Clarion Review

General

Jula's Loom
Kathy Knowlton
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4269-2426-2
Five Stars (out of Five)

Author Kathy Knowlton takes readers to a reality where it is possible for people to relocate to new planets in order to solve old problems, but they still carry the human condition with them. This is the world of Grounders (natives who are close to nature) and Pioneers (people from Earth).

Although its intergalactic setting is pure science-fiction, the characters in Jula's Loom are human and lovable. Descendents of the pioneers who left Earth for a better life, these young people struggle with the meaning of life. Seventeen-year-old Jula ponders the concept of what makes human beings human. "I think it's something about choices," she says. "I don't have it worked out, really…But it's sort of about what makes you you or Hank Hank." Carlo, the young orphan who has adopted Jula as his mother, teaches her about love and motherhood.

Knowlton presents a creative, yet believable setting in a new universe. The inhabitants of this world hope to resist the greed and problems that harmed the planet Earth. Their goal is to develop a new society that will sustain existing natural resources, but the failings of Earth's people are always close by. When Jula and her friends find a dead body, they face the first murder on their planet. They instinctively know that their world has changed forever, and that they will change too.

Inter-species communication is possible and there have been many scientific advances; but human emotions rule in the world of this novel, along with the knowledge that nature must be conserved. The young characters are trying to learn how to blend the best of these two worlds.

Knowlton tells her story with imaginative flair. She succeeds at thoroughly developing her characters and allowing readers to get to know each one of them. Her brilliantly depicted habitats evoke pictures that capture readers' attention: Hank attracts a swarm of green butterflies that cling to him; Jula attracts blue butterflies; Carlo thinks he's different because he doesn't

have an animal companion.

Knowlton is a psychologist in Seattle. She is the author of several other books, including Jamie's Fight; Tomatoes, Squash and Babies; and the Weavers series. In Jula's Loom, she gives realism to her characters, inventive details to her settings, and clarity to her dialogue. The result is an enjoyable story, with characters that charm and a world that inflames the imagination.

Pat Avery