



## The Jailing of Cecelia Capture

*Janet Campbell Hale*

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## **The Jailing of Cecelia Capture** Janet Campbell Hale

Cecelia Capture Welles, an Indian law student and mother of two, is jailed on her thirtieth birthday for drunk driving. Held on an old welfare fraud charge, she reflects back on her life on the reservation in Idaho, her days as an unwed mother in San Francisco, her marriage to a white liberal, and her decision to return to college. This mixed inheritance of ambition and despair brings her to the brink of suicide.

*"The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is a beautifully written book. Janet Campbell Hale's gifts are genuine and deeply felt."--Toni Morrison"

## **The Jailing of Cecelia Capture Details**

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Author : Janet Campbell Hale

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## From Reader Review The Jailing of Cecelia Capture for online ebook

### Sophia says

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture is a very unique portrayal of the effects of trauma and hardship on a native woman. If you don't know much about Native American's history of discrimination, this is a perfect foundation for starting to learn. And even if you do, it's an essential book to add to one's knowledge. We start with Cecelia, being brought into jail for a potential DUI charge, only to find that it may not be the only reason she's there. As we progress, the book reflects on her life and her experiences leading up to where she is now. We reflect on Cecelia's past detailing poverty, abuse, alcoholism, family ties, ethnicity, toxic masculinity, suicide, and identity. It's important to have a good balance of self-care and caring for others, and we see that Cecelia tends to put this on the backburner throughout most of her life. We base so much of our lives off of human interaction, and from a very young age we see Cecelia being shamed by her parents not only for her love life, her body, and her personality, but her own ethnicity. If our own ethnicity is challenged, then where does one's soul lay? In literal terms, the 'jailing' referred to in the title is expressed through the incarceration, but it could also mean that she is a prisoner in her own body. This book is not only metaphorical, as the title suggests (the 'capturing' or 'jailing' of Cecelia) but it is also strikingly truthful. Us as readers play the waiting game, just as our main focus, Cecelia. We know just as much as she does, and it almost feels as if we are in the jail cell with her, anxiously waiting for answers. In the beginning we immediately have so many questions, and as time goes on we slowly learn more and more, which makes the book absolutely impossible to put down. The clever use of flashbacks whilst present-day spans over the course of just a few days, we get a true glimpse of the manifestation of thoughts happening whilst waiting in a jail cell, mixed with the thoughts and reflections that can push one over the edge.

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### Sammi says

This is a tricky one. I'm not quite sure how to rate this. I had to read it for the summer class I'm taking online. It was a fast read for sure and much better than most of the other works that I've been assigned in my previous semesters (other English majors know the struggle). It was definitely interesting and never boring. It's basically a very intimate look into the dysfunctional, terribly flawed life of Cecelia Capture. I guess the reason for my confusion as to what to rate the book is that I don't quite know what I think of Cecelia herself. Is she worth reading about? Her story, while sad and sometimes just disgusting to read about, is definitely interesting. Do I feel bad for her? I did sometimes. Other times she really ticked me off with her poor lifestyle choices. But in the end, I have to say I enjoyed this a lot more than I thought I would, and was pretty satisfied with the ending, when Cecelia's resilience shone through. It's a story that I'll definitely remember, and one that I found myself truly interested in throughout (it didn't even feel like I was forcing myself to slog through a book for school). And that's a good sign.

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### Emily says

*The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*, by Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene), follows the difficult life of a Native woman grappling with her past and struggling to look to the future.

Cecelia Capture Welles is pursuing a law degree in San Francisco, living on her own hundreds of miles away

from her husband and two children and managing her own life for the first time in more than a decade—but on her thirtieth birthday, she is jailed for drunk driving. As she waits to be released, Cecelia starts to reflect on her life and the things that have brought her where she is today. Told through a series of flashbacks and musings on her current circumstances, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* slowly reveals Cecelia's troubled past, detailing her struggles as a Native woman dealing with abuse, racism, sexism, classism, and self-destructive decisions.

*The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is not an easy read—and it's really not meant to be. Cecelia struggles with PTSD and depression. Her self-reflection is not light-hearted; looking back at her life involves grappling with the effects of abuse, racism, and a slew of self-destructive activities. Even the narrative is difficult to follow at times—the story seems filtered through Cecelia's own dissociative state, a hazy series of painful memories and muddled observations of her current circumstances. At times, Cecelia's commentary seems detached and impersonal—and sometimes the narrative jumps to another character altogether for a few paragraphs.

