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Building a Relationship:

How Technology Affects a Relationship in “The Perfect Match” by Ken Liu

In society, technology is integrated into a lot of aspects in our lives, especially the relationships we have with others and our ability to create them. Advances such as email, instant messaging, and social media were made for communication to be more convenient, but this advancement has consequences. The use of technology has dehumanized our ability to be genuine to another individual and is excessively used to the point of no return. Humans are always in need of technology to do their bidding as if it is impossible to do without. We are humans of convenience and pleasure. We enjoy taking the easy path toward our goals, but it has led us to become the viewers of a story, a story in which we are not living, but a story inside a screen. In reading Ken Liu’s “The Perfect Match,” we learn that the excessive use of technology in communication is regressive in building a stable relationship with another person.

This regressive behavior is manifested when Tilly, an artificial intelligence, takes charge of Sai’s love life: “In that moment, Tilly’s voice burst into his earpiece, ‘You might want to ask her if she likes contemporary Japanese desserts. I know just the place’” (26). This little suggestion, despite its helpfulness, is harmful to Sai genuinely building a relationship with Ellen. Not only is it degrading for a human to rely solely on technology, and in this case artificial intelligence, but it also hides the genuine, authentic self from the individual wanting to build a relationship. Trust is the very foundation of making that connection, and Tilly interfering is not

helping. Unlike the spontaneity and awkwardness, a first date is known to be, Sai's date with Ellen was predictable because of Tilly:

Although everything had gone exceedingly well, if he was being completely honest with himself, it wasn't *quiteas* [sic] exciting and lovely as he had expected. Everything was indeed going smoothly, but maybe just a tad *toosmoothly* [sic]. It was as if they had already knew everything there was to know about each other. There were no surprises, no thrill of finding the truly new. In other words, the date was a bit boring. (25)

This quote illustrates how the excessive use of technology, and in this case artificial intelligence, can affect a relationship. Sai's date with Ellen felt unnatural and insincere. Liu wanted to show how little intimacy and connection was expressed during their date. There was constant interference from Tilly in which it took away Sai and Ellen's experience of what a date should have been. A first date is an experience where it is all about getting to know the other individual, but the answers about Ellen's life were handed over to Sai.

There is a correlation between the interference from Tilly and that of the technology today: email, instant messaging, and social media. Liu worries about how excessively using them takes away our ability to fully experience the present moment like how it happened with Sai and Ellen. Many people often enjoy texting and scrolling through events happening to others on social media. We are dependent on that communication to know what is going on in our world and the people we recognize, but it also serves as a distraction to living in the moment. It is a distraction from interacting face to face and getting to truly know someone. This is all time wasted communicating online than offline. That sense of trust and feelings of connecting with another individual were therefore dampened. In short, Liu is making a statement of how the excessive use of technology in communication is detrimental to building a relationship. It is far

more important to be genuine and authentic when wanting to build that bond. We should truly live our story rather than seeing it through the screen.

Work Cited

Liu, Ken. "The Perfect Match." *Lightspeed Magazine*, no.31, Dec. 2012, pp. 23-38.