

★ **Unity**

Elly Bangs

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In Elly Bangs's science fiction novel *Unity*, two people, haunted by their past deeds, outrun an apocalypse to find new purpose.

Danae was already planning her escape from Bloom City, an underwater aquapolis, when the war started. She just barely makes it to the surface with the help of Alexei, a suicidal mercenary who can no longer stomach the thought of killing. As they make their way through what was once the Western United States, both Danae and Alexei confront everyone they have been, and everything they have done, before they end their lives—and are reborn.

Set in the 22nd century, *Unity's* immersive world has been ravaged—but not destroyed—by nuclear war, environmental decay, gang wars, and intrusive technology. Land-based countries have collapsed into wastelands where a few meager souls scrounge out a living, and underwater empires bring the entire globe to the brink of destruction again and again.

It is through this unforgiving world that Danae treks in search of her other selves, the people with whom she fused her consciousness in a revolutionary but costly process. Though she longs to rejoin them, she fears her sins are unforgivable. Alexei, bereft of purpose and filled with self-loathing, seeks only to fulfill his obligation to Danae before ending his life. They both keep their pasts to themselves until disaster strikes, sending all of their secrets tumbling out. In trying to save humanity, Danae has lost touch with it, while Alexei was never given the chance to be fully human. They cannot change what they were, but they control who they will become. It isn't much, but it might just be enough to live for.

Unity is a dystopian science fiction novel about what it means to be human, and what it takes to retain and reclaim one's humanity.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (March / April 2021)

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