



## **Darklandia**

*T.S. Welti*

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Manhattan, 2147

Seventeen-year-old Sera Fisk gleefully celebrates the death of her 114-year-old great-grandmother, the last Atraxian alive who still remembers what New York was like before Felicity.

There is only one principle of Felicity: Suffering is optional. Those who disagree or forget this principle, as Sera's father did, are detained and “purified”. Through the use of the Darklandia virtual reality and mandatory water rations, the Department of Felicity has transformed metropolises all over the country into happy, obedient communities.

Inspired by her great-grandmother's last words, Sera stops drinking the water rations and is soon recruited by Nyx into a rebel organization in the midst of planning a full-scale attack on Darklandia. When Nyx attempts to override the Darklandia system, he stumbles upon shocking information about Sera and her family. After years of living in a haze of virtual reality and drugs, Sera finds herself running from a powerful surge of raw emotions and a government agency intent on keeping reality a secret.

## Darklandia Details

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Author : T.S. Welti

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# From Reader Review Darklandia for online ebook

## Kascha says

I'm sort of at a loss as to what to really rate this book. Not because it is not good; it is very engaging. Because it is in fact, engaging.

I've read several reviews now that I've finished the book that place it as a hybrid of The Matrix and 1984, and in fact, nothing could be more accurate. The entire time I was reading it I had the phrase "Free your mind" whispering through my head in Morpheus's voice. The obvious connection besides that would of course be 1984, although one could also make a case for Brazil (without the humor), or computer games like Bioshock. There were points at which, while the characters walked down corridors to a reveal, I found myself hearing "We're off to see the wizard" in my head. But that could just be me. Any way it goes, this book fits right in with the time tested oppressive regime of the future formula, albeit with a very nice set of customizations.

As I said, it is a definite page turner. It was superbly easy for me to envelop myself in the world and see it clearly. The main characters were easy to attach to and feel for, while the others were often faceless which is exactly what they are designed to be by the system in which they live. It sets a very claustrophobic and paranoid vibe that can be felt.

That's the good news. The bad news, as I've also read in reviews, is that just when the story is at its most engrossing, and I couldn't turn pages fast enough, I was looking at an epilogue with author dedications followed by a link page and a second table of contents. I was reading in Kindle, so there was no visual indicator of how close I was getting to the end, which made the reaching of it just that much more jarring and premature feeling. I can't stress this enough. There was such a superb job done meticulously taking me through the story that the abrupt ending had me wondering if the file was damaged. I was positive this was a series and actually went looking for the next book to continue with, only to find there are none yet.

To make matters worse, the ending itself, although I think I can see what obviously happened, left me with absolutely no understanding whatsoever of what *actually* happened. I feel like I must have skipped 15 or so pages and lost the whole thing. Similar to the confusion you'd get if you walked in on a new X-Files episode 10 minutes late. Now as a result I will have to read the last third of the book over again, and possibly yet again, until I can figure out what the deal was.

There were repeated phrases or plot keys that reappeared at the end in character conversation that had to be more than coincidence, but I haven't the slightest idea what they referred to. Sigh...

Nonetheless, these are the only reasons I denied the book a fourth and possibly even fifth star. And I will definitely be picking up any additional books should this become a series. Recommended.

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## Sophie Zapoli says

The United States has been reeked by a disastrous Civil War and famine. It seems as if this will be the end. But what if the Americans were given the chance to escape this pain? After all, in Felicity, suffering is only

optional.

