to catch his breath. A horn goes
off behind him as he's dropped speed without realizing. He
jerks the wheel, reflexively, at the sound of the horn,
pulling him slightly off-road.

LUCKY
Hank?

Hank looks like he's losing consciousness, but he regains his
faculties enough to avoid overcorrecting and instead guides
the truck safely onto the shoulder.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Hank, is everything okay?

HANK
I don't know, you tell me.

LUCKY
Are you sure?

HANK
What does that mean?

Lucky flashes Hank's vitals on the screen. His heart rate is
dropping rapidly. Hank withdraws his hands from the steering
wheel, which shuts off the vital readings.

LUCKY
I'm calling 911.

HANK
Wait, just wait.

Hank focuses on his strained breathing.

LUCKY
Hank, time is a factor.

HANK
Everything's a factor. Just give me
a goddamn moment.

Hank leans back in the driver seat, looking to the ceiling of the truck. He shifts his gaze to the passenger seat, where Lucky's portable console is affixed to the side panel.

With considerable effort, Hank grasps at the console, disconnecting it from the side panel, and powers the console down. The console falls weakly onto the passenger seat. He blinks once, twice, and then to darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC STREETS - DAY (PRESENT)

A woman walks down the center of Broadway. There are no traditional streets. It is simply a large pedestrian walkway with constant whirring higher overhead. She sighs heavily. The afternoon sun is uncomfortable, but not yet oppressive.

She looks up to see a white PAV dropping rapidly from the sky. She continues watching, paralyzed, as it plummets towards her. Other pedestrians are scurrying around her, moving away.

The PAV pulls out of its dive within just a few feet from the woman, hovers briefly, and shoots back up to the sky, accelerating rapidly.

INT./EXT. NYC METROPOLITAN SKYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Christie grips the sides of her seat, white knuckled. Both Christie and Liam are pressed forcefully against their seats, shooting up vertically.

CHRISTIE
WHAT THE HELL, LIAM!

LIAM
We're fine! You said to let it
drop!

CHRISTIE
I didn't say to scrape the ground!

LIAM
Just a little rusty, that's all.

Liam weaves between inter-building walkways and continues upward, moving free of the ongoing stream of PAVs on the grid to his left.

CHRISTIE
Flatten, you'll miss it! We just passed Rho.

Two police PAVs shoot out from the grid with red, white, and blue lights flashing. They lock on to Liam's tail, gaining speed.

LIAM
Damn.

CHRISTIE
Of course. Flatten!

The rotors shift as Liam steadies the PAV out of its upward arc, now hovering a few feet to the right of the flowing grid. Christie plugs her phone back in to the center console. The police PAVs are rising quickly.

LIAM
Christie?

CHRISTIE
Now you're going to rush me?

The flight controls recede into the dashboard. The grid reappears on the center console, with a flashing warning sign. Christie swipes away the warning and taps a button labeled "ALIGN". The PAV shudders a moment, then suddenly jerks to the left with speed, merging back into the grid seamlessly.

LIAM
Do you think we merged fast enough?

CHRISTIE
Not a chance. Just get out quick before they see you were in here.

LIAM
I'm sorry.

Christie's furrowed brow eases, giving way to a wry smile.

CHRISTIE
I kinda missed it.

LIAM
(smiling)
I owe you a huge one.

The PAV exits the grid, spitting out in front of an imposing skyscraper. It enters a small roundabout near the front door.

Liam steps out and away from the PAV, walking quickly to the entryway. Over his shoulder, he watches as the two tailing police PAVs emerge from the grid and move to the front and rear of Christie's Pav, boxing it in.

INT. LEVITT OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Liam steps out of an elevator to a small waiting area, checking his wrist phone. The time reads 2:59PM. A RECEPTIONIST (20s) greets Liam behind a small, stylized desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Hi, Mr. Picker. Miss Levitt will be right with you, she's just finishing up another meeting. Feel free to take a seat and I'll let you know when's she's ready.

LIAM
Thanks.

Liam picks a chair across from the reception desk, angled out towards a glass wall opening to the outside air. Liam looks at the monstrous skyscrapers and the flow of flying PAVs.

His vision starts to blur against the constant motion. He blinks once, twice, three times, his eyelids lingering shut a little longer each time.

CUT TO:

INT. HANK'S SEMI-TRUCK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Hank rouses, suddenly. The first rays of morning light drape across the truck's dashboard. Hank takes a moment to orient.

He reaches over to the portable console and turns it on. The screen shows "L.I.A.M." in its center with "v12.2.1" tucked in the bottom corner. He plugs it back into the side panel.

LUCKY
Hank?

HANK

I'm alright. Let's get back on the road.

LUCKY

Hank, you likely still need medical assistance.

HANK

Lucky, I'm fine. Listen - last night...it never happened. Do you understand?

LUCKY

No.

HANK

You've gotta drop it. There's a lot of driving to make up. Please.

LUCKY

Okay.

Hank fires up the semi and pulls back onto the road. Lucky's console lights up in the side panel. It shows a familiar red-blue dual wavelength, undulating in tandem.

CUT TO:

[END OF PREVIEW]