

MOVING IN TOGETHER

A STORY OF AMSTERDAM BY AMALIE PETERSEN

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CHAPTER I - MONDAY MORNING

It's Monday morning, the 10th of August, year 2071. Fortunately Marija has summer vacation, so only her parents are leaving for work this morning. This summer she graduated from high school and she is spending the summer moving into her new apartment together with her boyfriend Jos, who also graduated from high school and has been living in Rotterdam his whole life. After the summer they will both start studying at the University of Amsterdam. This summer is therefore very important to them, and Marija is looking forward to finally living together with Jos, after having lived in different cities for so long. So far, she is still living with her parents, Gert and Frija, but only for a couple of more days, and then her life can really begin.

Marijas grandparents have told her about the chaotic period in the 2030's when the AirCar was introduced. During the 2020's the carpark underwent a complete change into self-driving shared cars. During this time the AirCar was invented and tested out, and the new set of traffic laws was developed. Since self-driving cars were introduced in the 2010's, the car fleet have gradually switched from 100 % user controlled vehicles in 2010 to 100 % self-driving vehicles in 2030. Those were some very chaotic years, since there was still need for physical signals in the intersections because of the user controlled vehicles. Therefore the self-driving cars also needed to wait in line and the system couldn't be used optimally, which created a lot of congestion. Luckily those days are over, and Marija and her generation will never need to learn to drive a car. She couldn't imagine living in a time where you need to drive your own car. She enjoys being able to relax in the car and play with her Rubik's cube without worrying about the traffic

CHAPTER II - MONDAY EVENING

Marija's phone rings, and she is happy that the call is from Jos. She has been waiting all day for him to call. She can sense that something is wrong, and she is nervous if maybe he got cold feet about moving in together. They have already signed the contract to the apartment, so she would understand that he is in a difficult dilemma if he doesn't want to move in with her anyways. She would be heart-broken of course, since they have been together for nearly three years now. But on the other hand, since they started talking about moving in together, he has been very quiet and hesitating. She almost thinks that he has been avoiding her.

Marija picks up the phone.

Marija: "Hey honey, I'm so happy to hear from you."

Jos: "Hey. I'm sorry that I haven't called you so much lately." Marija: "No, no, it's okay. Is something wrong?"

She is shaking. Has she been too pushy with the decision? It was an easy decision for her to move into a new apartment with him in Amsterdam. It would also be convenient, since after her Summer Vacation they will start

studying together in the University of Amsterdam, so she has always had the idea, that this situation would be perfect, and that they would both be equally excited about it. But she has a strong feeling that he doesn't like the idea as much as she does. Why didn't she ask him for his opinion in the beginning? Did he get to say anything at all? Was it really her decision and not his? She can't remember the decision making process now. She is too nervous. Is he calling to break up?

Jos: "Actually... I have been thinking about something."

Her heart starts beating superfast. She sweats and almost panics. She has to start holding the phone more tightly in order to retain herself from throwing it out of the window in frustration.

Marija: "You don't have to explain. I know maybe the decision is a little rushed. If you don't want to do it, just say it. But I just want to know, what I have done wrong? I thought we were ready for this. But I can totally understand that it's a long way to move for you from Rotterdam to Amsterdam. If you live in Amsterdam, you can't see your parents so often, but I didn't think about that when we started planning this. I'm so sorry. I just thought that maybe it didn't matter that much, since you want to live with me. Or I don't know – maybe you don't want to live with me. Do you?"

Jos: "Wow. Wait a second. That's not what I'm thinking AT ALL. How can you analyze all of that from the fact that I didn't call you the past days? I can't believe this!"

He sounded quite surprised and angry. Marija had never been more confused. Had she misunderstood him?

Marija: "It's not just that. I just feel like you have been acting weird for the past month. I feel like there is something you are not telling me?"

A million thoughts went through her head. He said that she was wrong about what he was thinking. How could she be wrong? Women always have a good sixth sense when it comes to reading through the lines.

Jos: "Hey, calm down. You are overreacting. Can you please stop trying to read my mind?! This is so typical women. You always try to read through the lines, and then you start assuming all kinds of things that are not true. Listen. Now, don't interrupt me! The reason why I might have been a little hesitant about this whole "moving in together" project, is NOT because I have second thoughts about the idea of living with you. I would LOVE to live with you. I love you with all my heart, you know that. The reason is, that I have second thoughts about moving to AMSTERDAM. And no, it's not because of you, and it's not because of the distance to my parents. It's because of the city. I know it sounds stupid to you, but I'm actually really nervous about the flying cars. It really doesn't seem safe."

Marija was so relieved. Nothing was wrong with the relationship. Everything was fine. Now it all made sense.

Marija: "Oh, okay. Well, I'm really sorry that I might have misunderstood you then. But there is no reason to be nervous about the cars here in Amsterdam. You've seen them when you've been visiting me here. They are safe. You don't need to worry about it."

