

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

Romance
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“Are you okay?” she asks in the glow of the sunset wall. Her eyes are so close. Her lips are so close. Yes. My hands pull her closer. I kiss her with every lip on my face. I need more lips. I explore her lips with what lips I have. They do well, my lips, but a few more would do so much better. Looking into her eyes so close, I find she only has one. Her eye is two outer halves of eyes. She is still beautiful with only one eye. I have fallen in love with a cyclops... a gorgeous cyclops.

One of my hands leaves her waist to touch her soft cheek. Her eye closes. My fingers dance across the side of her face to the music of our kisses. At the edge of their dance floor, where her neck and cheek meet below her ear, two of my fingers discover a spot where a soft caress causes a smile, so the two fingers touch the spot again. They turn to look at a smile twitching across Hope's lips. The fingers decide to investigate further. They caress around the spot, step across it with care as though stepping onto the ice of a frozen lake for the first time. Her slight smile no longer shows signs of departure, and the forecast calls for light giggles, followed by periods of heavy giggles in some areas. My fingers put on their ice skates and start a rowdy game of hockey below Hope's ear. Hope laughs. “Quit that,” she says, raising up on me and adjusting her seating. Hey! Hope has two eyes! I smile back at her with all the innocence of hockey players.

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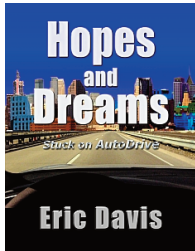
Hopes and Dreams: *Stuck on AutoDrive* by Eric Davis

ISBN 978-0-9796098-0-0

\$39.95, 592 pages, hardcover

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Hope is nestled beside me. I think she's fallen asleep... fast asleep. It took next to no time at all. I'm lightly, reassuringly, petting her hair. Mostly, I am holding her. This is weird. I know a thing or two about weird. Using that expertise, I can safely say, this is weird. How can I possibly sleep? I am propped up on my left elbow. My left hand is under Hope's head. Even if I were to free up my hand, what am I going to do, leave? No, I'm not trying to leave. I'm not even insistent on sleep. The idea of holding someone all night is weird. Part of the equation is that a relationship takes bed space. It means your limbs might get tangled up like my arm is now. I pet Hope's hair with my free hand. Her eyes open into a squint. I smile at her. She smiles back and falls asleep again. There. She wouldn't have woken up if it wasn't for me. A relationship might mean lost sleep. Then again, maybe my comforting her is making her sleep better.

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If I try to look at my question from the other side, from Hope's perspective, I would say that it's the wrong question. It's not about getting Hope's permission or Hope's approval. It's keeping Hope in my life, so as my life changes, she can stay with it. I can't tell her everything. I can't tell her about every detail in my life, every noise from the neighbors, every hurtle in front of AutoDrive. It would take too long. It would be boring. What I can do is tell her about the significant things. The things I would want to know if they happened to Hope, even realizations. I'll tell her about the stuff that matters, and I ask her to do the same. It sounds reasonable.

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