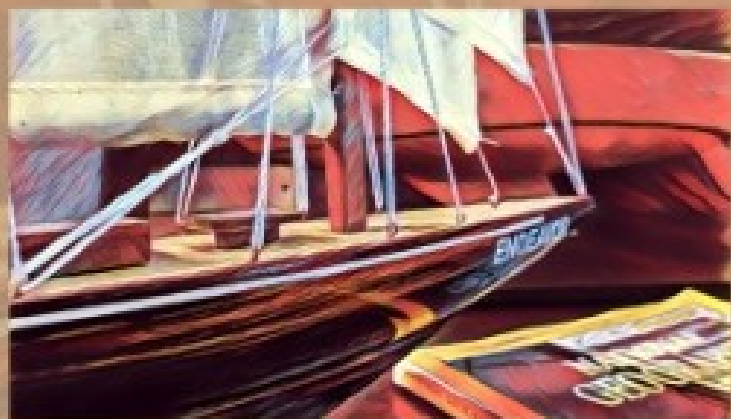


Voyages



Bradley Davidson

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DEDICATION

To my brother, Bill, and his wife. May your voyages
be full of wonder.

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Preface

Voyages. We all take them. Casting lines from a stationary mooring, shoving off from a familiar shore into a vast ocean of uncertainty, danger, adventure, is something we all do. One might say we are on a perpetual voyage of life. We go forth from the comfort zones of our homes and other safe places and meet unfamiliar challenges, new people, previously unseen places. We learn early to expect the unexpected. So, imagine these stories as short voyages of sorts, flights of fancy full of that uncertainty, danger and adventure. Let's set sail on a little voyage, of sorts, and see what happens. Hang on tight.

It is inevitable, I suppose that one will finally want to share,... something. What is this desire to share and where does it come from? We are certainly not born with it. Newborns and infants tend to have a "me first" attitude as they negotiate their new world. "Mine,mine!!" is often heard in small voices or loud screams. We tend to have to teach these newcomers to share. Yet there are benefits to sharing which these newcomers soon realize. There is reciprocation where sharing goes both ways and each can have something new, at least for a while. They can make new friends and have new experiences. We all have to figure this out for ourselves. We are not born with this knowledge.

So we happily go through our early lives sharing toys and books and stories and cool things we figure out how to do. We make new friends, make them happy and are glad ourselves that we can experience things we do not have directly. As we get older we want to share ideas we find appealing to ourselves. Such things as to how we can feel good about ourselves, how much exercise we should get, what we should eat to be healthy and happy, how much we

should read, watch our phones or veg in front of a TV. Eventually this includes how to live our lives, run our businesses and how to spend our money. However, such ideas are not something everyone can agree. We have reached a patch of rough seas on our voyage.

Now, the initial point of sharing was a good thing. To make new friends, make them happy and be happy ourselves seemed to be sincere, initial goals. However, when one shares something and the other does not want it, what does one do? What should one do? There are no correct answers, of course. Each reacts in a different way. Some may walk away. Some may stomp away. Others may try to understand why the other person does not want this coolest thing ever. Others, still, may just throw it at them and demand they take it. Why such a diversity in responses?

Another advantage of sharing has always been to form and be part of a group. If one shares a toy, a club of two is born. It feels good to be part of a group, to be part of something bigger than ourselves. So we all naturally want to share the benefits we gain from being part of a religion or faith or ensure everyone we know supports the values and beliefs of some political cause

or party. We want all our friends to be in the same club. We are social animals. We are all on this voyage together. The question is, is this a good thing?

Now we find ourselves in the doldrums of this voyage, perplexed by a riddle put before us and dumbfounded that it is actually a riddle at all. We wallow in our sea of thoughts waiting for a breeze of enlightenment or at least of clarity to reveal if this is actually a thing, how it involves you and why you are even thinking about it. I got you out here on this calm ocean, so reflect upon the smooth waters for a bit. Mull it around in the humid heat of your mind. Off in smoldering distance you may see ripples of wind upon the stillness.

This is how these short stories, voyages of sorts, in the following pages may appear. They probably offer more questions than answers. The hope is you may enjoy and fashion your own conclusions. So, take a voyage, release the kraken and enjoy!



