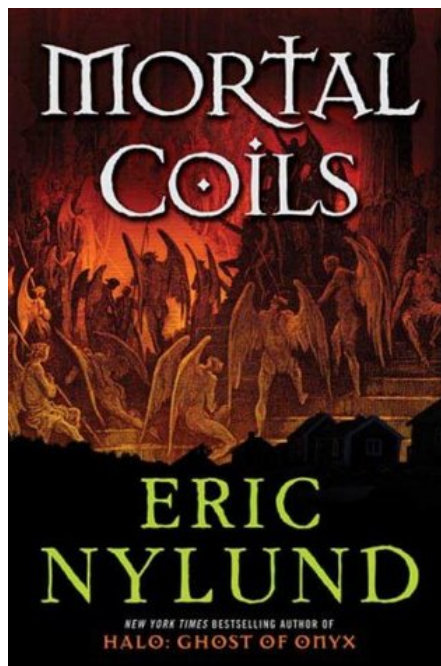




Mortal Coils

Eric S. Nylund

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"Nothing interesting had ever happened" to orphans Eliot and Fiona for 15 years with strict Grandmother and well-meaning great gran Cee. But unintended offspring of a goddess and Lucifer can break a long truce. Rather than kill the pair, Immortals create three Trials; Infernals add three Temptations. The pair must stick together; adult allegiances are uncertain.

Mortal Coils Details

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From Reader Review Mortal Coils for online ebook

Liviu says

I liked a lot the only book that I read by Mr. Nylund maybe 10 years or so ago, A Game of Universes and I always kept an eye on his offerings, but he wrote mostly tie-ins and some near-future sf/thrillers which I generally avoid, but Mortal Coils sounded tempting so I got a copy and I have to say that Mortal Coils was a big positive surprise, funny and smart and with great characters.

Despite it's 600+ page length, it is also a very fast novel so I finished it much sooner than I expected.

It could qualify as YA with two twin fifteen year old protagonists, the twins Fiona and Eliot whose parentage is not usual.

The elder by ten minutes, Fiona is the cool, composed leader and when her special characteristics start manifesting, it's not surprising they include martial abilities. Eliot is gentler and that is also manifested in his supernatural abilities.

The book flows so well that the pages turn by themselves and you really want the twins to succeed in their "trials" and find their place between the two clans of supernatural beings they belong to by blood. Of course they may be that "new" thing that both clans are scared of since after all the Gods destroyed their predecessors the Titans "some time" ago, or they may be just regular mortals, or...

Highly recommended and the next installments - five books planned, two contracted so far - should be even more fun.

Clackamas says

Kind of the step between the Percy Jackson series and the Preacher comics, except dull. This was a fun idea, poorly executed. It might be better as a movie because then the actors could make us care about these characters. As is, there just isn't an interesting person in the book... I hoped I'd care, but I didn't. I gave it more than one star because the author used footnotes as a device to attempt to give the book the feeling of an historical biography. That was more interesting than the story... I found myself skimming the pages and just reading footnotes for a hundred pages or so.

I won't be bothering with the next in the series.

Liza Gilbert says

Sigh.

There were a thousand things that I liked about this book. The concept rocked; the characters were good; Louis, the father, was a semi-Jack-Sparrow-type; the violin bits were excellent; and the depictions of the gods/demons both above and below as crabby-pantsed egomaniacs was cool.

The pacing sucked.

I would have liked to have read a version with at least 200 fewer pages. By the end of the book I was shaking it and literally yelling "Get to the point!"

This is a conflict book for me. I would like to say it was great because it had so many great elements, but it was such a slow read. However, the long and short of it is I really WOULD want to read the next book in the series.

Woodge says

The premise sounded promising and I gave this one a pretty good go, getting over 200 pages into it. But by that point I was completely bored. I didn't experience any real suspense. And when I got to the scene with all the rats, I thought things were looking up. But the denouement of that scene was anti-climactic and that sort of clinched my decision to abandon this book about 1/3 read. I realize this is a YA book, although it wasn't classified as such where I bought it. Even so, I'm no stranger to reading YA as an adult. But this obviously didn't grab me.

