



## The Apollo Illusion

*Shari Lopatin*

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**\*\* Nothing is ever what it seems. \*\* From award-winning journalist Shari Lopatin comes her highly praised and riveting debut novel, "The Apollo Illusion," a science fiction and dystopian suspense about a future society's frightening over-dependence on technology.**

The year is 2150, and bullied nineteen-year-old Flora can no longer ignore the burning curiosity to learn what's behind the towering Wall surrounding her home state of Apollo. Citizens still read books, discuss philosophy, and send text messages, but questioning The Other Side is forbidden.

When Flora's naïveté accidentally reveals a dark secret about Apollo, she's forced into an isolated web of truth, lies, and survival. Fearing for her life, she leaves behind a clue for her childhood friend, Andrew, placing her last hope in their special bond.

A must-read for today's generation of older teenagers and millennials, THE APOLLO ILLUSION is a story for the hackers, the techies, the seekers, and the rebels of the world.

SPECS:

- \* Audience: young adults (older teens) and millennials
- \* Rating: PG-13 for some sexuality and occasional language
- \* Genres: dystopian suspense, science fiction, speculative fiction, YA

## The Apollo Illusion Details

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## From Reader Review The Apollo Illusion for online ebook

### Jessa Julian says

Normally, I think dystopian novels are OK. I think they have an interesting premise, but I find that most authors overdo the concept. This makes it excessively difficult for me to buy into the world that they're selling. Then comes Shari Lopatin with one of the best books I've been asked to review in my last two years of blogging. I'm so flipping in love with this book that I was begging it not to end. When it did end, as all good things must sadly do, I stared at my Kindle with an absolutely blank face hoping that my Kindle had simply put the About the Author page in the document too early as some kind of sick joke. Unfortunately, I was only kidding myself.

I talk about characters in all of my reviews, so let's start there. Lopatin has dominated the world of character creation. These kids may be teenagers, but they are so stinking realistic that I forgot that I was reading fiction for a little while. I could definitely see any of the students that I teach doing all of the things that Andrew, Flora, Don, and even Sophie do. This was awesome from a general reader's point of view, but to a teacher that's a dang magic trick. If I can see my kids in those parts so easily, they would see themselves in those roles. If they do that, they would be more likely to give Lopatin's message some real thought.

My favorite character of the bunch was definitely Don. I LOVED HIM. Lopatin, if you're reading this I'm mad and you know why. \*Insert angry tears of rage and pain here\* He was an absolute enigma at the beginning and once he makes more sense to the readers, there will be an absolute soft spot in your heart for this little guy. Andrew, however, was a close second. He's your everyday, run-of-the-mill, doofy teenaged dude but he grows and becomes SO MUCH MORE! It is beautiful to watch the romance unfold between him and Flora. It is very organic and feels as obvious as the romance between Ron and Hermione. Please for the love of all things wonderful, allow me to live in my fantasy world where these two grow up, get married, and have a child. I hope they name their son Jaron after their friend from The Other Side.

Lopatin has a very important message in this novel. In fact, it was so terrifyingly real that I almost couldn't finish the book because I was spooked. Lopatin introduces a world in which people have become so dependent upon electronics that they can't think for themselves. YIKES! That sounds a little too real. I am terrified of this message because I see so many of my kids who need calculators or other electronic assistance for things that we were forced to use our brains for (I'm 25 and I teach high school. It's not like I'm ancient!). The teacher in me loves it. I want to give a copy of this book to every single one of my students so that we can have the important discussion that would result from the theme of this novel. Students need this to be pointed out to them. Some of them couldn't care less. Others might be as spooked as I was.

If you like The 100, George Orwell, or any sci-fi and dystopian novels, please read this book. YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT. And, if you don't like it. I'll read it again and enjoy it in your place.