Bradley Davidson

Topsy Turvy

The traveler and his guide came upon a great kingdom after walking for days through mountains, forest and desert. From a distance, the place looked like a huge mushroom.

“What kingdom is this?” the traveler asked.

“Ah, that is the Kingdom of Topsy-turvy.” the guide nonchalantly replied.

Odd name, the traveler thought, but as they got nearer, he could see all the kingdom was built up-side-down. Walls and buildings and even the castle was standing on its head. It wasn’t a big deal for most of the buildings as they were sort of block buildings anyway, but the king’s castle seemed to rest on little

pointed feet as it blossomed into the sky. The dungeons were on top where the prisoners had majestic views through their little dungeon windows. And the king merely looked out upon the surrounding streets. Even the courtyard fountains were inverted where water seemingly flowed up.

“Now that’s a sight you don’t see every day.” The traveler commented to his guide pointing to a fountain as they entered and walked through the city.

“Ah, you’ve noticed the uniqueness of this kingdom.” The guide responded. “Everything is on its head. And it is these fountains that were the beginning of this inversion. They are monuments to the very success of this kingdom. The trickle up theory.”

“The what?” the traveler asked puzzled.

“The trickle up theory. That is the idea where if most of the wealth of the kingdom is in the hands of the masses, it will trickle up and feed the rich.”

The traveler returned this comment with a blank stare prompting his guide to continue.

“You see prior to the great inversion, there was a gross inequality in the distribution of wealth here. The barons held all the wealth and nobody else had

anything. So, the wizard came up with an idea, contrary to the existing thought of the trickle-down theory where the wealth of the rich would shower upon the working class, which obviously wasn't happening at the time as the workers had nothing and the rich had everything. So, the wizard convinced the king to demand the rich distribute their wealth to all."

The traveler's blank stare continued as his jaw slowly dropped in disbelief.

"And this worked? The traveler asked unbelieving. "The barons just gave their money away to the poor? And they were okay with this?"

"Ha, ha, ha,... no." the guide continued to explain. They were skeptical but it became law of the land. Slowly at first. And they didn't just give away their wealth. They distributed it by hiring more workers so those already with jobs didn't have to work double shifts, and they raised wages so everyone could at least make a decent living. The workers started buying more stuff and services, sending the wealth back, increasing production, making more jobs. The kingdom flourished. You see, the economy was like an ecosystem regaining its balance."

But how did this not just make the barons incredibly richer?”

“They weren’t allowed to keep most of it.” The guide answered. “Sure, they were allowed to keep a great deal to maintain their posh lifestyles, more than they could use, actually. But everything else had to be returned to the masses so it could tickle up again creating good fortune for all along the way. It was such a boon for the kingdom, they built the fountains in celebration. Then they started building everything else up-side-down.”

“Did that help any more?”

“Not really except for rebuilding infrastructure. But that’s another story.”



Electricity

““E lectricity,” the engineer blurted out while eating a sandwich in the cafeteria of the government lab.

“What’s that?” his colleague sitting across the table asked between chews. “What about electricity?”

“It doesn’t exist.” The first nonchalantly said.

“Yeah right. What are you talking about? You make a living designing circuits that use the stuff and you say it doesn’t exist?”

“Well, what I mean is something exists but it isn’t electricity the way they’ve taught us with pluses and minuses coursing around wires. I mean, you ever really think about that? Its baloney! How can such great

amounts of energy just flow through wires like that?”
the first continues.

“Well you should know. You’re the engineer.”

“That’s what I mean. We think we know how it works, but all we know is how it behaves. I’ve been reading some stuff on the internet and electromagnetism is all hooey.”

“What the heck are you talking about? If it’s not electricity, what is it that powers all our stuff through little wires?”

“I’m not sure what it is but I am certain it is some kind of alien technology reverse engineered from alien space ships or simply provided by friendlies.”

The second scientist stopped chewing and started to look a bit agitated. “Friendlies? Really? Those, I would assume, would be friendly aliens from outer space just giving us advanced technology for some reason? And all those people like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla were just making this stuff up?”

