

Super America: Stories

Anne Panning

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In settings as different as Honolulu, Hawaii, small-town Minnesota, and Taxco, Mexico, these nine stories and a novella show blue-collar characters struggling to achieve the American Dream?and sometimes alienating friends and family as they try to upgrade their working-class pedigree. Anne Panning's people, despite their mixed record of success, make us root for them on their sometimes heartbreaking journeys of entrepreneurship, love, and loss.

In "Tidal Wave Wedding" a tsunami in Honolulu yields surprising results for a couple on their honeymoon. In "All-U-Can-Eat," a woman tries to stave off the investment of her inheritance into a restaurant specializing in frog legs. In the novella, "Freeze," a teenage son's future is forever complicated after a "life altering" accident confines his father to a wheelchair and accelerates the disintegration of his parents' marriage. An eerie clinical replay of another accident?this one on a bicycle in Hawaii?is at the center of "What Happened," and in the title story a college theater major gets caught up in his father's exotic pets scheme.

Panning's stories show an acute awareness of place, and?whether it be a seventeenth-century former-monastery in Mexico, a suburban housing development in Minnesota, or a hard-luck laundromat on the Oregon coast?each setting often tells us something about the characters who occupy them. Sometimes sad and often funny, *Super America* takes risks with our notions about the American Dream through characters caught between their working-class roots and grandiose visions.



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