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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ SCIENCE FICTION

Between Worlds: Nekkel Ace

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Yianna Yiannacou, author of six manuscripts published on her personal website, has completed her first book project. *Between Worlds: Nekkel Ace* chronicles the trials of young Sophia Amaro, who lives on a planet near Earth called Caledonia. Naïve, lonely, and tired of her cloistered lifestyle, she yearns to visit Earth but her parents forbid her to do so. Tragedy compels her to venture to the forbidden world when her father becomes mortally wounded. Only a powerful element found on Earth, Nekkel Ace, will save him. In her journey to save her father, she finds love with a young earthling named Joshua, resulting in further complications.

Unfortunately, this fascinating set-up quickly falls victim to many of the traps known to fresh novelists, including inconsistent characterization, contrivances, and slow plotting. The concept of Caledonia—an Earth-like world unable to be seen by Earthlings—is fascinating, but it is only fleshed out to serve the plot. For example, readers think Caledonians travel everywhere by walking until Sophia mentions off-handedly that a few cars exist on her planet. It isn't until she gets to Earth that readers learn Caledonia lacks traffic lights, elevators, and has a small population. Knowing factors such as these before Sophia makes her sojourn would give readers a better sense of her world. The life-saving element, Nekkel Ace, isn't even hinted at until after Sophia's dad has been wounded for weeks, and the protagonist finally gets the idea to ask the doctor if anything will save him. Given that the same doctor examined her dad right after his injuries, one would think that something as important as Nekkel Ace should have been mentioned at this juncture.

The plot evolves at a glacial pace; although her dad is dying, the protagonist doesn't make it to Earth until nearly halfway through the book. Sophia vacillates between loving and hating her parents as required by the plot, and this makes her determination to save her domineering father seem bizarre. The catalyst that sends the usually obedient Sophia fleeing to Earth after dithering for weeks seems unbelievably convenient. The appearance of another main character who reveals himself to be Sophia's brother is yet another contrivance.

Teenage girls will identify with Sophia's desire to rebel against her parents, swoon over the sexy Joshua, and cheer for love to conquer all. The concept of a portal to a world where one's true love awaits will also intrigue them. This readership will also appreciate how Sophia uses diction and modern slang, though other readers may find someone from another planet using phrases such as "duh!" and "I was busted" rather jarring. Also jarring is the book's constant switch between past and present. A decent first effort, recommended for lovestruck teenage females.
JILL ALLEN (February 9, 2012)

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