



The Island Will Sink

Briohny Doyle

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In a not-too-distant future perpetually on the brink of collapse, catastrophe is our most popular entertainment.

The energy crisis has come and gone. EcoLaw is enforced by insidious cartoon panda bears and their armies of viral-marketing children. The world watches as Pitcairn Island sinks into the Pacific, wondering if this, finally, will be the end of everything. Amongst it all, Max Galleon, anxious family man and blockbuster auteur, lives a life that he cannot remember.

What happens when you can outsource your memories – and even edit them?

When death can be reversed through digitisation, what is the point of living?

If the lines between real and unreal are fully blurred, can you really trust anyone, even yourself?

The Island Will Sink Details

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From Reader Review The Island Will Sink for online ebook

Michael Livingston says

A fascinating dystopian novel, wrestling with a future in which memories are outsourced and the planet teeters on the brink of oblivion. It's a little confusing at times, but it was fun to read something so packed with ideas.

Thomas says

A sparkling debut. This is precisely the thing that I would like to publish under Fantastica. If Briohny had come to us with the MS it would have been yes, yes, yes.

Despite the tremors of debut writing (perhaps slightly too much exposition to begin with) this is a very assured book. It's probably the type of thing I'd love to write. The near-future is thought out and realistic. It's a little bit like every episode of Black Mirror rolled into one (minus sex with a pig), with a coherent and touching story and without all the brashness/crassness of Charlie Brooker (that said I love Charlie's Black Mirror because they are clearly more satire).

The best characters were probably the two children, who I thought were scarily perceived reflections of future childhood - that is, a complete lack of innocence. The other first-novel jitter was that characters seemed to meet for the sole purpose of discussing philosophy, but again this disappeared as the novel progressed and became much more human. Plus, who cares, I love futuristic books that have sardonic characters chatting about the meaning of life. That and the absolute gems of writing that Briohny manages to bring forth. She's a bloody great writer.

The ending is crazy whack, somewhat reminded me of Neon Genesis Evangelion and the Human Instrumentality Project. A sort of group madness as we fold in on each other and disaster sweeps over us. Kinda feels like it is to be alive in 2016. And to be honest I was leaning towards the whole thing being a dream (ie the main characters was being brought out of a coma) but I was happy to be wrong and the ending is very fitting.

Top stuff, highly recommend.

Elissa says

This is an extremely clever book that I'm afraid will appeal to only niche readers. The material is something that totally interests me — the point-of-no-return when climate change tips the balance enough to signal the end of civilization as we know it — but the story written here is more than just bleak, it's disorienting. Max Galleon, a prolific filmmaker of immense disaster films, decides to shelve his current project on tsunamis to film the sinking of the Pitcairn island, which scientific experts say is the tipping point. If it had just been about the island, his family (precocious son who is obsessed with the flickering demise of his future, as he reads the news every day; his younger daughter who is taken with conservationism, the mascot of which is an animated bear), and his filmmaking career, I would have been able to follow the story, but there was an

added layer about Max's comatose brother Tom, Tom's doctor with whom Max is having an affair?, and Max's fixation on deleting his digitized memories. Everything got muddled and I feel like I should re-read the entire book to catch everything I didn't "get" the first time. Unfortunately the writing style is a bit technical and meandering so I didn't enjoy the experience of reading, which means that I'm not eager to go back and try to understand what I missed. (It was like a convoluted, drawn-out episode of *Black Mirror* without the easy wrap-up.) Still, the tech, and the way in which it is used, was very believable.

Jennifer (JC-S) says

‘We will not live long enough to live forever .’

In a post-energy-crisis world, hovering on the brink of collapse, Pitcairn Island is sinking into the Pacific Ocean. In this world, where catastrophe is reality, it is also our most popular form of entertainment. Meet Max Galleon. Married with two children, Max is not just a filmmaker, but the world’s foremost director of immersive virtual-reality catastrophe blockbusters: an auteur. But for all this, Max lives a life he cannot remember. And, if you can’t remember your life, then how can you tell what is real? Every experience is new, or is it?

