

SCIENCE FICTION

# 2032

Bhavika Sachan



## Entry 17; 13:55

**T**HEIR voices don't reach me. Even if I could hear them, I would not know who spoke and what.

They always come here when the Sun is directly overhead. When they come, I stop being myself and try to imitate them. But my new self does not seem to know who I am. Each day, when I open my eyes as if I am about to die again, I always find myself in a strange world. A world where they have divided us into colour-coded groups. Their distended eyes look bloodshot, and they hastily start chewing the Toffees wrapped in pink. Then as if they forget what they have been doing at all, they go back, in the same ceremonious march in which they came. Left, right, left...the golden

sickle emblem shining brightly against the glare of the Sun.

I think they were the Reapers. They come to harvest and to discard.

I try to follow them, imitating their footsteps to avoid arousing any suspicion. I don't want to disappear yet. I don't know what they do. But they intimidate me. When I first saw them here, on this side of the city, I knew instinctively that I was different, and maybe...a threat. I kept my distance. But today, I feel a little courage surging in me and so, I follow.

They enter the city which is covered with an eerie dome-shaped, glass-like something. The city is inside just like how the dolls are in a snow globe. Are they trapped? I peer in and try to see. Inside, people walk methodically. They don't look at one another. They don't look at anything. The ones

in purple jackets look smart and walk the centre streets. One of them sees me. Our eyes meet and I seem to ask, "Do you know what this is?" but he is not looking. He is looking but right through me. Almost as if I am not there. But I am here, am I not?

I am outside the city. But maybe it is the city which is inside where I live. Whatever it is, I have come to understand that everything in this world means something, that my life means something, and that those soulless eyes looking at me also mean something.

Today, I go back.

Where I live you can find all sorts of things — things disowned, erased and forgotten. Name it.

Today, they must have thrown away some more books, obsolete to them but savoury for me. I return to the typewriter and to the woman who is always there. But she is already dead. Her death is a mystery. I have grown up eating her skin and typing words that no one remembers. I understand my survival is different, and outside. I cannot save this world. But maybe my words can.

### Entry 19; 22:07

They reap memories.

They decide what is worth remembering and what is better off forgotten. They plunge into a human's Id Well and re-dress them. It is like a cassette tape. You take it out, cut what you do not need, re-coil and put it back in. They wanted better humans, they said. Maybe the most perfect ones.

I try to piece something together about the city. For one thing, the residents remember almost nothing. These people know no history, no times, or tales from the past. If something is not present, it does not exist. And what is not needed is thrown out: paints, crayons, shoes, umbrellas, anything and everything. Desires and emotions have no value. Only super-intelligent beings live — meritorious, rich, with all the technologies at their service. Something you will *never* find outside.

But everyone goes mad, sooner or later. It is not *easy* to kill the intent to feel.

The Toffees program them into un-feeling and recollecting only the important memories. It is like an addiction, without which people become mindless, like an awry mass of flesh, flesh, and just flesh. I have seen it once. How distorted people with foaming mouths were locked up in floating cubes inside the city. Many high pillars were erected to hold these people in green uniforms. It was as if they were cannibals from pre-historic times.

I have also seen how crazy parents become on hearing the first cry of their babies. No wonder, they are prohibited to see their children or feel for them lest they should revive what is latent and natural in them: emotions. No one knows what happens to the babies taken away. But when they come back, they are just like their parents.

Maybe *this* place no one knows of is where I come from too.

But someone heard my cries. Someone felt for me and brought me out. Maybe it is this dead woman here.

Maybe that explains why I feel so strongly for things forgotten. My mind is not a tabula rasa. I am not empty; I am carved with memories, ancient — long and scattered thoughts I have chosen to fill myself with.

But all this is speculation. Maybe I am speculating.

### Entry 27; 2:30

I don't have a name. Perhaps I did have one.

As far as I remember, I was always here. I do not know when I was born or how I ended up here. My memory first remembers me from the time I could push my way through miles and miles of scrap heaps. Once, I had found something. I do not know what it is called. I have never seen its picture in any of the books I have read. But I can describe it for you with the few words I know. It had a disc with grooves on it and a needle was placed over it. It was working in fragments when I rotated the crank. I remember the voice that spoke through the golden flower-shaped metallic something. It was sweet, and melodious but full of melancholy. I was her only audience.

Another time, I came across a broken swing, crushed under the weight of heavy metals. It felt a little lonely. But I could still play with it. I think I spent some hours there. I saw a sofa, brown and dirty. I made it my little home. It must have belonged to a very big family once. There was a closet. I dragged it out from under the pile it was stuck in, thinking I could use it to keep my enigmatic findings from little adventures across the landfill.

It was here I found the photographs, some torn and soiled, barely intact within the album. There were happy faces. Lots of them. How can anyone choose to forget happiness?

I have never seen my own face. There are no mirrors here. But if I could, I would like to see it smile. My face right now is like a charcoal scribbling, glitching over thoughts. I mean, how can you explain something you have never seen?

So, how do I define who I am? What language do I speak when I have spoken nothing? What gender do I belong to when I have never been classified? What memories do I remember? What experiences make me? What face among the faces in these photographs resembles mine? Am I one or am I a thousand of these?

I am my memory, and I am all the memories dismembered by the Reapers.

Maybe I am an Id and this dead woman right here is my butchered conscious.

The more they harvest, the more I grow. I make this city a monochrome. I am a presence that will linger on forever in the objects here. I am in the music, in the air and in all the stories. At the very bottom of the mind's swamp, bracketed in this type-writer, I am the voice that remains when all the memories have disappeared.

---

Bhavika Sachan is a Student at Miranda House, University of Delhi. Address: P-904, Alaknanda Apartments, Gomti Nagar Extension, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226010. Email: bhavikasachan19s@gmail.com