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An Arizona cautionary horror tale



Margot Harrison, *"The Glare"* Hyperion 2020.

Hedda lives on a small ranch in Arizona with her mother. They have goats and chickens, a garden, books ... but no "glare," Hedda's word for anything to do with computers, iPads, and iPhones. She knows the lack of technology in her life has something to do with a computer experience that left her "off-kilter" when she was six. She also remembers that a baby sitter she was fond of poured drain cleaner in her eyes because of something dreadful she saw on a computer, and still insisted, "I can still see it!" But she doesn't know the whole story. She is about to find out; her mother is going to spend a month or two nursing a friend who is dying in Australia, and for

the first time in 10 years, Hedda is going to spend time in San Francisco with her father, step-mother, halfbrother -- and the world of the glare. Her mother is clearly worried about her and has made her father promise to expose Hedda to computers as little as possible. Hedda resents that protectiveness; she's 16, fully in enough control of her life to prevent herself from going "off-kilter" in the real world. She even plans to persuade her father to let her go to high school

rather than continuing the home schooling she's used to. Even though she's sure she's prepared, Hedda is shocked at the ubiquity of the glare. Screens are everywhere in the airport. Her father initially limits his cell phone use (as for example, not consulting it at the dinner table), but her 9-year-old stepbrother can hardly take his eyes off his phone and spends all his free time gaming. When she re-meets the friends of her childhood, Hedda finds they're on their phones all the time too. Gradually, she becomes accustomed to it and starts using her phone ... which gets her to the dark web and a game called Glare. It brings back odd childhood memories; so do her old friends' stories of what a precocious gamer she had been. Interested in her

memories, she sends Glare to her closest friend, not realizing how easily it can be shared. Soon, terrible things start happening to the friends who have played the game; one girl rushes off a cliff, another is found dead in his car. And Hedda, helped by the brother of her long-ago babysitter, decides she must face down the terrible, unreal but all-too-real things she is seeing and find out who is perpetrating the Glare.

Teens who spend a lot of time gaming will probably like this book, though they may be scornful of Hedda's reactions to a society hooked to its phones. People who spend a lot of time on their phones (like Hedda's father, whose attention is

always divided between whoever he is talking to in the flesh and his phone) may or may not heed the obvious warning about too



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much cell use. The plot picks up a little halfway through, when its cautionary message develops into a technological horror novel. Altogether, it's a fast read that may attract kids who prefer screens to books.