



INDEPENDENT BOOK REVIEW

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The Journey Home

By Diane Hatz

Genre: Contemporary Fiction / Metaphysical & Visionary / Absurdism

Reviewed by Joelene Pynnonen

A thought-provoking absurdist satire examining the state of the world through the lens of addiction and mental health

For years Alex Scott has struggled with her demons. The cruel voice in her head that she calls Spike has led her down the path of alcoholism and taunts her, even sober. At her lowest, it tells her that she's not good enough, and deep down, she believes it. With her megalomaniac boss's fiftieth birthday coming up, Alex can't afford to sink back into the addiction Spike demands. Especially since the fate of humanity is riding on Alex holding everything together.

Her billionaire boss, JT, has found a way to make drained consumers spend even more of their hard-earned money buying things they do not need. Disconnecting them from their spirit guides serves to make himself richer, and he's pulling out all stops to ensure that he gets what he wants. Controlling cyberspace and using his C3 machine to rend people from their guides is only the beginning for him though. To ensure full domination, he has something far darker up his sleeve.

The Spiritual Enterprise Network is a group focused on making sure that his plans don't eventuate, but in order to succeed, they'll need Alex's help. And if Alex can't fight her demons, there is far more at stake than her mental health.

The Journey Home is the fourth and final book in the Mind Monsters series. It can be read as a stand-alone, but there is little reference to earlier novels so character set-up and development is sparse. It uses the lens of satire to tackle increasing problems in the corporate and technological world. Things like micromanaging, digital surveillance, and disconnection from fellow people are major themes, but all of them are amped up to comical levels. So, rather than just having a micromanaging boss, Alex has one who has bugged her office and keeps her on call at all hours with extra tasks.

The Journey Home is an analogy to modern life with all its vices and pitfalls. While the situations Alex finds herself in are absurdist, the concepts resound. Obviously, most people don't have bosses who bug their offices to watch and listen to their every move, but almost everyone is familiar with superiors who micromanage and demand accounts for every bit of time spent at work. Most people's lives are open for all online and getting away from the world is almost impossible given that we're connected to a device that can access everyone else; this fact even shows up in the form of Alex's former boyfriends who she can't escape, no matter how much she may want to.

The Journey Home uses humorous, hyperbolic satire to address real-life issues that affect people on a daily basis. The effect of a brutal workplace on addiction recovery and mental health, the healing benefits of connection to self, and the rise of corporate greed are a few of the problems it highlights. The over-the-top portrayals hammers home how deeply these problems are entwined with our culture and give a fascinating, fresh way of seeing the issues.