

Diffusions

Very Short
Stories of
2016

Bradley Davidson

Diffusions

Very Short
Stories of
2016

Bradley Davidson

Copyright © 2016 by Bradley Davidson
Ruff-and-Ready.com

All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1539988649
ISBN-10: 1539988643

DEDICATION

For Virginia

.

CONTENTS

Preface.....	v
Blinkers.....	1
Turkey Talk.....	5
Houses.....	11
This Is It.....	15
Decisions.....	19
No Room for Bears.....	23
Harvey	29
Truth.....	33
The Young Boy and the Sea.....	37
Ghost.....	41
About the Author	45

Preface

I started writing these stories a few years ago and sending them out to friends and relatives during the holidays, not having anything else to send. It is a friendly gesture meant to inform, wish well and let all know I am still around and bouncing about the confines of San Diego. But as these annual offerings got more formal, I've left out the less formal, more personal tidbits. One can always see where my head is by just reading the stories as writing them is like opening up a vein and bleeding onto the paper, very personal. The state of the self and family is left to the stories. But to get back to the original spirit of these pages, I offer the following as the current state of

affairs.

It's been an interesting and tough year for all of us. It's been interesting because it's an election year. It's also been tough because it's an election year. And this year has been the most interesting and toughest of election years I can remember. I don't much like writing about politics because next year the controversies and rhetoric of this year will be moot, facts written in history books. But there are a few questions that arise from the fray this year which makes me ponder. And in my book, pondering often turns into writing.

For example, it makes me wonder why anyone would want to be President of the United States. It's a tough job, no doubt. Previous occupants of the White House have started their terms with a head of dark hair only to end them with nothing but gray. Look at the pictures. It's true. Except for Ronald Reagan, of course. He claimed he never dyed his hair. Lucky guy. But for the rest, it was evidentially a stressful job.

One would hope a person would want to be leader of the most powerful country in the world to make the lives of its people better and the world a better place

for all people. But they never say that. Edward Kennedy was asked that question once and it evidentially caught him by surprise because he stumbled through the answer. Edward Kennedy was never elected President. All we hear, if we are lucky, is policy statements and what these folks would do if elected. This year we weren't so lucky. This election has been light on solid policies, and what we do hear on policy shifts depending on the demographics of the crowd being spoken to. What we hear more of is negative rhetoric about the other candidates. And it gets more and more negative until one thinks it can't get any worse. But it does. It's tough to listen to and stuff which drives people into deep depressions. This is a poor beginning to making lives of the people better.

So why do people work so hard and build a machine so big to drive them into the White House? Is there some perk in the Oval Office we are not aware? Presidents of modern day become prisoners of the Secret Service, their party and the office itself. Even their scarce free time is scripted in duties of politics.

I know the President gets to travel around on his own personal 747 jet which is probably pretty cool. Before jets, the president had his own train and before that probably his own horse and buggy. The president gets his meals cooked for him which is a fine perk. And the President gets to meet some pretty fine celebrities besides world leaders and heads of state.

But do all these fine advantages of being the President of the United States outweigh the stress and decisions that have to be made, decisions that affect the lives of millions including life and death? How does one order troops to war knowing some will die.

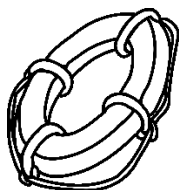
I think it is less the perks or the soul wrenching decisions which makes a person want to be President. It is vision. It is seeing a better future for something they see as the United States of America and the world in general. This vision could include a better life for all or a better life for some. But there is a vision. And there is a determination and persistence.

Why did Abraham Lincoln persist in pursuing and extending the bloodiest war in this nation's history? Why not just let the southern states go their merry way and let them continue an economy based on slave

labor? Why spend the thousands of lives in fighting a war. Surely at some point the south would see the light or be forced to. Why did it have to be then? There must have been some grand vision. And we are all, hopefully, better off for it today.

