

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: May 15, 2013

Captives.

Williamson, Jill (Author)

Apr 2013. 416 p. Zondervan, paperback, \$9.99. (9780310724223).

The most compelling dystopian novels aren't really about a horrifying possible future; they're about the present, and the dangers we don't see because they're part of the cultural air we breathe. That's clearly the case with Williamson's somewhat moralistic but wonderfully realized antiromance. The term *antiromance* is prompted not by the absence of true love in the novel—in fact, honoring it is a thematic keynote—but because romance is considered corny in the antifamily, libertine Safe Lands, where a pandemic decades earlier has made reproduction problematic. Consequently, the state abducts uninfected young outsiders for breeding purposes. Williamson deftly intercuts between the points of view of characters drawn from the group, which includes a teenage girl living in a harem. Along the way, well-observed details skewer today's materialistic and superficial values. Yes, some plot points are hard to buy (e.g., authorities would be better at keeping the outsiders apart) and the biblical references can be too explicit—but that's not a knock on the message, which is important and worth discussing. Ultimately, the multilayered, futuristic narrative should intrigue fans of sf.

— *Peter Gutierrez*