

[PDF] Passage

C. Willis - pdf download free book



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Description:

Most of us would rather not spend a lot of time contemplating death, but the characters in Connie Willis's novel *Passage* make a living at it. Joanna Lander is a medical researcher specializing in Near Death Experiences (NDEs) and how the brain constructs them. Her partner in this endeavor is Richard Wright, a single-minded scientist who induces NDEs in healthy people by injecting a compound that tricks the brain into thinking it's dying. Joanna and Richard team up and try to find test subjects whose ability to report their experiences objectively hasn't been wrecked by reading the books of pop-psychologist and hospital gadabout Maurice Mandrake. Mandrake has gained fame and fortune by convincing people that they can expect light, warmth, and welcoming loved ones once they die. Joanna and Richard try to quantify NDEs in more scientific terms, a frustrating

exercise to say the least.

The brain cells started to die within moments of death. By the end of four to six minutes the damage was irreversible, and people brought back from death after that didn't talk about tunnels and life reviews. They didn't talk at all.... But if the dying were facing annihilation, why didn't they say, "It's over!" or, "I'm shutting down"?... Why did they say, "It's beautiful over there," and, "I'm coming, Mother!"

When Joanna decides to become a test subject and see an NDE firsthand, she discovers that death is both more and less than she expected. Telling anything at all about her experience would be spoiling the book's suspenseful buildup, but readers are in for some shocks as Willis reveals the secrets and mysteries of the afterlife. Unfortunately, several running gags--the maze-like complexity of the hospital, Mandrake's oily sales pitch, and a tiresomely talkative World War II veteran--go on a little too long and threaten the pace of the story near the middle. But don't stop reading! We expect a lot from Connie Willis because she's so good, and *Passage*'s payoff is incredible--the ending will leave you breathless, and more than a little haunted. *Passage* masterfully blends tragedy, humor, and fear in an unforgettable meditation on humanity and death. --*Therese Littleton* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly In a departure from her usual historical theme, Willis (*Miracle and Other Christmas Stories*) pries open the door at the end of the tunnel of Near Death Experience (NDE) while holding firmly to her endearing brand of exasperated humor. Dr. Joanna Lander, a psychologist separating the truth from the expected in NDEs, is talked into working with Dr. Richard Wright (pun intended), a neurologist testing his theory that NDEs are a survival mechanism by simulating them with psychoactive drugs. When navigating the maze of the hospital in which the cafeteria is never open, dodging Mr. Mandrake who writes popular books on NDEs and fabricates most of his accounts and finding uncorrupted participants for their experiments becomes too difficult, Joanna herself goes under. What she finds on the Other Side almost drives her and Richard apart, while solving the mystery of what it means almost drives her mad. Joanna holds nothing back as she searches her mind and her experience; readers will be able to puzzle out the answers just as she does. That this work is less tightly packed than most of Willis's novels somewhat undercuts the tension. Even so, the plot twists, the casual wit and the enjoyable characters will satisfy fans. The shocking occurrence 100 pages from the end is a good indication of Willis's power as a writer.

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