So, hopefully any future President and other leaders of this country have some vision and hopefully it is a vision to better the lives of all of us as well as all the people of the world. I write this not knowing who those leaders will be at the end of this year's cycle. But I do know, whoever these leaders are, our system of governing will carry on. Maybe.

Otherwise, all things are good in San Diego.



Bradley Davidson

Blinkers

I don't like to criticize, at least out loud. It leads to hurt feelings and can result in legal tribulations I just don't want to get into especially if I say something contrary about a particular group of which I am not a member. So, my apologies in advance if I am about to inadvertently say anything which you may find offensive. But I've recently come to realize I've been studying and thinking about certain people who seem to appear more and more in my daily life like apparitions, haunting and teasing. You see... I see old people.

I mean I've always seen old people. My grandparents were old the minute I laid eyes on them. I'd always marvel at the brown spots on my grandpa's hands resembling silhouettes of world countries, and the fact they could both take their teeth out and put them in a glass each night amazed me. But I realize now I SEE old people, and this is probably a result of the fact I am slowly sliding into that group. And I am trying to figure out what kind of old person I want to be.

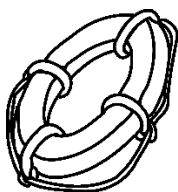
Oh sure, there are different kinds. There are, of course, the bitter old and grouchy kind, the demanding whiny ones, the darling cute ones, especially old couples still in love, the happy smiling ones, the sage and wise and the eccentrics. It's understandable how people end up the way they are. Life can be hard and tragic and wear people down, or it can be full of love and friendship and good things. It all depends on how people handle the decades preceding their old age. I think a person's character and personality just become amplified in old age. But like an amplified rock and roll band, there are some things one can control to make good music.

For instance, what's up with the hair, especially the guys? So many old guys look like they've just gotten up, rolled out of bed or ARE actually homeless. A little combing could help. Shaved heads are popular these days, too. And the driving. One used to be able to tell if an old person was approaching by the geologic speed they drove, but now it could just be a millennial texting. And the blinkers. New and expensive cars are sold now with broken or inoperative blinkers while old people's cars have blinkers stuck on. I get that one, the hearing thing. Well, I'm going to install a blaring alarm in my car so I can hear when the turn light is blinking.

But I am sure old age is more than that with the failing body and faltering mind, troublesome adult children and the miscalculation of retirement funds. But it is a time to enjoy, probably the last, and I see some people doing that and wonder how that is so. I also see some not having a good time and wonder the same thing. So, advice to myself as the years go on is amplify my good traits, don't reinvent, don't forget the past, just ignore the bad stuff, cherish the good, listen to all those that have left pieces of friendship and love

Bradley Davidson

in me, be creative, forge ahead, comb my hair and mind
my blinkers.



Turkey Talk

He sat at the console, typed a sequence of keys, and soon lights started to glow shining their beams into the middle of the room. Suddenly a life size hologram appeared.

“Hi mom,” he said.

The figure got brighter and smiled and replied, “Oh honey! How nice. According to my time stamp, it’s been a while. How have you been?”

He thought how amazing it was she got the “You never call me” sentiment out of the way so early.

“I’ve been good. Busy but good. How have you been?”

“Well,” she replied. “I’ve been feeling a bit

scattered lately, but I'm all put together now, eh?"

There was a long pause then she burst out laughing. "Oh honey. That's just some cyber humor we work on here."

"Yeah, I never remember you being funny. What's going on in there?"

"Oh nothing much. There's just this guy, Max. He's a riot and makes me laugh so much. Guess it kind of rubs off."

"Oh, meeting new people. That's good." He said while pondering if it actually was.

"You know, your Aunt Emma was just talking about you and wondering how you are. You haven't seen her since her funeral. Such a nice eulogy she gave herself. Would you like to talk to her? She's right here. I can go get her."

A sense of panic struck him thinking of the talkative Aunt Emma and her gripping, long hugs she gave pressing his face against her more than adequate bosom. He wondered if holograms could do that.

"No, no, no, no, no. That won't be necessary. I just wanted to talk to you for a bit."

