ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

The Apocalypse Gene
Carlyle Clark
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Imagine a dystopian world in which virtually everyone was dying of cancer and treatments were no longer effective. Then imagine you had the key to saving the world, but at great danger to yourself.

That is the premise behind the riveting new young adult fantasy novel, *The Apocalypse Gene*, set in the not-so-distant future of 2032. This is a world in which people "involute" and emit "psionic" energy, among other futuristic talents.

Olivya, the teenaged, dreadlocked protagonist living in Chi-Town (formerly Chicago) has the gift of Sight: the ability to read others' emotions by way of seeing colorful auras around them. Adventurous, feisty and a little rough around the edges, Olivya lives with her mother, who runs one of many of the hospices in the city, taking care of people whom she dubs GADs (Good-As-Deads). When she notices a malignant aura forming around her mother, she is determined to save her.

Olivya teams up with Mikah, with whom she forms an instant connection and attraction after meeting him in cyber school. Like Olivya, Mikah has a powerful gift: to delve inside others' thoughts and feelings through "telempathy." Mikah is orphaned and lives in a complex with such imposing figures as the Kindred Eldest named Changarai, the half-alive Biblical creature, Prime, and the malevolent Neo-twins, Kaiman and Ash. Mikah is not what he appears to be on the surface, though even he does not yet know his true legacy; as it turns out, Mikah's secret is intricately linked to the global pandemic.

In a journey through cyberspace (cleverly named Cy-Chi), Olivya and Mikah battle inhuman forces and millennia-old characters to save humanity from complete obliteration.

Well-developed colorful characters, such as Lylobriel and Ayvilo, Olivya's "mini me" whose language and deeds are completely unfiltered, lend both humor and intrigue to the already exciting and fast-paced story.

Authors Michelle and Clark frequently use luminous prose in this engrossing novel, as in their description of Olivya's reaction to Lylobriel's voice:

> *Oh that voice, so sweet. Rich, like the taste of vanilla ice cream, vowels like flute music, warm caramel consonants. She could float in that voice forever and not miss a thing.*

With its snappy, razor-sharp dialogue and wildly vivid imagery, the book, while geared toward young adults, has plenty for adults to enjoy as well. This is the first novel in a series by this author duo; an impressive endeavor.

Hilary Daninhirsch