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On The Edge Of Gone



Synopsis

A thrilling, thought-provoking novel from one of young-adult literature's boldest new talents. On January 29, 2035. That's the day the comet is scheduled to hit "the big one. Denise and her mother and sister, Iris, have been assigned to a temporary shelter outside their hometown of Amsterdam to wait out the blast, but Iris is nowhere to be found, and at the rate Denise's drug-addicted mother is going, they'll never reach the shelter in time. A last-minute meeting leads them to something better than a temporary shelter—a generation ship, scheduled to leave Earth behind to colonize new worlds after the comet hits. But everyone on the ship has been chosen because of their usefulness. Denise is autistic and fears that she'll never be allowed to stay. Can she obtain a spot before the ship takes flight? What about her mother and sister? When the future of the human race is at stake, whose lives matter most?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up-As a biracial girl with autism, Denise has never been very comfortable in her own skin. Six months ago, when the world wasn't ending, her only real relationships were with her sister, Iris, and the cats in the animal shelter where she worked after school. Now, Denise's only chance for surviving the comet that threatens to destroy all human life on Earth is to earn a spot on a generation ship, a vessel that will transport colonists to another habitable planet across the galaxy. While coping with the complete disruption of her daily routines, as well as continuing threats of natural disasters, Denise must prove herself useful enough to save not only her own life but those of

her sister and her drug-addicted mother. But even if her family is lucky enough to escape, what about the rest of the families in her home city of Amsterdam? What about those across the rest of the world? Duyvis expertly employs real science and vivid imagery to bring to life the most terrifying villain of all: Mother Nature. But it is the author's talent for writing about human nature that sets this book apart. Insightful, suspenseful, and unsettling in its plausibility, this novel is sure to stick with readers long after the last page has been turned. VERDICT A high level of believability and excellent writing make this diverse apocalyptic novel a recommended selection for any young adult collection.-Liz Overberg, Zionsville Community High School, IN (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

****STARRED REVIEW**** "...what makes this a winner is the nerve-racking adventure. Life-affirming science fiction with spaceships, optimism in the apocalypse, and a diverse cast that reflects the real world." (Kirkus)"Denise's fear is palpable throughout, which helps to push this sci-fi novel into thriller territory... Duyvis' attention to detail and strong descriptions will recommend this to fans of the genre." (Booklist)****STARRED REVIEW**** "Insightful, suspenseful, and unsettling in its plausibility, this novel is sure to stick with readers long after the last page has been turned. VERDICT A high level of believability and excellent writing make this diverse apocalyptic novel a recommended selection for any young adult collection." (School Library Journal) Readers are immersed in the tics and tactile aspects of Denise's condition as Duyvis (Otherbound) skillfully incorporates an exploration of complex mental conditions, addiction, and gender identity into her narrative. It's a riveting apocalyptic thriller with substantial depth. (Publishers Weekly)****STARRED REVIEW**** "This novel offers an edge-of-your-seat survival plot and a compelling narrative. It subtly raises questions about the value of a human life without didacticism or easy answers, and the diverse cast, including a biracial heroine and characters of various races, religions, and sexualities, gives the novel real-world authenticity and impact. Duyvis deftly balances broader social elements with a powerful family story. A worthy readalike for North's Starglass, this near-future scifi will gain fans amongst those who want a story that is simultaneously heartbreaking and thought-provoking." (BCCB)"There is a great level of diversity in this book, which raises questions of who is worth saving and what makes a person have value." (School Library Connection)

I love YA Sci-Fi, and ON THE EDGE OF GONE was soooo different from any other YA Sci-Fi I've read and it was awesome. Usually apocalyptic-type books are post-apocalyptic, but ON THE EDGE