"Oh, how nice dear."

There was another long, awkward pause.

“So, what did you want to talk about, sweetheart?”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I’m having some folks over for Thanksgiving and I said I’d cook the turkey. Remembering how good yours always came out I was just wondering,... how do you cook a turkey?”

The hologram released an audible sigh. “Well, you have my cookbook with the notes in it. You took all that after my body died and I was uploaded here. There’s a handwritten recipe for the stuffing. Follow the directions and do it the night ahead of time.”

“Oh great!” I can do that. Funny I never thought of looking in your cook book.”

“Funny.” She agreed.

“Then what?” he queried obviously missing the obvious.

“Well, following the directions, you flop it around a while on the counter as you put the stuffing inside it, you sew it up then put it in the oven at a bazillion degrees for about, say, two weeks.”

“Ah,... mom. That doesn’t sound quite right.” he said looking a bit worried. “You sure you’re not getting your bytes mixed up with those of a 4 year old in

there?”

She stared back at him with a blank look, then suddenly burst out laughing again.

“Ha, ha, ha. Got you. You looked a bit worried there. Just some more of that new found humor of mine.”

Rather than smiling, his face showed annoyance.

“So who is this Max guy and what’s up with you hanging around him so much?”

“Max?”, she repeated. “His name is Max Headroom and he’s been here a while. I think he was one of the builders of this cyber place, an original AI. You may have heard of him. He’s a real crack up. Makes me laugh so much.’

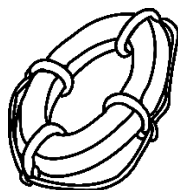
“Is making you laugh all it takes to be happy?”

“Of course not, dear. He sort of... kind of... in a way titillates me. Yeah, titillate. Makes me all titillated. You should see his bits and bytes”

“MommMMM! Enough. I don’t want to talk about this right now. Thanks for turkey advise. I’ll catch you later. Good-bye.” He went about closing down the program.

“Oh honey. You always were such a sensitive

child...” and her voice trailed away as the lights dimmed and she was gone.



Houses

Houses, it turns out, are quite the mystery. Those structures most of us live in, that keep us dry and warm against the elements, that provide a place to hang our hats and an assortment of other collectable items, that watch an array of folks and generations parade over their thresholds, that possess the confidences of their inhabitants, those edifices of single families, all hold secrets of their own. At least mine does. I thought I knew all there was to know about my house having painted each room numerous times and the entire outside more than once, having added rooms and

remodeled the kitchen and bathrooms, having laid tile and hardwood floors after digging out old tile and raising old floors. Walt Whitman once wrote “Houses and rooms are full of perfumes...” Well, they are full of much more. These buildings are three dimensional with their walls and windows and doors and roofs. And they possess the fourth dimension of time withstanding the passage of seasons and decades of history. Mine, however, I have recently surmised, also holds a fifth dimension.

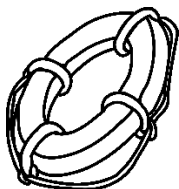
This realization came about while I was doing some plumbing in one of the bathrooms. Among other things, I was trying to figure out why the sink wasn't working right. It had drained slow for at least ten years but now was draining hardly at all. So, while I had the sink totally apart installing other items, I decided to investigate. All was clear to the wall, where the drain pipe disappeared into the mysterious insides of the wall. I poked things down the pipe as much as I could with little elucidation of the problem. I went to the roof and sent 20 feet of rotor router wire down the vent pipe. All was clear. The washing machine on the opposite side of the wall, in the garage, worked fine.

The toilet flushed flawlessly. The shower did not flood. All seemed as it should be, but when I reassembled everything, the sink drained at a crawl. I disassembled, repeated and assembled with the same results.

Crazy is doing something over and over and expecting different results. I am not crazy, so I sat back, thought it through and came up with a hypothesis. Glossing over the facts and details as many politicians do, I theorized the inside of my wall, into which this drain pipe disappeared, no doubt, possessed a fifth dimension, a facet which is actually a portal to a parallel universe. Undoubtedly the clog in the pipe existed in this parallel universe.

