



Accidental Creatures

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Anne Harris' second novel moves along at a brisk pace. The heroine is Helix, a young lady who has the unfortunate handicap of possessing four arms. Helix is not the only mutant in this story, and the culprit is GeneSys, the mega-biotech company that seems to rule post-automotive industry Detroit.

Helix ends up in Vattown, a kind of ghetto which is home to the vatdivers—low-level employees of GeneSys whose job is to swim around in huge vats of toxic liquid in order to remove “impurities” and harvest organic matter that GeneSys can use for its own purposes. Not surprisingly, the vat divers are frequently getting sick and dying.

Helix, however, turns out to be not your average mutant. In spite of the fact that she thinks and acts like a sensitive, “emotionally correct” young woman of the 1990's, she is in fact of less than human origin, the brainchild of crack GeneSys scientist Hector Martin. There are a lot more of these four-armed beauties where Helix came from, and Harris indulges in some appealing metaphysical whimsy about how this band of sexy aliens came into existence. Unfortunately for GeneSys, these newcomers seem to be capable of doing a lot more than their creator intended.

The futuristic touches in ACCIDENTAL CREATURES are often clever, if a little heavy-handed, and although Harris is no prose stylist, she manages to produce a rousing climax in which GeneSys and the life forms that it has spawned fight a deadly battle for supremacy.

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