



## **Immobility**

*Brian Evenson*

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When you open your eyes things already seem to be happening without you. You don't know who you are and you don't remember where you've been. You know the world has changed, that a catastrophe has destroyed what used to exist before, but you can't remember exactly what did exist before. And you're paralyzed from the waist down apparently, but you don't remember that either.

A man claiming to be your friend tells you your services are required. Something crucial has been stolen, but what he tells you about it doesn't quite add up. You've got to get it back or something bad is going to happen. And you've got to get it back fast, so they can freeze you again before your own time runs out.

Before you know it, you're being carried through a ruined landscape on the backs of two men in hazard suits who don't seem anything like you at all, heading toward something you don't understand that may well end up being the death of you.

Welcome to the life of Josef Horkai....

## **Immobility Details**

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Author : Brian Evenson

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# From Reader Review *Immobility* for online ebook

## Eddie says

this is 'good horror' to me.. futureistic... dystopia'ish...

just absolutely utterly mindfuckingly numbishly wow..

I have a confession my Goodreads.com friends...

This is actually the second book I have read by Evenson. For whatever reason/major oversight. I have never reviewed/rated *Last Days*

I will review it tomorrow.. and I give you fair warning. It will absolutely fanboyish, but omg for all the right reasons... so fair warning....

PS READ THIS BOOK BRAD

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## Cheryl says

*Immobility*. Yeah, I'm suffering it right now. My feelings are all over the place. I can't even handle what I just read. That ending! I'm done. It's over. I will never be the same again. Brian Evenson, you talented writer, you have thrown me outside with no hazard suit. I'm dead.

Josef Horkai had been in storage, but he's about to get a nasty wake up call. Rasmus and his community of dying humans need Horkai's help in retrieving a mystery package that was stolen from them. The mission is simple. Trek to the mountain, locate and take the important package, and come back. Easy, right? Oh wait. Horkai is paralyzed from the waist down, so he must be carried on the backs of two men by foot to reach his destination, the distance there and back is almost 100 miles, and the air outside is unbearable and unbreathable for humans. Basically, it's a suicide mission. Oops. Set in a postapocalyptic world, we follow Horkai's story of self discovery, uncovering secrets, what happened after the Kollaps, what the Kollaps even is, and what's so special about this specific package in the mountains.

First of all, postapocalyptic earth? YES, PLEASE. Second, paralyzed legs? Reminds me of a certain character in *Avatar*, and he was badass, so I went into this not viewing Horkai as handicapped, but as a potentially badass character.

This book is very character based, which is fantastic. The plot is pretty simple and doesn't veer much. It's the characters that are complex and extremely deep. There's only like less than 10 important ones. (Don't quote me on that. Haha.) A small amount of characters means it's easy to get attached to all of them, whether they appear just for a little while or throughout the whole book. Well, I take that back, most of the characters I loved. Some characters, you'll know which ones, I couldn't care less for, especially at the end. Haha. Bring on the bromances! Evenson puts a stress on the relationships between characters, which was great since the trek is pretty much just a journey across a barren wasteland. Evenson makes us question our own values and morals in a way.

Questions going through my head: Is there a new hierarchy if there is the possibility of a post-human race emerging? How do you behave around those who are perceived as "lesser" beings? Can you empathize with someone whose only purpose in life is to help you succeed then die? Better yet, should you? If you can't remember anything, how can you tell friend from foe? Ohhhh. Penny for your thoughts.

Overall, this book was entertaining and, in a weird way, eye opening. There's adventure, tons of emotion on my part as a reader, and loads of thrills, but you also have some religious aspects sprinkled in there. Beware of death and brutality. This book is a super fast, amazingly well written read that will get your heart pumping and make you grateful for not having a world of poisonous air to live in.

This has gotten relatively long, so I'll wrap up with my thoughts. The Q's were so perfect and ultimately my favorite, I don't care if they were "just mules." Horkai needs to fix himself and get his life together. Ugh. Frustrated me at the end. Damn Rasmus and the O's. Rykte was exactly how I would be. Step back. Wait it out. What a terrible world to live in. I would cry myself to sleep every night if I didn't already die. What a sour note to end on. Yay, plot twist!