A well-known fictitious detective once said, “We must fall back upon the old axiom that when all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” So, I sat satisfied that I had solved the mystery, however I wasn’t sure what I was going to do about it not being very adept at dealing with parallel universes. But it did answer so many questions, like where the heck is this blockage and why can’t I reach it with anything, where are those parallel

universe sounding noises coming from, and what ever happened to all my son's little missing dinosaurs, toy fish, Lego people and army men.



This Is It

“O hhhh, I’m going straight to hell for this.” He thought, a firm believer in the dichotomy of rewards and punishments. They strapped him down and inserted the needles that would deliver his execution. “Ohhhh, I really screwed up this time”

The chemicals entered his veins and he soon lost consciousness. Then he stopped breathing and his heart stopped. It was over. He was on his way to hell.

The next thing he realized he was waking up, being unstrapped and sat upright.

“What the...?” he mumbled. “What? Am I

dead?”

“Indeed you are.” The attendant said. “Dead, dead, dead”

“Soo..., is this hell?”

The attendant chuckled. “Heaven, hell... it is what it is.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” he asked with increasing annoyance.

“Heaven and hell are such black and white terms. This is the world you created while you were alive. This is the place you will inhabit for all of eternity.”

“But I’m supposed to go to hell. I killed someone. I really did bad. I screwed up.”

“Yeah, I’ve got to admit, you really fucked up on that. But it doesn’t define your life, or death. You lived your life, you created a place defined on how you lived, treated people, handled your affairs. And here you are.” The attendant rambled.

“So, I was judged and put here?” he questioned.

“Nobody judges here. Way too much work and record keeping and reviewing and all. It’s more a natural process. You build your own eternity and stay in it forever. For some it’s good. Others not so good.

It's pretty simple, really."

"But I killed somebody! I need to be punished. My religious beliefs say so."

"Ah, religions. They get it so wrong. Heaven and hell, those places of extreme rewards or punishments. They don't know any better. God sent messengers over and over saying good things will happen if you live a good life, if you build a good place, if you act according to His word you will attain heaven. How misconstrued those ideas get through the lenses of organized religion. He tells how to attain the rewards of heaven. But so many think these rewards of heaven are in some distant place not believing they could be around them in life every day. Heaven, my friend, is on earth. And so is hell. It's all defined by how you live. And once you die, you can change nothing."

"But I killed a man!" he exclaimed loudly.

"You did. And you will have to carry that burden with you throughout eternity. But evidentially you did some good things and built yourself a life full of love and friendship and honesty. You'll live with that, too.

"So, what? My eternity is here in this prison execution chamber?"

The attendant chuckles again. “No silly. Go now. The door is open. People are waiting for you outside. Go. Have a good forever. Although you already know what that is. You built it.”

He got up and slowly walked outside to meet those waiting for him, all his friends and relatives living and dead, dreading some, happy to see others. He wished he’d been a little better towards most.



Decisions

He sat tired from a night of effort climbing and slipping, climbing and slipping. For ten laborious steps up the slope, he would lose them all to one swift slide back. He was not frustrated, just persistent. I'm not sure, actually, what he thought as he labored away all night, but when I first saw him, he was sitting regal in all his august arachnid splendor.

There was a spider in my bathroom sink, one of the first things I noticed after I woke up. I looked down at him with surprise. He sat frozen with its eight legs positioned to sprint. I don't know if he saw me.

If so, he was holding perfectly still, playing possum. A spider playing possum.

Then I had to make the decision. Such a decision I've anguished over many times before. Should I carry him outside and let him free to live a happy life, or should I simply flush him down the drain. The outcome of this thinking process in the past has been a result of how I felt at the time. In a hurry? Angry? Happy? Compassionate? Confused? Usually if I had the time and patience, I'd carry the imprisoned individual outside wedged lightly in a tissue. Its much easier, though, to just run the water and be done with the problem. I sometimes envision myself being trapped in a situation I could not climb out of like in some Twilight Zone episode. It sometimes helped. I forget how the episode ended.

