

## The Quelling: A Trilogy

**C. L. Lauder**

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*In the exciting science fiction novel The Quelling, differing beings forego prejudice to ensure their mutual survival.*

C. L. Lauder's imaginative science fiction novel *The Quelling* centers heroism, perseverance, and redefinitions of good and evil.

Kyjta, a teenager from the planet Aurora Saura, lives in fear of the Rheman—bodiless beings who take over, or quell, other bodies. Though members of Kyjta's community make every effort to avoid Rheman capture, they are outmatched. Indeed, the Rheman are aided by fearsome animals and backed by powerful Tarrohar, tentacled beings who impose their will through pain and mind control.

During a raid on her community, Kyjta is forced to protect a younger Aurora Saurin, Calipsie. Fearing subjugation by the Rheman, Kyjta is relieved to receive help herself from a familiar acquaintance, Merrick. But after he demonstrates incredible strength and fighting skills, Kyjta realizes he is not the Aurora Saurin she knew—he has been quelled and is being controlled by a Rheman named Kranik.

Alternating between Kyjta's and Kranik's perspectives, the story's view of Aurora Saura and the sentient beings who inhabit it evolves as it continues. For Kyjta, the struggle to reconcile long-held prejudices about the Rheman with Kranik's continued show of devotion is central. For Kranik, confusion about his identity and his growing affection for Kyjta reigns.

Kyjta's and Kranik's differing viewpoints also combine to develop a nuanced sense of their world, with aspects of it acknowledged in varying detail depending on who's speaking. When Kyjta is on a farm surrounded by familiar creatures, she takes their attributes for granted; because they are an ordinary part of her life, their presence on the pages is vague. However, when Kranik encounters these strange creatures, he makes clear note of their physical characteristics and mannerisms, feeling wonderment, confusion, and a sense of discovery.

A tendency toward verbosity undermines the book's delivery, though. In particular, a significant portion of its pages are devoted to depicting the particularities of the social, political, and legal systems of the planet, often beyond what is necessary. The thrills of the plot are obscured behind such lengthy deliveries of background information. Subplots involving secondary characters at first seem to be a further point of distraction in this series-opening text, though the book's various storylines are united in time.

Working toward a satisfying conclusion that generates interest in the next installment, the exciting science fiction novel *The Quelling* introduces differing beings on another planet who forego prejudice to ensure their mutual survival.

GAIL HOFFER-LOIBL (January 19, 2024)

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