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A Double Novella: Over The Wall & Beyond The Rim

by Thomas James Taylor

book review by Melayna Alicea

"I had once believed in the existence of beauty and meaning in life, but that was long ago."

The first tale in Taylor's collection, "Over the Wall," begins with David and his fellow inmate, Abe, escaping from prison. David has spent much of his life contemplating the divine and the meaning of life. Abe leads David to the home of his friend Tenzin Yeshe where David is introduced to a Buddhist community determined to find the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Amidst these people, David begins to understand why he has never fit in with others and undergoes a spiritually enlightening experience. Because of this life-changing event, David decides to return to prison, finish out his sentence, and return to society as a renewed man.

In contrast, the second one, "Beyond the Rim," is a dystopian science fiction story set in the late 2000s. Jack Hardin works as an undercover operative. He is sent on a mission to determine how vital items are disappearing from a science lab. His mission takes a quick turn upon meeting Alex, a seemingly inconsequential assistant. Alex introduces Jack to an advanced alien species known as the Jhai. After a romantic evening with Alex, Jack resolves to be a different man. He is determined to protect the Jhai's secrecy and be with Alex even if it risks his life.

These novellas feature distinct narratives but with similar tones. Both invite the reader to ponder the philosophy of life, religion, and morality. The first dives into these through David's internal dialogue throughout the novel, while the second paints a believable dystopian picture of the future based on our world's current reality. The voices of David and Jack are relatable, allowing the reader to be immersed in the unique settings of the stories. The author's thought-provoking collection might especially appeal to those who enjoy stories of protagonists who find a new purpose in their lives.

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