

The Last 8

Laura Pohl

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The Last 8 is diverse and immersive science fiction.

Clover Martinez may be a teenager, but she's built like a soldier. Trained to fly by her air force grandfather, she's the perfect candidate for surviving the apocalypse: clever, calculating, and a survivor. When aliens invade her planet and wipe out most of humanity, she finds herself leading her fellow survivors in the fight of their lives.

A slow opening delivers Clover's backstory and makes her decisions easier to understand. She's not always the most likeable character, but she's firm in her convictions. Her heart is conflicted, and she's sometimes unkind, but she showcases both the best and worst traits of someone with nothing left to lose.

The cast features characters from often underrepresented backgrounds, including its romance-averse Latinx lead. Each character has their own special skills, from tech to medicine, though secondary characters sometimes blend together. Clover's cohort makes an exhilarating, powerhouse team.

There are hints at romantic elements, but Clover makes it clear that she's never felt a romantic attraction to anyone. She has powerful feelings for her friends and for her dog, Sputnik, though. Here, friendship and platonic relationships are most important.

The science is light, but the world is vibrant. Animate descriptions bring Clover's fight to life, and the particulars of the alien invasion (they a frightening force, with humanoid faces and invulnerable technologies) keep the plot hurdling forward. From its dialogue to its action, the story is fluid, maintaining irresistible momentum through to the emotional, unpredictable ending.

With its powerful world building and emotional twists, *The Last 8* is a beautifully fresh take on the idea of an alien apocalypse.

TIA SMITH (January/February 2019)

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