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## **Brian says**

What happens when the world ends in a bang not a whimper and the addled remnant arrive on the scene with their prison features and force a protagonist into a role he's not even sure isn't a dream he's inhabiting? Evenson happens, baby. Evenson.

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## **Maciek says**

Last year I read Brian Evenson's *Last Days*, which was one of the best novels I read that year and earned its place on my favorites shelf. That weird story of Kline, a private investigator who gets involved with a peculiar religious cult and steps through the looking glass impressed me greatly, and made me want to read everything that he has written.

The origin of this book is particularly interesting. Back in 2010 a website called *The Hypothetical Library*, which created covers and blurbs for books which do not actually exist, asked Evenson to provide a summary of a book he would be interested in writing but wouldn't actually write. Evenson obviously liked the idea behind the blog, and the for the 5th of April described a bleak work of dystopian speculative fiction, titled *Immobility*. An editor at Tor Books saw it encouraged Evenson to write an actual book, and with the idea still resonating in his head Evenson needed little other incentive. Thus, even though it was not supposed to exist, *Immobility* came into being.

I'm happy to report that it's a good one. *Immobility* opens with Josef Horkai, the main protagonist, woken up after being stored in cryogenic sleep for decades. The earth has been destroyed by an event known only as the Kollaps, implied to be a nuclear holocaust which rendered the planet infertile and uninhabitable, forcing the few survivors to live underground because of prevalent radiation.

Horkai doesn't remember being stored or his life preceding the Kollaps; awake, he discovers that he is paralyzed from the waist down. Soon he is introduced to Rasmus, the leader of a small community called The Hive, living in the ruins of what once was an university. Two of Rasmus's cronies, Olag and Olaf, give

Horkai a forced injection - which Rasmus explains is for his own good, as it will slow down the paralysis which is shutting down his body bit by bit - the result of exposure to the nuclear blast, which did not kill him but would eventually leave him locked in in a completely immobile body, were he not stored.

Rasmus tells Horkai that he was awakened because the Hive needs his help in retrieving an object which can save the community - a stolen cylinder containing precious seed, currently held in a remote fortress.

Paradoxically, he is the only man who can fulfill the task and survive the journey - exposure to the nuclear blast made him able to stand prolonged exposure to radiation. Rasmus explains that because he cannot walk he will be carried by two "mules", Quatik and Quanic, whose sole purpose is to carry him so that he may retrieve the cylinder. After bringing it back, he will be stored again until the time a cure for his paralysis has been developed. Having really no better options, Horkai agrees and sets off on the journey.

Evenson's work can be classified as a post-apocalyptic fable, employing the classic hero's quest common to many fairy-tales: a long and dangerous journey where the hero aims to acquire a magical item which then he will use to save his beloved/family/the whole kingdom from an imminent danger. Horkai's immobility extends past his physical body: having virtually no memories, he experiences the world he inhabits literally for the first time, just like the reader. Horkai is not certain of anything - he is not even sure if he's fully human - and is haunted with moral, ethical and existential questions. Horkai is a very unreliable protagonist, but his unreliability results because he has no way to knowing who he is - much less if he can know and trust others. He can't even trust his body, with its constant pains and uselessness, forcing him to depend on others for transport. Even though he is completely aware of how little he knows and tries to understand and learn, he has no basis on which he could judge how credible and true is the information that he receives. Religious metaphors are unavoidable - Evenson is an ex-Mormon, having left from Brigham Young University in Utah after growing tensions with the university officials considering the violent nature of his fiction. He was subsequently excommunicated by the church, a decision which he did not challenge. Immobility is set his novel in a post-apocalyptic Salt Lake City where BYU is clearly recognizable.

Evenson's writing is clear and taut, with his distinctly ironic voice clearly recognizable; it's unpretentious but intelligent, brilliantly using the language to describe the bareness and desolation of the destroyed environment and the struggle to find truth in the darkness. Although I admit to preferring *Last Days*, *Immobility* is a novel which packs a surprisingly strong punch which it aims right at the gut and leaves its readers almost breathless as it ends. It's a bleak and dark book which packs quite a lot of impact in its short length and certainly confirmed my desire to read everything than Brian Evenson has written.

