

Chasm

Susan Cummins Miller

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As hunters track their prey and danger becomes more and more imminent, a twisted and haunting past is revealed.

Chasm, the sixth book in the Frankie MacFarlane mysteries, by Susan Cummins Miller, is a suspenseful read filled with murderous men and the beauty of the Grand Canyon.

Naomi Sprague is a sixteen-year-old girl brought up in a fundamentalist sect of the Mormon Church. She is promised to be the third wife of a much older man, Ben, who is the usual cause for the bruises on his wives and children. Frankie MacFarlane is a geologist in Tucson and is asked to fill in for a professor for a class rafting through the Grand Canyon. The one thing Naomi and Frankie have in common, besides their mutual friend Dora, is that they are both being hunted and their only escape is threatened by a band of ecoterrorists. When Naomi escapes the Family under the cover of night, she heads down a path to meet up with people who have saved others from the trappings of that lifestyle. To reach her final destination, she changes her looks (and her name) enough to blend in with Frankie's traveling geology class.

Miller, a former field geologist and college instructor herself, shows her knowledge of the terrain as the setting comes alive in vivid detail. She reveals not only the beauty and history of the canyon but also a sense of the ruggedness, obstacles, and danger that Frankie and her team must overcome.

As the men from the Family hunt for Naomi (now Molly), much of the backstory is revealed and shocks even Ben enough to think about changing his plans for his future child-bride. The suspense is captivating and quite an asset to the overall plot. The same is not quite so true for the man tracking Frankie. As he makes his way down the river and plans his kill, little is revealed about his motivations. The truth of his backstory is ultimately revealed when outside investigators make the connection, but the result is anticlimactic.

With the intrigue, plot twists, threat of death, and the final action scenes, *Chasm* is sure to be enjoyed by those who like a little thrill in their mysteries.

SHANNAN SPITZ (Spring 2015)

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