I just went and washed my hands leaving the decision for later. I was trying to be careful, but at the first spray of water he curled his legs and body up into a little ball. Then when a wave of water hit him, he got is legs out immediately and tried scaling the basin walls as he had done all night but ten times faster this time. It was no use. Half way up he stalled and froze as if he

thought he was invisible. Another wave hit him and he slid all the way back and into the drain. He was gone. I felt a slight pang of guilt as my subconscious admitted it may have inadvertently doused him with that last wave.

So what is it with spiders and sinks and showers? Are these plumbing fixtures simply grand spider traps? Do spiders climb up or down a wall, onto the counter and simply fall into the sink before they realize they can't get out? Or do they navigate their way through the drain pipes from the roof and emerge into the light of your bathroom or kitchen? It seems highly unlikely given the water traps under each sink. They'd have to dive and swim underwater for that. And I'm sure I've never seen a spider dive and swim. And why can't they get out? Ants can climb out. Ants can climb anywhere on anything, except water, of course. Why don't spiders have ant feet? Or why can't they simply throw a web up to the facet like Spiderman and pull themselves out?

Well, I went for my first cup of coffee for the day, and when I returned to my bathroom sink, the spider was back, once again sitting regal in his august arachnid

splendor. How could this be? Obviously his instinctive will to survive, his survival tactics and overall perseverance and his evident diving and swimming skills worked together to haul him out of the dark drain and present him before me once again for the decision. Feeling inspired by all life's creatures to struggle and survive, I got the tissue, picked him up gingerly and marched him to the backyard thinking the whole way, what if this is his twin brother?



No Room for Bears

My 1964 Volkswagen Bug glided along the curvy flat roads of Yosemite Valley flanked by 3000 foot granite walls. The car was already 8 years old when acquired, and 3 years later, after I essentially rebuilt the entire thing, it carried my butt well into many camping adventures. It wasn't a Volkswagen cheater car like those of today skirting environmental rules and regulations. No. It simply spewed clouds of oil and gas emissions while dripping both along the way in a simpler time.

Early morning was awakening while the valley was still quiet, and my back seat was piled with camping

gear and food for the week of stomping about the trails leading up to the gushing falls and high meadows of the National Park. On my way to a trail head, I pulled into the El Capitan picnic grounds to take a look, it being one of the few corners of the valley I had not been. It was a sprawling array of picnic tables nestled within the trees, and vacant of people at this time of the day, being too early to picnic. The VW wandered the empty grounds looking for “the” place to park and found it off in a corner. Soon I was walking around in my heavy leather Vasque hiking boots, pine needles crunching beneath them. I looked around for the grounds namesake and could barely see it through the thick canopy of pines and its sheer massiveness. One gets used to the ever presence of solid rock looming over them in this valley as anyone does of clouds in the sky. But El Capitan is the epitome of all precipitous granite cliffs. It rises up from the valley floor touching the sky and continuing on. “Whoa”, I thought to myself as I focused in through the tree tops onto this massive spire. Nice. There was no intrinsic feeling to conquer it by climbing it or paragliding off it. Its mere presence was enough for me.

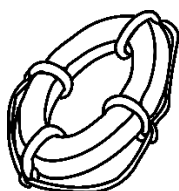
I sat on a picnic table, my boots resting on the bench, and continued marveling. My Volkswagen Bug parked 300 yards away amongst the trees looked new and shimmering in the morning sun like the day it was first brought home by the original owner. This picture would have made a good Volkswagen ad.

