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Clarion Review ★★★★☆ THRILLER

Equilibrium

James Luthi
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Equilibrium *is a captivating novel in which grieving friends work together to save the world.*

In James Luthi's dazzling science fiction novel *Equilibrium*, a mixed group faces an ancient enemy in order to save humanity.

Nick disappeared in Guatemala two months ago. His girlfriend Kiera's life has been torn apart by his absence, as have the lives of their best friends, Ethan and Tabby. When Nick suddenly reappears—in his bed, with no memories of the last eight weeks—nobody knows what to think. They consider the possibility that his issues are neurological or psychological. But the truth is much more sinister, and it involves a teenage boy who is not quite what he seems and the eternal fight between good and evil.

This steady, cohesive novel delivers regular clues whose nuances makes more sense as the book progresses. Indeed, foreshadowing is a strong component of the story, ramping up suspense and creating an eerie atmosphere. The cast tries to adjust to their new understandings of the world, which in the novel is built drawing from Mayan and Greek mythology. In this multiverse, all of the separate dimensions are linked together and dependent on one other, and two ancient forces have resumed their battle for dominance over all.

Though this is an event-driven story, its characterizations stand out. The cast is full of personality, and its interpersonal dynamics are vibrant. Some of their relationships are friendly, as with those between Kiera and Tabby and Kiera and Ethan; others are romantic. But all are believable and warm. The characters are written as having known and liked each other for a long time: their banter is easy, they trade inside jokes, and they show profound concern for each other. And when a runaway orphan, Josh, appears at Ethan and Tabby's door with an unbelievable story about Nick, he is fast taken under the group's collective wing. The speed at which the group comes to care for Josh, and vice versa, is authentic and moving.

The wry prose helps to balance the larger-than-life elements of the plot. Luthi's descriptions, especially those of the settings, are detailed and careful. Only a few misused words detract from this precise work, but still: the fascinating world that Luthi introduces is fleshed out so well that the ending seems to be the only possible one–a sorrowful, satisfactory, and complete conclusion.

Equilibrium is a captivating novel in which grieving friends face an ancient evil, hoping to save the world.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (September 27, 2021)

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