Maxine says

Twins Fiona and Elliot lead a boring life with their grandmother and great-grandmother. Grandmother has developed 106 rules the twins must abide by including no music (not even humming), no fiction stories, no dancing, no dating; in other words, none of the things that most teenagers live for. Their only break from their routine is their jobs at a pizzeria although even this is not much different than home. Then, on their fifteen birthday, the twins discover that they are the offspring of a goddess and Lucifer, Prince of Darkness and a custody battle is about to ensue between their mother's family and their father's. For their mother's side they must pass three heroic quests while the fallen angels on their father's side have three temptations for them. Unfortunately, all of grandmother's restrictions haven't exactly prepared them to deal with all the dangers that are being thrown at them including urban legends, serial killers, and possibly the most scary of all, a first kiss.

There is a whole lot going on in this book: gods and goddesses, the fates, fallen angels, talking animals, and urban legends and in a less capable hand, this could become very confusing. But Eric Nylund is very capable and Mortal Coils is a terrific read. And perhaps the best part of this book are the twins themselves. These are two of the most likable characters I have come across in a long time and it is impossible not to root for them.

So definitely a huge recommendation from me for Mortal Coils.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

"We must not let the other family have such power over the future. We must make those children ours."

"And failing that?"

"And failing that ..." Lucia suddenly looked sad and tired. "Failing that, I will kill them myself"

This book is epic in every sense of the word. I am pleased that upon a second reading, it was just as good as I had remembered.

It's got:

Terrifyingly intelligent, yet spectacularly **dorky and awkward** 15-year old main characters

An awesome, complex relationship between **twin siblings**

Terrifyingly **dangerous familial relationships** where your beloved cousin might be plotting to kill you and eat your siblings

A battle between ~~good slightly good not very bad~~ **kind of evil vs. evil**

An interesting spin on **demonic mythology**

A series of tests, in the form of **trials and temptations**

And the cherry on the cupcake...**refreshingly little romance**

Sometimes a book just clicks. This book was just what I needed to refresh my mind in between the terrible books that seem to enjoy bombarding itself at me.

The Summary:

Eliot Post and his sister, Fiona, would be fifteen tomorrow and nothing interesting had ever happened to them.

Eliot and Fiona are the most socially stunted 15-year old twins in the entire world. And it's all thanks to their grandmother. They are orphans, parents mysteriously dead, oh, somewhere, somehow. The only family they've got now is a terrifying grandmother who is more military commander than cuddly old cookie-baking grandma.

It was Grandmother always. It was never Audrey or Gram, or any other pet name like they used with Cecilia. Not that it was forbidden, but Grandmother was the only thing they ever thought to call her. It was the only title that carried the authority her presence demanded.

And a cookie-baking great-grandma who seriously can't cook anything for shit.

They've been home-schooled their entire lives. Their lives are dominated by rules, ranging from NO LISTENING TO MUSIC to NO READING BOOKS DEALING WITH MAGIC. Seriously, their grandmother has a fucking list of rules for them. They've been forced to work hard their entire lives, there's no easy ride for them. From cleaning the apartment unit when they were young, to working their asses off doing menial labor in a horrible pizza shop, Eliot and Fiona's life can only be described as **miserable**.

They can't even have candy. Even a half-eaten piece of chocolate, found in the trash, is considered a special treat. They wear homemade clothes (ugly ones). They never, ever go out. They have no friends but each other.

He and Fiona might as well have been corked inside a bottle, sailing nowhere on a tiny balsawood ship.

But **all is not as it seems**. Eliot and Fiona...surprisingly...caught someone's attention. Someone who recognizes their potential, through the altogether normal appearance.

