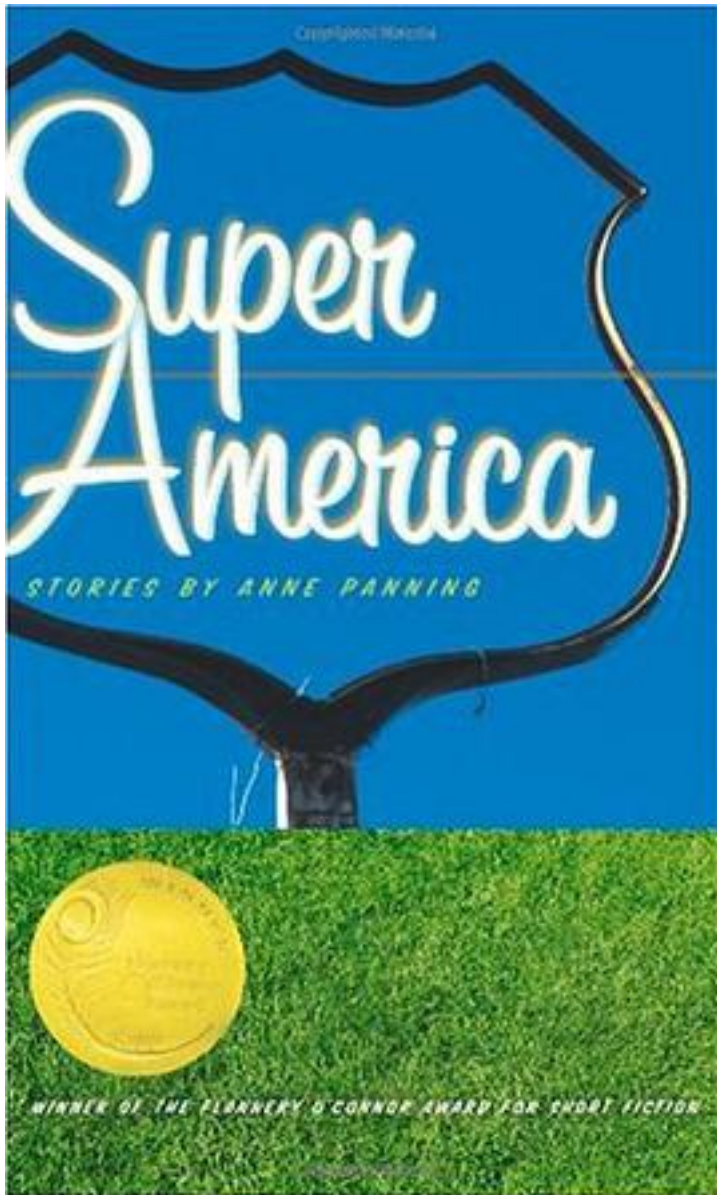


Super America



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出版者:Univ of Georgia Pr

出版时间:2007-10

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780820329963

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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