

The Narrator

Babak Hodjat

Dastaan

(112pp)

978-1-73548-600-0

The Narrator is an absorbing science fiction novel in which intelligent people are pushed to their emotional limits while investigating their tech industry employer's corruption.

In Babak Hodjat's pensive science fiction novel *The Narrator*, social media platform employees scrutinize fishy data and navigate their romantic entanglements.

The Narration Company owns an application with which users immerse themselves in AI-generated stories that follow along with them as they go about their lives. Walking to and from work becomes a fantastical adventure, and hanging out with friends becomes an interaction between cartoon characters for the smattering of TNC users who delve in on a continual basis.

But after analyzing some questionable data, TNC employees Lida and Matt discover suspicious information related to the application's extreme users. They come up against mysterious bureaucratic obstacles in their investigation, though. The TNC founders are hiding dangerous information from their employees, their users, and the world.

In this personality-driven tale, data-obsessed Lida is fierce and intelligent, though she prioritizes her work and scientific analysis over all else. Her budding romance with Matt and her friendship with flighty, funny Poornima suffer as her investigation deepens. Elsewhere, Rob, a programmer, goes on a few dates with Poornima before becoming the scapegoat for the founders' villainy. And among the distinctive secondary cast are people who make relationships tense and who advance the plot. In general, a few straightforward defining traits guide people's decisions, though they all have both strengths and weaknesses.

While the application itself is conceptually intriguing, its portion of the story is overshadowed by romantic story lines elsewhere. People muse on dating struggles, their self-esteem, and their ideologies; the virtual reality system fades from focus. Their philosophical conversations dominate the book to the extent that they obscure its tension for long stretches. When it's illustrating people's thoughts, feelings, and movements, the book's expository language is concise and lush, but its redundant descriptors impede true immersion by emphasizing emotions that were already made clear in conversation.

Revelations are delayed in the book: Lida and Matt's realization doesn't come until halfway through the story. But when the disparate romance and mystery story lines finally intertwine, they result in a profound criticism of obsession in its many forms: with love, work, the stories others tell people about themselves, and the stories people tell themselves too. The emotional devastation of the book's bittersweet conclusion hammers at these themes, though.

The Narrator is an absorbing science fiction novel in which intelligent people are pushed to their emotional limits while investigating their tech industry employer's corruption.

AIMEE JODOIN (January 5, 2023)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

Source: <https://www.forewordreviews.com/reviews/the-narrator/>

have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.