I felt like this had the potential to be a very good book- right up there with the Hunger Games and other best selling dystopian novels. The rough idea was there-I certainly felt as if I was in a futuristic Manhattan- and it was clear that the author spent a lot of time on world building. However, it didn't translate so flawlessly onto the pages. It seemed as if the author assumed we knew as much as they knew about this world so several ideas seemed missing or confusing. Due to the lack of pages, the characters didn't have time to develop and felt as dull to me as the sleepwalkers of Felicity. Even the main character Sera had no background story, no distinctive personality traits, and I felt no connection to her at all. When characters died or were detained I couldn't share in Sera's distress because I never even got to know any of these people so I honestly had no preference as to if they lived or died. If the book had been a little bit longer, Sera's overall character would have been more developed and memorable. In addition, things in the book felt way too rushed, as if the author had a page limit or something, and so even huge events were glossed over so quickly that if you zoned out for a second you would have missed it. Sera's change in viewing her world had no time to develop so it felt unrealistic and unskillfully done. The ending was so abrupt I wasn't sure if I had really reached the end of the book and the scientific background that Sera was learning about her world was thrown at the readers too quick to process.

Overall, I think that the concept of the story was unique but it just didn't translate as nicely into an actual book. In worrying about the world, the author simply neglected her characters and her plot and the whole story suffered as a result.

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## **Frank Errington says**

### Review Copy

Darklandia is the first book I've read from YA author T.S. Welti. I don't expect it to be the last. If I had to categorize the work, I might say a dystopian/thriller with one hell of a twist.

Set about 130+ years in the future, the old United States is no more. After the Civil War of 2072 the government finally defeated the rebels by uniting with Canadian and Central American forces to form the nation of Atraxia.

The story follows seventeen-year-old Sera Fisk who stops drinking the water rations and is soon recruited by Nyx into a rebel organization planning a full-scale attack on Darklandia, a virtual reality program which, along with those drugged water rations has transformed metropolises all over the country into happy, obedient communities.

As you can tell from the above synopsis, there is a lot to learn about the future and the author did an exceptional job of giving just enough information to keep the story moving without leaving the reader feeling overwhelmed with information.

There were a few things I was having difficulty understanding as the story was developing, but even those were answered in an ending that I never saw coming, but was completely satisfied with.

Overall, I found Darklandia to be an enjoyable read and something I can recommend to anyone who enjoys a good, well told story. Visit the author's website at <http://tswelti.com/>. The book is available now, both in paperback and e-book formats from Amazon.com.

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## **Mandy says**

I received Darklandia from a librarything giveaway in return for a honest review. Sera has just watched her grandmother be raptured which is a happy time for the people of Felicity. Her grandmother was the last living person to remember what New York was like, and with her rapture it would change the city for the better. Sera has grown up in the future where after a drought has changed the course bring about a war that causes the government to police water. Everyone receives water rations that are laced with conforming drugs as well as every day they spend time in a virtual world.

Sera decides to take her grandmothers last words to heart and stops drinking her water ration which changes her life forever. She's thrust into a world she didn't know existed, awaken from the drugs she joins the resistance against the government. Sera will venture into the virtual reality world in attempt to gain secret information from her father that could save the masters and change the world. However she will have to give up everything she's known in order to help change the way things are risking it all.

I've become a huge fan of the dystopia genre plus the synopsis screams matrix so of course it was my kind of book. I was drawn into Darklandia right from the start; the story is fast paced and keeps you wanting more. The author creates a unique twist on the dystopia genre creating a captivating story from start to end. Having grown up the all her life living on the controlling rations I found it interesting reading about Sera experiencing what we take for granted. She's an enjoyable character who I found was easy to connect with and by the end she stole my heart. I do think most teens and adults who are dystopia/matrix fans will fall in love with Darklandia. I will admit it's a little intense in parts so really young teens may struggle but I think it's worth the read.

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## **Sean says**

I will not bore readers of this review with plot lines and giveaways, I will state simply a review of some of the things I think make this book worth reading, and what I think Ms. Welti could do to make it even better.

First of all, as a fairly perceptive writer myself, I find it easy to be distracted by authors who write poorly. I was not distracted. Ms. Welti's prose was excellent and engaging. I would certainly rank her writing ability at 5 stars.

The characters made me want to engage in their world. I found myself wanting to explore the things they were exploring, live in future manhattan, etc. Again, excellent job.

