



No Gods, No Monsters

Cadwell Turnbull

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A distinctive urban fantasy novel, Cadwell Turnbull's *No Gods, No Monsters* is an operatic story involving monsters, magic, and myth.

The stage is set when Laina receives a flash drive containing footage of a Boston cop killing a werewolf; she witnesses as the werewolf transforms into her Black brother, Lincoln. The novel is permeated with such evidence of racism—a plight facing the marginalized communities of the United States.

The book's short, fast chapters then follow Calvin, who's from St. Thomas and has the ability to cross space and time. Functioning as an observer, he makes transient appearances in the lives of a large cast whose events and histories otherwise seem unrelated: a rich cult that follows the mysterious Order of Zsouvox; a commune under the mythical Order of Asha; a dwindling wolf pack; a shape-shifting politician; and the workers and owners at a fantasy bookstore. A deep, wide, and secret battle between monsters, gods, and humans binds them.

Each chapter of the book reframes its central issues: wars between good and evil, right and wrong, and power and subservience. The individual narratives come together in a monster march, a protest seeking justice and equality for a new, at-risk population. The monsters are intersectional, and they include LGBTQIA+ and POC communities, as well as people living with or through addiction. From their lenses, the novel places society's taboos front and center, constructing a narrative replete with social critiques and criticism. And its precise language and masterful storytelling make each character's story compelling and immediate. Difficult magical concepts are also made accessible and engaging through logical explanations that sometimes become scientific.

No Gods, No Monsters is a horror and fantasy novel with a sociological bent, in which many secrets wait to be unearthed.

GEORGE HAJJAR (September / October 2021)

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