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## Panagiotis says

Ο Έβενσον είναι ένας συγγραφέας που κατ'έφευγε να με κερδίσει ολοκληρωτικά με τα *Last Days* και *Open Curtain*. Ήχι τόσο για την αναγνωστική τρέψη που μου προσέφεραν, όσο για την απήλαυση να διαβάζω έναν συγγραφέα που δύνητικα θα μπορούσε να γράψει βιβλία που θα ικανοποιήσουν πολλές προσδοκίες μου: έχει χαρακτήρα, έχει ραμα, η θεματολογία του συμπύπτει με τις αγαπημένες θεματικές που ψάχνω, η γράφ του δεν απευθύνεται σε ανήτους δάχως απ την άλλη να πύφτει σε κομπασμούς και επιδειξιμανία.

Ήταν λάω εμμονές του μέρσον (τις οποίες γενικά σε έναν συγγραφέα θεωρώ προσήν συγγραφικές διήνοιες βλακεάς) συνοψίζω απ τα βιβλία που έχω διαβεί: Ντέτκτιβ, άνθρωποι που εξαναγκάζονται να αναλάβουν μια αναζήτηση δάχως να γνωρίζουν σε τι μπλκονται, κοινήτητες με απροσδιρίστεις επιδείξεις. Σάχτες που η αινιγματικές διαθήσεις τους τις κύνουν τρομακτικές. Η τελευταία αυτ έμμονη μάλλον έχει να κύνει με το παρελθών Μορμόνου του ίδιου του Έβενσον,

πάνω στο οποίο άλλωστε στηρίχτηκε το The Open Curtain.

Τι έχουμε ακριβώς εδώ; Κάποιο γεγονός που φέρει το περιεκτικό όνομα 'Κατάρρευση' διήλυσε την ζωή πάνω στον πλανήτη. Η γλώσσα και η πανίδα εξαλειφθηκαν. Ελάχιστοι άνθρωποι μείναν που μόνον κρυμμένοι απ' ό,τι είναι αυτό που τους καταβλήει και τους σκοτώνει στην ατμόσφαιρα. Υπάρχουν και μερικοί, όπως ο πρωταγωνιστής, που μεταλλάχθηκαν, έγιναν πιο ανθεκτικοί και σχεδόν αδύνατο να σκοτωθούν. Ο πρωταγωνιστής, δέχως αναμνήσεις, ξυπνεί απ' κρυογενετικό πνο και του ανατθεται μια αποστολή απ' την κοινότητα που τον είχε στην φλαξ της.

Το βιβλίο είναι μετα-αποκαλυπτικό, αν θλίει κάποιος ορισμούς. Μάλλον στόχο γιατί ο βενσον δεν εντάσσεται σε κάλοπια και αν προσεγγίζει συγκεκριμένα εδη αυτό γίνεται επειδή μάλλον έχει καλύτερο στο και δεν γράφει ανοησίες. Ώς να είναι και το κατάλληλο γήμα αυτός ο κόςμος για να διηγηθε να σκοτεινί δρμα μυστηρού, αναδεικνόντας πως συνηθίζει, τις νοσηρές πτυχές της ανθρωπότητας. Ο πρωταγωνιστής θα σωθε απ' έναν ασκητή, ο οποίος αδυνατώντας να καταλήξει αν πρέπει η ανθρωπότητα να σωθε να εξαλειφθε για πάντα, έχει παροπλσει τις μεταλλαμνες δυνατήτες του εμνονοντας στην δική του ξεκθαρα επιβωση.