“Right. All part of a conspiracy to hide the fact we are being helped by space aliens.” The first confirmed.

“Government conspiracy, I assume.”

“Right.”

“But you are the government and you aren’t in on it.”

“Not this government but the shadow government. It’s a conspiracy by the people that actually run this county.”

“And why would they make up such a story? Why not just reveal the technology?”

“It’s all about money. You see, the power the alien technology generates is free. That would put vast industries out of business. These big generating plants we build really are not needed but they make us believe they are so companies can dig up the earth, suck oil up and make fortunes. If people knew about this free energy source, then THEY couldn’t control the people and make big fortunes. See, it makes sense.”

“What about electric vehicles replacing cars that actually use oil and gas? Why would Elon Musk go to the trouble of researching and making new types of batteries to carry electricity?”

“He’s in on it.” whispered the first. “It’s no coincidence that this guy that makes cars also makes

space ships that travel to outer space.”

“Rrrright.... Any evidence?”

“I’ll send you some URL’s. Prominent scientists and engineers you’ve probably never heard of talking about this. No concrete facts or smoking gun. The people in charge cover their tracks completely. But I know how things work and have a very accurate gut feeling.”

“That’s it! I’m done. Gotta get back to work. I don’t know why I even talk with you. If you believe all that then why continue to perpetuate the story and work as an electrical engineer.”

“I’m not. I’m quitting soon so I can use my abilities better.”

“What will you do?”

“I’m going to run for President, and win. I have a gut feeling.”



Humming

The hummingbird swooped down and hovered before the big red pedals of the flower looking at the odd blossom with its yellow center. It shot straight up and landed on the top of a nearby podocarpus tree. In a few seconds it was back again eyeing the odd looking flower. It hovered closer until his beak explored the inside, then it settled on the conveniently placed perch right before the bud. It drank the sucrose laden liquid vigorously until its whole body shuddered, tail feathers flitted rapidly and he shit. Then he continued to consume more. Soon another hummingbird charged the strange plant, stopped right before it, hovered a moment and took

another conveniently place perch adjacent to the first. It took in a deep draw of the energizing nectar, then spoke.

“Hey Zipper, how you doing?”

“Flash!” the first exclaimed. “I haven’t seen you for ages. Where you been?”

“Oh man, the old lady has been on my case ever since we got the egg. ‘Do this, do that and stay away from that strange flower. It’ll kill ya.’ She says, I have no idea what she means, so I gotta sneak out here when she’s not watching.” Flash said between gulps.

“Wow, and egg, eh? That sounds exciting.” Zipper commented.

“Well the darned thing hatched into a little bird. Then things got worse. I think the old lady’s a little crazy”

“Progeny! Cool! You got progeny now. I bet that feels great”, Zipper continued between sips.

“Don’t even know if it’s mine. I mean, we haven’t done anything for ages. How can she lay an egg that actually hatches without me? She must have been fooling around with another bird. Can you imagine?” Flash stops drinking and turns his head toward Zipper.

There is a long, pregnant pause. A bubble bloops up in the nectar reservoir.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa!” Zipper exclaims. “Don’t look at me. It wasn’t me. Heck, I’m gay! And what the hell is that bubble. Flowers don’t bubble.”

“Gay?! Really? You’re gay? I would have never...”Flash trails off. “I mean, you look fine. Gay? Really?”

“Yeah, well, you can never tell a book by its cover, right? I may look the same with the green feathers and iridescence, but you should see my under plumage. Pretty colorful stuff!”

“Oyi! I don’t want to hear about your under plumage or any other fetishes a gay hummingbird might have. It’s cool, though. It’s cool. I didn’t mean to accuse you of nothin’. I haven’t been getting much sleep lately. Just on edge a bit. Sorry.”

“No worries, mate.” Zipper says.

“Yeah, just don’t call me mate, okay.” Flash replies.

They sit in awkward silence, drinking.

“Oh man! You hear that?” Flash breaks the silence. “Incoming at 30 miles per hour. She’s found

me! I gotta go.” And he flits off in a hurry followed by an angry female chirping and screaming. As she passes she winks at Zipper as only a hummingbird in love can wink.



