



## The Island of Excess Love

*Francesca Lia Block*

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## **The Island of Excess Love** Francesca Lia Block

Pen has lost her parents. She's lost her eye. But she has fought Kronen; she has won back her fragile friends and her beloved brother. Now Pen, Hex, Ash, Ez, and Venice are living in the pink house by the sea, getting by on hard work, companionship, and dreams. Until the day a foreboding ship appears in the harbor across from their home. As soon as the ship arrives, they all start having strange visions of destruction and violence. Trance-like, they head for the ship and their new battles begin.

This companion to *Love in the Time of Global Warming* follows Pen as she searches for love among the ruins, this time using Virgil's epic *Aeneid* as her guide. A powerful and stunning book filled with Francesca Lia Block's beautiful language and inspiring characters.

## **The Island of Excess Love Details**

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Author : Francesca Lia Block

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# From Reader Review *The Island of Excess Love* for online ebook

**Carrie (brightbeautifulthings) says**

I was really impressed with Francesca Lia Block's *Love in the Time of Global Warming*. Naturally, since I am incapable of doing thirty seconds worth of research on a book before I read it, I didn't realize it had a sequel until I finished it. I try to never quit a series unless I'm really not feeling it, so here we are at *The Island of Excess Love*. There may be spoilers ahead for the first book. Trigger warnings: rape, misgendering.

Pen, her brother Venice, and their friends Hex, Ez, and Ash have been scraping by at the pink house after the apocalypse, but their adventures are far from over. When a ghost ship appears in the sea outside their home, it starts them on a quest that loosely parallels *The Aeneid* to an island ruled by a magical king who thrives on beauty and temptation.

It's entirely clear to me why no one has ever heard of this sequel, since it falls well short of its predecessor in a number of ways. I didn't fully think through the ramifications of a sequel before I decided to read this, but I realized in the first few chapters that no matter what happened, I probably wasn't going to like it. My children were safe and happy at the end of the last book, and I wanted them to stay that way—but then, there wouldn't be a book, of course.

I found the *Odyssey* parallels in *Global Warming* interesting (and occasionally over my head), but the *Aeneid* connections feel a lot more forced. I'm more familiar (and sympathetic) with Dido's story than Aeneas's, but I'm not sure the parallel brought a whole lot to the story Block is telling. It has elements in it that are interesting, but overall, it didn't keep my attention the way the first novel did, and the writing seemed to lack some of the beauty/mysticism as well.

While I praised *Global Warming* for its diverse cast and LGBTQ representation, *Excess Love* has been criticized for some of its more problematic themes. The first is that Hex is in no way done justice as a trans character here. When the king is courting Pen, she mentions that she's never been with a man before, as if Hex is suddenly not a man, and he's misgendered several times before that. That's not okay. More on the other after the spoilers mark.

Not surprisingly, the king's advances drive a wedge between Pen and Hex. There were a lot of directions the character development could have gone, but that fallout isn't adequately dealt with. Ez and Ash are little more than background characters, and no one except Venice gets the development they deserve. I found myself unsatisfied with the way Block leaves things. All in all, I think it's well worth it to read *Global Warming*, but also perfectly acceptable to pretend that *Excess Love* never happened. I enjoyed parts of it because I enjoy the characters and the world-building, but it also has to be taken with a heap of salt.

**SPOILERS SPOILERS SPOILERS. TURN BACK BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.**

It's not really clear whether Pen is in control when she sleeps with the king, but it looks an awful lot like she's magically date-raped. Worse, she receives a lot of criticism and slut-shaming for it. I understand Hex's feelings of betrayal, but rather than focus on the relationship dynamic between the two of them, the narrative maintains a critical tone toward Pen. She's awash in feelings of guilt and shame, and we're offered little insight into Hex's feelings other than his anger at her. There are better ways to handle issues like this but, again, it doesn't get the proper attention, and things are left rather open-ended.

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## **Erin says**

Oh man... I love Francesca Lia Block, and this was totally going to get five stars from me. Spoilers spoilers spoilers. BUT.

