



The Millennial Reincarnations

Daniel Mark Harrison

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The Millennial Reincarnations is daring and strikingly original.

In *The Millennial Reincarnations*, the first installment of The Millennial Trilogy, a father wrestles with grief after the death of his teenage daughter, and a group of sorority girls jockey for social standing while their boyfriends try to make it big with social media platforms, trendy nightclubs, and Bitcoins. Beneath a wildly imaginative plot, Daniel Mark Harrison introduces an interesting philosophy about the millennial generation's mindset, meta nuances, and a shifting of characters' identities that frequently turns the whole narrative on its head.

The story unfolds over the course of the 1990s through 2014, while the world is awaiting the appearance of “the Mandate”—a messianic leader “born into flesh and embalmed in the myth of historical folklore.” In Shanghai, Sofia, the leader of a sorority with ties to China's Communist Party, is ousted after being blackmailed over a sex tape. She is replaced by her cousin Chanel, whose mother is a Party dignitary and future candidate for premiership. Both Chanel and her mother rule with an iron fist and an eye toward maintaining *mianzi*, or saving face. Though most of the men in their lives are posturing fools, there is a shady figure at the top, “Cousin Redflag,” who may be wielding the most power of all.

Characters' names change throughout the story as they are “reincarnated” to suit the needs of the narrative, a device that works surprisingly well. The point of view shifts frequently as well, with the author even placing himself inside the story and directly addressing his characters.

At the center of these interwoven stories, something is being said about the millennial generation and its values, and it isn't very complimentary. Pride and power are paramount. Sex is a vehicle for instant gratification, devoid of meaning. Technology allows for frightening levels of surveillance. While none of these sound like particularly fresh insights, Harrison is presenting them in a new, compelling way—a Chinese sorority is not the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of power plays.

Some of the philosophy falls apart under scrutiny. The prophecy that the Mandate will “pay the price for the world by giving in return the world that is already his own as payment for its receipt” is a tautological head-scratcher. The text has a tendency to be aggressively long-winded and purple with descriptions, sometimes carrying a single sentence through an entire paragraph. There is also a glut of extremely explicit sexual content, including descriptions of incest and sex between young teenagers. Quite a lot of it adds nothing to the plot.

The Millennial Reincarnations is daring and strikingly original. The characters may not be likable, but they are interesting and unpredictable, which makes the narrative engaging. The overall success of the book will be determined by how well the author can pull together a cohesive trilogy.

LISA BUTTS (December 1, 2016)

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