

The Verge of Extinction

G.A. Velky

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The Verge of Extinction opens after several earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and a major tsunami have wreaked havoc on the landscape of the American West. The world has irreparably changed, and surviving humans have formed little communities in the remaining dry areas. In this brave new world, a teenage boy named Nathan wonders what happened to his missing scientist father. He also hopes that Cyndi, a girl he's always liked, is still alive. Determined to discover the truth, Nathan sneaks away from his mother and sets out on a dangerous journey.

The Verge of Extinction is skillfully crafted by G.A. Velky, who guides Nathan through a mysterious and threatening landscape. This new world comes to life in part by Velky's striking descriptions: "Today would apparently be like most days now; nothing more than a vague softened disk of sun was arising in the east, the hazy glow visible only between fast moving patches of morning fog."

In some ways, Nathan is like a futuristic Huckleberry Finn. While Huck's adventure spotlighted the disagreeable racial customs in the South, however, Nathan's journey is a critique of the modern world's unwillingness to deal with its own pending ecological disaster. A geologist and outdoorsman, Velky explains the problems caused by global warming clearly. While they're part of a definitive history to Nathan, the contemporary reader may begin asking, "Is that true? Is that how that's going to happen?"

Unfortunately, the global warming preoccupation takes over the story and Velky's writing develops a preachy tone. For instance, Nathan and Cyndi escape a life-threatening situation on Pike's Peak, and are saved by friends. For several pages, their dialogue feels less like a conversation than an earth science lecture. Even if it sets up the rest of the tale, the conversation brings the adventure to a grinding halt at a crucial point in the tale.

Nonetheless, *The Verge of Extinction* is a thought-provoking adventure for all ages. The conscientious reader can only hope that it motivates earthlings to avoid a disastrous future.

KATERIE PRIOR (March 17, 2011)

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