I would say the only reason a star has to be removed is quite simple, and has been mentioned by other reviewers. As soon as I felt the plot was getting to the "good bits," it was over. While there were several things Ms. Welti could have done, it simply needed to be a longer book. Although, I understand she is planning a sequel, which means many of my qualms will be satisfied.

I do have to say I disagree with a previous reviewer, I think the last chapter "twist" was a spectacular blindside to the reader. Bravo and huzzah to you, Ms. Welti! The only thing I could wish for is more, more,

more, and I am happy to hear that you will be planning to give readers exactly that!

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### **Alex Albrinck says**

There are a number of dystopian YA novels on the market these days, using a number of different approaches in terms of how the bleak futures might be achieved and what form they might take. The best known, of course, is *The Hunger Games*, in which the future is presented as an openly oppressive regime stifling prosperity and doling out punishment in the form of a fight-to-the-death televised tournament amongst children. Another lesser-known series, which starts with *Matched*, presents a near-opposite view of a seeming utopia: clean and pristine living, plenty to eat, and no death tournaments. That shrouds a society in which all true freedom - and thus all true living - is stripped away, decisions such as career and mate chosen "scientifically" by the "friendly" government. Naturally, in both series, the rebels want a change, which seems intelligent to the oppressed in the first series and absurd to those in the second.

*Darklandia* takes something of a hybrid approach. Sera Fisk lives in a future New York City in which water is scarce and rationed, and all citizens must spend an hour a day immersed in a virtual reality game called Darklandia, in which players are forced and encouraged to act out their most violent urges and tendencies before returning to the real world. Mad at your boss? Kill them in the game. Annoyed at your spouse? Have a fling in the game. The game was created in response to a massive, decades-long drought which made water scarce and necessitate the banning of alcohol production; without this game, people acted out these urges in the real world. Eventually, a government formed around the use of the game and rationing of water, as well as the selection of careers and mates. Life is wonderful, of course.

Sera figures out, with the help of the dying words of her "darkling" grandmother, that something's not quite right, however. Over time, she learns of a society that oppresses its people through drugging the water supply to deaden emotions, pain, and the ability to sense reality. "Suffering is optional," they say, so long as you take those rations as prescribed. (If you don't, you'll be "purified" or "raptured.") Words which might provoke questions of the government and its Felicity are expunged; all problems are blamed on the evil darklings - like Sera's great-grandmother and missing father - and their creation of the drought and constant war that turns parts of New York City into a war zone. As Sera wakes, with the help of rebel leader Aaron, she starts to realize that she's never truly lived.

This is a well-written, thought-provoking story that will leave you asking questions about human nature and what we might expect in a future world, and I definitely enjoyed it. I thought Sera fought off her lifelong conditioning a bit too easily, and the ending was definitely not something I would have predicted or expected. Still, this is an enjoyable read for dystopian novel fans, and I encourage such readers to check it out.

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### **Michelle Muckley says**

This was my first opportunity to read work by T.S. Welti, and I was not dissatisfied. No longer able to quite consider myself quite a Young Adult, I wondered if I wouldn't be able to connect with the characters, but this was certainly not the case.

We are thrown straight into a dystopian world, a post catastrophic scenario where life conversely appears

on a first glance to be somewhat perfect, celebratory even. It however soon becomes evident that this facade is merely a point of view, and that the reality is that the society is stifled and oppressed, and that our hero Sera senses that something is horribly wrong in her world.

What is clear to see is Welti's thorough understanding of the sci fi/dystopian world genre, and her development of this society in which the characters live was detailed and believable. As the story progressed I found myself completely behind Sera, wondering how her life would turn out, would she make it, would she achieve her goals. In the final couple of chapters I was shocked by the ending, which is perfectly written for a sequel. I would gladly put myself on the waiting list to read it.

I would recommend this book wholeheartedly to all ages who enjoy this genre, and will certainly go back and check out the other previously published work by this talented writer.