Jos: "But how exactly does the system work?"

Marija: "Let me explain it to you. Actually I think I will write it to you in an e-mail, because then I can just check the technical details on Google, so I don't write anything incorrect"

Jos: "Okay, I also need to go and have dinner with my parents now. I'm looking forward to reading your e-mail later. Hopefully it will calm me down a little bit, and I will stop being nervous about this. I know you say the cars are safe, and of course I trust everything you say, but it could still be nice if you could send me some information on the transportation system."

Marija: "I will do that right away. See you tomorrow!"

Jos: "Yes, see you tomorrow morning! I can't wait!"

Marija hangs up. Gert entered the room. He has apparently been listening to some of the conversation, so now he wants to help Marija write the e-mail to Jos about the transportation system. He knows a lot about the transportation system in the city, since he has works in the traffic department in the municipality, where they work a lot with analyzing the system and monitoring the safety and traffic flow. He explains to her how it works and leaves the room again.

Marija sits down by her computer and writes the e-mail.

"Hi my dear Jos <3

As promised, here is a description of the transport system here in Amsterdam.

As you know, all cities have their own Automatic Traffic Control system, and the AirCars are so far only introduced in the bigger cities around the world. The capital cities in most European countries have the system. The first city in the world to implement the system successfully was Copenhagen, where it was introduced in 2065. The Ministry of Transportation in Amsterdam are thus following the successful example from Copenhagen and since the two cities are very similar, the system is following the same structure here in Amsterdam as in Copenhagen. Back in 2065 in Copenhagen there was a six months test phase, where the first AirCars was sent on trips through the AirRoads. In this test phase a lot of safety precautions were taken, and the citizens could not use the public space, nor the roads, most of the time, because of the fear of various failures in the technology which could cause the AirCars to crash. This transition phase was of course inconvenient for the citizens, and some would say it was even unnecessary, because there were no errors on the AirCars in the test phase. For this reason there has been no test phase here in Amsterdam, and so far the system is working perfectly. We've had these AirCars since February and they are just great. Of course it's something you have to get used to, but it's not so different from LandCars which have been self-driving for more than 40 years now. So there is absolutely nothing to worry about.

The AirCars are monitored by their GPS-position, with the same technology used for airplanes for the past hundred years. So radars are placed around the city, to receive the GPS information from all Air vehicles and the Automatic Traffic Control system ensures that all vehicles stay in their predefined routes and that no routes are meeting. The vehicles have sensors that detects any objects nearby and automatically steers around them.

I hope that answered the questions you had.

I am counting down to Wednesday. Only two days left now! I can't wait to finally move in together. I feel like I will remember that day for the rest of my life, so we must enjoy it.

Hugs and kisses, your Marija"

CHAPTER III - TUESDAY EVENING

The family sits around the dinner table watching TV. Today's news features some politicians that are summing up the recent evaluations of the Automatic Traffic Control System. The system already seems to be a great success, and has already made a lot of improvements on traffic flow, congestion and traffic safety in the cities that have it, and it will be worldwide within the next few years. Then they went on to present ideas for future developments of the system. They plan to propose a new legislation, where it will be possible to control the citizens in the same way as the traffic system. The concept is called the Automatic Citizen Control System, and has already gained support from many politicians and from companies that wants to make the technology. With the Automatic Citizen Control System it will be possible for the government to track where all citizens are, by using biologically implanted chips. The politicians agree that the potential benefits of this system far exceeds the disadvantages. They expect a future with zero crimes, since criminals will no longer be able to flee their crimes. This will lead to abolishment of the police force, the prisons, and maybe even the military.

The family discuss the news. Marija likes the idea because it seems like the system will provide safety and security for the citizens. She thinks the politicians are doing a great job of improving the society for everybody, and the Automatic Citizen Control System appears to be another useful tool – just like the Automatic Traffic Control System – to optimize life in the city and support gradually evolvement towards a perfect society.

However Gert and Frija are more skeptical about this. They don't think there is such thing as a perfect society, and if there is, it should be created by the citizens themselves, and not by the government taking control over people. A high level of monitoring of the citizens can lead to many ethical consequences.

Marija: "Whatever, let's not discuss it further today. You can be pessimists if you want to. But I choose to always look at the glass as being half full, rather than half empty."

Frija: "Sure, but you should be careful of not being naive. You might be blind of potential dangers."

Marija: "I'm sorry, but I don't see any dangers. Right now I'm just really excited about the move tomorrow, and showing Jos the AirCars, and I won't let you ruin my good mood. Goodnight."

