



Anticipation

Neil Taylor

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Neil Taylor's thriller *Anticipation* unravels a high-tech mystery in an unsettling near-future scenario.

Riya is a math and machine-learning savant who lost her technology genius father in a plane accident. When she learns that his death may have been murder, she's prompted to investigate. With the aid of a punk software programmer and the son of another deceased technology entrepreneur, she learns that her father was perfecting an Anticipation Machine—an AI to predict the future. With a rival mogul determined to get his hands on the AI, the race is on to protect this precious new technology—and the safety of the world.

The book maintains a breathless pace as Riya and her comrades dodge peril at each turn, forced to differentiate would-be friends from enemies. Riya may be a technology wizard, but she's otherwise a normal teenager who's thrust into a head-spinning situation; she doesn't always make the right choices, but her flaws and mistakes humanize her.

The story is at its most entertaining when Riya interfaces with Art, the virtual assistant for her father's AI; the two of them share like-minded banter. And serious moments round the text out, including a heartfelt conversation between Riya and the "ghost" of her father left behind in the AI. A shocking death proves that not even the most advanced AI can predict everything with 100 percent certainty.

The book is sometimes shaky with its plotting, as when people refrain from sharing information that could have averted crises. Still, its far-fetched scenarios, as with a three-month sojourn at sea to recover from gunshot wounds without professional medical care, are enticing and maintain interest.

Anticipation is a brisk, upbeat thriller that works toward a expectations-reversing conclusion and promises future adventures.

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