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### **Sabrina Riley says**

I know that this book technically qualifies as YA, but I think that it might be so deep and layered with intelligent meaning that some of it may be missed on the youngest of the young adults.

This book is good. I mean, like, really good. The author tells the complicated story in a first person perspective that puts the reader in a strange position, even uncomfortable at times, which makes you feel what she feels, even when she feels something completely foreign to most of us.

The technology in the story is intriguing and is used in a way I've not seen before, and her descriptive style is enough to paint a clear picture in your mind, but with enough room for your own imagination to have a bit of leeway, which i love.

The fact is that there is more than just one story being told here, and not everyone is going to catch it. Without throwing in any spoilers, I think that the ending is better than any other option because it's not the expected one, it was well thought out and written, and it requires the reader to have really been paying attention all along. If you don't, the ending will feel like a total betrayal.

I just read that there is going to be a sequel. I'm glad on one hand and nervous on the other. Of course I'll read it; I love the writing and the world and the characters. I just hope that Welti doesn't try to make up for the fact that not everyone got the warm fuzzies some people need from this one's ending and loses the depth and intelligence of the original story. I'm betting she won't disappoint.

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### **Vicki James says**

I found Darklandia to be on a whole other level compared to the past work I have read from T.S. Welti.

Though I enjoyed the No Shelter Trilogy immensely, Darklandia was just my kind of book. It was dark and well thought out, and really captured the heart of a the Sci-Fi genre it is written for. It really throws your dramatically, and with a great deal of honest and brutal detail, into the Dystopian world Sera (our main character) has come to know and celebrate.

When we come to find that Sera has a past, and a mind, that comes to sense that something is very wrong, is when the story really starts. T.S. Welti has a way of detailing every emotion, decision and character with both dialogue and thought, it is a fantastic way of storytelling, as you're left to make your own decisions and interpretations of the characters and this world.

In places I found myself a little bored, when dialogue became a little stretched and dried up, but honestly, in the places this happened, it worked well to add a layer of depression, darkness and loneliness to the story, which fit perfectly with the journey our character was making. If this was intentional, it was genius, if not, it was in no way something that effected my reading experience or make me love the book any less.

The journey our character, Sera, makes is one that does have a layer of darkness to it, and I found myself loving the inner battles she seemed to have. Her understanding of her world is that it is perfect, she has no concept of sadness or evilness, what is right, and what is wrong, and that makes the battle she has with the idea of being a 'Darkling' probably one of the most amazing character stories to follow.

The relationship between all the characters is also one of the most wonderful things that I have read in a long time, it reminded me very much of the way Stephen King writes his characters in novels such as 'Under the Dome' and 'Carrie'. It is such a breath of fresh air to see a writer writing in such a way, and focusing more on the story and character relationships, to display and describe the characters we are reading.

Since reading the novel, I have noticed a divide in readers, those who loved the ending, and those who didn't. I found the ending was a perfect ending, it really is quite a twist, that I didn't see coming. As simple as I can put it; it ended how it should have. There was it could have ended any other way, and have had quite the same effect and left the space for a sequel. It took a while to soak in, but after it had, I found myself loving it even more.

I would highly recommend *Darklandia* to anybody who loves this genre, and quite honestly, anybody who is a fan of any of Stephen King's work, 1984, Day of the Traffids, and I am Legend. In fact, I'd recommend it to anybody who loves a good story. I look forward to seeing where T.S. Welti goes with this in future.

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## Grammar\*Kitten says

I was lucky enough to win a copy of *Darklandia* in a **Library Thing Giveaway**.

I have to say it is one of the most superb novels I have ever been lucky enough to win in this way. It is hard to say what genre it falls into, it is a kind of dystopian thriller/post apocalyptic/sci-fi hybrid, that draws upon a few parallels with the novel 1984. I, unlike most people, HATED 1984, but *Darklandia* seems to pull from it's better elements and gives it a new, original and exciting twist.