Τα βιβλία του βενσον έχουν έναν ζήφο. Αφίνουν κάτι βαρθυμο που πολλοί αναγστές άλλων αναγνωσμάτων αμσως εντοπίζουν και θεωρούν την λογοτεχνία του αν και καλύτερη, σγούρα ενοχλητική. Αυτό τα λνε άλλοι. Εμνα ουδποτε με ενοχλοσε το πνθιμο αναγνωστικό μετεκασμα και ουδποτε ξεχωρίζω αυτό που μου αρσούν σε 'σκοτειν' και 'φωτειν'. Ωστσο επειδή μάλλον μειοψηφ δραματικό, προειδοποι τον αναγστή: μπορε ο βενσον να σου φανε ψυχοπλακωτικός. Το νου σου.

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## Paul says

I did a big, fat review of this book at the Los Angeles Review of Books. Go check it out:

"IN 2010 A CLEVER BLOG titled the Imaginary Library posted covers, jacket copy, and blurbs for books that did not actually exist. The April 5, 2010 entry was for a bleak, post-apocalyptic detective novel, *Immobility* by Brian Evenson. In an odd case of art imitating art then becoming art, the description of the fake book caught the eye of an editor at Tor books, who then encouraged Evenson to write the real book. Got all that? Given its grim, all-too-plausible, post-nuclear disaster setting, let's hope for no further iteration, no life imitating art."

read the rest at LARB

<http://lareviewofbooks.org/article.ph...>

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## karen says

wow.

that should be my whole review. untainted by pictures and whatever nonsense i usually spew. this book is clean and taut and deserves a review untouched by nonsense and gimmicry.

and i will try to give this book what it deserves.

wow.

this is my second book by evenson, and the second to take place in a ruined, barren wasteland. his spare prose lends itself so well to this landscape. but "spare" doesn't mean there isn't anything going on here.

how can a book this short, with its ripped-from-the-twilight-zone ending be so full of tension and heartbreak and hope and philosophy and devastation? this thing showed me fear in a handful of dust, i tell ya.

it is more than the sum of its parts. it is more, for example, than a story of the failure of humanity.

it is more than a story of uncomplaining self-sacrifice to one's perceived role in this world.

it is way more than a detective story starring an amnesiac paralyzed from the waist down on a baffling mission to retrieve a metal cylinder from a compound located across a ruined city, carried by two inscrutable men. or are they men? the old definitions of things do not apply here.

there are some very clearly biblical themes here regarding knowledge and duty and obedience and towards the end, a character will more directly invoke the flood to great effect. evenson's dark mormonism is unleashed in its full spectrum here. not that he is still a mormon, but there is just something delicious about that phrase, to me, and i'm not gonna change it.

i'm going to say it here: qanik and qatik are my two newest favorite characters ever. an even deeper-through-the-cracked-looking-glass version of tweedledum and tweedledee, but their "comic relief" is the nervous-laughter variety:

*"what happened to his head?" horkai finally asked. beside him, qatik patted one of his backpacks. "never know when you'll need a good head," he claimed.*

they killed me.

this is one of those books that can only be discussed in hushed tones among people who have actually read it. no spoilers here, not from me. i am zipping my damn lips right now, and imploring you to give it a go. it is shudderlicious.

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## Josh says

(4.5)

*"We're a curse, a blight," said Rykte. First we gave everything names and then we invented hatred. And then we made the mistake of domesticating animals -- almost as big a mistake as that of discovering fire. It's only one step from there to slavery, and once you think of humans as animals, we become a disposable commodity, war a commonplace. Add in a dominant religion that preaches end of the world and holy books that have been used to justify atrocity after atrocity, and you're only a step away from annihilation. It's better not to let society develop at all, to leave each person on their own, alone, shivering, and afraid in the dark.*

*Horkai looked at him a long time. "You really think humanity should die out?"*

*"Objectively, yes," said Rykte."*

I'm not generally a sci-fi fan, but when I come across one that seems to have a message, a philosophical way about it, I tend to jump in optimistically and hang on for the ride.

At the heart of Evenson's work is what purpose do we have in this world? Is it *absurd* or meaningless what we do or exist for? Is there a puppet master brandishing its tightened strings upon your harness and moving your hands for you? Restricting you to only move when he/she moves? Or do you have the ability to decide for yourself without outside influence? Do we ruin each other in the same way we ruin ourselves?

