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### Beyond the Story and a Song

At some point in our lives, we have felt a connection between a song and a specific aspect or situation that we have gone through or we are going through in our lives. We feel like that particular song brings back old thoughts, stories, decisions that we once made, and past moments into our minds. All of these can remind us of who we are and where we stand, but sometimes, they remind us of the plans we wish we had made and the decisions we wish we had taken. Sometimes, we decide to follow somebody else's dreams or pathway so we can fit in or just because it is more practical and easy to rely on someone or something and follow it than to build our own road. In the story "The Perfect Match" by Ken Liu, he introduces a subtle irony when the song of "My Way" by Frank Sinatra is added at the end of the story. The song allows readers to better understand how Sai feels about his final decision when he chose to adapt to Tilly. Readers can compare the radical change of emotions that Sai demonstrates at the beginning and at end of the story by doing exactly the same routine while depending on Tilly. In a world where everything and everyone is ruled by a powerful, omnipresent, and all-knowing digital assistant, the only solution for Sai is to resign himself and try to adapt to it. In response to his resignation, he plays Frank Sinatra's song "My Way" as a representation of his deepest desires and thoughts about his decision, leaving us to decide whether it's a move of hope or submission.

There is nothing that Sai can do to change the world that Centillion has created. People have learned to depend on Tilly, and they feel comfortable with it, since Tilly decides for them what is too complicated for them to do on their own. Thus, people trust it to take control of their lives. This is Sai's situation at the beginning of the story when Tilly convinces Sai to get a smoothie instead of a coffee. Tilly suggests that the smoothie is the best option for Sai's tastes: "Trust me, you'll love the smoothie" (23). To this, Sai responded, "Okay, Tilly. You always know best" (23). This shows the conformity and comfort that Sai has when leaving even this small decision in the hands of a digital assistant. Just like Sai, the majority of the people rely on Tilly for their day-to-day activities. For instance, Sai and Ellen's date shows us the significant influence of Tilly's role in people's lives. Tilly's advice and opinions are so indispensable in Ellen's life that she was not willing to move forward with Sai if Tilly was not present. Liu tells us that when Ellen left the date, "She said nothing and avoided looking into [Sai's] eyes" (26). This not only shows dependency, but this reveals a society that is not willing to abandon the practical lifestyle they have already adopted. Namely, people are not willing to change.

In this world, Tilly has become a necessity. Readers notice this when the Centillion representative, Rinn, tries to make Sai conscious of Tilly's authority over people's existence by showing Sai's own dependence on Tilly when he needs to remember his mom's phone number, his past, or a book that he read three years ago. Sai automatically needs to reach for Tilly to answer to the Centillion representative. Then, the representative responds to Sai's behavior by saying, "You see? Without Tilly, you can't do your job, you can't remember your life, you can't even call your mother. We are now a race of cyborgs.... It is no longer possible to squeeze all of ourselves back into our brains" (37) readers understand that Tilly has not only become a necessity, but a habit and "inevitable" (37). People have found a simpler and more practical way

to do, see, and interpret things: “We made machines to help us think, and now the machines think for us” (37). Here, Rinn highlights the revolution that Tilly has created and the impact that it has had on everybody’s life; it is hard to let efficiency and easiness like that escape.

In the end, Sai more deeply understands the cost of the automatic world that he blindly accepted in his life in the beginning of the story. In the end, Sai asks Tilly to play “My Way” by Frank Sinatra as his wake-up song. In the song, this last stanza is especially important: “For what is a man, what has he got? / If not himself, then he has naught” (lines 33-34). By allowing ourselves to be guided by this last part of the song, it is not very difficult to guess that it reflects Sai's innermost desires: free will, independence, privacy, and spontaneity. We also notice that Tilly calls this choice an “unusual choice” and then adds, “given your taste,” which means that maybe Sai will start looking for himself through a change of routines and tastes, that he might gain that freedom he wants according to the song (38). We also see the feeling of disappointment from Sai. Sai, along with Jenny, was willing to end the phenomenon that Centillion had created. Still, it became clear that Centillion was too powerful and was not something that could be brought down. Therefore, the only thing left for Sai is to get back to living in a world of algorithms and machines. Taking it further with Sinatra’s song, we can associate this last sentence with verse three of the song: “Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew / When I bit off more than I could chew” (17-18). This suggests a connection between Sai’s wanting the ease of Tilly surveilling and taking control of every aspect of his life, and the hard work of doing that for himself. Sai lost control of the situation and by the time he wanted to take it again, Tilly had taken it over. The song tells us a story and connects us with the origin of Sai's emotions and suggests possibilities for what will happen next. It helps us to rethink the end of the story in

order to understand its principle better. How we interpret Sai's reasons for choosing that song says a lot about whether we see his choice as one of despair or one with a small glimmer of hope.

A song can be a fundamental part of ourselves. Many times, it tells us about diverse aspects of our lives: emotions, thoughts, desires, and even regrets over certain facts. Sinatra's song "My Way" is a key point in Sai's emotions. It helps us understand how important the sense of independence has become to him. What Sai used to think was practical and easy becomes tedious and predictable. As human beings, we are always looking for the most comfortable and simple solutions, especially through technology. We forget that we have the capacity to assert ourselves. In the story, Sai had no choice but to adapt to the inevitable: Tilly. The fact that he chose Sinatra's song tells us about the unconformity of his decision, and the desire to go against the system. We have the opportunity for our songs to reflect the satisfaction of being independent. We can make the decision to trust ourselves to do what we need to do. Liu is showing us that we need to depend on ourselves while we can. Maybe one day, we will not be able to do it, and we will regret some decisions. Then, possibly, we will be listening to "My Way" with melancholy next to a device that, for the sake of making things easy, tells us how to think, how to write, what to wear, and what to eat.

Works Cited

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Sinatra, Frank. "Lyrics to 'My Way.'" *Genius*, 2019, <https://genius.com/Frank-sinatra-my-way-lyrics>.