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Foreword Review

Closing Down Heaven

Lesley Choyce
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This free-verse novel begins with Hunter's death: after a bicycle accident, Hunter finds himself in another world. He is greeted by a man named Archie, who explains what has happened and how Hunter is now "home." From there, Hunter encounters a young woman named Trinity, a girl whom Archie warns him he must protect. The task grows increasingly complicated when Trinity and Hunter are returned to Earth. From there, Hunter must deal with his confused memories, his newfound ability to see auras, and his desperate but muddled sense that he must do something to save Trinity before her time runs out.

The free-verse form of the novel gives the whole work a dreamlike quality, and the story is compelling and sweet. Dialogue is set off with indentations rather than quotation marks, a construct that is easy to follow. Just enough hints are given about the nature of reality, and Heaven, and Earth, that the gaps in logic seem to be something out of our understanding rather than errors in execution. For example, Archie's role as semi-mentor is mentioned but not fully explained. Even Archie doesn't seem to fully understand his position, as he offers half-answers and half-truths for the entire story, never completely justifying his existence in his own world. The novel then hurtles toward a riddled close that, with its back-and-forth nature, seems to take away some of the power of the earlier stakes. However, the story remains compelling to the end.

In *Closing Down Heaven*, neither Heaven nor Earth plays by the rules—and what results is a poetical look at life, death, fate, and choices. The short length of the novel means that many of these questions go unanswered; thus the story offers a way into a discussion of such questions, rather than any pat conclusions.

STEPHANIE BUCKLIN (March/April 2017)

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