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### **Jerry Lopatin says**

I found the book to be absolutely fascinating, capturing my imagination from the very start. All of the characters are brought to life in a very realistic fashion. The author was capable of creating a futuristic world that the reader could easily understand and buy into, with technology that really gets your own imagination going. I have often walked away from books that did not have the ability to grab my interest from the onset and maintain it. This book does that.... keeps your interest the entire way through. You want to keep reading to find out in what direction the author's imagination will take you. Both the personal side to the characters will draw you in as well as the thoughtfulness of futuristic technologies and how they interplay within the society which the author has created. All of this has been masterfully done. The book makes for thoughtful deliberation upon what is happening within our society today, both politically and socially. Lots to think about! This book deserves a well-earned 5 stars. I'm looking forward to a follow-up story. I definitely recommend this book!

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### **Zoe's Human says**

There were many things about this novel I enjoyed, and as a freshman effort, it was good. However, there were some glaring issues as well as some things I disliked as an individual and a feminist.

The writing, in terms of the actual prose, was good. It was paced nicely, it flowed well, and the dialogue, which is a tough thing to write, felt like actual conversation. I loved the universe. It's a great dystopian society with some nuance to it that asks the reader to examine some complex questions about what totalitarianism is and what we do when moral priorities are seemingly in conflict. (view spoiler)

Unfortunately, there were some bits that felt like last minute solutions to plot gaps. (view spoiler) While I can suspend disbelief for any number of things while taking in a book, I've never been able to accept characters behaving in manners that are inconsistent with their character or human nature. Ultimately, these particular segments stretched the bounds of credulity for me.

The final thing I disliked was both personal and political. Anyone who has read a few of my reviews knows that I'm not a big fan of the romance. There is a romantic subplot in this one. It is relatively low key, and I might have been able to ignore it EXCEPT ... (view spoiler)

All in all, I think there's some promise here. Shari Lopatin can clearly write well and has a great imagination. I hope to see work in the future where her plot devices are a bit less obvious and where her romantic relationships are forged between equal partners who respect one another. (Or are non-existent. I'm totally fine with no romance at all.)

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*I received a complimentary copy of this book via a Goodreads giveaway. Many thanks to all involved in providing me with this opportunity.*

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## **Becca Braunstein says**

### The Apollo Illusion

I am a sucker for a good dystopian novel-and The Apollo Illusion did not disappoint!

The characters are well thought out and realistic for their too good to be true lives that they lead. Flora provides the reader with a heroine worth rooting for throughout the entire novel.

Shari gives us a frightening glimpse into what society would be like if the government controlled all of our information while isolating us from the rest of the world. I was captivated by the mystery of what was behind the wall and why it was built. And I couldn't put it down until I knew whether the government was protecting its people or if the rest of the world was being protected from the people inside Apollo.

As a working mom who loves the Hunger Games and other Young Adult mystery novels, this book fit nicely into my niche. This book captures its audience from the first page, all the way until the exciting conclusion. Additionally, just like Pixar's Wall-E forced us to see what our lives could be like if we stopped caring for our planet, the Apollo Illusion forces us to look at what life could be like if we continue down this dangerous path of living our lives mostly online with no personal interaction. I enjoyed this book immensely and hope for a sequel!

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## **Laura says**

The romance side of things is a big part of the story. It doesn't feel forced or overly cheesy. I didn't feel like it added much to the story but then again I am not a romance kind of person. I liked how the story is hinting at a possible future that could happen to us in this day and age. Just the right push in a specific way could end up like this world the Author built. Where one side information is controlled so specifically. Or the other side where technology tells you when to brush your teeth when to go to sleep when to go loo.

The story made you think, is it better to be ignorant or not? Is the price of happiness worth it? It made you engage your brain and think.

It was a very slow burner, even when 'action' happened it didn't really feel like action. The pace was very steady, didn't feel like it really spiked at all.

(The Author loves sweet potato casserole. I have never seen it mentioned so much in my life.)

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## **Kristin Eveld says**

The Apollo Illusion is a futuristic novel that follows Flora, Andrew and Don as they look for answers about the world outside of Apollo. The Apollo Illusion is set in Northern Arizona, and is very well written in an easy to read format. Shari does a wonderful job of painting a picture of a society that appears idealistic, however you quickly realize that there is a lot more going on beneath the surface than the citizens of Apollo are aware. Throughout the book the looming question of "What is beyond the wall?" keeps your interest and I thoroughly enjoyed this novel.