Confusing as it was, this disjointed narrative was, in my opinion, the strongest part of the book, and it really demonstrated Hale's capabilities as an author. As someone who has struggled with mental illness, including depression, I found this dissociation uncomfortably familiar. My life may look nothing like Cecelia's, but the doubt and distance communicated by the narrative reminded me of the worst episodes I've had. This framing might be difficult to grasp if you've never gone through that kind of emotional apathy, but I thought it was an incredibly effective way of demonstrating the way Cecelia's mental illness pervades her life without her realization—and it made her moment of clarity at the end of the novel that much more effective and poignant.

*The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is admittedly a difficult read, but it's an important one. Discussions on the intersection of mental illness and racism are necessary, and Hale's novel handles the issue tactfully without pulling any punches.

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### **Noel says**

The story was moving and real in many ways. I love how Hale writes, her characters seem authentic and they struggle through their lives.

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### **Linda says**

Janet Campbell Hale's 1987 novel *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is a poignant life reflection by Cecelia Capture Wells as she sits in jail after being arrested for drunk driving on her thirtieth birthday. Her time in jail is extended as she is held on an old charge of welfare fraud leaving the Berkley law student and mother of two spending her solitary time reflecting on how she came to this point in her life. Her honesty and candidness about her life helps readers identify with her through her associative memories as her life story unfolds piece by piece. Triggered memories of her childhood of loneliness, isolation, abuse, and poverty melt into adult memories of lost love, motherhood, bad relationships, her failed marriage, and the death of her father. She is held captive not only physically for three days but realizes she has been held psychologically captured for years. Fighting against a legacy of racism, alcoholism, misogyny, and white cultural indoctrination the novel follows Cecelia's psychological journey to push past self-recrimination and doubt to emerge ready to summon her grit and determination to fight on. On the precipice of suicide, she discovers how to embrace her Native American heritage, motherhood, and her intellectual aptitude in order to let go of the past and walk baggage free into the future. *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* is an engaging must read into

the thought process of a woman searching for her identity, love, and acceptance in a world that delivers abuse, pain, and loss.

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### **Hanna says**

In *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*, Janet Campbell Hale writes from a narrator's point of view about Cecelia's life, going back and forth between her present state in jail and her memories. Cecelia was arrested for a DUI but is being held in jail for a reason that is unknown to her for majority of the book. As she sits in her jail cell, her mind wanders and she recounts the big moments in her life that led her to that point. Cecelia is half Native American, but is raised by a mother who hates Native Americans and a father who won't let her wear red because it would show that she is Native American. Cecelia takes care of herself for the most part because her father is consistently drunk and her mother has arthritis. She grew up on a reservation in Idaho and experienced abuse, poverty, and alcoholism in her own home. As soon as she can, she moves away, but her past continues to creep up on her and impact her decisions. Hale's story demonstrates just how much nurture impacts a person's future. The more we hear about Cecelia's childhood, the more her life and feelings make sense. Cecelia's life is an emotional example of how difficult life can be for Native women. Hale does an amazing job of building suspense and leaving the reader asking questions throughout the book. *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* was very meaningful and a great read.

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### **Mitch Milam says**

I really liked the female Native American perspective here, and I was really into the first third of this book. Unfortunately, the prose just became too impersonal in a story that needs you to understand and relate with its central character. It was kind of a letdown for a story that started off so promising.

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### **Emily says**

Cecelia Capture is the main voice of the book as a half-Native American and half white woman who has internal and external struggles throughout the entire book. In the beginning of the book, Cecelia is imprisoned on her 30th birthday for a drunk driving incident where she reflects on her life and decisions that led her to this disastrous moment in her life.

Now I don't want to spoil the plot of this book, but this book depicts the reality of living a life of oppression and a life of normalcy. Her past of living on the reservation affects the way in which she conducts her life today. Not only is she dealing with a torn childhood, but struggles with a marriage and her children. Her problems seem endless and pile themselves on top of each other, but I always felt pity towards her problems. Her feeling of loneliness and desperation for a sense of normalcy overrides her ability to make capable decisions.

