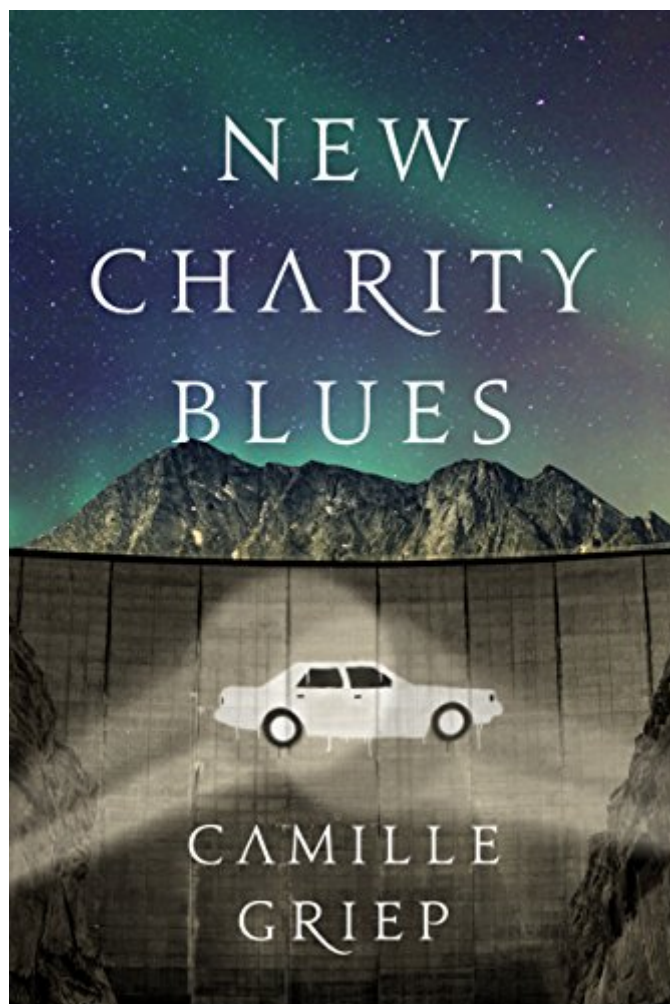


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New Charity Blues



Synopsis

In this intense, post-apocalyptic reimagining of the Trojan War epic, two women clash when loyalty, identity, community, and family are all put to the ultimate test. After a devastating plague, two communities emerge as bastions of survival. One is called the City, and its people scabble for scraps in the wasteland. The other, New Charity, enjoys the bounty of its hydroelectric dam and refuses City denizens so much as a drop of precious water. When City-dweller Cressyda inherits her father's ranch within New Charity, she becomes intent on opening the dam to all "no matter the cost. But when Syd reunites with her old best friend, Casandra, a born seer and religious acolyte, she realizes that her plans could destroy the fragile lives they've built in order to survive. What's more, the strange magic securing the dam's operations could prove deadly if disturbed. Yet when Syd discovers evidence that her father might have been murdered, she is more determined than ever to exact revenge on New Charity's corrupt. Pitted against Cas, as well as her own family, Syd must decide how to secure the survival of both settlements without tipping them over the brink to utter annihilation.

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Customer Reviews

This novel opens on a post-apocalyptic City where SpaghettiOs and canned tuna are eaten cold in the dark "or by the light of a candle" and where books are just easy fuel for a fireplace. A world where 90% of the city's populace has perished from a plague. One in which people routinely die from simpler infections that might have been cured had the medicines survived the death of refrigeration. But this is also a world in which a nearby rural community, New Charity, has most of the region's water impounded behind their dam. They have plenty of electric power and a suspicious immunity to the plague. Griep has added a potpourri of extrasensory talents to her tale of two communities dealing with the plague. Dwellers in New Charity routinely call music from the air, push plows and build dams with earth magic, cast fire from nothing, or boost the speed of racehorses by lending them air magic. At least they once did, before Cressyda left for the city to attend ballet school. Now, she would be barred from returning to the power-rich New Charity, except that she does have immunity, and she inherits a ranch from her late father, who had remained behind. Cressyda (Syd) takes her late mother's Cressida (Toyota) back to the town above the dam, determined to release the water and power for the benefit of the city. But when she arrives, she finds a community that has surrendered power to its religious leader, and a dam and power station that is carefully guarded against seizure or diversion. She is drawn into the community like a Trojan Horse, holding the seeds of its destruction within her. Speaking of which, if you're not prepared for it, the growing resemblances to the tale of the siege of Troy can be disturbing.

First of all, kudos to Camille Griep in writing such a starkly different novel from debut *Letters to Zell*. I say this not because I disliked *Letters to Zell*; quite the opposite as you see from my reflections, more reflections, and review. (I pre-ordered *New Charity Blues* without knowing anything about it simply based on my love for *Letters to Zell*.) Rather, she avoided the temptation to play it safe and to be pegged as a certain kind of writer or the tried-and-true route of writing a sequel. Granted, this is still speculative fiction; there are, after all, magical elements, but her previous world was fantasy grounded in overlapping reality whereas this novel provides a gritty, post-apocalyptic reality with magical elements. Moreover, the overall tone is grittier (while remaining less dark than the prevalent writing fashion of the day) even as she deals with similar issues of community and individuality such as: Where do our roles and obligations start and stop and when does feeling obligated result from self-abuse? How do we communicate and remain connected in the midst of having made different/difficult choices over which others differ or disapprove? When does cooperation roll-over into selling out? As much as this book is about fighting the status quo, it also speaks to how we fight. How do we avoid adopting our enemy's worst characteristics when there seems to be no

other way to â œwin?â • Finally, how the heck can a writer so deftly handle these humorous riffs on fairy tales and gritty post-apocalyptic tinged with hope stories? Seriously, if Ms. Griep was considered an up-and-coming writer before, New Charity Blues announces her as a force with which to be reckoned.

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