Yes, the boy's eyes, the slender but strong bridge of the girl's nose, the high cheekbones and arching brows on both. How could she have missed it? Whoever had camouflaged them had done a masterful job: they had transformed divine into dull.

And with that, the dam bursts.

No shit, they're not who they seem. Neither is their grandmother. They have a newfound extended family they know nothing about. A family that's all sort of magical, but not altogether friendly. Eliot and Fiona might get killed just for being born. Unless they pass The Test.

"Let the record show," Aunt Lucia declared, "that we shall test the children's potentials with three heroic trials. This will illuminate their characters and determine their lineage. It will prove their possible worth to remain alive."

But that's not the only family they have to be concerned about. As bad as these relatives seem...there's the other side of the family...**a side that may be even worse.**

Meanwhile she had to prepare for the gathering of the Board. There were weapons to sharpen and armor to mend.

Indeed, one did not face one's brothers and sisters without taking careful precautions against carnage and bloodshed.

Eliot and Fiona will fight for their lives. They will face tests, temptations. **Crocodiles and chocolates.** Yes, you read that correctly.

They will face attempts at seduction, they will discover powers they never knew they had.

Challenges abound. They will learn that there is so much more to them and their families than they ever knew. Will they conquer their challenges? Will they fall? Will they succumb to the light? Ok, the slightly shadowy...or will they fall to the darkness?

Above all else...they have to trust each other. They have to stick together.

She gently pushed them away. Tears were in her old eyes. "Be brave," she whispered. "Do not let them separate you. You are stronger together."

Together, they are strong. **May the best side win.**

The Families:

Eliot stared into the darkness and wondered about his father's side of the family. Why was no one talking about them? Uncle Henry, Aunt Lucia, and possibly Grandmother had murdered. Could the other family be somehow ... worse?

This book takes a number of mythologies and gave it an exceedingly interesting spin. There are demonic creatures from Christian mythology and other legends who come to life...and who become other characters here. **It is half the fun guessing who the characters are.** From the "dark" side, we have characters like the

seductress Seeliah, the deadly beauty with a secret soft side, a fighter and a queen in her own rights.

On the "good" side, we have characters like the beautiful, deadly Lucia. The charming and conniving Henry Mimes. Good and bad are all relative here, no pun intended, because good or bad, each side is out for their own best interest, and no game is too dirty to play.

With families like these...who needs enemies?

Familial love: I absolutely love the portrayal of complex family relationships in this book. It is a battlefield, but above all else, there is loyalty. One may want to kill one's sister at times...but blood ties stand above all. It is a rather "**Mafia**"-like relationship. You wouldn't ever want to turn your back on a relative...but when it counts, you know they've got your back.

Sibling Love:

Fiona might have tried to drive him crazy, dreamed up the worst insults in the world to throw at him, but she'd never in a million years have snitched on him.

...Slash hate. I absolutely love Eliot and Fiona's relationships. **They have only ever had each other.** They have never had friends. They don't always get along...in fact, they hardly ever get along...but they're **fiercely loyal** to each other because of that fact. When you have lived your entire life a step up from abject misery, forbidden to have friends, forbidden to go to school, to be with your peers...you feel closest to the one who knows what you're going through.

They have an...interesting relationship. There is a **considerable and constant amount of rivalry with each other, academically.** There's seriously NOTHING else they can do to keep themselves entertained but to fight with each other. They compete by playing word games...seeing who can best insult each other using the most obscure words. Hey, we all have to get our fun somewhere.

As much as they claim to hate each other, Eliot and Fiona know they can rely on each other. Fiona is **fiercely protective of her brother.**

*An image of Eliot, beaten and bloodied, flashed through her imagination—and her only thought was to protect him.
She yanked the rope.*

Eliot, in turn, knows to be there for his sister when she needs him most, even if she seemingly doesn't want him there.

They have an unspoken YOU ARE SO GROSS I HATE YOU DON'T EVER TOUCH ME pact. A pact that is broken when they need each other most.