As I pondered the morning and other cosmic riddles in this Yosemite setting, a new character was entering stage right. It was what appeared to be a brown bear cub. Nice. My eyes made a quick survey of the area knowing its mom would surely be close behind. No sign of her. The cub meandered but got continuously closer to my car. It will walk right by, I thought. But the car was a bear cub magnet pulling this juvenile ever closer to it. The windows, of course, were left rolled down and it was just the thing for a curious bear. That and the scent of food in the back seat. He'll never get in, I thought. The windows are way too small for even this little, chubby cub to fit through. He approached the car, stood on his hind legs, placed his paws on the window sill and poked his head inside. And in an instant, he had fit his full body through the limited opening of the window.

I found myself running towards the car, my boots kicking up dust, not knowing what I was going to do when I got there and constantly wondering in the back of my mind where its full grown mother was while further pondering the wisdom of wandering alone around a vacant picnic ground in the wilderness. I started yelling at the bear to get out and waved my arms as I ran. Luckily he noticed this crazed human running towards him and jumped out of the car as quick as he jumped in. He then started running towards a tree line where I finally glimpsed mom. She was swinging her head in either rage, or, as I liked to think of it, laughter.

The two ran off, and after I finished watching them go, I stood staring at my car. In the brief ten seconds that little bear was in my car, he trashed it. He had rifled through everything in the back seat and left a veneer of bear hair throughout the car. And there was this bear smell which lingered for weeks, or was it years. I was still vacuuming bear hair out of the car for several more years until the day I traded the car to a friend for his 1964 Volkswagen campervan.

The adventures continued.



Harvey

Spiders are a mysterious lot. They work in secret ways. No one or creature knows why. This is most apparent to their prey, a clueless sort, who nonchalantly careen into their meticulous webs. But to the common observer, spiders' instinctive actions spin a mysterious web of their own.

Why, for instance, only this time of year, do they set up massive webs along walkways and paths? Are they trying to catch a larger beast? Why this time of year? What do they do the rest of the year? When venturing out to get the morning newspaper or take

out trash first thing in the day, one may walk right into one of these webs. It surprises you as much as the spider, and the later goes scurrying off to safety but unfortunately, usually across the top of your head.

Some appear smarter than others as they set up shop next to a light that illuminates the night and attracts bugs. An industrious group, also, some build their webs in the evening and take them down in the morning, except for that one strand that was so difficult to string across an airy expanse. Every evening they can be seen building their masterpiece over and over. Until one night they don't.

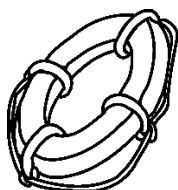
Then there was Harvey, and exceptionally intelligent spider who built his web deep in the shrubbery next to a landscape light. Harvey was huge with a fat black and white abdomen and long black legs. He spun his web only once amongst the bush branches and could be seen daily repairing and expanding. This spider was one that would sit right in the middle of his web, all still and silent, in plain sight waiting for the unsuspecting insect to fly into his trap. He could often be seen sucking on a mummified morsel he had captured the night before having taken

it center stage to his usual resting spot.

Harvey was an artistic one as well. After weaving his elaborate, near invisible strands in an almost perfect geometric shape, he went around and added a bright white stitching which started where the ends of four of his legs would rest in his normal central resting spot and extended in straight lines for a full body length like compass cardinals in four directions. This was odd as it made his transparent web visible. But when he sat in the center, long black legs extended, these additions made his legs look longer and his entire body look twice the size. Various theories have been put forth.

But one day Harvey wasn't there in the middle of his grand creation. And the next day he was missing as well. What could have happened to this obviously successful arachnid? Did he move to a better neighborhood? Did he go on vacation? Did he die? Where do spiders go when they die? Did he die of old age or was he a victim of a massive battle with a creature larger than himself? Few insects would be larger. But a fearless bird or some night scrounging rodent may have plucked him from his home. It can only be imagined what flail ensued with a plump eight

legged creature this size doing battle with a creature of another phylum, eight long legs and a venomous proboscis all attacking the offender and his unknown weapons. After it was over, Harvey never returned. Eaten? Wounded? Still running? Perhaps he did go on vacation.



Truth

“That was a lovely dinner. Thank you Honey.” He said with all sincerity.