The faux-happiness (or 'felicity') instilled in everyone is very eerie; from the beginning I think the reader realises that there is something wrong with the situation; buzzwords that make you think of cults, brainwashing etc. such as 'Rapture' as a noun not as a verb also contribute to this. I had a little cry within the first few pages if I'm honest, the brutality of the 'raptures' and how the citizens had been brainwashed to accept death and murder as a happy thing as opposed to the brutal and devastating things they are was



something I found very uncomfortable.

The characters within *Darklandia* are expertly written; I found that the protagonist, Sera, affected me most of all. Her abject horror at the thought of being a 'darkling' (or 'normal', as we would consider it) is quite distressing and the level to which she has been brainwashed by the Atraxia (new Manhattan) government is alarming, yet not unfeasible. The 'pain' of her realisation that something isn't right, when citizens are not allowed to feel pain, is quite poignant, as she learns how to be human as we know it. Her relationships with others, particularly her distrust of her own mother and her trusting people she has only just met seems warped but again, is understandable in the circumstances she finds herself in. Sera is possibly one of the most interesting characters I have read in a long time, and I wish I could read more of her.

The twist at the end of the novel is quite brutal, and one I definitely didn't see coming. *Darklandia* is an exceptional novel that I would honestly recommend to almost everyone - don't write it off as 'just another 1984', it is so much more and so much better. I will look forward to reading more by this author for sure!

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### **Chris Ward says**

I thought this book was pretty well written and developed a pretty cool dystopian world which had a lot of potential. However, the issues I have with it outweigh what I liked which is why I can't rate it any higher, although I would probably check out more by the author.

I had noticed from a couple of other reviews that some people were dissatisfied with the ending. Strangely enough, this is one of the things that kept me reading. The promise of a really good or a really bad ending is addictive for me. I almost bunked off work back in January because I'd heard about the controversial ending of Stephen King's *Dark Tower 7*, and it didn't disappoint. Recently I read Christopher Priest's *Inverted World*, with "one of the best twists in sci-fi" and it was expertly done.

Here, I didn't feel that same mastery. I began to get worried when I was 20 pages from the end and nothing much besides a bit of build up had happened. I expected it to taper off and set up for a second part in the series, but it didn't. I'm not going to put in spoilers but I couldn't help but think it was a waste of a good world, for all the issues I had with it - in particular how the "rebels" were able to pretty much run around at will being the evil government's back, and the ease with which they were able to avoid such things as security cameras. I felt no sense of any real danger. The issue with the central character's friend, Darla, conveniently joining the rebels only to get captured again summed this up. It was all a little too easily done.

The writer clearly has a great imagination which is why I would look for more of her work. The whole Department of Felicity thing was very well developed (I loved the name) as was the water rations, however I struggled with the technology side of the *Darklandia* pods and wasn't really sure what was going on. Perhaps that was the point, or perhaps that was my fault. I'm not particularly good with hard sci-fi.

I felt overall that the book tried to be a cross between *1984* and *The Matrix* without really achieving either. The story it most reminded me of was *The Bridge* by Iain Banks, which is a masterful novel with a vaguely similar storyline (I can't say more without giving away any spoilers but if you've read it you'll understand).

Overall, I thought this book had a lot of potential but didn't really live up to my expectations.

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## **Elizabeth Giosia says**

If there is one thing to be said about Darklandia, it is that you should go and pick it up, right now. No, seriously. If you enjoy dystopian fiction of any flavor, chances are high that this book is one you will enjoy.

In the beginning of Darklandia we meet Sera, a young woman who lives in Manhattan. Not the Manhattan that we know; a Manhattan of the future, where your water is rationed and the nutrients you need to survive are given to you three times a day in a glass. A Manhattan where the subways are inaccessible to the general public, and where you must spend at least one hour every day in a virtual reality machine to soothe your "darkling" urges.