OF GONE starts right before a massive comet strikes Earth and obliterates everything, then continues on in the days afterward and people try to survive and Denise tries to get her family safely off-planet. Denise struggles with a lot—her autism makes everything she experiences more difficult for her to handle, all the while she resents people knowing about her disability (particularly when she isn't the one to reveal it), and because she's Black in a very white area that comes up as a subtle obstacle several times too. At the same time, her Dutch mother is an addict, and her mother's struggle with addiction and how it affects Denise and her family plays a major role in the book. Plus trying to survive on a dying planet. Plus trying to find Denise's missing sister, Iris. Plus trying to get her family aboard the ship bound for the stars. ON THE EDGE OF GONE was fascinating and totally captivating. I really connected to Denise and felt her highs and lows while reading, the characters were really complex and interesting, and honestly the whole thing just felt like something that could really happen, which made it a tad chilling, too. All in all, I very much enjoyed this book, and I can't wait to see what Corinne Duyvis has for us next. Super recommended if you like YA Sci-Fi and are looking for something different, or would like to read an authentic portrayal of an autistic protagonist, or just want to read a great book. Diversity note: As the author puts it, "The protagonist is an autistic, biracial, part-Dutch part-Surinamese Black girl. The story also features a prominent bisexual trans Black girl, as well as lesbian, Muslim, and Jewish characters, among others." The author is also autistic, so that part is #ownvoices.

The blurb gives you the essence of the story: this is a survival story that essentially begins as the comet hits and continues for the next two weeks. The big question is whether Denise and her family will make it on the last generation ship left in Amsterdam (and possibly the world). That remains the question for the book—so if you're looking for interstellar travel or space pirates or anything of the sort, a quick expectations adjustment will give you a much more enjoyable read. This isn't an action-packed tale, this is something between a gritty story of survival and an absolutely amazing character study. Denise is strong, focused, and capable, and just the sort of person I want to be with if NASA tells us tomorrow that there's a comet headed straight for the earth. She's also female (obv), biracial, and autistic. Her identity plays into her life in complex and real ways. She has developed coping mechanisms to manage the things that are difficult, and they work brilliantly until they don't. Frankly, Denise copes so much better than her mother, who cannot find her way to giving up her drug addiction. In fact, this book has all my heart for an incredible, seamless read that is brilliantly diverse. Denise's sister is a trans woman, the couple she meets who are trying to help the emergency shelters are Muslims of

Moroccan heritage. Our potential love interest happens to be Jewish. There are people of different faiths, gender orientations, races and ethnicities, and it is completely natural because it is completely real. It isn't trying too hard, it's just precisely what the world looks like. And, just as in the real world, each person's identity naturally effects their lives over the course of the story. I suppose what was frustrating for me in this read was waiting for something to happen rather than letting myself stay in the moment with all the small twists and turns. This is very much a story of ground gained and then lost again. Progress is not about the progress of action, per se, as the progress and development of our characters. Overall, a deep and insightful read. Highly recommended.

I bought this because I'd seen the author post on Tumblr and thought, "hey, it's on sale, what the heck." I ended up staying up half the night because I couldn't stop reading it. The main character's autism is neither glanced over nor belabored, it's just a fact about who she is that informs the narrative, like Batman's PTSD or Harry Potter's scar. The plot progression is logical and suspenseful, and it manages to tell a story about the end of the world which hurt my heart but didn't feel hopeless or pessimistic. Humanity isn't shown as saintly or devilish, just human, and it's just a great, gripping story.

Please do yourself a favor and read this book, it is so so good. If you like complex protagonists: read this book. If you like female protagonists: read this book. If you like stories of sisterhood: read this book. If you like a diverse cast: read this book. If you like when there's no forced romance jammed into the plot: read this book. If you like crying because your heart is full: read this book. If you like cats... I mean, it's actually really rough on a cat lover, but you should read this book anyway.

I cried a lot, reading this. I am not autistic, but I am not neurotypical, and I related a lot to many of Denise's struggles with getting her mind to work the way she wanted it to. I deeply appreciated the look into the mind of an autistic Black woman as our main character, and the inclusion of queer and trans people and different races and religions. It was refreshing to read something so inclusive. I can only keep my fingers crossed that there will be a sequel; I feel as though there is more to be explored. Thank you, Ms. Duyvis, for a truly heartbreaking, nerve-wracking, refreshing read.

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