Pen has sex with the Enchanted King on the Island, after Hex throws a fit about illusions and storms off without saying a) where he's going, b) if he's even coming back. It doesn't appear like he's coming back. For all intents and purposes, it looks like homeboy flew the coop and abandoned them all. Not to mention the Island is a wild place of enchantments and everyone is vaguely high on love drugs the whole time they're there. The King loves Pen and has seen her in prophecies. Built this whole island for her, so she would be in comfort, and rest in order to go further on her journey and put the world back to order.

Hex LEAVES. Pen, thoroughly distraught, turns to the person who appears to love her to most in the world and makes a conscious choice to sleep with them.

Which she then beats herself up about, slut shames, and generally is way too hard on herself without placing any blame on the situation Hex left her in. And then later is like, "But I was drunk and high and you know what that's like!"

And I'm like, girl, you made a conscious choice and that's okay! Hex fucked up too! You're both allowed to fuck up and still love each other! Abandoning your partner is not okay. Neither is cheating - but she didn't even know it was cheating, because he left.

And then she's pregnant.

Now, this is a retelling of Greek epics, which means this baby might be Achilles, but Pen has also been both Odysseus AND Aeneas so far, and the Iliad happens BEFORE The Odyssey or The Aeneid in episodic structure, so I don't know where Block is going with this.

Also I am SICK of women becoming pregnant to advance the plot. It's boring, cliché, and I expected better.

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## **Doriana says**

Wut the hell?

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## **Yuli Atta - Damaged Pages says**

Imagine you're back in time when those fanfics about a boy and a girl, complete strangers, meet each other, immediately fall in love with each other, fuck, then the boy dies in some odd circumstances and the girl is surprisingly pregnant and if there is a happy end, then she finds a man in the face of her BFF and live happily ever after, are still popular and consider it for a moment- would you like it even though you know that it is not what it's supposed to be? Especially when it's a book about apocalypse. You know, I am an easy reader I rate books with five or four stars more often than with 3 or even 2, but with 1 I rate as rare as possible.

Just think about how bad this book was that I rated it with one star.

It wasn't full with problems around food or water or survival, no, it was full with teen drama like some soup operish teen fiction but at the time of global warming.

I regret reading this book and I'm gonna try to forget it and stay with the possitive feelings about the first one.

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### **Alison Evans says**

TW for transphobia re: Hex not being a "real man".

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### **Jamie (Books and Ladders) says**

I was meh about LOVE IN THE TIME OF GLOBAL WARMING but THE ISLAND OF EXCESS LOVE didn't even live up to the first. The retelling aspect was even looser this time around and the characters acted poorly to one another specifically because there needed to be conflict rather than it feeling natural to the story.

I felt like this one tried too hard to be "better" than the first rather than its own story and it really hurt it because it ended up feeling like a cheap copy of the first with different inspiration. I'm also not a fan of cheating so be warned that this happens in this book. It could be called a "parallel" or whatever but it was stupid and not necessary.

I thought the length of the chapters was awkward as well. The pacing was alright until the chapter that lasts like 60 pages. The others you flew through but this one took so long because you kept wondering when it was going to end. I think the best part of this book was it's short chapters but that wasn't the case with this particular chapter and that disappointed me.

I'm not sure I would recommend this one unless you REALLY loved the first but I do want more retellings of mythology that include LGBTQ+ characters. I just wish this had been better.

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### **Karissa says**

This was an okay sequel to Love in the Time of Global Warming. I didn't like it nearly as much as the original book, although there was some beautiful imagery throughout.

Pen and her friends are making a life for themselves in the pink house on the beach. The world has ended but they are still surviving. Then a mysterious boat shows up on the shore and this boat brings up all the bad in our characters' pasts and makes them relive it. Our characters end up heading out on yet another adventure to the Island of Excess Love. The story was written to loosely follow Virgil's Aeneid.

The plot is very straight-forward and predictable, not nearly as dreamy and ambiguous as Love in the Time of Global Warming. I always enjoy Block's beautiful sparkle in her writing, but that just wasn't present in this book. The beautiful description is there, but our character feel downtrodden and tired...they aren't

finding beauty in this desolate world like they did in the first book.

The characters are not nearly as easy to engage with as they were in the first book either. In fact I flat out disliked them throughout much of the story. They make very poor decisions and treat each other poorly, there isn't much heroic about this story.

