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The Undistancing Explores What Happens When Technology Makes Hidden Consequences Visible

Meiyen Kennedy's speculative novel brings questions of empathy, grief and responsibility into a society transformed by an invention promising relief.

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A technology designed to offer peace, healing and escape from suffering carries a more unsettling power in Meiyen Kennedy's *The Undistancing*: it can reveal the unseen consequences of every choice. The speculative novel follows Dr. Elle Sterling, who helped create the system, Eden, as its capabilities challenge both the society it promises to serve and her own beliefs about what humanity is ready to confront.

As governments struggle to control Eden, society begins changing in unpredictable ways. Elle faces a dilemma that extends beyond whether the invention can deliver its promised benefits. Its power raises the question of whether people can live without the separation between their actions and their outcomes. The technology places personal decisions and matters of global consequence within the same field of scrutiny.

The novel also gives that dilemma an intimate dimension through Elle's relationship to her brother, Jett. Confronted with different possibilities surrounding him, she carries grief, guilt and the desire to go backward and make things turn out differently. Her journey brings her toward an understanding that being present with someone can matter even when it cannot save them or change an outcome.

Kennedy identifies that value of presence as an idea that became especially meaningful during the writing of the book. It gives the story a concern distinct from the reach of Eden: how to remain with another person when intervention cannot repair what is happening. Alongside the speculative questions about a revolutionary system, the novel makes room for the limits of what people can fix.

For Kennedy, the title refers primarily to an ethical and emotional distance, not a physical one. She describes the separation that allows people to avoid seeing, knowing or feeling what occurs beyond their immediate experience. Technology drives the premise, but empathy, responsibility, grief, forgiveness and connection form the human subject of the book. Its focus is not simply the invention itself, but the habits of perception it challenges.

The Undistancing offers a particular point of entry for readers drawn to speculative fiction grounded in moral questions, as well as those reflecting on regret or second chances. Kennedy identifies everyday judgments made without knowing someone's story, and responsibility dismissed because an outcome remains out of sight, as concerns behind the novel. Her intended readership includes people reconsidering past decisions and those still facing choices they may later wish they had made differently.

*"More broadly, the message closest to my heart is the one at the center of *The Undistancing*: our choices rarely belong only to us."*

— MEIYEN KENNEDY

Meiyen Kennedy is the author of *The Undistancing*. Fascinated by human behavior, she often begins her fiction with impossible premises. Her writing explores identity, faith, sacrifice, redemption and grace, including the tension between conviction and fear.

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