



Oryx and Crake

By Margaret Atwood

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Oryx and Crake By Margaret Atwood

Oryx and Crake is at once an unforgettable love story and a compelling vision of the future. Snowman, known as Jimmy before mankind was overwhelmed by a plague, is struggling to survive in a world where he may be the last human, and mourning the loss of his best friend, Crake, and the beautiful and elusive Oryx whom they both loved. In search of answers, Snowman embarks on a journey—with the help of the green-eyed Children of Crake—through the lush wilderness that was so recently a great city, until powerful corporations took mankind on an uncontrolled genetic engineering ride. Margaret Atwood projects us into a near future that is both all too familiar and beyond our imagining.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In *Oryx and Crake*, a science fiction novel that is more Swift than Heinlein, more cautionary tale than "fictional science" (no flying cars here), Margaret Atwood depicts a near-future world that turns from the merely horrible to the horrific, from a fool's paradise to a bio-wasteland. Snowman (a man once known as Jimmy) sleeps in a tree and just might be the only human left on our devastated planet. He is not entirely alone, however, as he considers himself the shepherd of a group of experimental, human-like creatures called the Children of Crake. As he scavenges and tends to his insect bites, Snowman recalls in flashbacks how the world fell apart.

While the story begins with a rather ponderous set-up of what has become a clichéd landscape of the human endgame, littered with smashed computers and abandoned buildings, it takes on life when Snowman recalls his boyhood meeting with his best friend Crake: "Crake had a thing about him even then.... He generated awe ... in his dark laconic clothing." A dangerous genius, Crake is the book's most intriguing character. Crake and Jimmy live with all the other smart, rich people in the Compounds--gated company towns owned by biotech corporations. (Ordinary folks are kept outside the gates in the chaotic "pleeblands.") Meanwhile, beautiful Oryx, raised as a child prostitute in Southeast Asia, finds her way to the West and meets Crake and Jimmy, setting up an inevitable love triangle. Eventually Crake's experiments in bioengineering cause humanity's shockingly quick demise (with uncanny echoes of SARS, ebola, and mad cow disease), leaving Snowman to try to pick up the pieces. There are a few speed bumps along the way, including some clunky dialogue and heavy-handed symbols such as Snowman's broken watch, but once the bleak narrative gets moving, as Snowman sets out in search of the laboratory that seeded the world's destruction, it clips along at a good pace, with a healthy dose of wry humor. --Mark Frutkin, *Amazon.ca*

From Publishers Weekly

Atwood has visited the future before, in her dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. In her latest, the future is even bleaker. The triple whammy of runaway social inequality, genetic technology and catastrophic climate change, has finally culminated in some apocalyptic event. As Jimmy, apparently the last human being on earth, makes his way back to the RejoovenEsencecompound for supplies, the reader is transported backwards toward that cataclysmic event, its full dimensions gradually revealed. Jimmy grew up in a world split between corporate compounds (gated communities metastasized into city-states) and pleeblands (unsafe, populous and polluted urban centers). His best friend was "Crake," the name originally his handle in an interactive Net game, Extinctathon. Even Jimmy's mother-who ran off and joined an ecology guerrilla group when Jimmy was an adolescent-respected Crake, already a budding genius. The two friends first encountered Oryx on the Net; she was the eight-year-old star of a pedophilic film on a site called HottTotts. Oryx's story is a counterpoint to Jimmy and Crake's affluent adolescence. She was sold by her Southeast Asian parents, taken to the city and eventually made into a sex "pixie" in some distant country. Jimmy meets Oryx much later-after college, after Crake gets Jimmy a job with ReJoovenEsence. Crake is designing the Crakers-a new, multicolored placid race of human beings, smelling vaguely of citron. He's procured Oryx to be his personal assistant. She teaches the Crakers how to cope in the world and goes out on secret missions. The mystery on which this riveting, disturbing tale hinges is how Crake and Oryx and civilization vanished, and how Jimmy-who also calls himself "the Snowman," after that other rare, hunted specimen, the Abominable Snowman-survived. Chesterton once wrote of the "thousand romances that lie secreted in *The Origin of Species*." Atwood has extracted one of the most hair-raising of them, and one of the most brilliant.

From [Booklist](#)

Surely Atwood deserved a respite after *The Blind Assassin* (2000) won the Booker Prize, but the muse had more to say, hence this hijack-intense speculative novel, sister to one of Atwood's most indelible works, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Jimmy is struggling to stay alive on a wreckage-littered Earth besieged by a brutal sun and overrun with smart and vicious test-tube-bred predators. Now calling himself Snowman (as in Abominable), he's preparing for an arduous scavenger expedition back to the formerly high-tech compound in which he lived and worked until the bioengineering industry ran amok and a catastrophic event put an end to civilization. Snowman is desperately lonely, but he isn't actually alone since he serves as guru for a strangely passive tribe unaware of the lost world of computers, bullet trains, Web porn, gene-splicing, and the plagues that Snowman so vividly and regrettfully recalls. As Snowman remembers his friend, Crake, an emotionally remote genius, as well as the love of Snowman's life, an enigmatic survivor of childhood sexual abuse called Oryx, Atwood conjures a grim, all-too-plausible future in order to consider the possibly devastating consequences of our present ill-advised biotech pursuits. Rigorous in its chilling insights and riveting in its fast-paced "what if" dramatization, Atwood's superb novel is as brilliantly provocative as it is profoundly engaging. *Donna Seaman*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Amy Hewitt:

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Delbert Lambert:

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