

hive mind

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eep. at the bus stop, a bee lands on me. it crawls from my cuff onto my wrist. it feels cottony and dangerous. i'm scared because i'm allergic but i try to hide it because there are two people near me and they don't see it and i heard that bees can smell fear. or was that sharks? it hops up and hovers to my neck, vibrating against the almost bristles under my jaw. if it can smell fear then why am i trying to look not afraid when i should be trying to smell not afraid? i flap my hand at it like i've seen other people do. it flies into the face of the college guy a few steps away from me. i'm glad someone else saw it.

at work, when i remember, i look at myself as if i were someone else. and i shake my head at that guy for ending up in an office job, like his dad. working in a tan office with grey cubicle and slate floors. a pile of papers to the right. a filing cabinet. a fluorescent desk lamp. an "in" folder and "out" folder.

i can take my lunch break whenever i want. if you told me that when i was a kid, i would take it sometime other than lunch, because i could. as early as possible. and that's how i feel now. not because i'm hungry but because i need to get out.

i take my lunch break at eleven. i walk to the mayfair mall food court every lunch break, in the close-to-but-not-quite-downtown area of victoria. it's an eight minute walk to the mall. i am a food court drone.

the mayfair food court contains thirteen fast food outlets circling around an open hexagon. the regional cuisine of places like china, japan, mexico, and italy are represented by bajillion dollar chains to make this food court look almost like any other food court in any other mall ever. a hundred or so consumers scuttle about. and i'm one of them. i usually start to lose my appetite as the smell of sharp grease cuts my nostrils and fills my stomach.

arby's sells meaty sandwiches. a big depressed man with grey hair likes to put his knuckles on the arby's counter and stare. but not at anyone in particular. he just stares. surrounding him, there are three thin, athletic girls. he's always going to be sad.

the taco time workers are the biggest mystery in the food court. i buy lots of tacos from them. they have to recognize me by now. "hi, how's it going," i say. or "hi, how are you enjoying your shift?" or "i bet you guys get a lot of customers on taco tuesday." none of them answer me with more than one word. bossy girl asks "what can i get for you?" but not in a sincere manner, because i am inconveniencing her and making them make me tacos. but that's the only answer i have. three of them on hard shells with no cheese. "order! three hard tacos no cheese," she repeats to small girl at the taco creation stand. they hate their jobs. we'll never figure each other out.

the guys at kfc are more enthusiastic. “hi boss, what can i get for you?” the cashier will ask in that unmistakable mexican weight in his tone. it’s like “boss” means “friend”. the other cashier is a lot quieter but his oversized clothing and saunter speak on their own.

i watch the faces of the customers as well. they all look like they believe they’re the bosses of the food court workers. they are comfortable with ordering food and they want it soon. a big woman crosses her arms outside a&w and gives that familiar expression – the impatient scowl. maybe she’s in a rush. but i hate her just a little bit.

so i take my tray to a two person table. i choose one with flowers or a cardboard advertisement when i can. this time, there are none. i sit alone. i eat tacos. i wish you cared more about me and my story of eating tacos. they’re really tasty – juicy and spicy and all that.

when i’m back at the office, my mind turns off for five hours and i work a lot. i stare at the hr guy and try to squash him with my mind. individual bees are not smart. but the honey bee is born with the ability to make honeycomb. the cells of honeycomb are hexagons. this shape lets the bees use as little energy as possible to make strong cells that can hold a lot of honey. the bees still work hard. nobody remembers them.