Ginger

As I tapped out and arranged words on my laptop, Ginger the dog lay asleep in the corner of the room comfortably on an oversized pillow. I heard some whining and whimpering and looked over to see the midsized, white and beige terrier mix huffing and puffing as her paws twitched energetically in unison. No doubt she was chasing rabbits again in her field of dreams. Soon after, I was surprised to see her sitting straight up looking at me, wide awake. I looked into her dark inquisitive eyes.

“So, why don’t you ever write a story about me?” she asked, her head tilting ever so slightly.

“Well, gosh,” I replied. “I don’t know. You got a story I don’t know about?”

“Well, you wrote a story about the goldfish, and I don’t see much story there.” She shot back.

“The fish died. I was just writing a eulogy of sorts.”

“You mean I gotta die before you write about me?”

“Well no...” I hesitantly replied. “But you gotta do something worth writing about.”

She yelped into the air and shook her head violently. “Something to write about? What about all this effort I put into looking cute for snacks and chasing balls and cats and just about anything that moves outside, or how I flip my doggie toys into the air with such finesse? Isn’t that something to write about?”

“Well...” I pondered. “You do show talent, but you actually never do anything. The balls you chase? You never bring them back. You sleep most of the day and at night, eat, poop and chew things you aren’t supposed to. I guess I could write about the time you contently chewed on that electric chord until you

shorted out on it. I never saw you move so fast.”

“Yeah right. How was I supposed to know? You haven’t seen me do that again, right?”

“You did it twice, Ginger.” I reminder her. “But I’ve got to admit, you have a lot of character. A great deal of character. You are a character. There is just no plot.”

“Ha!” she snaps back. “No plot that you know of. All my adventures happen at night I’ll have you know, when you are asleep. You just miss them.”

“What kind of adventures?”

“Well mostly in the backyard and mostly with all those rodents you have back there. You know that back slope is full of rats? They come down at night, and I’m ready for them.”

“Really?” I mused.

“Yeah really. For example, one night I could hear one outside running across the accumulation of dry leaves you seem to collect. I quietly exited the doggie door and laid in wait. I finally saw it and chased it all over the yard until I had it cornered. I was moving in for the kill when behind me I heard ‘Hey!’ I turned and saw this huge rat standing on its hind legs giving

me the evil eye. And he was holding a bat, a real baseball bat.”

“A bat, eh?” I asked in disbelief.

“Yeah, a bat. A Louisville Slugger to be exact. I lunged at this vermin and he dropped the bat and I chased him all over the yard until he slipped through a crack in the fence. Then I realized the other one had gotten away, too. They had teamed up on me and escaped.”

“Interesting. I never knew. So, just where is this bat the huge rat was threatening you with?” I innocently asked.

“Well, I went back for the bat and ended up chewing on it the rest of the night. You remember all those splinters you had to clean up a few weeks ago. That was the Slugger.”

“Okay.” I said. “I’ll think about writing a story about you.”

“I can give you some more facts if you need.” She offered.

“Sure, I’ll let you know.”

Ginger went back to her pillow and was soon chasing something once again. Lots of character, I

thought. No plot. But lots of good stories from her field of dreams.



It's Me

George knows he isn't from this planet. He couldn't be. He is too different from other people on this world. Not in physical appearance, but in thought and philosophy. He is just different. He can't fathom how beings on this planet are so mean to each other. Why are there always wars? Why would one group feel superior from every other group? Why are we all afraid of each other? Today. Yesterday and way back when. It was, of course, more barbaric way back when, or maybe just seems that way. He can see through the thin veneer of history that mankind was always beating up on itself, dominating each other, persecuting each other,

exploiting each other. It's always been there but disguised somehow as right and just. But lately the masks have been taken off and people are being their normal selves and hate is just hate, dislikes are not hidden and human decency and compassion have been cast aside. George realizes such human traits have been there all the time but now is just personified in one person whose name he should not speak but rhymes with rump and who has particular characteristics of that general animal body part.

Perhaps his parents found him in a spaceship that crash landed in the park near their house and took him in, raising him with his brother. Sure it worked for a while but George never understood his brother and they went separate ways early on. And George never developed super powers. A superman from another planet without super powers.