*She grabbed Eliot's hand.
Normally this would have violated their brother-sister-never-touch-me agreement, which had been in place since they had been toilet trained. But tonight, Eliot let her.*

I absolutely adore a good sibling relationship, and they don't come any better than this book, but that's not to say the twins themselves aren't **excellent characters**, alone.

Fiona:

She wanted to be Fiona Post ... whatever that was ... shy and awkward ... scared ... but

herself.

The older twin, the wiser, more cynical twin. **The warrior to her brother's poetic soul.** Fiona is awkward, unsure of herself, wishing, like most teenaged girls often do, that she could be stronger, more confident, more beautiful.

*Fiona would have given anything to be as confident. Every time she had to talk to strangers, her heart pounded so hard she could barely hear her own mouse voice as it tried to squeak out something clever.
If shyness were a disease, Fiona would have been rushed to intensive care and put on a social respirator.*

Throughout the book, we see her bloom. From a shy, stammering girl afraid of everything to a warrior goddess who stands up to challenges, who is capable of killing when she needs to, who finds strength to stand up against the most powerful of temptations.

What I love about Fiona is that she is not perfect. That she is bitchy on occasion, but she has a tremendous amount of loyalty and love for her brother and her family. That is a main character I can stand behind.

Eliot:

*"I'm here," he whispered. "I'll always be here for you."
Behind the door, Fiona quietly started to sob again.
Eliot didn't let go.*

The gentle, soft poet. The musician who doesn't know what he's capable of. He is more compassionate than Fiona, weaker than Fiona, but at the same time, stubborn and strong in his own way. He, too, grows from a spineless boy who's all-too-conscious of being smaller, weaker than his twin, into someone who finds strength and power in a skill he never knew he had.

This is one of my all-time favorite book. It is a long book, but I assure you, it's so worth the time investment.

C. Lorion says

I can be such an idiot.

I hate to write this, I really do, but I must. Mortal Coils is a book that I saw on the Barnes & Noble shelf every time I entered the store. I always visit the fantasy/science fiction section, and for at least a year I would see this book. I'd pick it up, (at 675 paperback pages, it had a nice heft to it, which I love in a book, know what I mean? Yeah, of course you do), read the back cover (sounded like quite a story), read the blurbs (*Publishers Weekly* and *Library Journal* praised it). I'd consider buying it, take it with me to the snack area and sit with it (with a pile of other books), think about it, then would ultimately...put it back.

Yeah. I would put it back. Know why?

You sure you want to know?

(Here's the part I hate to write, but I must in order to present a truly honest review of this fine novel)

I would put it back because...well, um,...because it looked like it was a...a...yeah, you guessed it. A young

adult novel.

And I, C. Michael Lorion, do NOT read young adult books. After all, I am an adult.

Like I said, I can be SUCH an idiot.

I finally relented one day. I took *Mortal Coils* off the shelf, hefted it to the checkout counter, paid for it, went home, started reading it, and thought to myself...(yeah, you guessed it)..."You are SUCH an idiot, Lorion!"

Once I had devoured the first few chapters, I discovered one of two things, possibly both things: either this was not a YA adult novel, or I enjoy reading YA novels. Whichever the case, I found myself entranced with the story, in love with the characters, and completely taken by the descriptive force of Mr. Nylund's prose.

I don't know if *Mortal Coils* is classified as young adult (it's hardly got any swearing, no sex scenes that I remember, no gory violence), but that doesn't really matter. The story is incredible, no matter what category it falls into.

The storyline (not the plot, mind you) is rather straightforward: Eliot and Fiona are the children of a goddess and Lucifer. A custody battle ensues between the two families. To determine which side should gain control of the fifteen-year-old twins, three heroic tests are presented to them.

And that's it.

