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Literary

The Bird Saviors
William J. Cobb
Unbridled Books
978-1-60953-070-9
(June 12, 2012)

William Cobb daringly dips his pen into the inkwells of past, present, and future, and comes up with a story that is at once gritty and gripping, portentous yet promising, raw but redemptive.

When we meet seventeen-year-old Ruby Cole, a single mother living with her fundamentalist father, "Lord God," drought and unyielding dust storms drape the Southwest desert landscape. Dying birds signal man's demise, a killer fever is spreading like the wildfires burning nearby, and rogues and murderers are a dime a dozen. Amidst such hardship, Ruby must decide whether to yield to Lord God's plans to wed her to a man twice her age or stand her ground and carve out a life for herself and her daughter. Ruby is beguiling, her innocence and pluck in stark contrast to Lord God's unyielding stance.

But nothing is as black and white as Lord God, a disabled war vet, would have others believe. And nothing is as hopeless, either. Credit Cobb for that.

Weaving a biblical motif with social, political, economic, and environmental undertones, he does a yeoman's job of bringing together complex themes in a touching and memorable tale that readers won't soon forget. It's Cobb's prose, in particular, that breathes life into this tumultuous terrain, his every sentence dulcet in the discordance. Characters range from murderous fuel hijackers and cattle rustlers to a bottom-feeding pawnshop owner and garden-variety thugs. But there are good people here, too: a grieving "bird savior," an honorable police officer humping duty on horseback, and an imposing Native American (Crowfoot) who rescues damsels in distress when he's not meting out gentle justice or painting petroglyphs on canyon rock.

“She [Becca] wonders what George Armstrong Crowfoot has in his heart that gives him the confidence to offer his own depiction of the history of the world. There’s a daring quality to it. ‘This is amazing,’ says Becca, and immediately regrets it. The words are weak and meaningless.”

Likewise, readers will wonder what William J. Cobb has in his heart: doubtless, courage and a daring quality that gives him the confidence to render such a depiction of our world. To say *The Bird Saviors* is “amazing” is also to short-change Cobb. For his is a timeless story of love and redemption, a classic tale of good vs. evil, and a can’t-miss page-turner that leaves readers wanting more. *The Bird Saviors* was selected as an Indie Next pick for June.

Chris Henning