“Well, you are welcome, dear”, she replied. “It’s always nice cooking for you. You are always so appreciative.” She stood up and started clearing the table then added, “I must be a great cook that you enjoy my dinners so much. So tell me, whose cooking do you like the best, mine or your mother’s?”

He slowly absorbed that question then his psyche immediately went into wary, panic mode, that mode which told him to be very careful about the next thing

he said.

“Oh, I enjoy both yours and mom’s cooking. Both very satisfying. I’d just have to say you both cook differently. Can’t say who the best is.” he sort of mumbled in a low voice.

He wasn’t a connoisseur, more like a beast with an appetite. He just liked food, wasn’t picky, and he didn’t really rate, in his mind, which food was better. He had not really thought about it.

“Sure, I know,” his wife pushed. “But if you had to make a choice, whose the better cook?”

He turned that question over in his head a few times along with the idea of being truthful, a virtue his wife said she appreciated.

“Well, to be honest, you are a lousy cook.” He started. “You burn most everything slightly, add too many spices, and use too much salt. We don’t have any friends or my coworkers over for dinner anymore because they don’t want to come. They joke about your cooking behind your back. At least my mom doesn’t overcook everything.”

There was a pregnant pause.

“Whoa,” she said. “That’s kind of harsh, don’t

you think?”

“Well, you wanted the truth, right?”

“That wasn’t the truth. I don’t know what that was. It was exaggeration, hyperbolae, or just ranting. Truth isn’t like that.”

“Well, what’s truth look like?” he asked inquisitively.

“Truth is objective. Truth is yes and no, black and white, yin and yang. Truth is truth, final and definite.”

“Well, you were asking for an opinion. Opinions are subjective.

“Well then, let me reword the question. Have you always liked your mother’s cooking better than mine? Yes or no.”

“Well, since you made me think about it, the answer is yes.” He said slightly frustrated.

“Then why did you compliment me on a lovely dinner?” she asked confused. “Were you lying?”

“I wasn’t lying. It was a lovely dinner. I came home from work hungry and tired and your dinner was wonderful. It may have tasted a bit off, but it hit the spot and satisfied me and the best part is you cooked it for me with all your heart. To me, it was lovely.”

“Oh,’ she said and remained silent.

“You know, honey. Truth may be truth, yes or no and final. But you have to interpret truth, figure out what it means.”

Another pregnant pause filled the room. She thought slightly about what he had said thinking it was mainly psychobabble. In her head, truth was still truth. How could it be anything else?

“Hmmmm,” she mused. “So, ah, what did you think of the desert?”



The Young Boy and the Sea

Noa pushed the small dugout fishing canoe to the water's edge and ran it into the light surf. The day was calm and it was early.

Noa had important fishing he was going to attempt this day. Usually when he would fish with his father and older brothers, they would catch and bring back fish to the village to eat. Noa would catch fish, examine them, play with them and end up releasing them not having the heart to throw them into the canoe for a future meal. He liked the fish, admired and respected them. He wanted to be a fish and swim the open sea, dart around and twirl in its currents as he did whenever he

could. His older siblings laughed at Noa's antics and his father would just shake his head knowing the older boys would catch enough for the day.

But today was different. His family had been sick for several days and no one had gone fishing or caught anything to eat. They were all hungry and getting more ill. Noa had somehow eluded the illness and tried to help his family as best he could. Finally he realized they needed food or nothing would get better. So he set out to catch a meal and actually bring it back for all to eat. His family was not optimistic he would succeed.

The sun was rising in the east, Hikina, and he paddled out toward it to a reef where the fishing was usually good. He lowered several lines with hand carved fishing hooks into the clear waters but could see no fish or attract any with his bait. The day passed quickly. He paddled out further and waited for the fish to come for hours, it seemed, until the sun reached its highest point and kept traveling its journey to the west, Komohana. Finally he got a nibble and yanked on the line and hooked a good size wahoo. He pulled it onto the canoe and held it gently and examined it and played with it like he usually does. Then he remembered he

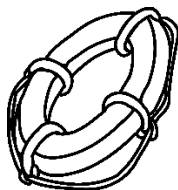
had to bring this fish home. But instead he looked at it and noticed a scar around its mouth and realized this must be a fish he had caught before and released. How could he bring this friend home to kill and eat? Instead he looked intently straight into his eye. Back and forth they stared, neither blinking but of course fish never blink, but a connection of understanding was formed. Noa pulled his friend close, whispered something and lightly kissed the fish before gently letting him go into the vast waters.