Overall this was an okay read but a disappointing follow up to Love in the Time of Global Warming. Everything about this story felt tired. I would only recommend reading if you really loved Love in the Time of Global Warming and are dying to find out what happened to Pen and crew after that book.

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### **Summer says**

I was not as impressed with this book as the first. It still had lovely imagery due to Block's writing. I just didn't like how the story was told or the choices the characters made.

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### **Journey says**

[basically, Pen is raped (she is literally magic-enchanted and drunk, and a man has sex with her--and i can't remember if she specifically identifies as anything in the first book but RIGH

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### **Hannah Kane says**

It's gonna take me a long time to recover from this book, I think. I need a sequel, like, immediately. I care so much about these characters, I love the mythology references, and reading this book and its predecessor is like a dream. I highly recommend this to fans of post-apocalyptic and fantasy, but really to anyone looking for an excellent, quick read. Pen is an outstanding heroine, in part because she is fallible; she's not up on a pedestal for us to worship and adore, but more like we would be in her shoes.

This book hits a lot of diversity points, too. The main character has a disability, and pretty much everyone is queer and/or not white, canonically.

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### **Hannah (fullybookedreviews) says**

Yowza. What a beautiful cover!

The Island of Excess Love was just as weird as its predecessor, Love in the Time of Global Warming. Unfortunately, it wasn't nearly as wonderful. There was also a dub-con element that left me feeling rather icky and didn't sit right with me.

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## ? percy ✨ says

[why does pen have to be pregnant with the king's baby?? all bc hex couldn't get her pregnant i bet fucksidsnfs what bullshit is this. COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY!!! i guess i get it though, new life, rebirth, hex accepting shit, pen accepting shit, w/e w/e. still. also i don't mind cheating in books but only when it's done well, and this wasn't it just made me ANGRY!!!! (hide spoiler)]

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## Carmen says

What I like most about this book, and about *Love in the Time of Global Warming*, are the way she evokes classical epic, not just by name dropping, but by writing prose that evokes the ancient epics. When she writes about characters sitting down to a meal after their private safe world has been invaded, you can hear the echoes of Homer and Virgil, albeit updated with modern appliances: "Ez takes a ration of almonds from our stand and roasts apples on the hibachi stove for breakfast. After we've eaten and fed Argos(the dog) we all gather in the living room... We try to stay busy with our morning meditation, and yoga class, our reading and drawing and repairs-Im mending some shirts and Venice is attempting to fix a broken chair, but its like we can't really concentrate. Hex has taken his sword down from the wall above our bed and every so often he reaches for it as if to reassure himself..."

You can almost hear and see overlaid the image of the battered trojans in book one of the *Aeneid*: They sit on the shore after the storm at sea, eating, and talking and trying to allay their anxiety about "What the fuck are we gonna do now?"

The book is shot through with not just references to *The Aeneid*, but as a reference for the characters to work out the rest of their lives in the wake of an apocalypse. Brilliant use of the source material.

But not as engaging as *Love in the Time of Global Warming*. Too much of the book taken up with the illusion vs reality theme, with too many falshbacks, flash forwards, and dream sequences, and as a result parts of the book dont always feel authentic, or genuine. I get that the main point of the book is that survivor trauma is often about figuring out the real concerns from the general everpresent anxiety that surrounds the sufferer, but i had a hard time staying invested.

Still, Im hoping for another instalment.

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## shady boots | #WatchPOSE says

Does the guy on the cover have....antlers?

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## **Melissa Chung says**

This sequel is loosely based on Virgil's Aeneid. The adventure that Pen finds herself on in this story is not as enjoyable as the first. In 'Love in the Time of Global Warming', Pen meets new people after the great "Earth Shaker". She is on a mission to find her family. She fights Giants and becomes a Hero.

In 'The Island Of Excess Love', Pen and her friends find themselves on a hopeless adventure to the Island of Excess Love and The Island of Shades. These two islands are filled with vices and tests that have to be conquered and won in order to make it out alive. I felt Pen wasn't strong at all in this story.

I think Venice grew to be a better person in this book. He should be the leader now that Pen has proven she can't defeat her sins. She made me angry with her weakness. Hex of course had his faults too. He was too prideful and didn't communicate with Pen or his friends. In the end everyone got what was coming to them.

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