Many of the reviews stated that feeling sorry for Cecelia was impossible at times because she made poor life decisions. Though her decisions seemed poor at times, I have to state that this book depicted the way European settlers decisions to 'kill the Indian, save the man' was still affecting Native Americans in more modern times. Cecelia became a bi-product of the environment in which she was subjected to for so long. In my opinion, this book is worth the read. It is heartbreakingly sad for the most part, but it shows the struggles of everyday life intertwined with being part Native American and part white. It depicts how deep issues affect

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how to deal with them effectively. Cecelia paints a sad, but truthful picture of just one life.

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### **Jaqueline Martinez says**

I had to read Janet Campbell Hale's novel "The Jailing of Cecilia Capture" for an online class and found myself completely immersed in the author's words. In this novel, Hale shares the story of a Cecilia Capture Wells, an indigenous woman, and law student who struggles with her identity. The story transitions from Cecilia's jail cell to flashbacks of her childhood, growing up on a reservation, and eventually, early adulthood where Cecilia is largely on her own. This effectively helps the reader understand how Cecilia ended up in her current state. One thing that I especially enjoyed about this book is the way Hale tells Cecilia's story. You can really get a sense of what Cecilia is feeling and the story is easy to follow along. I felt empathy for her character and was rooting for her the entire time. The novel especially does an effective job of bringing light to problems such as mental health, alcohol abuse, and other relevant issues within indigenous communities. The one thing that I would say I did not like about this novel is that the ending was very sudden. It would have been nice to see Cecilia further down the road and learn whether or not she was able to earn her degree as a lawyer and how or if her role as a mother changed. Overall, I found myself really enjoying this book and I think a lot can be learned and interpreted from Cecilia's story.

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### **Lauren Rogers says**

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture, written by Janet Campbell Hale, surrounds the arrest of a 30-year-old Native American woman, Cecelia Capture. Cecelia is arrested on account of a DUI, but she is kept in holding for days because of a previous welfare fraud charge. As Cecelia awaits her release, she has the opportunity to look back on her life and reflect on the ways in which all of the hardships she endured led her to where she was. Cecelia is a very respectable character. Her immense inner strength and perseverance become evident when introduced to the continuous amount of pain and misery Cecelia suffered throughout her life. Cecelia's introspections are moving and this story is bound to touch the hearts of all who read it. Janet Campbell Hale lures the audience into each page through her sophisticated elucidations, and keeps readers in anxious anticipation with intense dramatizations. Overall, this story provides insights into the struggles many Native people and their cultures endure. Certain parts of this story would not be considered appropriate for younger readers. However, I would recommend this story to older readers who are fans of suspense and drama. This book is also perfect for any older readers who are interested in gaining a novel viewpoint on issues surrounding Native Americans.

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### **Jim Potter says**

Janet Campbell Hale's novel, published in 1985, is a classic!

I felt pain every time Cecilia's mean mother berated her. I hurt when the father she loved chose alcohol as a mechanism to cope. And, I believed in hope as Cecilia worked to improve her life. But, I was scared whenever self-doubt crept back into her consciousness.

This book is a masterful work of art. I'd love to have an update on Cecilia from the Author Hale.

--Jim Potter, author of *Taking Back the Bullet: Trajectories of Self-Discovery*

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## Monica says

Truly amazing meta-fiction done by indigenous author Janet Campbell Hale. The novel focuses on Cecelia Capture and her struggle to assimilate into dominate, white culture throughout her childhood and into her adult life.

Arrested on her 30th birthday for drunk driving in San Francisco, while in her jail cell, she looks back on her childhood and teenage memories in a drunken haze, quickly sobering up to realize she is being held longer for welfare fraud.

Hale beautifully examines the intersections between race, religion, gender and class and bravely puts her own life on display.

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## Aubrey says

3.5/5

It's always odd reading a book set in so close a proximity to my own spatial life. I'm more used to settings on the East Coast and beyond the borders than I am to in text references to UC Berkley and SF and the Bay Area, perhaps because I'm used to letting my imagist muscles run rampant. Names of places that I've exhaustively traversed means I must reconcile rather than construct, which amps up self-reflexivity at the cost of escapism. Thus, the fact that I didn't enjoy this as much as other works doesn't render it any less necessary a read, as it's my sordid backyard that's on display for once. Reader, know thyself.

