



Down World

Rebecca Phelps

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Rebecca Phelps's inventive novel *Down World* crosses multiple dimensions and timelines as a teenager searches for a way to heal her family and correct a tragedy that should never have happened.

Sixteen-year-old Marina recognizes some faces when she transfers to East Township High for her sophomore year, but she does not know anyone well. She went to elementary school with some of her new classmates, but when her brother Robbie died, her parents transferred her to private school, away from Kieren, the boy they blamed for Robbie's death.

On her first day at East Township, Marina meets Brady, a handsome, friendly senior who helps her to navigate the confusing building that once served as a military base. She develops a crush that leads her to a shocking secret about her town, and about Robbie's death.

The story moves across multiple dimensions and timelines, requiring concentration. Scientific explanations for how and why the different dimensions exist are present, but unanswered questions remain, particularly concerning the existence of a train that travels between dimensions, seeming to defy the book's established rules.

Marina's setting is somber. Her town's economy was reliant on the former military base, and much of the landscape that surrounds her is abandoned. She and others deal with the fallout of unexpected deaths, and their emotions, even of love and attraction, are muted by grief, helping to make the fantastical plot more credible.

As the story progresses, the worlds that Marina visits, and the world into which she was born, change as a direct consequence of her travels. Marina is desperate to repair her family and restore her world, but she does not know how. She must decide what she is willing to sacrifice to make things right.

Down World is a imaginative work of young adult science fiction.

CATHERINE THURESON (March / April 2021)

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