

★ **How We Know Our Time Travelers**

Anita Felicelli

WTAW Press (Dec 3, 2024)

Softcover \$18.95 (216pp)

979-898771977-0

In Anita Felicelli's stunning short story collection *How We Know Our Time Travelers*, technology and the supernatural are rival routes to understanding time, loss, and memory.

These speculative stories are set in California in the near future and are marked by environmental anxiety. Many of their characters have South Asian backgrounds. A nascent queer romance between co-op grocery colleagues defies an impending tsunami. A painter welcomes a studio visitor who could be her estranged husband traveling from the past or his double. A study-abroad student boards a plane to the future and is aghast to find her boyfriend a staid family man. A scientist incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital for seeking an immortality elixir exchanges letters with a former love interest.

Mysterious "fog catchers" recur in multiple stories. Other subtle links appear; a sense of the uncanny weaves throughout. Sometimes, realistic situations are upended by paranormal activity: In "The Moment," Valentine disappears while test-driving Ezekiel's car on their first date; she's no common thief, but a time traveler. Other times, magical experiences have logical explanations: Amrita's vision of movers absconding with her belongings is a sign of dementia.

Memory bridges the human and the artificial, as in "The Glitch," wherein a coder, bereaved by wildfires, lives alongside holograms of her wife and children. But technology, though a potential means of connecting with the dead, is not an unmitigated good. In the outstanding, Bluebeard-inspired "Assembly Line," a man preserves his late girlfriend via automata. Other creative reinterpretations of traditional stories and figures involve urban legends, a locked room mystery, a poltergeist, and a golem.

In the grief- and regret-tinged speculative stories of *How We Know Our Time Travelers*, heartbroken people can't alter their pasts, so they'll mold the future instead.

REBECCA FOSTER (November / December 2024)

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