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### **Elinor Stone says**

The Apollo Illusion is the realistic evolution of the dystopian genre; a must-read for the book lover who is stirred by storytelling that is directly influenced by the current state of the world. Because of this, you cannot help but find yourself immersed in the story while reflecting on our present cultural trends. You can feel the change of landscapes the author creates, as well as connecting with the main characters. I found that joining them on their journey was exciting and suspenseful. Shari Lopatin's writing style so vivid and honest, and I appreciate it being the right length for creating the imagery. I personally do not enjoy reading 4 pages about what it's like to stand in a forest. I would recommend this book to anyone who is entertained and engaged by the dystopian story, or pondering the future of the world. I've started telling friends about this book even with a few pages still left to read, and now that I'm finished, I can't wait to discuss it with a fellow reader!

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### **Raschelle Mullette says**

*The Apollo Illusion* is an enthralling dystopian story. Once I started reading, I could not put it down. The story is compelling and holds your attention to the very end. In a George Orwell-type of way, this story makes you think about the future of society, especially given today's climate about truth, privacy, and privilege.

The story is well-written and captivating. You are immediately sucked into the lives of the characters. Shari weaves together mystery, political commentary, and ordinary life into a believable story about a girl who is seeking the truth about what lies beyond the towering wall surrounding her home state of Apollo.

*The Apollo Illusion* will leave you with many issues to think about, such as the control of information and the power of propaganda, both of which are hot topics in today's society. I believe the story does present extremes of both sides, but it does give one a glimpse into what society could become if we go too far in any direction.

I found it to be an enjoyable read and would recommend it to anyone who enjoys reading.

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### **Rebecca says**

Before anyone begins to read too far into my review, I feel I should be transparent and offer the disclaimer that the author, Shari, is my sister. Anyone who feels this lessens the credibility of my review, feel free to read on to the next review (no hard feelings, I get it). Placing aside my personal connection to the author, I truly was intrigued and captivated by the world I was brought into upon first reading *The Apollo Illusion*. A world is created which makes us question, which is better, blissful ignorance to reality, or uncomfortable and sometimes terrifying awareness of the authentic world? It also allows us to be transported into a world that begs the question, what is authentic as technology progresses, and what is real? This story keeps you questioning what will happen next. Two of my favorite books growing up were Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, and George Orwell's *1984*. The world created in *The Apollo Illusion* holds its own unique, new, and striking dystopian tale which anyone who has loved these great, classic novels as I do, would likely be engrossed in.

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## Victoria says

The author, Shari Lopatin, of The Apollo Illusion contacted me a few months ago about sending me a Kindle version of her book that will be released on May 19th for me to write up a review about the book! I've been asked in the past by authors to do this and am really picky about what I read (many times I decline, but this is the third time I accepted). I don't want to be bored out of my mind or feel forced to read a book in general. Thankfully, this book actually captivated me quickly.

This is pretty much a Science Fiction story for young adults and older teens, both, which I am not of. I read Young Adult books regularly though and prefer them to a lot of adult books, as a way to unwind and break from human trafficking stories I read constantly. It gives my mind time to escape reality.

Let me give you a synopsis of what is happening early on in the story. It starts out in 2150. I can't even imagine how life is going to change in that time when so much has changed in the past 25 years alone.

The Apollo Illusion has two main characters who each give us their perspectives throughout the book. Flora is 19 and has been enjoying college life. She studies hard, but she has a fascination with exploring and indulging her curiosities. Andrew is also 19 and has been Flora's best friend since they were about eight years old. He will go on these explorations with her, but has to keep her reigned in because he really doesn't want to get into any trouble.

The name of the place where they live is called Apollo. There is a large wall that borders where they live, but no one has actually seen it. Flora wants to see it so badly. That is when she meets Don, another guy her age who smokes and seems mysterious. He might have some of the answers to her questions about the Wall, but Andrew doesn't seem to like Don at all!