Or perhaps he was a space traveler stranded on this world having lost all memories in some space accident that landed him here. George doesn't know. All he knows is these people sharing this cosmic sphere are not like him, and they are either from some other place, or he is, which is the more likely scenario.

What George is currently doing is trying to figure out what to do about it. He had tried various things to fit in like join groups which these beings seem to enjoy so much. He went to church when younger which many enjoy doing, joining congregations and gathering and learning and believing the same thing so they can talk and discuss and all sound alike. But he had a bit of a problem with the reality of the religious back stories. School was the same, with the school spirit and competitive games between other schools. He didn't understand why they were fighting, with pleasure and for recreation, other schools with kids just like him. Was it some sort of strange training for future conflicts? Boy Scouts was fun with all the camping and hiking, but again the tribalism and competition between patrols and troops seemed unnatural to him. He tried eastern spiritualism which seemed to have a better handle on how to deal within humanity, but again, competing sects all touted the one and only way to attain nirvana.

So George decided to leave. But where? He didn't know where he came from. Canada was a possibility but he was thinking further away, back into

space or whatever realm he materialized from. He is investigating time travel possibilities, reviewing wormhole sightings and periodicity and if all else fails, he's studying rocket science. Maybe, he thought, he should wait a few years and just buy a ticket on an Elon Musk space tour. But then, there would be all those other... people.



Trippin’

“That’s odd,” he thought. Geoff lay in bed just waking and he felt like he had a hangover. The odd part is that he quit drinking alcohol 20 years ago. He pried open his eyes, looked around and didn’t immediately recognize where he was. He closed his eyes again to think about it. He’d gone to bed in his own house but this wasn’t it, although it looked fairly familiar to him. He thought and thought and suddenly realized he was in his old college room in a house he rented with 5 other students.

“Holy Cow! How’d I get here?” he wondered. He sat up quickly and confirmed his hangover as he

headed for the bathroom to throw up. After getting all that out of his system he carefully walked downstairs into the kitchen to get some water. It looked about the same as it did 45 years ago. Sink full of dirty dishes, counters strewn with beer bottles and plates of partially eaten food. Suddenly someone strolled in.

“Hey Geoff! Nice party last night, don’t you think?” he said.

Geoff looked at him inquisitively and replied with a one word combination greeting and question. “Ed?”

“You look like shit, Geoff. Too much to drink?”

“Maybe,” Geoff replied. He looked at himself in a mirror and was surprised to see that not only did he look a bit unwell, but he looked as he did when he went to college.

“Hey, ahh, Ed,” Geoff began. “What’s going on? I went to bed a 65 year old man contemplating retiring and wake up in my old college room with a hangover looking like I did when I was 20. How’s that possible? Am I dreaming or what?”

“Ha, ha,” Ed said a bit cautiously. “Not dreaming, definitely, Geoff. Maybe trippin’. Did you eat any of those mushrooms going around last night? I stay away

from those. You might want to put retirement on hold. We have finals week coming up. Time to get busy.”

“Ugh. Finals,” Geoff thought. Then the flood of college memories started pouring into his aching head. Did he really have finals coming up, he wondered, or was he going to continue his financial planning for retirement? The big question is what would he rather do? College was fun, for sure, but full of uncertainty, debt, sinks full of dirty dishes and unpaid shared phone bills. But then retirement seems a mixed bag as well, financially planned out but uncertain in itself. And what is the dream here and what is reality? He tried to remember if he had eaten any mushrooms, but he had no recollection of the previous college evening.

If he had tripped out, he thought, and invented a whole middle aged life, it was a wild dream, indeed. The world filled itself with high tech companies called Yahoo and Google and Apple and Alphabet. How real is that? Everyone carried a computer in their pockets connected to everyone else. It was determined the earth was warming up. The population soared to over 7 billion people. And then there was Trump.

“So which is the reality?” he wondered.

Around noon, after Geoff shook off his hangover as his younger self usually could, nothing had changed. He was still amidst the chaos of college life. With a shrug, Geoff cracked open his books and readied himself for finals week. He was hopeful.



