



Ricochet

Kathryn Berla

Flux (Oct 8, 2019)

Softcover \$11.99 (288pp)

978-1-63583-040-8

Free will clashes with genetic experimentation in Kathryn Berla's mind-bending science fiction novel, *Ricochet*.

If you asked Tati, she would tell you that she's a regular high school senior. An academic overachiever, she's also working on a DNA science project with her first girlfriend, Priya, who is way out of her league.

But there is something different about Tati, who suffers from inexplicable seizures that no doctor can explain or cure. As her seizures increase in frequency, Tati sees images that hint at parallel universes where three other girls who look exactly like her, and whose names are also Tatiana, live. They, too, suffer from seizures. The girls join together to figure out what is happening to them and why, unraveling a web of lies that places all four in immediate and mortal danger.

The clever premise combines DNA research with string theory, chaos theory, and the possibility of parallel universes, and the novel is poignant in examining the possibilities and limitations of personal choice. Each Tatiana takes a turn telling her story, and so the plot develops in a slow way that creates intrigue and eagerness to find out what's truly going on.

As the story hurtles towards its climax and questions are answered, it becomes difficult to keep the Tatanas apart. Two lead near identical lives, and secondary characters share names across the universes, too, their roles in each respective life not distinguished enough to prevent confusion.

For Tatiana, part of growing up is wresting her power back from her supposed caretakers. *Ricochet* is a coming-of-age story with a thought-provoking science fiction twist.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (September / October 2019)

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