But, yet, that's not it. This story, in the hands of a lesser author, could easily fall into a cliché-ridden monster that would gobble up every nuance and character development it could. Not so here. Nylund does a fantastic job of creating suspense and tension through subtlety and sleight-of-hand. He writes characters in such a way that you're not completely sure who's right and who's wrong, who's good and who's evil. The characters, as do real people, have open and hidden motives, secrets to uncover, desires to conceal, jealousies, loves, and everything that makes people real.

The only that disappointed me with this book (which I did not find out until I was almost done reading it) is that it's the first in a series. I've read the second installment *All That Lives Must Die*, and it's just as good, if not better, than *Mortal Coils*. However, the series isn't finished yet, and if you visit Mr. Nylund's website, it's unclear when it will be finished as there seems to be some kind of dispute with his publisher, which totally rots for the rest of us because I WANT TO FINISH THIS SERIES!

So you are warned. If you read *Mortal Coils* and its sequel, *All That Lives Must Die*, you may be waiting for a long time for the end of the story.

However.

I highly recommend *Mortal Coils* as a standalone novel. It's that good, it's that complete in itself, and I don't think you'll regret reading it (as well as the second installment).

So there you have it.

Cera says

I read this in one enormous gulp, and was left feeling vaguely dissatisfied. There were many things I really

enjoyed about it, but it wasn't nearly as good as it could have been & that's always frustrating.

The premise is entertaining: Eliot and Fiona are twins, they've been raised in a bizarrely restricted household by their hyper-rational grandmother and their loving but frail and rather ditzy great-grandmother. When they turn 15 they find out that everything they thought they knew was wrong... but as other readers have commented, they find out Very Slowly. This didn't bother me in the moment because I was expecting some serious emotional payoff -- massive transformations, deep psychological work, etc etc -- which would have made sense out of the slow pacing. Alas, no such luck; it's the beginning of a series and so while the characters do develop, they do so in a frustratingly realistic manner, coming to new self-knowledge and competency only to immediately let go of it again. (A good example of this is Fiona's back-and-forth about the chocolates, that goes On and On and On. Quite realistic, but I was so disappointed by it!)

Also, Nylund's prose is perfectly adequate but never rises above that, even when it really needs to. I was particularly unhappy with the footnotes, which are all written in a very contemporary voice even when they purport to be from the 1950s or the 13th century. Nylund seems to be lacking the skill to do the sort of pastiche necessary to make that kind of layering work. By the same token, all of his characters tended to sound largely the same; he managed little quirks, but nothing that made me feel like the Really Old characters were actually really old.

All that being said, I did devour the book in under 24 hours, and I'll read the next one, too. Nylund was good at making me care about his young people, and good at keeping me turning the pages, and that in itself is a pleasure, even if the experience feels hollow at the end. And who knows? Maybe the next one will be more substantial.

Andjela says

***2017 book challenge- book named after a song:** <https://youtu.be/HFWKJ2FUuAQ>* (*cheated a bit, it's the name of a band, not the song*)

I really don't understand how this book isn't more popular. It's an absolute gem! Nylund is a superb writer. I mean, the world building, the interesting plot- you won't be able to put this one down.

If you still have doubts, I'll just say that there are footnotes with completely made up, yet world legit-sounding sources. That's how complex and well thought out this book is. Freaking awesome.

Joshua says

I've been a fan of the subgenre of fantasy, urban-fantasy, for a long time. However, in recent years I've been dismayed with the changing currents of the urban-fantasy world, where every monster is beautiful, and thinly veiled romance novels run abound next to Charles Lint and Neil Gaimen novels. I'm a romantic, but the stilted dialogue and writing styles of recent urban-fantasy novels leaves a lot to be desired. But I can't really complain. As long as people are reading, and more and more urban fantasy gets turned into tv shows, hey, that's always a positive.

