

In Absence of Fear

Celeste Chaney

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In Absence of Fear by Celeste Chaney takes place in a distant future plagued with constant surveillance meant to keep its citizens safe, but at perhaps too high a cost.

In a period deemed “the New Era,” citizens are made safe by people known as “protectors,” who can predict crime by monitoring human behavior. With chips implanted in every citizen, it seems easy to keep people safe. However, in a city where security cameras almost outnumber people, protector Marus Winde's son has gone missing. Despite making a living off the safety of his city and the people within it, Marus must fight through unsafe territory as he confronts the flaws in the system he aides.

As a grieving parent, Marus comes to feel that he has fundamentally failed his child by not protecting him. He and his wife have a believable relationship, both taking on their share of the blame when it comes to their son's disappearance, even though in reality, the blame lies within the system they have been relying on.

1984 meets *The Minority Report* in *In Absence of Fear*, which creates a futuristic world where safety and crime prevention are key, even at the expense of people's privacy. For every person, every step of every day is completely tracked. When people become reliant on this system, solving crimes becomes a lost art. This deficiency adds a great deal of tension to the novel, especially for the main character, who grapples with his conviction in his work and the reality of his missing child. The narrative serves as a reminder that, for all the good technology can do, it still can't always be trusted, especially with people's lives.

While its premise is not particularly original and has been done many times by authors and screenwriters, the novel adds fresh elements by implementing the reign of security cameras, a topic of heated debate in today's society as well. Even as a dystopia, the novel is familiar, mimicking life in the twenty-first century by amplifying its concerns through a world not unlike our own. Its characters have been trapped in a safety bubble their entire lives, and watching them venture outside of it into a world that's unexpectedly chaotic is a fascinating and gripping journey.

Fans of classic science fiction will get the most out of *In Absence of Fear*, especially fans of Orwell or Huxley, to whom it pays subtle tribute.

SONYA LOVY (May 11, 2016)

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