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Quakeland

Francesca Lia Block
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Francesca Lia Block's *Quakeland* tells the story of a Los Angeles woman named Katrina who struggles to understand her personal loss against the backdrop of the catastrophic events of the turn of the twenty-first century: the bombing of the World Trade Center, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, tsunamis and hurricanes. Representing the private experience of instability endemic to a world literally built upon fault lines and earthquakes, Katrina struggles to find the right combination of anti-depressants, sexual partnership, and spiritual guidance to stave off the depression and addiction that seem inevitable.

Haunted by the loss of her father and the deaths of her mother and best friend, Katrina is emotionally adrift and her dreams are filled with premonitions. As if to explain the imbalance, her friend says, "we don't know if we were the victim or the perpetrator…But it's a cycle that keeps repeating until we get conscious." It is a female spiritual connection—between Katrina, her friend Grace, Kali, and even the goddess of Los Angeles—expressed through dance and mysticism that becomes the theme keeping the emotional world of the novel intact. The twin forces of female friendship and sexual competition drive the novel, and the delicate balance of female relationships staves off the total destruction that always seems possible.

Block assimilates popular knowledge about Eastern mysticism and yoga into a novel which undermines the rationality of Western medicine and psychology. The author of several children's and adult books, including the bestselling novel *Weetzie Bat*, Block's novels challenge their readers' assumptions about rationality in a world plagued by instability. *Quakeland* is ultimately a novel about the prevailing spirit of female love.
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