Mortal Coils falls into the type of urban-fantasy novels I like, where ordinary people are set upon with extraordinary circumstances, as greater forces fight over their destiny and every city has its own unique smell and life. Just good vs. evil with very (if any) romance. The book is a tad long, and it felt like I was watching the last *Lord of the Rings* movie, with endings on endings. Still, the writing is crisp, the story moves incredibly fast for a 700 page novel, and the characters are all likable, although the two main twins whining can be a bit tiresome, but I guess that's what it means to be a kid. However, it's because of the two main characters and all of their whining that I consider this more a YA novel, then a regular urban-fantasy novel.

Author Eric Nylund is best known for his novels in the *Halo* video game universe, but for me, **Mortal Coils** has made me stand up and take notice of him. A 3.5 starred read. I look forward to the forthcoming sequel this June.

Jennifer says

In the tradition of *American Gods*, fifteen-year-old twins Eliot and Fiona find out that they are the mortal offspring of Lucifer and the goddess Fate. It takes them around 300 pages to discover this fact (which is far too late in a 600 page book, IMHO), and that is the point the novel finally takes off. They come into their powers and have to pass challenges set by both the heavenly and hellish members of their new "family" to determine which side they will eventually belong to. While the language is accessible, the descriptions of the modern gods and their machinations deliciously diabolical, and the fight scenes well choreographed, this book is VERY slow to start and will no doubt lose most readers in the first 200 pages because so the build is so sluggish. Also, the cover is about as ponderous as the pacing and does nothing to enhance the story within. Footnotes taken from a "fake" famous book of mythology that explain the people and places the twins are experiencing are fun, as is the character of the evil seductress goddess Sealiah who wiggles her voluptuous curves at every male who walks by, chews up the scenery and ruthlessly curses teenage girls who get in her way. I would have rather had a whole book about her than this bloated grown up version of *The Lightning Thief*.

Paul Weimer says

Fiona and Eliot Post are two orphans on the cusp of their fifteenth birthday. Living with their grandmother in a strangely strict regimen of rules, their lives are relatively dull and uninteresting. The myriad non fiction books (fictional books are forbidden!) provide much of the entertainment and life for these homeschooled twins, whose only outside outlet is their work in a nearby pizza parlor.

Their fifteenth birthday, however, coincides with the discovery of them by outside powers, and the discovery by them that their parents are scions of competing supernaturally powered families. Now at the center of a custody fight between gods and demons, set on trials by the gods and tempted by the demons, Fiona and Eliot soon realize just how protected and safe their previous, constricted existence really was.

Wow.

The novel reminded me of L Jagi Lamplighter's *Prospero's Lost*. It's clear that both novels have read, and been influenced by Roger Zelazny. The tone and the worlds created, though, are somewhat different and I think a good analogy is to think of another pair of writers, C.S. Lewis and JRR Tolkien. With her explicitly Christian framework to the mythology of her supernatural modern day universe, Lamplighter's *Prospero's Lost* is the C.S. Lewis in this formulation. Nylund's novel, on the other hand, does not have that explicit

framework. In fact, the novel seems to suggest that the appearances of supernatural beings throughout history have all been members of the various families depicted and hinted at in this book. In this way, its a more, for lack of a better work, pagan formulation than Lamplighter's.

Turning aside from the comparison, the novel itself is replete with all sorts of delights. The twins are well drawn and have a complicated sibling relationship which I found believable and a delight. I particularly liked the vocabulary/reference game that the two play. Only having had years of non fiction volumes to read for recreation, the twins are perfectly comfortable in making obscure references. For example, early in the novel, Fiona refers to Eliot being sick by asking if he has *Nagleria fowleri*(a type of amoeba contracted in water).

Another delight in the novel is the footnotes. While he doesn't pepper the text with the frequency of, say, Jack Vance, the novel's text and narrative is replete and enriched by the occasional footnote which makes observations from what seems to be the future of the events depicted. This further enriches and complicates the world and its narrative in a way that helps suggest that the world "continues" beyond the borders of its pages. The Playground of the Imagination, as Larry Niven calls it.