To give you an idea of content within this book, I actually wish that Shari Lopatin had warned me about the sexual content in this. At first I was just annoyed because Andrew is thinking about breasts and doing things with some young women and expresses it early on. I feel like sometimes when those things are mentioned, it was not done well and makes him look really bad and unintelligent. It doesn't really set his character up for how cool and wonderful he is later. It makes him just look like a womanizer with no actual brains. I feel the book didn't need that. Also there is an entire sex scene in this book. I don't want to read about sex scenes at all. If the books about human trafficking I read about can talk about sex without describing it, so can this. That deducted a star rating from me. There is some bad language in the book, though not a lot, yet the ones that are said are pretty much all of the F word. There is violence in the book too. Definitely the parts where it is talked about is not gruesome.

The story as a whole was really well written, but I think towards the end the author wanted to give explanations about things, while not fully explaining other things, which depicts how real life is. Sometimes we don't know everything and other times we learn too much at once that it is hard to comprehend. I think in a way there could have been a little more balance for how much was shared at once. It was really interesting to learn though!

Some of this story reminds me of Logan's Run, The Island, 1984 (which is even mentioned in the book), and The Village but with its own unique take on things. Some of the technology explained in it is original and really good. Also, the fact that many times in such stories people try to get out to find a better world, but

perhaps something to think about is that the world where we came from isn't so bad even though it is not perfect. I felt that was unique.

I feel like this book ended strangely, but not necessarily poorly. It was as if you want to say, "But what now? What about that other world? Is there anything more that can be done?" Perhaps the point of this book is that we are to become victim to something regardless and that sometimes we can't completely overcome every obstacle, but perhaps we have to accept things as they are in order to protect the people we love. It is a little sad to think about. It still didn't have a bad ending at all though. I am glad I read it. It gave a lot of food for thought. There is a lot I can't say here since I am not into giving away spoilers.

I give this book 3.5 stars.

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### **Bradley says**

Sometimes the hardest part of reviewing a book is telling the prospective reader that their impressions of the first quarter of a book should not be the expectation they should have by the end.

For me, and with little more to go on other than the feeling like I was reading another The Giver mixed with an impression that this was another 1984 in spirit, my expectations led me to believe that scales would fall from eyes. And they do. But also because this is a YA dystopia with a lot of the feel of Divergent, we can also expect some resistance action. And we do.

But then, the difficulties of leaving home eventually lands us in a very futuristic world and I'm now sitting upright and enjoying the ride. The home of Apollo is not what it seems at all, and this particular quest of discovery makes the rest of the book a lot more enjoyable. For me. After all, I've read perhaps too many of these to get really surprised anymore. :)

Add a bit of Twelve Monkeys, hacker collectives, and a very decently-built world that has a lot more to say than I usually see in these kinds of novels, and the novel fairly hops along with all it's missing people, the despair of whole populaces, and a completely disconnected and probably schizophrenic society.

In other words, it's a pretty realistic description of our world. :)

So, all told, I was underwhelmed at first and excited for the rest. This is a very decent read.

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### **Karen E says**

In a world of turmoil created by a Virtual Revolution in 2075, Ms. Lopatin spins a story of suspense where Flora, a curious college student and her friends, Andrew and Don, seek answers to what is beyond the wall that surrounds their idealistic home near Flagstaff, Arizona, called Apollo. Ms. Lopatin's writing style is fast paced and I found myself reading the book in a day! I was always excited to return to find out what lay beyond. The frightening realization of what lies beyond does not seem that impossible to me. As the secrets of the other side are revealed, one can visualize the actual possibility of the revolution happening if our world does not get the digital over dependency under control. I would highly recommend this novel to those whose minds seek curiosity and possibilities.

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## John Coon says

I'm a sucker for compelling sci-fi stories and the premise of this book hooked me.

It is set in 2150 in a state named Apollo that has formed out of a portion of the former United States. Flora, a 19-year old college student, is driven by a thirst to find out what lies behind the wall that surrounds Apollo. On the surface, her home state appears to be a utopia of reading and learning. In reality, a sinister Orwellian undercurrent exists that threatens to envelop anyone who dares to question what lies beyond the Wall or even discuss it for that matter. Flora finds herself thrown into danger when her curiosity leads her to try to dig up more about the Wall and its purpose and is rapidly drawn into a technological nightmare.

