

**Down****Ally Blue**

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*Psychological as well as physical horror elevates this sci-fi thriller to a disturbingly exciting level.*

Mo Rees, employee of the BathyTech mining company, gets the adventure he always craved when the dashing scientist Armin Savage-Hall arrives to investigate a mysterious black rock on the sea floor. But deep under the surface, strange and terrible things are afloat. As romance blossoms between Mo and Armin, madness blooms amongst the crew of BathyTech 3—a madness accompanied by shocking physical changes. As the crew is claimed by the strange ailment, Mo and Armin realize that it might be connected to the strange rock ... and an alien agenda that threatens all of humanity.

Delving into psychological horror as often as visceral gore, *Down* maintains a creepy atmosphere, never failing to highlight the terrifying amount of pressure present outside of the comparatively tiny human-compatible environment. It seems that an ordinary human could easily go crazy here even without the influence of a sinister rock. When the book's pace becomes deliberate, the prevailing sense of danger and suppressed fear inherent in the environment itself carries over until the plot speeds up again.

The one thing that distinguishes *Down* from its genre siblings is its diverse cast. Set in the near future, the underwater lab features a fairly equal distribution of men and women, a variety of name origins and ethnicities, and homosexual lovers as lead characters. The book never remarks upon its refreshing variety but convincingly presents it as though general human acceptance is par for the course in this time.

The peacefulness of the unchanged crew toward one another is markedly different from the violence of the people who change. The true horror of this story is not that people are turning into fish but that people are becoming violent, hateful underwater supremacists, a group determined to rule the Earth, whether or not their fellow humans discard their identities and join up.

*Down* is a sexy, scary romp through a place more dangerous than the surface of the moon. The book is almost sure to be a hit with thriller fans, especially those looking for a zesty romance in the bargain.

ANNA CALL (Fall 2015)

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