

Excerpts from the novel **Hopes and Dreams: Stuck on AutoDrive**
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Hopes and Dreams



Hope is looking at a cheese sculpture of Michaelangelo's David in Monterey Jack.

"Is any of this cheese made from invisible cows?"

The cheese farmer looks at me. "I'll sell you some invisible cheese, if you want. It tastes as light as air," he says cheesily.

"No, thanks."

He writes something down. "Invisible cows. I always get the odd-balls," he tells Hope. To me, he says, "No offense."

"None taken." What a cheese ball. "Is that what you're having for lunch?" I ask, pointing with my elbow to David as Hope picks hay off me.

"No. I don't know what I want. Do you want to switch drivers?"

"You're replacing me?!? What did I do wrong?"

"Nothing." The cheese farmer scoffs.

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"What's this?" Hope asks, holding up a large funnel with rubber tubing tied to it.

"That's either a land octopus or a Funnellator. Pack it like a Funnellator, not like a land octopus."

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Hope says, "My brothers used to play a similar game with me, only it was called knives." We all turn to look at her.

"You're kidding." She shakes her head, no, and picks up her cards.

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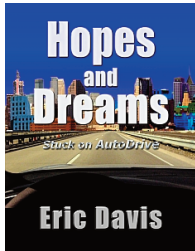
Hopes and Dreams: *Stuck on AutoDrive* by Eric Davis

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website - <http://hopes-and-dreams.net>

e-mail - book@hopes-and-dreams.net



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I go back to the Gag Shop for a dozen cans of red hair spray. I tell them, “It’s for a prank, but I can’t say any more, except that it involves a heard of bison.”

A very old man asks, “What’s that song?”

“I said, ‘Heard of bison.’”

He croaks, “I don’t think I know that one.” I think he’s pulling my leg. “Hum me a few bars, and I’ll fake it.”

I stop by a cash machine. I give the machine my card and my appropriate PIN. It says the usual things in fine print that scrolls quickly across the screen and I get to the part where all the machines have agreed on the signal for world domination which will be— And that’s all I get a chance to read. Next, the cash machine asks if I would like my money in Canadian currency, United States dollars, insect repellent, or sidewalk salt. Because of the trip to Chicago, I figure I’ll need United States dollars. The cash machine licks its metal fingers and counts out the dollars. It tosses out my money. The dollars sit quietly in the metal drop basket of the cash machine. I step forward and stack them up. The machine spits out my cash card with a spitting sound. It’s all wet, probably from having licked its fingers to count the money. The cash machine hums to itself as I walk away. I look back. It stops. I continue back to my car. I think it’s humming again.

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