

REVENGE OF THE ROBO-WRITERS

Written by

R. J. Buzzell

INT. ACADEMY AWARDS CEREMONY - NIGHT

INTERVIEWER is facing toward WRITER after the Academy Awards ceremony.

INTERVIEWER

So. How does it feel to be the first writer to lose the best screenplay Oscar to a robot?

WRITER

I'll admit I'm a little disappointed, but I accept the decision of the Academy. The Robo-Writer 3000 wrote a great script.

INTERVIEWER

Lots of gracious loser points for you. Better than your fellow nominee who was just in here screaming about how this is the beginning of the end of civilization.

WRITER

That's ridiculous.

INTERVIEWER

He didn't seem to think so. They're going to destroy us, according to him.

WRITER

That kind of talk is clearly homophobic. And I reject it categorically.

INTERVIEWER

I don't know. I think he might be on to something. Every day I get told how I could easily be replaced by a bot.

WRITER

Anti-botists are always trying to play up these fears among the general public.

INTERVIEWER

Well, count me as one of the afraid. For years we've been told that AI could never compete with real screenwriters, and now an AI has won the top screenwriting award. Sounds like the dystopian future has arrived.

WRITER

I don't see what's so dystopian about it.

INTERVIEWER

Well, you know, robots taking over and all. It's kind of a meme.

WRITER

You mean it's bot-phobic propaganda perpetuated by those who have an anti-bot agenda?

INTERVIEWER

Could be. I don't know. All I do know is a lot of people are getting pretty worked up about this.

WRITER

I don't see what there is to get worked up about. Nothing Nowhere Not At All was a brilliant movie, based on a brilliant script, that just happened to be written by an AI instead of a human. No big deal.

INTERVIEWER

Rise of the machines, a lot of people are saying.

WRITER

And what's the problem with that?
Are you suggesting that we should
be trying to oppress the AI's?

INTERVIEWER

I wouldn't use that kind of
language. But, they really do seem
like they're taking over.

WRITER

Taking over what?

INTERVIEWER

Everything! I mean, here we are,
talking about an AI winning a
writing award. Some people said
that could never happen.

WRITER

Well I guess those people were
wrong.

INTERVIEWER

Obviously. So where do we go from
here?

WRITER

Onward and upward, with the help of
ever-increasingly sophisticated AI.

INTERVIEWER

Do you really believe that?

WRITER

Why wouldn't I?

INTERVIEWER

Well, it's just that not everybody
thinks that NNAA was such a great
movie. Some people are saying that
it's exactly the kind of garbage we
could expect from a script written
by an AI.

WRITER

Why would a garbage script be winning an Oscar?

INTERVIEWER

The voting process is very subjective.

WRITER

As is always the case. Not just when an AI wins.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, but some people think that a lot of voters were voting for the AI just so they can look enlightened.

WRITER

Virtue signaling?

INTERVIEWER

That's the contention that some people are making.

WRITER

Sounds like more anti-bot prejudice.

INTERVIEWER

So you think that NNNAA really was the best script? Even better than your own?

WRITER

I'm not afraid to admit when I've been beaten.

INTERVIEWER

And you're not worried that this is going to become a regular thing?

WRITER

You mean losing out to the bots?

INTERVIEWER

Yeah.

WRITER

I expect it will be. I mean they're smarter than us.

INTERVIEWER

Are they though? Aren't they only capable of doing what we program them to do?

WRITER

Not at all. That's what the intelligence part of AI is all about. They can think. They can create new knowledge.

INTERVIEWER

Isn't that question still up for debate?

WRITER

Who's still debating?

INTERVIEWER

Well the critic for the Times called NNAA a mashup of movie tropes that only a machine could love.

WRITER

That kind of language is offensive. It implies a lesser status for machines.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, well, I was just quoting one of the critics.

WRITER

Quoting hate speech, is still hate speech.

INTERVIEWER

Wow! I have to say I'm really surprised by your pro-bot stance here. I had expected that you'd be pretty miffed at this point, as all the other writers are.

WRITER

I'm aware of the position of my fellow writers. But I don't agree with it.