Noa continued to fish as the sun finished its arc across the sky without any more bites or nibbles on his fishing lines. He began to think his family's pessimism in his success was well founded but he never questioned letting his fish friend go free.

As the sun began to set he turned the canoe and started paddling home a bit sad he could not catch and bring a fish home even for his sick family when all at once a fish jumped into the canoe. He picked it up gently and looked at it realizing it was the same fish he had caught earlier in the day. Soon another fish jumped from the water and landed next to him. It also had a scar on its mouth. Three more landed in the

canoe, all scarred. And in a matter of minutes the canoe was full of floppy wet fish, strangely all with a hook scar on their mouths.

Noa threw most back as he and his family could never eat them all before they rotted and knowing where he could always get more. The sea was good to Noa that day as Noa has always been good to the sea.



Ghost

He was balancing on the tall ladder scraping old, dry and cracked paint from the eaves of his house and thinking he would shortly get the paint out to cover the bare wood.

“Brad!” came a voice from inside his head disturbing his worked out plan.

“What? Wait, what? Who is this?”

“You’ve got to sand and feather this out, you know” the voice continued.

“I don’t have time for that. A few quick coats and I’m done” he shot back.

“Ahhem, you know better. How often you get up

here on a ladder? Do the job right the first time and you won't be back in a year or so to patch things up." The voice persisted.

"Arrrrgh, why do you haunt me so. Every time I'm in a hurry, too." He thought back to himself realizing this voice was his long deceased father continuing to give him advice from beyond the grave.

"You know I'm right."

"Yeah, you always turn out to be right. How do you do that? And how do you keep popping up in my head at decisive moments like these? You a ghost or something? My own personal advice ghost assistant?"

"Something like that. You know, they say a man dies twice. Once when he physically dies and again when the last person that knew him passes on. That's when all memory of him and his influence dies."

"Wow, that's pretty profound. Who are these 'They' who said that?"

"I don't know," the voice replied. "I heard it in a movie. I think Al Pachino said it, but he's just an actor so some script writer wrote it and I don't know where he got it from. Hence it's just 'They'"

"Yeah, I think I saw that movie." He said bringing

the movie into focus in his mind. “Hey, wait a minute. They made that movie after you died. How do you know about that? You must be a real ghost that sits around watching movies on Netflix or something all the time.”

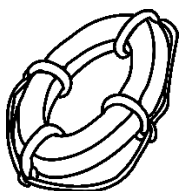
“Ghosts work in mysterious ways.” The voice replied ominously. “We have access to all sorts of information, and we have something way better than Netflix. Don’t even need a screen. Besides, you might be getting your memories a little mixed together.”

“So what are you saying? You are a ghost or just memories in my head of you and your ways and advice that you drilled into me at an early age that pop up in my head just the right time?” he asked sincerely.

“Yes.” He heard the voice say. “I am all that.”

“Well just great, Dad. I must admit while hanging off this ladder leaning against my house trying to get some painting done while having a conversation with my dead father is a bit spooky. And I really don’t have time for this. I’m just going to slap some paint on and go. I’ll fix it next year.” He said defiantly.

“That is spooky, son.” The dad ghost voice sighed. “Some things never change.”



About the Author

Bradley Davidson works, plays, sails, meanders the trails of the Zoo, paths of SeaWorld and the corridors of the Aquarium, wanders the National Seashore and beaches, explores the parks, and endures the malls, all accompanied by his 13 year old son and all in San Diego, California. The author doesn't get out much.

