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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ SCIENCE FICTION

The Karadan Encounter

F.C. Young
Trafford Publishing (Mar 28, 2012)
Softcover $15.45 (220pp)
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The Karadan Encounter opens on a desolate road near Zion National Park and features both a farfetched tale of extraterrestrial visitation amid a fight for natural resources on Earth and a believable story of love at first sight with a humanoid alien. Among other repugnant things, the story also involves a lobsterlike species that can rip its prey to pieces.

High in entertainment value but lacking in technical credibility, this imaginative science-fiction novel will delight fans of the old monster movies that starred oversized crustaceans or gigantic insects. Despite the silly behavior of heroine, Courtney Sayers, an anesthesiologist in her fifties who behaves like an adolescent with an instantaneous crush on a strange man, the book is truly difficult to put down. Written with an appealing sense of humor, even though it veers into immaturity at times, the story will capture genre enthusiasts and hold them for the duration of the fast-paced plot.

Courtney's desire to assist Zak, the injured captain she discovers, is understandable; but her immediate willingness to help him on his mission to protect the planet may not seem believable to the reader, especially since she has no way of knowing that she can trust him. She boards his aircraft, meets Kaalix (a computer guidance system derived from brain tissue), and follows orders without any serious apprehension. Their goal as a newly formed team is to rescue another of the ship's officer from the Flawtl, who are aliens embedded in "hives" under the earth's surface where they seek out minerals, before they methodically mutilate him to death.

The battle scenes are straight from giant pincer hell, for the formidable creatures are capable of dismembering and then slowly consuming their semiconscious captives: "Most of his face was gone, as were his arms, legs, and genitals, as well as an awful lot of skin. What was left of him was floating in clear fluid. There were tubes coming from the side of his neck."

Occasionally Courtney lapses into casual musing, which provides introspective detail that does not advance the story: "Now for shopping. I stood at the main entrance of the mall and checked the directory. Where should I start?" With greater attention to detail and some editing to tighten up the story, F. C. Young's strong debut effort would be even better.

An eye-catching cover depicting a woman near an unidentified metal structure and a riveting excerpt from the first chapter on the back cover draw the reader into the story. Enriched with powerful weapons, healing chambers, and out-of-this-world sex, the book teeters between an intellectual what-if scenario and a grotesque I'm-going-to-eat-you tale. This creative duality is part of *The Karadan Encounter*'s appeal.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (November 14, 2012)

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