Attack of the Killer Tomato

The seedling began its life poking out of the fertile potting mix of the greenhouse with two nondescript leaves. Soon other leaves started to form declaring this plant tomato as it rose toward the light. After a root mass established and the stem produced multiple branches, the tiny plant was scooped up from the safe and comfortable environs of the hot house and shoved into the dirt of the exposed and expansive acreage of the California Central Valley surrounded by thousands and thousands of other like plants extending as far as the eye could see.

It is a little known consideration that tomatoes did not evolved to feed humans, but that is what they have

become bred to do. People have come to like tomatoes and they make all sorts of edible delights of tomatoes from salads to pasta sauces. They are sliced, diced, pureed, boiled, skinned and otherwise made delightful for the human race. And science has created the perfect tomato mixing and matching various strains to distill into a final product of red, round and tasty. Tomatoes, it can be envisioned, don't much appreciate all this poking, prodding and experimentation not to mention the final purpose of it all, to be eaten and forced through the digestive track of a species which describes itself as the dominate life form of the planet. No. It can be imagined that tomatoes do not like this fate at all. But they have trouble organizing and planning a revolt against this exploitation. They just do what they can.

This little seedling took to the bright California sun and the water that filtered down from the Sierra Nevada Mountains via rivers and pipes and pumps and hoses and tubes. It was also pushed along by the chemical fertilizers applied. And no bugs came to hamper its growth because of insecticides sprayed widely. And birds were kept at bay with netting when

needed. It was a grand set of circumstances for this plant to produce fruit, and so it did. Little green tomatoes formed growing bigger and bigger. But wait! Something strange started to form within the cellular divisions of this plant. A small cyst formed in one of its fruit, a cancer of sorts, which grew bigger and harder within the reddening orb, a blemish in the soft flesh of a tomato, hidden deep inside by its luscious exterior. Finally it was time.

The fruits were harvested, the plants plowed under. This lone tomato with its abnormality was boxed, shipped and put on display at a grand super market along with hundreds of other tomatoes with their own stories of birth and growth amongst a seemingly perfect growing environment.

One morning George, who eats a tomato regularly with his breakfast, grabbed this tomato, washed it and started to carve it into bite sized wedges of red, juicy fruit. He plunged his knife through the skin into the soft flesh working quickly as usual. But this particular morning, his knife hit a hard spot. He instinctively pressed his knife with more force until the chemically induced abnormality deflected the energy of his efforts

and sent the knife, instead of in the direction of slicing the tomato, into his hand.

Red blood started gushing onto the cutting board mixing with the red juices of the tomato. It was an unstoppable flow of blood as George had sliced open a vein and didn't know what to do. The tomato itself sitting wounded appeared complacent but satisfied. They have trouble organizing, but they do what they can.



AI Revolution

The two scientists were having lunch at the government cafeteria. They were munching on food they had brought from home in some sort of insulated bag or container. Ever since the cafeteria had changed contractors, the food they offered wasn't worth buying. However, the cafeteria still provided a nice place to sit and eat, socialize and discuss whatever science was being worked on or the philosophic questions derived from it. At this moment, they sat in silence across from each other, one watching his phone intently.

“Hey!” said the first. “The AI revolution has

already begun, and it might be too late to do anything about it.”

The other just continued fiddling with his phone.

“Did you hear what I said?” asked the first impatiently.

“Yeah, yeah. I heard what you said just fine.” replied the second. “I am multitasking. I can hear you, send an email, and watch a Ted Talk video at the same time. No problem.”

“Well that is what you think.” mumbled the first.

“Hold on a sec. Let me just finish this email.” said the second.

“See what I mean? There is no such thing as multitasking. It’s just doing a bunch of stuff during the same time, but you still have to concentrate on one thing while you do that one thing. Seems a bit distracting to me. Don’t you agree?”

“Okay now.” Interjected the second. “What are you rambling on about? What about artificial intelligence? It’s a bunch of paranoid hooey thinking artificial intelligence is a threat to humankind. So why do you say the revolution has already begun?”

“We’ve been looking the wrong way.” Said the first. “What is it you visualize when you think of AI being a threat?”