Working in a test prep facility means dealing with multifarious cases of testing mentality, and one topic that has come up every so often is that of affirmative action. In moments of college gossip, my students (I've only ever taught one black student, and not for very long) bring up black students having a much easier time of things when it comes to getting into the Ivy Leagues, and likely continue on that envious and antiblack train of thought while not in my classroom. Coming across repeated instances of the main character being able to get into UC Berkley scot-free brought back these conversations to my mind, but having the surrounding context of homes with no running water, white supremacist assault in grade school, and abusive homes and relatives makes such residual jealousies pointless. The fact that the students I teach have parents that can afford to shell out for the brand of option tuition I'm involved in means none of them run as great a risk as Cecelia when it comes to falling through the academic cracks. Add in the history of Cecelia's ancestors and her own bildungsroman, and you have a picture of disenfranchisement centuries older than the terms of postcolonialisms and settler state where the post- never came and the settlers never left. The book ends in the 80's, which means Cecelia's story ends before Native Americna Langauges and rights to voting are confirmed by law. (view spoiler)

It's amazing how differently stories of realistic and contemporary woe are treated when the dominant reader demographic doesn't feel like the hero of the story. Much as the facts of Hidden Figures were twisted in the movie to give the white dude some cred, this book receives poor ratings because the average reader can't

relate or found the subject material depressing. It's hard to conceptualize that a happy ending would require that you give up your country, but plenty have had to give up that and more for less righteous reasons. The fact that the US has been propagandized into such an inviolable state has only made the calcification of structural genocide all the more volatile. It may seem stable now, but I'm sure some would say the same of the western Roman Empire when the rich had just begun to refuse to pay their taxes.

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### **Jacob McCann says**

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture is an allegorical yet comprehensible portrayal of the suffrage of indigenous people on both an individual and cultural level. The novel encapsulates themes of identity and suffrage that have been long overshadowed and ignored in commonplace society. The novel has Cecelia Capture, a women with Native blood, arrested and placed in a jail cell while she recounts her life story and what ultimately led her to where she lies now.

The novel is essentially a character study of Cecilia, portraying her Irish mother's disapproval, her fathers debilitating alcoholism, and Cecelia's more "scrupulous habits" and the effects these have on shaping her and her actions, marking her as a product of an environment that berates her relentlessly by being born a women and native in a "neo-american" male dominated society. The novel is not a justification of an individual's actions but is more so an explanation of underlying factors that contribute to one's sense of self and purpose in a society in which they feel adrift with no "cultural anchor" to give them identity showcasing the nuanced implications of both internalized and externalized oppression. No punches are held, every detail of misery that Cecelia is subject to is fleshed out and given weight that builds and escalates into one of the most gut wrenchingly tense finales that I've ever experienced.

The novel is written in such a way that gives it a sort of universal accessibility that gives way to exploring more involved topics and themes at a level that never feels alienating or unreasonable to the reader of all sorts. Coming from the perspective of an eighteen year old Caucasian male, I never felt lost or "guilty", there was a deliberate effort made to make the audience feel as if they're alongside Cecelia every step of the way.

Everyone can read this book and effortlessly get something out of it that will increase their standing as a conscious and considerate ally to Native women such as the fictitious Cecelia and real world women such as Janet Hale in their bids to break free from the societal conventions that have them trapped, or should I say, captured.

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### **Baylee says**

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture:

I have just read one of my favorite books yet! The Jailing of Cecelia Capture by Jane Campbell Hale, published in 1985 is a great book and was also very well-written. Cecelia Capture is a lady that ends up in jail, arrested for a DUI but later finds out she is held longer in jail for a welfare fraud case. When reading this book I also thought a lot about Rhetorical Sovereignty. Rhetorical Sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of people to determine their own. I believe that the reason this book is an act of that is because of how Cecelia has to be an independent woman majority of the book and solve most of her battles by herself. Cecelia was a character that was very easy to connect to. Although I am not a Native American, nor have I

ever got a DUI or have had kids at the age she did, I felt like I connected very well with Cecelia when reading this book. I loved Cecelia talks about her life, and I felt as if I was almost by her side throughout the whole book, going through life with her. Violence towards Native Women is sadly more popular than many people know, but I thought Hale did a great job at informing us that Cecelia is a Native women facing many issues in her life but is also trying to live an American life. Many themes also get brought into this book and help with thinking deeper about the book and connect with it as if you are part of it. I highly recommend this book not only to native readers, but also to non-Indians. Being a non-Indian like myself, it gave me a great look at some of the challenges that native people face everyday. Some of this book is sad and hard to read, but those sad parts are very important to include. Those were the parts that drew me so close to this book and enjoying it as much as I did. Definitely worth reading!

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