*Immobility* is a fast read, but also an intelligent, enjoyable one.

P.S. Thanks to Brian Dice for posting about Evenson, otherwise I most likely wouldn't have known about him.

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## **Andrew says**

*"What's in these?" asked Horkai, more as a way to slow Mahonri down than out of any real curiosity.*

*"Records," said Mahonri. He stopped, turned around. "What we have here is the history of the human race, a record of births and deaths for hundreds and hundreds of years."*

*"Why?" asked Horkai.*

*"What do you mean, why?" Mahonri responded. "Humanity is important. All these things must be preserved so that, when the time comes, humanity shall know what it has been, is, and will be."*

*"When the time comes for what?"*

*"When the time comes for humanity to return."*

\*\*\*

Josef Horkai isn't having all that much fun. Brought out from a thirty-year cryogenic slumber and paralyzed from the waist down due to a mysterious illness in his spinal cord, an illness that will kill him unless regularly (and painfully) treated, he emerges into a sparsely populated world with nothing but a mission, a pair of mules, and the constant threat of death looming overhead. Maybe not his death—maybe humanity's, or maybe his two stalwart and intellectually truncated companions—but death nonetheless.

Horkai is tasked by Rasmus, the enigmatic leader of this last-of-humanity shelter called a "hive", to go forth into the wasteland carried on the backs of two mules—test-tube human simulacrums named Qatik and Qanik—and retrieve a mysterious canister of seed, which, according to Rasmus, is essential to their survival. The journey will take Horkai and his mules through the toxic remains of the world, and past what little of society still exists in the wake of "the Kollaps". Despite his paralysis, only Horkai is genetically equipped to withstand the brutal wasteland environment. His two mules are sacrifices so that this paraplegic anti-hero can



accomplish his mysterious mission.

What the Kollaps was, what sparked it, and the direct fallout from the event, are not Evenson's primary focus. Instead he uses the aftermath of this seemingly global catastrophe (likely nuclear, though details remain uncertain through to the very end) to tell a tale of a violent man's limited purpose in a world where the only necessity is to find a way to kickstart humanity all over again. Horkai's past is alluded to in snippets of exchanges between him, Rasmus, and the unlucky few he comes into contact with along his journey on the backs of his two sacrifices, but even then, details are never concrete, never entirely trustworthy.

Immobility is a test of brevity. With effective and conventional writing, Evenson offers up an are-they-or-aren't-they zombie/vampire/Mad Max-style narrative. Immobility doesn't bring an exceptional use of tone or language to the folds of the post-apocalyptic story. Minimalism is more the game on display. Evenson uses the setting to great effect to show both the essential quality of a blunt instrument in a world gone to shit, and to show that same character's uselessness in the possible future that might grow from his actions—and to illustrate, as we've come to expect, that in such a setting, knowledge will always hold the wild card over brute strength.

Through the objective certainty of his mules and their acceptance of the roles they must play in Horkai's journey, the predictably opposing sects of science and faith, and a lone wasteland holdout with no name, Evenson offers some quiet philosophizing that is not often seen in this genre—at least, not with any degree of subtlety. Immobility never goes too far astray in this manner, nor does its narrative ever become obstructed by the rather large red herring at the core of the tale—the how and the why of Horkai's ability to survive without protection in the wasteland's toxic air.

From beginning to end, Evenson shows impressive restraint, never giving more than we need, never leaving the reader pissed off at what we aren't told. It stumbles a bit from time to time—specifically with its all-too-revealing-yet-not-at-all dream sequences—but they do not negatively impact the story's rhythm. In the end, however, that's a minor quibble—an overused crutch in a lot of science fiction. Regardless, Immobility is a solid, fun, post-apocalyptic tale.

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## **Veeral says**

Every once in a while you stumble across a book which surpasses all your expectations. 'Immobility' is one such book.

I mean, here you have, the much used trope of a post-apocalyptic scenario (although, I must admit that PA is one of my favorite sub-genres and I would read even a mediocre book if it's classified as PA fiction) with your usual wastelands, radiation and the always present hunger for food and all other things which are common in a book of such type.

