Do you remember what the future was supposed to be like when we lived in the 90s?

Back then, we wrote letters to each other on paper, churned our own butter, and used our phones for talking. We dreamed about a future where cars would drive us to our destinations, computers would understand what we said to them, and for those moments where voice wasn’t enough, we would use touch screens to express ourselves.

Today, look to me as a prophet, not foretelling the end of the world, just the escalation of never-ending frustration.

If you’re excited about self-driving cars, I want you to see how sensors, the things that will read traffic signs and lights, inevitably fail us: airport bathrooms. Saying this as tactfully as I can, when making use of the facilities, these auto flushers mistake a movement to adjust position as a signal of completion. The soap dispenser thinks that its doing a great job shooting soap well after my hands have moved on, and I would expect “hand dryers”, as their name implies, to finish when my hands are dry!

For those that hoped for a Star Trek future, where I can ask for a cup of tea, Earl Grey, and have it served, I’d like to point out how customer service works over the phone. I mean, Star Trek never had to deal with trying to understand \*mumble-mumble\*. But I expect my words, clearly enunciated, to be interpreted with much more success. But when I ask for “Account Management”, what I get back is “Did you mean ‘Taco and a Milkshake’?” And may the Elders of the Internet help you if the Voice Recognition system has to distinguish between a T, a D and a 3 in your account number.

And then, we come to touch screens, to which I reply “self-checkout lanes”. I have yet to be able to get through them without calling over a manager. First of all, these machines are slow; I’ve pressed the screen to start scanning, it takes forever to register so I try to touch it again, and that’s when my previous selection registers, and now I’ve purchased a trampoline (and not a good one). And now, I have to not only checkout, but I have to plan about double bagging my cans of soup, because if I lift anything off of the scale, I must be the world’s worst thief.

Now, knowing all this, seeing what our future looks like if we continue down this path, I want to encourage you to soak up the present state of things, because it’s all going downhill from here. As for me, I’ll be jumping on my horrible trampoline, with my bowl of soup, a taco and a milkshake.