ForeWord Reviews
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GENERAL

Crimes Against Humanity A1H1W2
Joyce A. Kovelman
FriesenPress
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Classic sci-fi style meshes with elements of a medical and psychological thriller.

A group of scientists gather in Antarctica to save the world from a creeping microorganism that could potentially eat up all life on the planet. In *Crimes Against Humanity A1H1W2*, psychologist and writer Joyce A. Kovelman, who holds PhDs in psychology and anatomy, brings her considerable expertise in integrated sciences to bear in this timely ecological sci-fi opus.

Kate Sullivan is a scientist stationed on Antarctica to study Archaea Haloquadra Walsbyi (AHW), a deadly disease and one of the possible villains in the slowly encroaching world panic. She finds herself on an international team charged with stopping the plague. The disease starts in the sea with reports of dead fish in all corners of the globe, but it soon spreads to land: to animals and then humans. The classic sci-fi fix is on, with a group of renowned experts from differing language groups and political ideologies (Americans, Chinese, and Russians vying for ascendancy) isolated in a remote enclave, receiving increasingly hysterical reports of the creeping pestilence they must quell.

Then, again in the classic vein, members of the team are found dead, murdered, it seems, by the same microbial demon that is killing the planet. Readers learn that there are two forms of AHW, and one has been developed for chemical warfare. Meanwhile, more life is consumed by AHW outside, and more murders are committed within, as paranoia and accusations flourish in the team's close quarters.

Books in the sci-fi genre, like this one, are sometimes weighed down by an exuberance for science, leaving the craftsmanship of fiction to limp along behind. *Crimes Against Humanity A1H1W2* suffers from a wide range of editing issues: there are many quotation marks out of place, and as many are simply absent. In one instance, one finds almost precisely the same text with the same appended bibliographic reference on two separate pages (pp. 430ff, pp. 432ff).

There are long chapters of tedious dialogue from characters all speaking in the same stilted way: "'The news that humans and land animals are also susceptible to the same disease is scary,' Joe observed."

Though Kate and the team present numerous reports about their important discoveries, there is no description of the lab or the work that goes on there. At the end of the book, a crazed villain, Asian Tiger Woman, is inserted into the plot to explain the mystery of the murders. The final resolution to the plague comes about in a way that makes all the efforts and intrigues in the book seem wasted.

The novel includes footnotes, charts, and graphs inappropriate to the realm of fiction. However, those distracting elements may paradoxically enhance this creation, since its primary audience will undoubtedly consist of those already convinced of its ecological implications. Kovelman is preaching to the choir, as *Crimes Against Humanity A1H1W2* is likely to attract a small group of avid fans.

Barbara Bamberger Scott