

## The XY

**Virginia Bergin**

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Virginia Bergin's thought-provoking dystopia *The XY* explores what the world might look like if it was developed only by women.

Over sixty years ago most men were wiped out by a virus. Those who remained were placed in sanctuaries for their own protection; since then, all boys are sent to sanctuaries shortly after their birth. The world was rebuilt by women, and it is a very different society than the one that came before.

River has never seen a boy, though she has been taught that they are often violent and dangerous. When she comes across a sick young man lying in the road, she is shocked and frightened but feels duty bound to help him. Her decision changes everything.

On the surface, *The XY* seems to rely on gender stereotypes. The women's society is peaceful and safe; the two male characters both exhibit aggression. But there's more to this story, in which men have become second-class citizens valued only for their sperm. The woman-dominated society still has many problems, including crime and struggles over authority.

River is an interesting lead who grew up largely without the influence of gender expectations. She is free to think and act and become whatever she chooses. Though her personality is not explored in depth, her ability to act according to her personal ethics shows her to be an independent, strong young person.

*The XY* explores ideas about stereotypes, power, and personal responsibility within a unique and intriguing world. It will leave its audience questioning the role of gender in social development.

CATHERINE THURESON (November/December 2018)

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