



Nabukko

K.R. Gadeken

AmazonKDP

(380pp)

979-899042132-5

Questions abound about an amnesia-afflicted space-colonizing community that holds a new girl at its margins in the exciting science fiction novel Nabukko.

In K. R. Gadeken's enticing science fiction novel *Nabukko*, a space traveler seeks acceptance in a mysterious space colony.

Under the light of an orange dwarf star, Eff, a teenager, wanders alien terrain for three months, familiarizing herself with sights, as of the

snow-capped pillars [that] protected a lush violet and black scene dotted with reddish brown undergrowth and orange-capped bushes.

Mentions of features like "a small river etched in silver [that] sparkled in the distance" are also evocative. In this intriguing landscape, Eff tries to survive by catching and eating bizarre pink creatures and by foraging moody, foreign foliage. She doesn't know how she ended up on the unidentified planet and believes that she's on it alone. But her challenges multiply when she's apprehended by two uniformed men.

Eff is ambivalent about her captors and unsettled by the fact that they share in her memory loss. The true nature of the colonists' situations remains a mystery, though Eff feels hope over their initial meeting. They offer shelter, guaranteed meals, and companionship; she no longer has to dodge vicious alien creatures and loneliness. The revelation that the crew of the Nabukko colony have their own issues with survival and secrecy upends her again.

Eff is a curious, knowledgeable heroine who never stops asking questions. This proves to be both her strength and a shortcoming at times, with the novel's progression dictated by her thwarted efforts to acclimate to her new community. She demonstrates her strengths and shares her skills but, aside from a small group of fellow teenagers, finds that people still seem bent on mistrusting her. She becomes the community's scapegoat without understanding why.

There are many unknowns throughout the text, though conversations between Eff and her romantic interests in the community are used to reveal clues about the colonists' backgrounds, piquing curiosity. Eff also has numerous flashbacks and dreams that proffer insights into her life before, via images of her parents, a space crew, and her education. Still, much of the book's suspense is wrapped up in the fact that for each question that Eff is able to answer, new questions arise, with people hiding information from Eff throughout and prompting questions about how she'll manage to survive, even though she's no longer alone. Because the stakes rise just as Eff seems to be developing real friendships, the book generates interest in subsequent volumes.

In the trilogy-opening science fiction novel *Nabukko*, a teenager witnesses the everyday challenges of colonizing a distant planet.

CLARISSA ADKINS (May 10, 2024)

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