



## The Age of Miracles – Karen Thompson Walker

Julia lives with her parents in a coastal town in California. Petrified, they sit in front of the television and take in the news of the rotation of the earth that's slowing down. Days are getting longer. What would be the long-term consequences? What would happen to gravity?

Governments all over the world are desperately trying to keep control over a phenomenon they cannot control at all. A clock time of 24 hours is set. Soon, sunrise and sunset no longer coincide with time. At a certain moment, days are sometimes completely enveloped in darkness or, on the contrary, overflowing with sunshine.

Opposite the group of people who keep to Clock Time, a group emerges who want to adapt to nature. They are called the real timers. Their bodies adapt to the changed rhythm. But will this work when the sun shines for more than 24 hours?

Amidst the chaos, young Julia develops a special relationship with Seth, who lives nearby. They are both misfits at school. When Seth approaches her, Julia cannot believe her luck. But will there be a future for them on this earth that's slowly falling to pieces?

In *The Age of Miracles* parallels with the present day are frightening. There is no virus, no, but the polarity in society is astonishingly similar. At first, the real timers are ignored. It is better not to associate with them, says Julia's mother when she finds out that Julia's piano teacher Sylvia has joined the real timers. But soon it turns into hate. Houses are destroyed, threats made.

In the desert, the real timers start their own communities where they align with the changing rhythms of nature without being criticised.

There is something to be said for the approach of both sides. I don't think it makes much difference to the final outcome whether you adapt to Clock Time or not. What matters to me is the reaction of people to each other's choice. The lack of understanding. And the behaviour that results from that lack of understanding.

I chose *The Age of Miracles* purely based on the cover of the book, as I rarely do. The outcome of such a choice is always a bit of a lucky guess. The novel shocked me a bit, but apart from that it doesn't do much for me. Perhaps that is because the main character, Julia, is 12 years old and I cannot quite identify with her. Maybe it is because the story seems to proceed very slowly from time to time. (Which, by the way, fits in well with the slowing rotation of the earth!)

As far as I am concerned, *The Age of Miracles* is an entertaining book. It gives the reader something to think about, that's for sure. I might have liked to see a bit more depth and development in the characters. The book seems to consist mainly of a kind of historical narrative about how the world is changing and, as a side track, a story about a boy and a girl struggling at puberty. The two story lines do not seem to come together. To me, that is a real flaw in this book. I should really be torn apart by the fact that Julia and her family will most likely not live long, but deep down I feel nothing.

I can hear you ask yourself: should I just ignore this book? No. I would suggest reading it. It is a wake-up call, especially now. It teaches you that there are people with other choices and experiences and that people have their own reasons for these. You have to respect that!

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