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<div align="center">Tech Talk</div>

In the story "The Perfect Match" by Ken Liu, Tilly, an automated assistant is capable of answering questions, it can remind users of their agenda for the day, but also it can predict what it's users will like, this can relate to our world today. We see this in ads and recommendations all over the internet and social media. This kind of technology poses a problem because we have become so dependent on it: we allow technology to curve our opinions about how we should relate to one another and our ways of thinking about being human, and this in turn can change our entire way of life.

In the story Tilly is changing Sai's opinion and what he wants to do. As he is getting ready for work in the morning, he talks to Tilly about his morning schedule and routine, asking whether he has time to make coffee before leaving for work, and their conversation about that is revealing about how much of an effect the technology has on his basic daily decisions.

"'Do I have time to make coffee this morning?"

"You do. Traffic is light this morning. But I suggest you go to this new smoothie place along the way instead- I have a coupon..."

"But I really want coffee"

"Trust me, you'll love the smoothie." (24)

When technology has an imprint on our lives it can curve our opinions, in this case Sai wanted coffee then Tilly suggested a smoothie and even softly pressures him to get it. Tilly curved Sai's

opinion because Sai gave Tilly his trust—trust to make decisions for him. One example of how technology in our world can curve someone's opinion is when we talk about beauty, people believe they need to look a certain way or eat certain foods to look beautiful because they trust that what they see and hear is the definition of beauty or good looks. They take on the opinion they're shown instead of asking themselves what they really like and prefer.

Life is about making decisions and making mistakes—they are the way we learn, improve, invent, and create. One of those decisions we might make is in developing relationships, and along the way, we sometimes make mistakes—silly or otherwise. In this story Sai has allowed the automated assistant Tilly to determine his decisions, curve his opinions and, more significantly, to choose a date for him based on interests and "compatibility." Tilly has arranged a date between Sai and Ellen, and while on the date, the narrator tells us that "As predicted, it turned out they were into the same books, the same movies, the same music. They had compatible ideas about how hard one should work. They laughed at each other's jokes. They fed off each other's energy. Sai marveled at Tilly's accomplishment... It was just like hitting the 'I Trust You' button" (25). Later in this date Sai shut off Tilly because he was so flustered by the fact that Tilly was constantly telling him what to say and do and didn't even allow for silent pauses in Sai and Ellen's conversation: "The way Tilly filled in that lull . . . it was as if Tilly didn't trust that he would be able to manage the date on his own, as if Tilly thought he wouldn't know what to say or do if she didn't jump in" (26). Sai realized that he wasn't making his own decisions and really living his life but just following instructions the computer was giving him.

On the other hand, Ellen is an example of a society that is all in with the technology and when Sai asks her to turn Tilly off as well, Ellen's reaction is one that tells a lot about what Liu is saying about relationships and technology in this story:

"Tilly," he said, "please stop monitoring and terminate auto-suggestions."

"Are you sure? Gaps in sharing can cause your profile to be incomplete—"

"Yes, please cease."

With a beep, Tilly turned herself off.

Ellen stared at him, eyes and mouth wide open in shock.

"Why did you do that?"

"I wanted to talk to you alone, just the two of us." Sai smiled. "It's nice sometimes to just be ourselves, without Tilly, don't you think?"

Ellen looked confused. "But you know that the more Tilly knows, the more helpful she can be. Don't you want to be sure we don't make silly mistakes on a first date? We're both busy, and Tilly—" (26)

Here, Ellen has bought into the idea that making mistakes—even small mistakes that can later be looked back and laughed about together—is a bad thing. Also, when she says "We're both too busy and Tilly—" it's clear that the remainder of that thought has something to do with Tilly saving them time as if the time of getting to know one another is not a valuable thing, instead it's a waste of how we would want to spend our lives.   In reaction, Sai tries one more time to convince Ellen to turn off Tilly for a while and

Ellen held up a hand, silencing him. She tilted her head, listening to her headset.

"I have the perfect idea," Ellen said. "There's this new club, and I know Tilly can get us a coupon."

Sai shook his head, annoyed. "Let's try to think of something to do without Tilly. Would you please turn her off?"

Ellen's face was unreadable for a moment.

"I think I should head home," she said. "Early workday tomorrow." She looked away.

"Did Tilly tell you to say that?"

She said nothing and avoided looking into his eyes. (26)

In this last moment, she doesn't want to look him in the eye and admit she has taken Tilly's advice instead of doing the thinking for herself, and it's clear that Ellen simply can't stand the thought of not having the technology to guide her and is afraid of relating to a person on her own and afraid to make mistakes.

Mistakes are both how we learn, and learning to relate to others is an important step. It is part of building our humanity by both experiencing our own and learning to recognize others' feelings and develop empathy for our moments of humanity. In both of these instances, it's valuable to have some guidance and advice, but if we are not daring enough to take a chance and try things ourselves, and if we're not willing to make a mistake and learn from it, we keep ourselves dependent on others, whether they are people or technology. When the whole of society has accepted that support as basic and even encourages it over human interaction, then it is hard for us to learn to make our own decisions and learn to be daring.

"The Perfect Match" connects to our lives in a lot of ways. Sai finds he has become so dependent on Tilly and allowed it to curve his opinions about some of the most basic and human things such as what he should eat and who he should fall in love with. These are all the things that are given to us in this life, and the society he lives in has handed over those moments and decisions to technology. Making decisions and mistakes are key to who we are as individuals and our personality. Giving those up to a predictive algorithm will make us more similar, but that is not what makes us the species we are. Predictiveness is not creative, is not innovative, is not

daring. It is not something that watches birds and says, "I want to fly," then builds a contraption to make that so. It is not a thing that supports the differences and diversity in humanity which is at the very core of our ability to progress and create new things, making ourselves and the world better. We should not get rid of technology—it has benefits and has made our world safer and us stronger and helped us build on our progress. However, if the technology compromises the things that make us human and help us survive and keeps us from developing our personal relationships, then we should restrain it and not lose sight of how very unique, strong, and powerful we are often because of the very human decisions and mistakes make.

Work Cited

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