



Savi and the Memory Keeper

Bijal Vachharajani

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In Bijal Vachharajani's novel *Savi and the Memory Keeper*, a girl navigates grief and healing via her connection with a sentient tree.

After her father's unexpected death, Savi moves with her mother and sister to Shajarpur. Depression threatens to overwhelm her, even as she pledges to keep her father's plants alive despite having no knowledge of nurturing them. But the plants begin to relay snippets of memories to her from her family's life and history.

This connection intensifies when Savi meets Tree—a large, old tree at her school. It communicates with Savi and a handful of other students, conveying urgency over the destruction of nature happening everywhere, including in otherwise idyllic Shajarpur. Moving on from her initial isolation, Savi is also torn between two groups of new friends: the Ents (fellow students in an ecological club that she is forced to join) and a group that promises coolness and a rise in social status. They are all keeping secrets, and Savi must unravel what her connections to plants, and especially to Tree, mean before it is too late.

Savi's snarkiness keeps the book's tone cheerful despite its serious themes of loss, mourning, and planetary destruction. She undergoes real change as a result of her relationships with friends and family members. And her story takes a fantastical turn when supernatural events intrude, like the tidy flower buds that populate many scenes.

With a neat ending that reconciles its varying threads, *Savi and the Memory Keeper* is a poignant novel in which natural connections are a means of triumphing over greed and climate change.

JEANA JORGENSEN (September / October 2023)

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