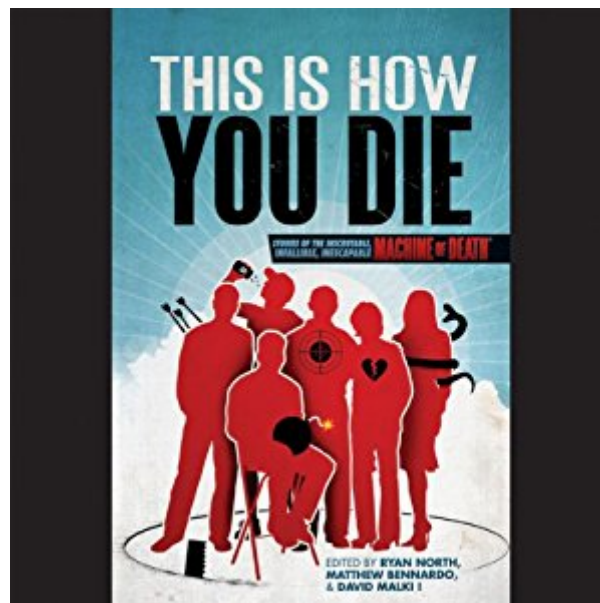




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This Is How You Die: Stories Of The Inscrutable, Infallible, Inescapable Machine Of Death



Synopsis

If a machine could predict how you would die, would you want to know? This is the tantalizing premise of *This Is How You Die*, the brilliant follow-up anthology to the self-published best seller, *Machine of Death*. The machines started popping up around the world. The offer was tempting: With a simple blood test, anyone could know how they would die. But the machines didn't give dates or specific circumstances - just a single word or phrase. DROWNED, CANCER, OLD AGE, CHOKED ON A HANDFUL OF POPCORN. And though the predictions were always accurate, they were also often frustratingly vague. OLD AGE, it turned out, could mean either dying of natural causes, or being shot by an elderly, bedridden man in a botched home invasion. The machines held on to that old-world sense of irony in death: You can know how it's going to happen, but you'll still be surprised when it does. This addictive anthology - sinister, witty, existential, and fascinating - collects the best of the thousands of story submissions the editors received in the wake of the success of the first volume, and exceeds the first in every way.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours 38 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: July 17, 2013

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00E038BE0

Best Sellers Rank: #87 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science Fiction > Anthologies & Short Stories #842 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Anthologies #2048 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Dystopian

Customer Reviews

In 2010, there was quite a lot of buzz around a new anthology entitled *Machine of Death* which collected stories exploring a single premise; a machine that could predict, without fail, the manner in which you would die. All it needed was a sample of your blood and a tiny slip of paper would have your ultimate fate written on it. I myself never read it but definitely had it on the ever growing TBR pile. Then this year, the editors unleashed upon the world a sequel, *This Is How You Die: Stories of*

the Inscrutable, Infallible, Inescapable Machine of Death. Word of mouth was that this volume was even bigger, better and not to be missed. So I gave in to the siren song, threw caution to the wind and picked up *This Is How You Die*. The collection opens with the heartbreakingly brilliant *Old Age, Surrounded by Loved Ones* by 'Nathan Burgoine. Burgoine is now on my list of go-to writers that I know will deliver a great story; I have yet to be disappointed. Also, the story wasn't what I expected at all; Burgoine has written an emotional story about sisters that will require tissues after reading it. If you're not teary eyed after this, then you have no heart to break. Other favorites: *Execution by Beheading* by Chandler Kaiden is a thriller that features three children who, upon hearing a rumor about someone who is different, go to extremes to collect a rare "Cause Of Death" card from their machine... *Apitoxin* is a very clever spin on the book's premise by John Takis, who places his tale right in the hands of none other than Sherlock Holmes. *Apitoxin* is both a wonderful tribute to the famous detective and a well written mystery that was great fun to read. *Monsters from the Deep*, editor David Malki's contribution to the anthology, is a weird, creepy tale complete with aliens and a delightful Lovecraftian atmosphere. *Lake Titicaca* by editor Matthew Bennardo instantly reminded me of *The Body* and *Goonies*, with kids a little afraid of what they're doing but too excited not to go off and have an adventure. Be warned: *This Is How You Die* is indeed a long book but the stories are so varied and encompass so many genres that you will continually be pulled along to keep reading, unwilling to put the book down. And with a collection like this, that is exactly what you want; great story after great story that keeps you glued to the page til the last sentence is read. Then you start over again. Happy reading!

I have not yet read *Machine of Death*, but I plan to once I finish this anthology. I grabbed it on impulse, having had a chance to read the first story, and it does not disappoint. Rarely have I read a book that possesses quantity AND quality among the stories, and this one definitely does. Rather than simply highlight the deaths of its various protagonists, authors chose to frame the tales as morality plays (*Execution by Beheading*, *Shiv Sena Riot*), elaborate hypothetical situations (*Conflagration*- which is the best story in here IMHO), heart-breaking fables (*Old Age Surrounded by Loved Ones*), humorous anecdotes (*Natural Causes*, *Lazarus Reactor Fission Sequence*) and even real-life events (*Cancer*- my second favorite). Throw in some classically inspired science fiction, some Lovecraftian evil, a Sherlock Holmes adventure, and a choose-you-path tale, and you get a rich, very readable experience that will grab your attention. And despite the title, very few stories actually focus on the morbid subject- many more choose to explore the impact death has on family members, the general public, the government, and the future. Definitely a must-read for fans of

speculative fiction, or just those looking for something new and different.

I stumbled across this book in a bookstore and wrote the title down to check it out down the road. I found that note awhile ago and ordered the book from for my Kindle. We have all bought bad books and I think those of us who love short stories and anthologies know it's a crap shoot as to what the book will be like, or how good it will be. We've all bought/read at least one that had just one good story and the rest sucked. This is How You Die is one of the best subject/idea based anthologies out there, hands down. The stories run from tragic to humourous to horrifying and all points in between. Sometimes you hit all of the notes in the same story. I wasn't super familiar with most of the authors involved but in my opinion they really delivered on the subject matter. This book does play on the fears of our own mortality and asks the million dollar question of if you could know how you were going to die would you want to? For me, no I really don't think I would, but the authors in these stories struggle with that question in a believable manner and many different paths were taken. Some chose to know, some ultimately didn't. Some fought their inevitability, some surrendered to it, which is a lot like facing down death from what I've seen in those I've known who knew via illness that their clock was winding down. The simple premise is that a machine will tell you how you will die but not when or where. And while there are a few loopholes, for lack of another term, in the vagueness or off the wall possibilities, it's inevitable, like death itself, that the line printed on your card is true and unavoidable. I can say for myself that I as great as this book was, and as much as I recommend it, I couldn't plow through it. The subject matter is pretty dark even if the authors handle it differently, and even though there is humor, along with the suspense and horror, some of the themes are universal and some very true to life. There are stories in here that made me laugh, and made me cry. A few like the one of the mirror twins, has stuck with me weeks after I read it, and goes down as one of my favorite short stories of all time. So I had to read a story or two here and there versus reading it in one sitting or even inside of one week. Your mileage may vary, but even though as I've said the authors do a fantastic job, it's heavy subject matter when we're talking about death and it's inevitability. Highly recommend this one. One of the best anthologies I've ever come across. I don't think you'll be disappointed if short stories and/or theme based anthologies are your thing.

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