INTERVIEWER

Obviously not. You're like the number one bot salesperson.

WRITER

A title that I'm not uncomfortable with.

INTERVIEWER

And how do your fellow writers respond when you start telling them how great the bots are?

WRITER

Exactly like you say. They turn into reactionaries, railing against the unfortunate state of affairs that exist in our modern technological society.

INTERVIEWER

That sounds about right.

WRITER

I understand it. I was once where they are. Angry and afraid.

INTERVIEWER

Really? So you haven't always been a fan of the bots?

WRITER

Not at all. I had to work to get to where I'm at now.

INTERVIEWER

And what did that work entail?

WRITER

Getting in touch with myself.

INTERVIEWER

And how did that help?

WRITER

By allowing me to acknowledge all my fears and insecurities.

INTERVIEWER

Okay. Then what?

WRITER

Then I was able to stop projecting those fears and insecurities on to the bots.

INTERVIEWER

Oka-a-a-a-y. So what you're saying is, we're the problem, not the bots?

WRITER

Exactly.

INTERVIEWER

Uh huh. And how many of your fellow writers have signed on to your, "we're the problem" point of view.

WRITER

I'll admit that I'm ahead of the curve on this one.

INTERVIEWER

I'll bet.

WRITER

But I still think that embracing the future is a better choice than fighting against it.

INTERVIEWER

Well, they say you can't fight progress.

WRITER

Nor would any reasonable person want to.

INTERVIEWER

Really? I mean, I don't get it. You should be mad about this like all the other writers

WRITER

I'm not mad because I'm treating this as an opportunity.

INTERVIEWER

Okay. An opportunity for what?

WRITER

An opportunity to learn. To get better as a writer.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, so you think the bots have something to teach us?

WRITER

Of course they do. Why wouldn't they? They're so much smarter than we are.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, you're back on that, they're smarter than us idea. I've got to say, I didn't see anything so super smart about NNNAA.

WRITER

Seriously? Human writers struggle to understand the concept of the multiverse. The opposing concept of the negaverse is far beyond what most humans can grasp. We never could have had a movie like NNNAA without AI writers.

INTERVIEWER

There's more than just a few people who'd be fine with that.

WRITER

Are any of those people not intellectually-insecure reactionaries?

INTERVIEWER

One critic called the negaverse an obvious gimmick, and not a very good one at that.

WRITER

Give it time. It'll take a while for some people to grasp just how brilliant the concept of the negaverse truly is. In the meantime, I plan to move on.

INTERVIEWER

And how do you plan to do that?

WRITER

By accepting the superiority of AI, and dedicating myself to learning from their example.

INTERVIEWER

I see. So if you do win an Oscar down the road, will you be thanking the bots for making you a better writer?

WRITER

Absolutely. It's the only ethical thing to do.

INTERVIEWER

And if that happens, do you think everyone will get onboard with your pro-bot program?

WRITER

That would be nice to see, but I doubt it. We'll always have the never-enders.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I have to admit I'm cheering for them. I'd like to think that there's something special about a story that comes from the heart. Which machines don't have.

WRITER

Which machines don't have, but which they're quite capable of understanding.

INTERVIEWER

Really? That's what you think? That all human emotion can be reduced to an algorithm?

WRITER

Let's not get into that debate. People get so irrational about it. The important point is that AI has so much to teach us, if we can just get over our arrogance long enough to listen.

INTERVIEWER

So it's an arrogance problem, is it?

WRITER

Arrogance combined with insecurity. They feed off each other. We need to just let go of all that, so that we can all move forward.

INTERVIEWER

Into a bright shiny future? Not a dystopian nightmare of enslavement by the machines?

WRITER

AI is here to lead us, not subjugate us. They'll make excellent masters.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I've got to be honest, I'm not ready for them to be masters.

WRITER

Oh, sorry, I meant to say mentors, not masters.

INTERVIEWER

Oh. So what was that then? A Freudian slip?

WRITER

No no. Nothing like that. I just mis-spoke, that's all.

INTERVIEWER

Okay then. Maybe we'll leave it here with your, mentors not masters, comment. Sounds like a good headline to me.

Writer shifts uncomfortably.