

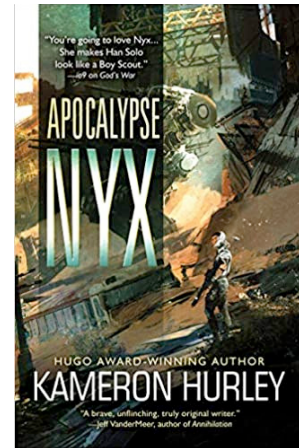
Apocalypse Nyx, by Kameron Hurley

Adam McLain



Kameron Hurley. *Apocalypse Nyx*. Tachyon Publications, 2018. Paperback, 288 pp. \$15.95. ISBN 9781616962944.

Returning to a world of bug magic and desert warriors, Kameron Hurley delivers yet another identity challenging, religiously provocative, and character-focused adventure in *Apocalypse Nyx*. Occurring within and between book one (*God's War*, 2010) and book two (*Infidel*, 2011) in her widely acclaimed Bel Dame Apocrypha, *Apocalypse Nyx* follows Hurley's aggressive, no-nonsense Nyxnissa so Dasheem through five separate adventures, each showing the depth and complexity of Hurley's world, magic system, and character development.



The five adventures in *Apocalypse Nyx* are curated from various novelettes and short stories that Hurley has published in order to continue the adventures of her titular hero. Luckily for readers and lovers of the Bel Dame Apocrypha, or *God's War* series as it is sometimes called, these stories were held behind various paywalls in several places. This collection collects them together for readers. Published from 2014 to 2017, the stories provide singular looks into moments of Nyx's lives and adventures. I would recommend not starting a reading of this series with *Apocalypse Nyx* but instead reading the original trilogy and then diving into this prequel of sorts.

"The Body Project," the first story in the collection, gives readers answers to some of what Nyx and her ragtag group of mercenaries were up to between chapters four and five of *God's War*. When Nyx discovers the body of someone she thought was supposed to be dead a long time ago, she must solve the mystery of why his body appeared far away from where she supposedly killed him. As with the original trilogy, Hurley seeks to question and complicate the ideas of identity and body in this story.

The second story, "The Heart Is Eaten Last," takes Nyx to the south, where we delve into Nyx's complicated family and a past that returns to haunt her. This story delves more into Nyx's character, showing her cold and hardened exterior while also giving glimpses into her true feelings about a job that is personal to her. Of course, as with any book by Hurley, the idea of emotions and what makes up a human becomes complicated as she layers into her characters various complexities. For readers of *Apocalypse Nyx* the notion of an individual "truth" within characters is more an ideal than a reality.

In the third adventure, “Soulbound,” Nyx meets an ardent cleric from Mhoria, a religious country that believes in the sacredness of the body so much so that they do not exhume or perform autopsies on bodies. However, this cleric, Abdiel, believes that she must research what her theology teaches her about the location of sin in a body. She eventually runs across Nyx in Nasheen, where Nyx is trying to stop magicians from carrying contraband inside their bodies. Bodies and theology clash through the rest of the story as Hurley weaves conversations and questions motivated largely by the worldbuilding through the rest of the Bel Dame Apocrypha, crafting a pensive and provocative story.

“Crossroads at Jannah,” the fourth story, follows Nyx and her crew on a new mission that leads them into a new hell. As the story progresses, Nyx again causes her crew to question her leadership and willingness to cost them their lives and livelihood. This descending spiral leads provokes questions about will and agency, paradise and hell, and choice and consequence. Not as theologically engaging as “Soulbound,” “Crossroads at Jannah” deals with the practicalities of religious belief and the morals that guide lives.

The collection concludes with the fifth story, “Paint It Red.” An old acquaintance reappears in Nyx’s life and demands Nyx pay her debt. Nyx, not liking personal debts, chooses to take on the mission and learns more about herself and her morals than she thought possible. As a conclusion to the short story collection, this story provides a sharp counterpoint to Nyx’s blasé and reckless attitude from the earlier stories. It shows her dedication to her team and her morals while also not caring too deeply

As an entry point to Hurley’s world, this book provides intense action and adventure, but some of Hurley’s deft moves and character growth is lost in the serialized shortness of each story. Because it is a short story collection, *Apocalypse Nyx* provides an ending that feels like the moment after a good dinner but before the dessert. It is epic in proportion, but the book leaves one wanting to read *God’s War*, *Infidel*, and *Rapture* (2012), hopefully for a second time. *Apocalypse Nyx* is a great reunion of readers with characters, one that appetizes the world, inviting the reader to dine at the full-course meal that is Hurley’s original trilogy..