



Sarah Canary

By Karen Joy Fowler



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Why does homesick Chinese railway worker Chin Ah Kin risk his life countless times in fevered pursuit of "the ugliest woman he could imagine?" Is Sarah Canary, the mute, misshapen object of Chin's confused affections, a vampire, an apparition, a shape-shifter, a feral child, a murderess? These are just a few of the intriguing questions that will keep readers turning the pages of this buoyant first novel set in and around the Washington territories in 1873. When Sarah Canary wanders into Chin's railway camp, his uncle orders him to escort her away. Far away. In the first of many such instances, the well-intentioned Chin misplaces her. When both resurface some days later at an insane asylum, Chin has run afoul of the law and Sarah has been committed for observation. Their escape from the asylum in the company of another inmate--BJ, a wonderfully drawn "sane" madman--sets into motion a series of adventures and misadventures at turns hilarious, deeply moving and downright terrifying. A picaresque romp that takes a good, long look into the human heart, this is a stunning debut. 35,000 first printing; \$35,000 ad/promo; author tour. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Chin Ah Kin is the reluctant hero of this search across Washington Territory for Sarah Canary. The year is 1873, one that holds promise for the emancipation of women, yet things couldn't be worse for Sarah. Chin first encounters her when she suddenly appears on the periphery of his camp. Because Sarah only speaks nonsense, Chin decides she is crazy and sets off with her to an asylum in Stellacoom. But because of her inability to communicate, Sarah soon becomes separated from Chin. Without her to justify his presence in the wilderness, Chin becomes the scapegoat for all the evil deeds around him. Fowler skillfully arranges characters and plot against a backdrop of American history, which becomes inspiration for her satiric wit. Although her unsentimental view is refreshing, Fowler overstates her case in the final chapter, for the reader already sees the unflattering reflection of racism and sexism in contemporary America. Recommended. - *Janet W. Reit, Univ. of Vermont Lib., Burlington* Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus Reviews

Fowler's remarkable debut recounts the 19-century adventures of a mysterious wild woman--and of the Chinese railway worker, insane-asylum escapee, suffragette, and exhibitor of circus freaks who pursue her through the Washington Territory--in this baroque tale of mystery, cruelty, and wonder as bombastically excessive as Barnum and Bailey itself. No one in Chin Ah Kin's half-hidden campsite in Washington Territory wants to acknowledge the presence of the dirty, shockingly bad-looking white woman who hovers at the edge of their forest clearing. White women mean trouble to Chinese railworkers, some of whom are being killed for sport in the larger California cities. When the woman begins warbling, singing, and babbling loudly, though, Chin's uncle orders him to escort the woman back to the nearby insane asylum from which she obviously came. Chin obeys, and so begins a wild-goose chase that leads the dutiful Chinaman through terrifying forests, into confinement at the asylum, into jail (where he must hang an Indian to buy his own freedom), and through countless other escapades he never would have imagined or wished for. Who is the mysterious Sarah Canary, so called because of her disturbing, nonsensical warbling? Each new encounter brings a fresh invention of Sarah's past: an exhibitor of freaks claims that Sarah was raised by wolves in Alaska. Adelaide Dixon, solitary and opinionated suffragette, claims that she's on the lam after murdering her abusive husband. To Chin, Sarah is an ever-elusive mystery, captivating in her very unresponsiveness to other mortals and in her determination to remain free. A fascinating romp, in which actual events are so cleverly intertwined with the author's fanciful inventions that the reader grows unsure which to disbelieve. --

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jerry Brock:

This Sarah Canary book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is actually information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. This Sarah Canary without we understand teach the one who reading it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry Sarah Canary can bring any time you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even mobile phone. This Sarah Canary having good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Mark Gibson:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be revise about what going on or facts even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era and that is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what one you should start with. This Sarah Canary is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

Eula Johnson:

Do you one among people who can't read pleasurable if the sentence chained from the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This Sarah Canary book is readable by means of you who hate the straight word style. You will find the information here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to deliver to you. The writer associated with Sarah Canary content conveys prospect easily to understand by a lot of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the information but it just different in the form of it. So , do you still thinking Sarah Canary is not loveable to be your top record reading book?

Kathleen Carroll:

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