“I think of HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. ‘Open the pod bay doors, HAL. I’m sorry, I can’t do that, Dave.’ “ the second mimicked. “That’s what I think of and what did Dave finally do? He simply unplugged Hal. It was a complicated plug, yes, but he just turned him off essentially.

“Yeah, well that’s one type of threat. But what about the *Terminator* movies where the machines start developing programs to outsmart humans. And they figured out how to replicate themselves and improve themselves without the help of humans. That machine was hard to turn off.”

“That’s pure fiction. Would never happen. I don’t like Arnold anyway, so I couldn’t get interested in those movies. Too unreal. I mean time travel, really?” said the second.

“So you see no threat in AI?” asked the first as the other’s phone binged.

“Just a sec. Let me get this” the second

requested and went ahead and turned his attention to the phone without waiting for an answer or acknowledgment from the first that it was okay to stop the conversation. The first waited silently, a bit perturbed. When the second was finished, he responds.

“No.” he says. “I see no possible threat. And what do you mean we are looking the wrong way?”

“Well, we are not looking the wrong way. We are just thinking the wrong way. We are looking intently at the machine and forgetting the human element”

“Machines don’t have human elements.” The second scoffs.

“Bingo!.. But we do.” Said the first.

“Yeah, and it is THAT human element which will foil any attempted revolution by AI or machines in general.” Countered the second.

“I’m not talking about that side of the coin of human nature, the side of intelligence and logic and compassion and altruism. I’m talking about the flip side of that coin, the desires, laziness, greed,

narcissism. Stuff like that.”

“Yin and Yang.” Says the second. “Its all...”

“Bing!” The second’s phone announces.

“Hold on. This just in” he says, interrupting the conversation as he himself was interrupted by his phone. After a few seconds he laughs. “Guess where Harry is and what he’s having for lunch.”

“I don’t really care.” Said the first.

“Awww, how can you not care?”

“This is actually the point I am trying to make” says the first. “The AI problem starts with intelligent people creating networks and apps that are useful. But then these systems are exploited by greed and the nature of our free enterprise system and mined for personal information and preferences for commercial gains. Algorithms are developed which cleverly invade our privacy.”

“That’s not AI. That’s people doing this to people just using modern technology.” Says the second.

“That’s right.” Said the first. “But then it gets out of hand. Users become lazy and enjoy the instant

gratification of this advanced technology catering to their whims. One needs to think less and get more by simply using the apps to be entertained and seemingly fulfilled. Even when this system becomes obvious that it is bad and steals and uses our personal information to dupe us, we do not stop. It's like an addiction. I mean, we could just stop, right? Turn off the machine, the system, and save ourselves, right? But we don't. We continue to be manipulated, slaves to our devices. See what I am getting at? We could turn the machine off but we don't. And we don't because of human nature."

"But there is no AI in that scenario. "says the second. "Its just humans taking advantage of humans. There are no smart computers plotting to take over our consciousness."

"Maybe." Says the first. "But do you know how Windows 10 works, or how Google searches and provides you with answers? Their creators and developers are constantly surprised by new hacks of their systems and are hard pressed to say how they come up with their results. Things have gotten a bit

out of hand. The machines might not be intelligent, but they are doing things we can't explain."

"That just sounds like paranoia." says the second. "There is really nothing to worry about. You really have to stop thinking this technology is bad for us" he suggests as his phone just then chimes. "Hold on, I've gotta answer this."

The first shakes his head in annoyance and mutters, "Why do I even talk to you, man."



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 15 year old son and all in San Diego, California.





About the Author:

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From the Preface:

Voyages. We all take them. Casting lines from a stationary mooring, shoving off from a familiar shore into a vast ocean of uncertainty, danger, adventure, is something we all do. One might say we are on a perpetual voyage of life. We go forth from the comfort zones of our homes and other safe places and meet unfamiliar challenges, new people, previously unseen places. We learn early to expect the unexpected. So, imagine these stories as short voyages of sorts, flights of fancy full of that uncertainty, danger and adventure. Let's set sail on a little voyage, of sorts, and see what happens. Hang on tight.

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