



Beyond the Map's Boundary: A Timely Sort of Adventure

Nibi Soto

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Have you ever wished you could go back in time a few minutes, hours, or days, and make a different choice? Do you ever despair that a certain moment of weakness ruined your life? We've all had the feeling that if only we could return to *before* and change that one fateful decision, life would be different—better.

In *Beyond the Map's Boundary*, Nibi Soto has created a lively science fiction scenario in which people called Trekkers have the ability to travel back and forth through time to help those in need. Mattie Bott is a Trekker, though she doesn't know it until she suddenly inherits her powers upon her mother's suspicious death. Her father, Kash, explains a bit about her new way of life, but she accidentally slips back in time before she learns everything. Her life now depends on a man with whom she's had only one date. Will Trevor marry her and become her Splitter, the partner necessary to bring her back to her own time?

As if that isn't enough pressure, the new couple needs to battle the Interloper, a mysterious man intent on stealing their powers for his own gain. With the help of their extended family and an ancient book of history and instructions, Mattie and Trevor zip through time and space to rescue each other, their loved ones, and their own destinies.

Soto offers mystery, romance, science fiction, family reunions, and a hearty dose of humor. Readers will get the feeling that she's having a lot of fun with her writing, and the result is true entertainment. Her characters are vibrant and well-defined and will appeal to a wide range of ages from young teenagers to adults who harbor a sense of adventure.

Occasionally Soto resorts to cliché when a fresh phrase would have served her story better, such as when she describes Mattie's attraction to Trevor: "Mattie felt like her heart was going to jump right out of her mouth. It was already stuck in her throat. She had a funny sensation in her knees that she had never felt before and was becoming short of breath!" The slapstick comedy is also sometimes heavy-handed, like when Mattie, Kash, and Trevor become tangled together on the hallway floor after an unlikely collision or two. And Soto makes the mistake of claiming that fingerprints contain DNA. The story, however, manages to shine despite these few narrative blips—evidence of Soto's skill as a novelist.

Maybe someday time travel will be as easy as driving down the road, but until then readers can rely on writers like Soto to provide fodder for fantasy and fuel for dreams.

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