



Bit Flip: A Novel

Mike Trigg

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Bit Flip is an engrossing novel that satirizes the pretensions of tech bros and billionaires.

In Mike Trigg's corporate novel *Bit Flip*, the seedy underbelly of San Francisco's technology community is exposed.

Sam, the CFO of a technology firm, struggles with debt after renovations to his house run over budget. He's also stressed out from having to clean up behind his irresponsible CEO, and incredulous at the gaudy and wasteful displays of wealth that are central to the Silicon Valley lifestyle.

While speaking at a technology conference, Sam has a moment of clarity. He launches into a rant about the futility of the corporate rat race, saying that, although tech firms like to talk about "doing good," the truth is that "Greed and envy and pride and all the other deadly sins are the core flywheel of who we are." The rant goes viral, and Sam is fired. He spirals as self-doubt and fear take hold. In time with seeking a new job, he deals with turbulence at home. In revisiting people and places from his past, Sam also discovers disturbing details about his former employer.

The book ably satirizes the cultivated eccentricities of Sam's world, in which "ostentatious displays of knowledge on obscure topics" abound, and people bluster "on every possible area of expertise, from Italian bicycle parts to Cambodian green teas." Sam works his way through San Francisco, lucidly observing its drastic extremes of wealth and poverty brought on by gentrification; an old friend who has acquired extreme wealth becomes obsessed with his security, for example, believing that his fortunes have made him a target.

Among the book's characters, those in the technological industry are often positioned as merely self-obsessed and entitled; in contrast, Sam's distress over the world he lives in, and the details of his midlife crisis, are caught in convincing terms. He is unsure of his place in the world, and interrogates his own motives and relationships at length. His decisions to question the exorbitant mortgage on his shabby house, the constant stresses that he faces, and the damage being done to his children as they are raised in such an environment are sympathetic. They are also convincingly juxtaposed to observations of small-town Ohio, which Sam revisits to observe the dying community he fled from, where people are poor, drunk, and resentful, and where small businesses struggle to survive.

As much a compelling narrative as it is a critical analysis of contemporary capitalism, this story worries over the coming future, in which technology could take over much of what people used to do. This helps to make *Bit Flip* an engrossing novel that satirizes the pretensions of tech bros and billionaires.

MATT BENZING (March 29, 2022)

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