EcoLaw is enforced, through its avatars such as Pow-Pow the Power-Saving Panda, assisted by armies of children just like Max’s daughter Lilly. This is close enough to our reality to be uncomfortably recognisable, just far enough away for the edges to be blurred. Max’s son Jonas, spends much of his time playing a simulation game set on Pitcairn Island with a friend online. And what about Max’s wife Eloise?

‘Goodbye, Max Galleon,’ farewells the elevator. ‘Always remember, sustainability is the key. You are a man who can make a difference.’

‘I leave no footprints as I step out into the world .’

Don’t expect every aspect of this novel to make sense: it doesn’t. But keep reading, because the absence of sense is a little like Max’s memory: apparently unnecessary. Especially when you are as networked as Max is.

‘It’s always much easier to measure complexity than it is to understand it .’

The story shifts between present and past, real and imagined. It’s complicated by what Max thinks he knows, by the film he is trying to make with Jean, his attempts to engage with his wife and children. And, in the meantime, while Max is trying to help his brother who is in a coma, obsessing about the state of his marriage and editing his out-sourced memories, the water level continues to rise.

Jonas is concerned:

‘We’ve lost another 0.00012,’ he says. ‘The world is ending and all you want to do is watch movies .’

How will it end? You’ll need to read it for yourself to find out. It’s a dystopian comedy of sorts, a look at a world where actual reality is so dire that escapism into imagined catastrophe is somehow better. How ironic. Or is it?

Jennifer Cameron-Smith

Terri says

Lots of incredibly interesting ideas explored, but I just couldn't follow the plot - particularly the last 30 pages or so. I feel so lost and confused. I have no idea how to piece this thing together!

Becky Nos says

Wow. So good. I'm so happy to see the Melbourne spec-fic/sci-fi scene slowly becoming a thing. Full of great ideas and imaginings, and entertaining as hell.

Jane says

This book is great, I haven't read a debut like it. It's entirely and brilliantly imagined: this isn't Melbourne or anywhere that could be Melbourne. There's nothing apologetic about the writing; I don't feel like the author cares if I like it or her. It feels honest and full bore and like it is utterly about being good in itself, not about being good for consumption. It is full of ideas, none of which felt tacked on or jokey: they were in the book because they made sense in the book. It has a lot of great stuff to say about our sentimental love for disaster, for the end of the world, about how we deal with fear and uncertainty, all of which are topics close to my heart and which I think I am particularly bad at handling. I don't understand what happens in it, in the end, but all the thoughts and feelings in it made perfect sense. A lot of times I felt like 'yep, that is me. You have found me out'.

Vincent Silk says

I would give this 4.75 if possible, but it's not so I'm giving it five.

This is a really clever book. It manages to do a LOT of world-building / description of the world / 'future technologies' in a way that doesn't break voice or feel hackneyed, which is a massive achievement for a first novel. The way the history and politics of the future dystopia is managed reminds me of the best bits of Neal Stephenson. It's also really funny, and uses the particular voice of the central character cleverly. I would have liked more multi-perspective stuff, as there is a little bit, but I also think the way sections are broken up work well. Would recommend.

Danielle {halfdesertedstreets} says

Whoa. Now I somehow have to pull my fractured thoughts together to write a coherent review.

