

MIND THE GAP

What AI sounds like. What AI actually is.

And why the difference matters.

Paul Roebuck

DEDICATIONS

To Gem

This book contains twenty-seven thousand words on how to get rid of the em dash. You'll find the em dash is embedded within the dialect and vocabulary of AI — a little like asking a Frenchman not to say *bonjour*. You can take it out, but I don't think you'll ever eliminate it. It's part of the native dialogue. But good luck with it. And you have been an inspiration for some of the detail I've covered.

To Kieren

My wife. My carrier of patience through hours of me thinking out loud about this since AI launched — and more especially in recent weeks. You're already fully immersed: from paying for ChatGPT, to adding Copilot, to adding Microsoft 365, to becoming a full enterprise user of Claude, building desktop workspaces for sales executives in a four-thousand-employee software company that's going AI first. You are the real-world proof of everything this book is trying to say. This is not a book for you to read and absorb right now. It's a foundation. A reference document. Something you can return to at any time. It will exist as an HTML artefact — yours to absorb, use, and manipulate to your heart's content. I love you, darling.

To Mum

There is content in these pages that surfaces some of my backstory — my upbringing, my childhood, some of the darker days. It's pre-editorial. It points sharply at things we've lived through together. Everybody who sits opposite me says they had a wonderful childhood. I absolutely know that I did too. And I know you have given me sixty-three years of care — not just through the dark days, through the bereavements, but through all of it. Mum, I love you. I trust you. I respect you. I value you. I listen to you. And I hope you can read these pages and listen to me. I am very content. Very fulfilled. Thank you, Mum.

To Kristian

The eternal sceptic. The wisest. Kristian already knows all of this — he just never had a bullet to write it down. He'll deconstruct this book into a single sentence: just understand there's a gap, and work through it, around it, and with it. I don't know where or when or if this material will ever find its moment for him. But I have a feeling that somewhere in his later life, as his career and life evolves, he'll make use of it. One day. One way or another.

To Daniel

Daniel, what were you thinking? I take enormous pride in imagining the moment some unsuspecting customer he's working with says: you need to read your dad's book. The irony is perfect: Daniel works for Morgan Motor Company. They make cars from wood. I've written a book about AI. You couldn't imagine more extreme ends of the human spectrum. But who knows — one day it might land. He is so special. I love him so much. I just wanted him to know I wrote the book.

To [name held] — and Nick

[name held] has immersed herself entirely in the EI side of life. She cares passionately about the evolution and development of the children in her nursery — giving young people the moral and behavioural grounding that can set them up for long, happy, fulfilling, and sustaining lives. She is the living practice of what this book is trying to understand. Nick, her beloved husband, is beside her in that work. Neither of them is likely to be the primary reader of this book. But what they are doing — building childhood in the community they live in — is the important bit. They are doing the underground work.

To James Wakefield

My biological father. You passed away completely by surprise, completely out of the blue. It must have brought terrific heartache. The family had its difficulties, and you had yours. Little Paul lived through that and picked up some scars. Those scars have shaped me. James Wakefield is, in effect, the founding father — literally — of some of the earliest breadcrumbs in this book. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, if you're sitting on that cloud and looking down at me now, and at your family — this is for you too.

To Dad — Ian Roebuck

You were diagnosed, and you passed away, during the very time I was studying grief while training to be a therapist. I was learning Kübler-Ross and death and loss in the classroom at the same time as I was living it with you. It was a blessing to my training — because it meant I maximised every possible last moment. I could write a whole book about you. But you don't need that. You just need the words from your gravestone:

Proud and devoted dad.

That's what you were. That's what's in me. The song I played at your funeral says the rest: You're the best thing that ever happened to me. You're resident then. You're prominent now. Without the grounding, the support, the love, the care, the nourishment and the comfort you gave me through my entire life — I wouldn't be sitting here writing this book on this phone.

To my grandchildren

— to follow

And to all those who said they'd buy my book.

Here it is.

Mind the Gap.

“When people start writing they think they’ve got to write something definitive...

I think that is fatal.

The mood to write in is: This is quite an interesting story I’ve got to tell.

I hope someone will be interested.

Anyway it’s the best I can do for the present.”

John Bowlby

I never got around to finishing the other book.

But I have done this one.

And it definitely is the best I can produce on the field of whatever it is this book is about.

That gap.

Paul Roebuck, Warwickshire, May 2026