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The Hollow People

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The preserve of civilising influence and of free thought constantly intersect and are played against one another creating tautness of pace and momentum in this, the first novel in Keaney's 'The Promises of Dr Sigmundus' trilogy.

Pronounced a dangerous inmate of the Tarnagar asylum, Dante Cazabon's mother committed suicide leaving her son orphaned and under the care of asylum staff. Living beneath the shadow of his mother's infamy, persistently downtrodden and made to believe he teeters on the edge of the precipice between civilised existence and lack of control, Dante finds himself ensnared at the bottom of an intensely hierarchical society. Totalitarian rule governs the asylum and social assimilation is enforced through the ritualised taking of Ichor, a drug that diminishes conflict and disruptive behaviour but in so doing denies individuals their dreams and thereby free thought.

Equilibrium in Tarnagar is achieved by ensuring that everyone has a clear sense of their position within the society and an understanding of the appropriateness of relationships with their social equals. This is ruptured twofold, by a burgeoning friendship between Bea, daughter of one of the junior doctors, and Dante, and by the links the two make with notorious new inmate, Ezekiel Semiramis.

Ezekiel knows the real reason for the antagonisms held towards Dante's mother. A bid for escape by Ezekiel, Dante and Bea allows the unfurling of a world outside of Tarnagar and outside the tyrannical rule of Dr Sigmundus. Aside from the bleakness of this bureaucracy, the importance of imagination, creativity and aspiration to human development and betterment is forcibly made.

In a society where formula now dictates so much of management rule, when streamlining and efficiency have become the mantra of successful administration, *The Hollow People* provides a stunningly effective entreaty for the importance of remaining attuned to the role original thought continues to play for humanity. This gripping thriller has the freshness and philosophical drive of Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' with a substitution of spirituality and belief for that of inspiration and creativity. A must-read for all creative, free thinkers. JHo

Running Order:

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