The characters themselves, beyond the Twins, on both sides of their relations, are a host that are complicated, complex and completely well drawn. Not all of the Gods could be considered good by even the most charitable reading of the text, and not all of the Infernals can be considered completely and irredeemably evil.

The novel is clearly and explicitly the first in a series, and I do hope that the novel sells well enough that Mr. Nylund has the opportunity to write and publish more of the books. I definitely will be looking forward to reading the subsequent volumes. As I implied before, people like me, who love Zelazny are going to cotton to this novel very well. (Hey, it has a character named *Fiona* who winds up having supernatural abilities. How can you say no to that?!). Nylund, thankfully, has had his time in the wilderness of media-tie-in novels not go to waste. The writing is engaging, inventive and enthralling.

Highly Recommended.

Shannon says

I don't get all the rave reviews on this one. It's at least 200 pages too long & to me, got worse as it went on. I barely skimmed the last 25 pages because I just did not care anymore. And it was also no surprise who the mother turned out to be.

Cecilia says

Eliot and Fiona must prove themselves in a series of 3 tests and temptations. As they race to succeed and survive, each discovers their special powers and struggles to stick together, even though others try to tear them apart.

What makes it harder for Eliot and Fiona is that no one is exactly who they seem and that makes it harder to know whom they can trust to help.

Honestly, I would refer everyone to the Fantasy Book Critic's review to get a better idea of what to expect from Mortal Coils. The intricate details just blew me away as I raced through the book, and it reminds me

somewhat of Pier Anthony's Incarnations Of Immortality series except on a grander scale. It was interesting to see how the Immortals and Infernals adapted to the present and what their modern-day names were.

I look forward to the sequel if Eric Nylund does indeed continue this as a series!

See my complete review here

Joey Cruz says

Mortal Coils may not be the best book I've ever read, but it's the best *kind* of book: one that starts small and grows more and more complex and exciting until you can't put it down for the last third of its length.

It's like that.

The problem I had with Mortal Coils is that it starts a little too slowly. Its premise is intriguing, but it takes almost 200 pages for the book to get really interesting, and then probably another 50 for it to get GOOD. But from that moment on, it's unputdownable.

(I just want to take a moment to note that, according to my spell-checker, "unputdownable" is an actual word, and that is awesome)

Eric Nylund is a master of high-stakes storytelling, but this is the first time I've seen him build his own world -- and what a world it is. This effort, unfortunately, is what makes the first third of the book so slow. He has a lot of characters to introduce, and none of them is particularly relatable at first. Even the main protagonists. They may be introverted 15 year olds, but they've been raised in such a bizarrely dispassionate and repressive environment that I couldn't connect with either their behavior or their thought processes.

It's all necessary, though. This is the story Nylund is telling. And while it may be distant or slow-going in parts, that's just because nobody has ever been through what the twins have been through, or what they're about to go through, before. What's ironic is that as the story goes on and Elliot and Fiona start going through their trials, the extreme emotions that come out of them make them much more relatable and sympathetic, because it's tapping into the human emotion we all feel. While being tested for godhood, the twins become more human. I liked that.

And the tests are really where the story takes off. It may take 200 pages for the pieces to all be put in place, but once the first moment of peril is reached, it's like a snowball rolling downhill. It's like Nylund spends almost a book's length proving to himself that he can worldbuild with the best of them, and only then does he allow himself to do what he does best: thrill us.

The lead-in may be long, the characterizations flawed, but the result is an investment in the world and all the characters that makes the amazing payoffs all the more satisfying, and to his credit, Nylund doesn't put a single detail in this story that isn't recalled in a meaningful way by the end.

The one actual flaw may be the handling of both twins' love lives, which seemed more like the writer was going through the motions rather than actually feeling out the romances the way he feels out everything else in the story. Even that was forgivable and got a little better by the end.

I'd highly recommend this book for anyone who is a fan of the supernatural, the mythical, the adventurous and the contemporarily fantastical. It may be a challenge, but the rewards are worth it.