Bandit says

Interesting. Definitely interesting and different and original. And while I'm not in love and somewhat uncertain on the degree of liking, it was undeniably appreciated. This one had me at dystopia, but it turned out to be simultaneously more and less of what that genre typically denotes. The end of the world here isn't necessarily a certainty and if so, it's a very quiet occurrence. So...in the future science may be no longer maintain the world as it is in the face of deleterious effects of individuals inhabiting it, but it really, really tries. Environmental adaptations are everywhere, personal choices of resources, foods, etc. are regulated, deliberate and it's all very, very good for you. Lives are recorded, measured and monitored. It's a logical pragmatic enhanced way of living, but it's too pristine to enjoy. The world is obsessively watching the Pacific reclaim Pitcairn Island and speculating on the possible worldwide consequences. It's also the main focus of the book's protagonist, a movie director specializing in disaster flicks. Of course, in the future all cinema is immersive and all immersions are haptic, so the experience is entirely different from how we perceive movies today. And the idea is to create a sort of magnum opus of disaster genre set on the much watched island. This is a somewhat reductive plot summary, there's much more going on, but the general theme is that of environmental catastrophes and society advanced in so many ways, but nevertheless endangered and what occurs when a popular form of entertainment in a world obsessed with entertainment becomes all too real. So adjusting and distorting reality to fit the story is what the author does via several quite clever tricks. In fact the title repeated throughout becomes almost a sort of mantra for a certainty in an uncertain time. And then there's world building too, really terrific world building with realistic smart technology, enough to land it into science fiction genre, with the new and trendy climate angle. And you may not care about that aspect at all and concentrate instead on pondering what becomes of the world where memories can be easily edited and what that might do for a person's mental state and place in the life's continuum. There are a lot of interesting things to ponder here. It's a very smart book. But there's certain aloofness to it making it difficult to connect to on an emotional level. It's very subdued in a distinctly Australian way. Then again it's well written, the narrative has a certain strangely hypnotic quality of a dreamlike state and there's much food for thought, so for a debut there's plenty to enjoy. Thanks Netgalley.

Margot Tesch says

I think Briohny has some fantastic ideas in this book and it is probably worth reading for the stimulation she brings in thinking where technology might lead us. But I felt her protagonist was a bit my engagement as the reader. At first I was sure he was a woman and had trouble accepting that he was a bloke when that was revealed. I gave him the benefit of the doubt that he was maybe a 'brain in vat' so persevered. While part of his problem was that his personality seemed compromised by his take up and internalisation of technology, I couldn't quite buy him as the central character.

But there are aspects to this book that stimulate on an intellectual level and make it worth a look.

Jypsy says

The premise is unique and engaging, but *The Island Will Sink* was disorienting. I thought the story was choppy and strange. Unfortunately, it's just not my cup of tea. Thanks to NetGalley for an arc in exchange for an honest review.

Calzean says

It felt to me it could have been two books - there was an environmental dystopian angle and a technology-driven angle where every action, emotion and memory is recorded. Together the two didn't quite gel.

James says

So, so, so desperately want to give this one 4 stars, but I'm going to have to drop a 3.5. This novel is full of amazing ideas and insights into the contemporary screen and media culture. Doyle creates a fleshed-out, totally realistic vision of the future like many spec-fic books struggle and fail to do. I had to doggy ear a few pages to keep a mark on some absolutely wowzer lines.

Ultimately, though, I have to echo what a few others have already written. The narrative just becomes a little too messy, created through ambiguous dialogue and description that left me slightly more confused than curious. Of course, I realise this is brilliant in its own way; the confusion of "reality" and the "virtual" is so complete and fascinating that we become as hopelessly lost as our amnesiac protagonist. By the end, I wasn't even sure which characters of events were real or fabricated illusions. I really dig that aspect of it... but also found it taking away from its appeal as a page-turner. I did also find the constant re-establishing of future tech and pseudo-techno-babble a bit of a turn-off as well.

However, I really, really want people to read this. It's an amazing debut novel and a book that makes me nervous to ever present my own manuscript if this is the standard for young Aussies. I guess I'd like my criticisms above to be seen as constructive more than derogatory. Congrats, Briohny! Best of luck with your future books.

Joelle says

I think "Exchange salted pork store for native wife" (page 84) is the straw that tips this book onto my "abandoned" shelf...
