

The Hystery App

V. T. Davy

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Seamlessly combining themes of romance, grief, and feminism, this realistic science fiction drama, *The Hystery App*, by V. T. Davy, explores the personal and cultural intersection between women and technology.

Brogan Miller, a brilliant biophysicist with a talent for programming, has stumbled upon a remarkable discovery: an experimental satellite has gained the ability to access images of women from the past. Brogan's partner, women's history professor Honor Smith, suggests opening this ability to the world for research and educational purposes via a free app. But when Honor succumbs to terminal cancer, Brogan begins to use the app to relive their life together, ignoring both their daughter and the unsavory intentions of a giant media company.

Though it features some interesting science and commentary on the treatment of women throughout history, the book's primary focus is Brogan's grieving process. Her unwillingness to let go of the app, even after it has become clear that it isn't improving the world, parallels her need to retain Honor. The problems of being a woman in the context of the Internet, of women's consent and agency throughout history, and of academic integrity in the face of corporate greed are all cast in the light of Brogan's progression through her loss. The science fiction aspects of the story are not far enough outside the realm of current possibility to exclude drama enthusiasts.

Brogan herself is well fleshed out, a flawed and actively developing character who is easy to root for. Her daughter and parents also play dynamic roles, but the romantic interests in Brogan's life tend to be flatter. One incidental character even remarks that Brogan beatifies her deceased partner, and the book is guilty of doing the same thing. However, romance readers familiar with the concept of a perfect partner may not mind, or even notice.

The Hystery App is nicely polished and paced well. Its dramatic but thoughtful treatment of its subject matter calls to mind a feminist Nicholas Sparks. While focusing on Brogan, the book takes pains to inject issues facing women, especially in short vignettes captured by the app itself. Though interesting, these don't always mesh with the plot seamlessly, and many even seem random. Activists interested in women's rights may be willing to make the extra leap to draw connections between these short pieces and the larger story. However, these interludes are also fairly easy to gloss over in favor of the main story.

A worthwhile and fun read, *The Hystery App* is likely to appeal most to LGBT supporters and activists. However, it is also a touching love story with a good premise and an endearingly flawed main character. Expect its appeal to be broad.

ANNA CALL (April 25, 2015)

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