

# Coming of Age in a Dystopia

FATIMAH AKHTAR

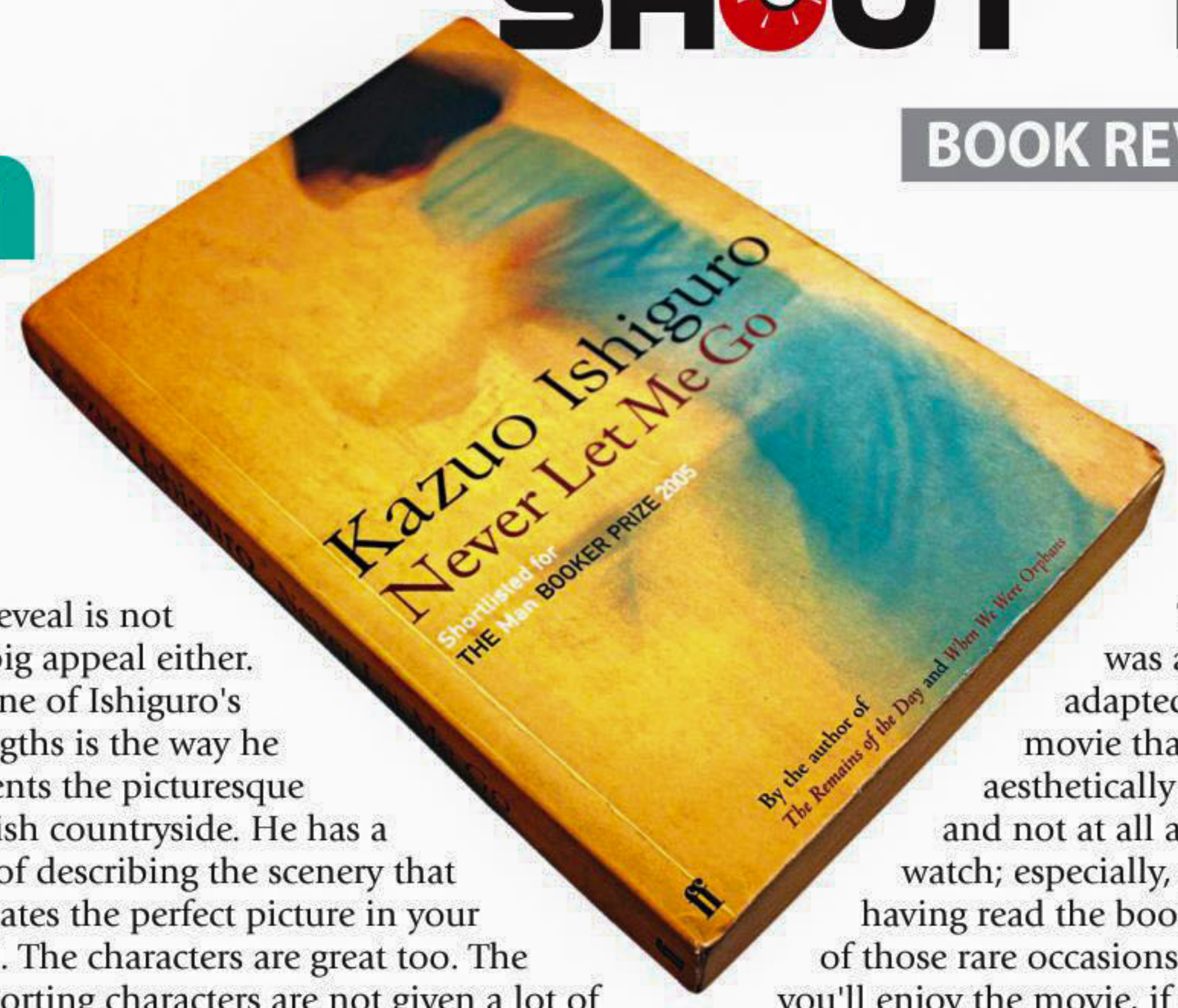
Once you get into reading-intensive courses in university, it's difficult to read books that don't come assigned with the courses. Even for people who would devour five to four books a month, struggle to get through one, I can tell you that from personal experience. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro in this regard was a treat. I delved into the book not knowing a single aspect about it except that the writer had previously written another book that I was extremely fond of. *Never Let Me Go* became the first book in a long time that I had a difficult time putting down, and I enjoyed reading it all the way through.

