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Science Fiction

State of Mind
Sven Michael Davison
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Memory is the food of the mind. We are a composite of our memories—and what we do remember is as important as what we forget. Each person's past is unique terrain, formed by the events that have shaped who we are: that rusty swing set, that late-night text message, that lucky lottery ticket. But what if memory was as flexible as a line of characters on a computer screen? Sven Michael Davison's *State of Mind* takes us into a nightmarish near-future where the synthesis of technology with the human body is as common as the iPod.

One small incision, and suddenly it's possible to access the Internet, digital archives, communications—essentially, the brain becomes an organic computer. "The P-Chip would keep the country happy and worry-free. It would stop unneeded procreation, criminal and seditious behavior, and people would treat the planet responsibly. In essence, society would have the first harmonious work force ever seen in history. Like the monolith from that old '60s sci-fi film *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*, the P-Chip will be the harbinger of the next evolutionary step of mankind." Jake Travissi, a homicide cop, is charged with maintaining harmony in the new society. He's part of a Chip-enhanced police force, an offshoot of Homeland Security. Davison's writing is fast and tight—unsurprisingly, a graphic novel version of *State of Mind* will appear in July 2011, with motion picture rights to follow. The plot is familiar, the paranoid-technology thread a well-worn story that needs only a few updates to grab the reader. An iPhone implanted in your brain? A digital library edited and erased by sinister bureaucrats? It's all here, and *State of Mind* glories in its genre's conventions.

Despite a few clunky moments, cliches, and distracting flashbacks, Davison's writing carries the novel forward. He has an artist's eye for details. As his hero's plane descends into California, "Jake turned his head to the starboard porthole. The towers of L.A. reached up to him from below; the broken arms of desperate people. Holographic banners floated in all colors, shapes and sizes. There was so much advertising below that most pilots dimmed their

windshields and flew by instruments lest they be distracted and crash." Readers familiar with Philip K. Dick's novels, or the America inhabited by Spider Jerusalem, will feel right at home riding shotgun with Jake.

Davison's Los Angeles is pulpy-vibrant, an unforgettable wasteland. *State of Mind* is the world of the near future, the horrible synthesis of human desire and the technology to make it a reality.

Claire Rudy Foster