Everything in this Manhattan is controlled. There are security cameras everywhere, watching your every move. The bracelet on your wrist tells the government if you've been skipping your water rations, or if you haven't served your hour in the virtual reality world known as Darklandia. Your words have been filtered; words that have negative meanings have been filtered out of every day vocabulary, so only harmonious words are spoken.

In the beginning, Sera is happy with her life. Her great-grandmother, the last of the darklings from the time before Darklandia and the water rations, is nearing her rapture. When the time comes, Grandmother tells Sera one final thing, "It's in the water rations." These words start a cascade within Sera, driving her to become one of the rebels who are trying to wake up those suffering from the state known as "felicity".

Much of the imagery in this book lends itself to the post-apocalyptic genre; Manhattan decimated by civil war, but only outside of the areas where the government has corralled the people of the new nation of Atraxia. In one scene, Sera is walking with a friend of hers in an area of the city that she had never been to before, and she notices a fountain that is gushing crystal clear water. It is mentioned that it looks "obscene", because of how the citizens of Manhattan are forced to go weeks without washing their clothes or bodies due to the water restrictions.

One could also call this book a science fiction novel, what with its use of technology that is definitely futuristic. The Darklandia pods, where people experience the virtual reality simulations, are filled with a gel that recognizes each person and allows the Department of Felicity to give them personalized simulations that feel real. So real, in fact, that there are some citizens who have trouble differentiating between what is reality and what is not.

As the book continues, the tone becomes more rushed, like an action film that is charging headlong toward its climax. I was unable to tear myself away, unable to stop reading. The last few chapters had me tearing through each page, desperate to find out what would happen to Sera and her friends.

This is one book where I absolutely did not see the ending coming. The last couple of chapters are a huge twist, one that had me nearly in tears. Not that the ending was a disappointment; far from it. It was not the ending that I was expecting, but it was a perfect way to end the book. I can say that the ending felt like it absolutely destroyed me; it was so good, but I felt like it left me wanting more when there was none.

The way that it was all brought together in the end makes me wonder if there will be another book. Even if there isn't, Darklandia is a fantastic addition to Ms. Welti's growing list of novels, and would be a great addition to anyone's personal library. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

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## Deborah says

I really liked most of the book, but the ending completely ruined it. The writing was good, but I feel sucker punched by the ending. I don't want to spoil anything, but I wish I hadn't read this.

The closer it got to the end of the book, the more I believed it must be the beginning of a series, because there was too much story left to finish. I started worrying that it would have to end with a cliffhanger.

I thought there were a few logical problems, but the ending negates everything.

It might have been OK for a short story that you knew from the beginning would not continue, but not after making us care about characters.

I won the ebook from LibraryThing.

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## i. says

A new approach to my favourite genre, dystopia, with a very likeable main character. Water is really scarce in this novel so it made me feel like having a shower or washing my hands after reading a chapter. All in all an entertaining book with a shocking ending.

[www.theleisurediaries.blogspot.com](http://www.theleisurediaries.blogspot.com)

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## Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says

I got this book from **Library Thing Giveaway**

I struggled at first with what to give the book. When I started to read it I absolutely found myself submerged in it as well as the plot. It seemed to flow, and the world T.S Welti created was simply unique and interesting.

Sera, the main character of the story lives in a new type of Manhattan. From the very beginning I was a little shocked with the way it had started, but it set up a very interesting storyline. I love the mystery that the character had to unravel about the felicity virus that plagues her people and the darklings (or normal people).

I have to say that the three stars came down to the fact that even though I enjoyed the storyline I was a bit torn and disappointed with the ending. I found myself a little confused with a bunch of unanswered questions. It seemed rushed, which would have been fine but it just didn't seem right. Made me feel like I missed something.

Overall I thought it was well written, up until the end, and I do hope that this is only the first book to a series. It was in fact, up to a point, a page turner. I enjoy books such as this, but I am left wanting more in the end, a little more depth as well.

