ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Selected Shorts and Other Methods of Time Travel
David Goodberg
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David Goodberg's *Selected Shorts and Other Methods of Time Travel* is a series of related vignettes—some dark, some cautionary, and most vaguely humorous—that explore human and non-human lives over a period of time in a future (and sometime past) that could be our own. Scenarios range from the mundane to the fantastic, culminating in a large-scale catastrophe that is surprising, funny, and inevitable.

As the title suggests, the phenomenon of time travel plays a frequent part in generating conflict in *Selected Shorts,* whether that "time travel" occurs by dint of time machine, spaceship, or everyday shifts in consciousness. And so Goodberg's characters muck about in various realities, irretrievably changing themselves or the universe as they do. What they do in their forays, or why or even how they go anywhere, varies from gathering riches and fixing past mistakes ("Flying Cars" and "A Familiar Face of Death) to merely scamming food no longer available in the future, as in the ironic "The Doctor." In "Synecdoche" a benign-seeming alien visits with children only to bludgeon one of them to death for having contributed to the demise of a life form (in the form of a turkey sandwich offered in a gesture of friendship).

Dark stuff, indeed, but worth a chuckle—and a second thought—page after page. Indeed, accompanied by the clever illustrations of Antoneo Deleo, each segment of *Selected Shorts* is imbued with an initial lightness, as in a children's book. This device ideally positions the reader for a number of shocks, when tales conclude with a guffaw-inducing, vaguely Roald Dahl-esque endings.

In short, *Selected Shorts* is a novel told through a series of loosely grouped episodes, some of them mere anecdotes, others fully realized short stories. The subject? A world in decline. That Goodberg's vision of such a fictional future closely resembles the here and now gives us something nasty to think about when we finish the book. And in that sense the author succeeds in getting under our skins.

Selected Shorts is worth a read for the advanced reader not allergic to science fiction themes, and interested in delving into what it means to be human. Those who would like to time

travel through a few hours of their lives being entertained should read this book.

Leia Menlove