The plot in hindsight seems simple enough. The story revolves around Kathy,

and her two friends, Tommy and Ruth who are growing up together in an old English boarding school within a different historic context. The book tends to be categorised as dystopian, but there are very little dystopian elements to it. The story did not have me hooked from the beginning, but rather the way the story was being told was what grabbed me. Ishiguro with another book of his, *Remains of the Day*, introduced a narrator who remained distant from the audience and only through the actions of the character was it possible to infer his emotional stances. Similarly, *Never Let Me Go's* Kathy remains distant. But it works well for the story. The actual mystery in the book isn't necessarily nail-biting or even hard to figure out. Throughout the book, Ishiguro continues to provide little hints of what's to come so the reveal is never a big surprise. However,

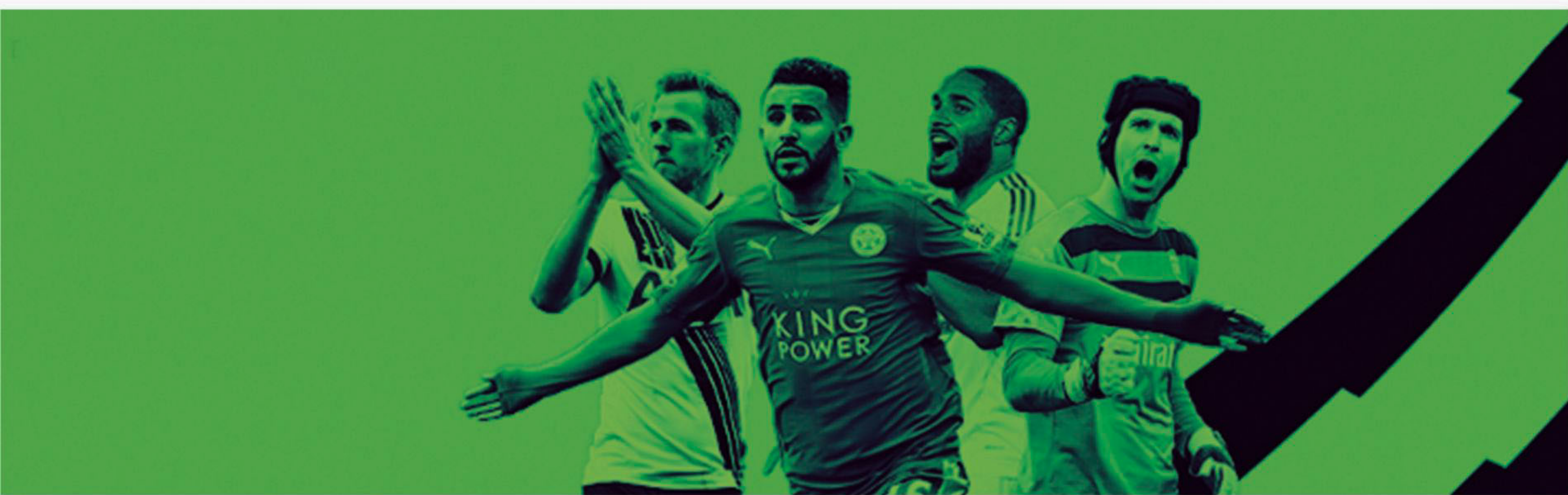
the reveal is not the big appeal either.