I enjoyed *The Apollo Illusion* very much. This is an engrossing and engaging story. You sympathize with Flora's naive curiosity and desire to probe at life beyond her bullied circumstances. Flora and Andrew are unique and dynamic POV characters who give the narrative a strong foundation. This is a story that's well-written and the mysteries contained within the plot draw you in and keep you hooked from one page to the next.

*The Apollo Illusion* should occupy a spot on the to-read list of any true dystopian sci-fi fan.

My verdict: Five stars.

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## Manny says

Dear Shari,

Thank you for sending me your book. When I picked it up and glanced at the back cover, I had a weird moment, because you look quite a lot like our Russian friend Genia. And then when I read it, I had another weird moment at the point where one of the characters discovers, completely out of the blue, that they have terminal cancer. That's just what happened to Genia, and a month later she was dead. We miss her very much.

One of Genia's best qualities was that she was always totally honest, in that way that Russians seem to do better than anyone else in the world. When she didn't like something, she said so straight out. And to honour her memory, I also need to be honest and say that I didn't like the style of your book at all. But then I never like the style of YA books, and I am the wrong age to be reading it, so please don't take that too hard. I decided after the first couple of chapters that I would probably have appreciated this most when I was about twelve, so for the rest of the book I tried to hand over control to twelve-year-old me. As I'd promised, I brought it with me for a long plane flight. Twelve-year-old me started reading when we were somewhere over Greece, and he didn't put it down until he finished somewhere near Qatar, so I'm pretty sure he enjoyed it. I'm now in Dubai, and we're writing this review together.

It's a good story, and it makes some nice points about the world we live in that many twelve year olds would do well to think about. The world really is quite astonishingly fucked up. You never know who's acting in your best interests and who's trying to destroy you, and often the other people involved aren't too sure either.

Sometimes they do terrible things while thinking they're acting in your best interests, and sometimes they save your life despite not actually liking you much. Things are rarely what they seem to be. In particular, you can be sure that the government is lying to you a lot of the time about really important matters. And sex, when you're a teen and trying to figure it out, is also terribly confusing. People can do very nasty things when they want sex, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are nasty people.

It looks like this is your first novel and I hope it won't be your last. It reminded me a bit of Philip K. Dick's *The Penultimate Truth*. PKD had amazing ideas, but he was a sloppy writer. He needed an editor to supply external discipline, and he was lucky enough to find himself a terrific editor for a while; that collaboration produced his two finest books, *The Man in the High Castle* and *A Scanner Darkly*. Every author has to discover their own solutions, and I'm sure you will work out yours.

Good luck!

Manny

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### **Cyana Scriptora says**

Welcome to a world that is frightening and yet, oh so hauntingly familiar. This book will make you wonder about our society and the type of future our children could inherit...

Flora has always loved her life in Apollo, especially the clean, pleasant community of three person families, she calls trilogies. In Apollo, education is free to all and artistic expressions are encouraged. Life is good with her best friend Andrew, so why can't she just put her curiosity aside? Despite Andrew's warnings, she is compelled by this illusive puzzle that is.. the wall.

Then suddenly, a mysterious boy shows up in her history class and the comments he makes propels Flora into a new way of thinking, Apollo is hiding something, and now she can't let her suspicions rest.

Determined to discover the answers to her questions, she probes deeper... and just as curious Alice fell down a rabbit hole, so too, will Flora face her own darkness.

This story starts off almost like a contemporary. You're introduced to this close-knit society and you can't help but love the friendship between Flora and Andrew and then Don enters the picture and things get very, very, interesting.

I was enthralled once I got about half way through the book. The author raises a lot questions about society, technology, the evil of our world in regards to social injustice, and equality, themes that we all can relate to, and delivers the suspense and action of a wonderful sci-fi adventure. Dual character perspective, elaborate world-building, and a smooth delivery of a mysterious plot-line with enough suspense and romance to interests any age or gender. Highly recommend if you want a light sci-fi/quick enjoyable read.

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