



Dark Inside

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Why, in a part of the world as rich and comfortable as our own, is there this affection among writers for young people for dystopia: the desire to reduce life to a state which is in the present found in the poorest and most conflict-ridden parts of the world? I don't know the answer, but here's another book in the same vein. An earthquake has devastated the world and unleashed some kind of evil that turns most of the population into zombie killers. The novel follows the fortunes of four American survivors, two girls and two boys, as they struggle to reach some kind of safety. Some of this is inevitably familiar from previous books and films, but the novel is gripping and intriguing. Partly this is because there is no attempt to fully explain the situation, nor what makes some people killers and others survivors, except hints that there might not be much difference between them; and partly because, rather than relying on set piece confrontations with the zombies (although there are a few of these), it concentrates on the struggle of each character to survive, a struggle that involves inner resources more than weapons or strategy. Indeed, Roberts is very good on the mechanics of survival: what it means when society completely breaks down: one of the survivors is a diabetic who dies because there are no longer any properly stored supplies of insulin. The implication of the novel is that somehow the potential for evil, selfishness and moral weakness that is in all of us, and explored through her characters, is at the heart of the catastrophe. But so many questions are left at the end of the novel, where the survivors finally come together, that I suspect there may be sequels to explain and explore things further.

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