One of Ishiguro's strengths is the way he presents the picturesque English countryside. He has a way of describing the scenery that it creates the perfect picture in your head. The characters are great too. The supporting characters are not given a lot of time to shine. However, the main three characters are given enough depth for the reader to form a connection with them. Kathy is the passive narrator, who lets her assertive friend, Ruth take over, while Tommy functions as something that can be called the heart of the group. The story focuses on their interpersonal relationships, disputes, and growth throughout the novel. External elements come in second to the internal ones.



The book was also adapted into a movie that is quite aesthetically pleasing, and not at all a bad watch; especially, after having read the book. It's one of those rare occasions where you'll enjoy the movie, if you enjoyed the book – even if it couldn't capture the whole story. Ultimately, the book is a poignant story of friendship, and growing up. A lot more of an coming-of-age than a dystopia, but there's a lot to get out of it.

*Fatimah Akhtar studies Anthropology and wishes she lived with a puppy. Redirect all your complaints, queries, memes and feedbacks to her at fatimahaakhtar@gmail.com*



# Fantasy football: The new found passion

SHOUT DESK

There is no denying the fact that fantasy football has made the English Premier League even more enjoyable. Over the last few years, this has emerged as a new found passion among the youth. The days of doing a "Khoj The Search" for people playing fantasy football 12 years back is long gone, now we find it difficult to tame overzealous managers in different Facebook groups, all very determined to emulate the likes of Quamrul Hassan, Jahid Hassan or Fazle Rabbii.

After winning big money contests of now defunct ESPN Star Sports between 2008 and 2010, Quamrul and Jahid decided time was ripe to form a group that will help spread the word.

"Our thinking was simple. The more Bangladeshis playing the game, the more chances of seeing our red and green flag on the leaderboard," says Jahid.

Together with Arifin Satej and Ehsan Haque, Quamrul and Jahid then set up Fantasy Football Players of Bangladesh, a Facebook group that now boasts around 15,000 members.

Besides the duo, Al Fuad and Saif M Ishtiaq Hossain also won contests held by ESPN STAR SPORTS.

"With the four of us winning name and fame besides pocketing close to \$7000 and trips abroad, we knew people will find inspiration in our stories," says Quamrul.

After its launch on July 30 in 2011, the founders soon saw their dreams coming true. Everyday new members were joining, all very keen to make the best of this group, seeking suggestions about transfers, captain choices and chips. ESPN Star Sports soon folded up, leaving Fantasy Premier League the only contest to concentrate on.

Then out of nowhere, a university student sitting in Rajshahi topped Quarter 2 in Fantasy Premier League (FPL), outsmarting around 3 million players from across the globe. The genius Fazle Rabbii will soon fly to the UK to watch his favourite Arsenal play a game at the Emirates Stadium with a friend.

The FPL authorities also organised a player exchange game in 2014, which was also won by a Bangladeshi - Ishtiaque Amin.

"Our idea was to help rookies get to the top. The cases of Fazle and Ishtiaque proved we were right," said Arifin.

"To make things more interesting, we contributed from our own pocket to raise funds to run FPL leagues every year," Ehsan adds.

FFPB also organises #FPLGalaxy, a contest where the top players and admins of popular sites across the globe play out a head-to-head league, which was won by Atikur Rahman last year, as he finished ahead of a number of FPL legends and former champions.

This year, FFPB has teamed up with 7TEEN Sports as they organise the 7TEEN FFPB Fantasy League 2016-17, a contest that has a prize money of over Tk 1 lakh.

The code to join the classic league is 1658-1120 as managers vie for prizes like 40 inches LED TV and a netbook. The head-to-head league winner also nets Tk 30,000, but new teams cannot join now.

While the monthly winners, besides the bragging rights, can enjoy a special meal courtesy of Madchef Restaurant.

But to be eligible for the prizes, one has to be a member of FFPB. The link to their group is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fanfootybd>

Watch this space from next week as Quamrul starts giving tips and suggestions for Shout readers.