CHAPTER IV - WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Finally the day has arrived. Marija is so excited to finally move into the new apartment. It is a big day for her, because she has been living with her parents all her life, and this day will be the first day of the rest of her life. She spent the morning packing the last of her stuff and saying goodbye to her parents, as they left for work. Tonight is going to be the first night she and Jos will spend in the new apartment. Jos is meeting her soon and together they are taking an AirCar to the new apartment. It's in the other end of the city, so the optimal route is by AirCar, and they only have the choice of taking the optimal route. The aim of the traffic system is to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow, wherefore the traffic users must take the routes that the TravelApp calculates for them. The Ministry of Transportation has imposed a law on this, so you will get fined if you take another route than suggested by the TravelApp. Therefore Marija and Jos has only the choice of taking an AirCar. AirCar will also be their only option of daily transportation from September when their first semester at the University begins. So it is especially a big day for Jos, since he will be trying the AirCar for the first time. They have entered in the TravelApp the amount of luggage they are bringing for the since, wherefore they know that they will only be the two of them

in the car, because there will be no room for other passengers. Jos is very happy about this, since he is nervous about the trip.

Jos picks her up and helps her carry her stuff to the AirCar that arrives right on the expected time in front of the house. As they enter the car, Marija looks back at the house and gets sentimental. She has been living here her whole life, and now she is all grown up and moving out. A lot of memories about her life in the house are appearing in her mind. She feels like she needs to sit for a while in the AirCar and think about life, BUT the car starts bleeping, because the AirCar must leave from the location within two minutes after arriving, so it doesn't waste valuable time. They have no time to talk further, and Jos is getting even more nervous because Marija didn't have the time to calm him down before take-off.

As the AirCar takes off Marija lets go of her thoughts of the house and they start talking about the AirCar trip.

Marija: "You really shouldn't be nervous about driving in the AirCar. It's perfectly safe."

Jos: "Yes, I know, you keep telling me that. But, how was it? In your e-mail you wrote, that in Copenhagen there was a test phase before implementation, but they didn't do that in Amsterdam. Why was that?"

Marija: "In Copenhagen the system was running without any problems or errors during the whole test phase, so probably they didn't think it was necessary."

Jos: "Hmm..."

Marija: "But let's talk about something else. I've been looking forward to this day for so many years!"

Jos: "Me too, sweetie. Finally I get to live together with my princess!" Marija: "Aww! I love you so much!"

Jos: "I love you too!"

Marija has never been more in love. Life is perfect, and she is happy and excited about the move. They kiss. Everything is perfect. This AirCar trip is really comfortable and actually really romantic.

Suddenly the AirCar is making odd sounds. They notice that a bird is stuck in the windshield wipers. They assume that the technology in the AirCar will somehow remove the bird. But the windshield wipers are stuck and can't move. The AirCar starts to deviate from its route and it starts shaking. Marija and Jos are getting nervous. What is happening? Why is the AirCar moving around instead of following the straight route? It's like the AirCar is trying to avoid flying into the bird, but it hasn't detected that the bird is stuck – making the car keep doing emergency maneuvers. To avoid hitting the bird.

Another AirCar is flying towards them. The traffic laws are programmed into the technology, so normally the AirCars would just fly smoothly past each other.

Jos: "Fuck! What's happening?!"

Marija: "I don't know! We will fly past the other AirCar, I'm sure!"

But she is not sure at all. They are flying very fast and uncontrollable and there is no indications of the car adjusting its speed and route as it normally would. They realize that the technology detecting objects near the car is not

working correctly because of the bird in the windshield wipers. Bu there is no possibility of taking control over the movements of the AirCar, as it is completely computer controlled.

They almost hit the other AirCar, which luckily managed to avoid them. However, Marija's and Jos' AirCar is now completely out of control. It starts to spin around itself and quickly loses both speed and altitude. The automatic rapid expanding foam airbags unfolds, but nothing can ease the extreme forces when the car eventually crashes into the ground.

EPILOGUE

The distress signal send out by the car has alerted the emergency medical department whose rescue team is rushing to the scene. The rapid expanding foam has evaporated and while the medical crew is working to do spinal stabilization, no heart activity is found on the electrocardiograms. Mobile ultrasound shows massive internal hemorrhage, fractures and extremity bleeding caused by fragments of the carbon reinforced body of the vehicle, piercing through the skin of both Marija and Jos. Several attempts of resuscitation are performed, but the electrocardiogram never shows any heart activity. Both are declared dead at the scene by the paramedics.

The next day an official announcement from the AirCar manufacturer was released:

"Yesterday one of the AirCars of Amsterdam was involved in a fatal accident. We send our condolences to the relatives of the deceased couple. However, it should also be said that the AirCars still remain the safest mean of transportation. Our technicians have evaluated the accidents and concluded that what caused the accident could only be a user error, wherefore we as manufacturer cannot be accounted for consequences of incorrect or irresponsible use of the vehicle. Thus, we do not take any responsibility of the accident."

The End.