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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ FANTASY

The Revival: Book Two of the Totoboan Trilogy

Maggie Allen
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In this second installment of Maggie Allen's Totoboan Trilogy, Virginia Wilson cannot remember the surreal world she visited in Africa. Tormented by nightmares and visions, she believes that returning to Totoba will bring her the answers she seeks and the inner peace she craves. *The Revival* takes the reader on another journey to an extraordinary place that cannot be fathomed, and a romantic encounter that cannot be forgotten.

Virginia fears that Nick, the mystical boyfriend who thrills yet terrifies her, may be dead. Edgy and raw, their relationship developed in a fantastical realm that may not even exist. Her inability to make up her mind about him is apparent throughout the novel, which adds both modern-day and gothic intrigue to this dangerous situation.

In this excerpt, Virginia is compelled by a force she does not understand to bridge the physical distance between them: "When I tried to picture Nick in my mind, to think about this whole weirdness, I saw him standing there, and I *did* feel like I knew him better than I remembered, like I could just run into his arms, like I was returning home."

As though she has blacked out, the heroine perceives a forgotten interlude on a psychic plane, but she hesitates to act on what may not be real. This "confusion" is present throughout the novel, introducing even more mystery onto a connection she cannot truly identify. "My stomach still hurt, but it was filled with fire and electricity. I couldn't focus, but that was because my mind was racing with extreme thoughts and immediate fantasies. I only fidgeted to keep me from letting myself go like a drunken sorority girl."

Determining whether Nick is her soul mate or her demise seems to be Virginia's—and may become the reader's—preoccupation. In a peculiar buildup to even more doubts, this story veers into a mythical land governed by a pseudo-sacred cult. Though mesmerizing, the plot moves forward with a considerable lack of coherence. While this dramatized, inexplicable aura that surrounds the novel enhances its entertainment appeal, the foggy delivery hinders the quality slightly.

Maggie Allen is a senior at Whitman College in Washington and has studied in Tanzania. *The Revival* is her second release.

A curious blend of genres in this stimulating story may be an eccentric undertaking, yet the author's ability to hold a reader's attention deserves praise. With countless questions left unanswered by this installment of Virginia's story, Allen's third title is discernable on the horizon.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (January 23, 2012)

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