But the “commonness” ends there. What we have here is an amnesiac lead character, Josef Horkai, who is woken from his cryogenic sleep after 30 years to perform a vital task for a surviving community under whose care he was stored. He cannot walk as he is paralyzed from waist down, so he is to be carried by two “mules”, Qatik and Qanik (who are human, maybe) to the place where he is to accomplish his mission of retrieving a canister whose contents are vital for the survival of the community.

In spite of the desolate surroundings, the book is filled with excellent dark humor, in fact one of the best

kinds I have come across in quite a while. And the “mules”, despite being interchangeable right until very later in the novel, come across as very resolute of characters, and also one of the many characters you’ll really care about as the book progresses.

The book defies the major trope of post-apocalyptic fiction that is selfishness, and the characters portray an unflinching quality of selflessness (especially the “mules”), and of course to an extent Horkai himself, despite his own reservations, tries to remain obedient to the cause.

By the end I asked myself, what would I do in such circumstances? And I found myself agreeing with all of the characters, good or bad, because when I mulled over the story in my head, I concluded that each character did his best under such trying circumstances and I would have done exactly the same, more or less.

You can’t say that about many books, can you?

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### **Benoit Lelièvre says**

Where were you all my life, Brian Evenson?

It's going to seem to you guys like I don't read critically whatsoever, but I swear I'm just going through a patch of really great books. IMMOBILITY is a post-apocalyptic messianic allegory. It's brilliant because it doesn't attract attention to itself since the protagonist is the messiah in question. It's emotionally and intellectually brutal and manages to distance himself from the torrents of post-apocalyptic fiction out there by making the ragtag bunch of survivors that must learn to live together the BAD guys.

I loved this book. Almost as much as I loved LAST DAYS. Almost, but not quite. It's still better than the majority of what I've read in 2016.

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### **Adam says**

Noir character edge, apocalyptic tone, Marx Brothers meets Beckett (if they are at all different) dialogue, comic but sinister duos, stark prose, identity and reality in doubt, and probing moral questions are all present and mark Immobility as both a representative and a thoroughly accomplished example of what one our best writers, Brian Evenson, does. This is his take on the post-apocalyptic genre and it is lighter in language and tone than his previous venture (the beautiful and singular Dark Property: An Affliction being a prime example) into the territory. As a literary example of the genre, comparisons to Cormac McCarthy’s The Road are inevitable, but the characters in this book are the ones the son and father in that book cover in woods and attics to avoid. Evocative of absurdist drama, seventies science fiction, lean, experimental tinged writing, and nasty noir, this book is recommended for any fan of such styles and of course fans of Evenson’s particular brilliance.

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### **Annet says**

I spotted this book via goodreads. I really like the recommendations they do here on the basis of what you're reading. I think I was reading 'Sleepless', when this book was recommended. A book which will probably

never be in the bookstores in Europe, so got it online, being curious by the story outline I got here. A weird apocalyptic story, cool out-of-the-box story too. How can a writer make something like this up...you wonder It's different from a lot of other books in the same genre, of course the desolation of the world and the landscape is there. Josef Horkai wakes up in a place, amidst a group of people, keeping themselves surviving 'under the ground' because the outside world can not be survived when going outside, after the world has gone down. They call it a 'hive' and their leader is Rasmus. Josef's legs don't work... they say they kept him in 'storage' for years (deepfreeze apparently) and now woke him up because they need his help for an assignment. In itself that is weird for someone who can't walk... Carried by two sort of 'twin' mules, two weird guys called Quatik and Quanic, wearing protective suits, he goes outside on a mission, while Josef Horkai is unaffected, he seems 'unhuman' in a way. His wounds heal and while the mules, despite their protective suits, get worse and worse and expect not to survive the assignment, Josef survives in the outside world without any protective clothing. Out on the assignment to get something 'that was stolen' from the hive, the story spirals to situations where you are wondering whether it is reality or a dream he is having.... to a weird end. Can not say more, would be spoiling. Great read. Pretty weird, but great.

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## Jason says

4.5 Stars

Immobility by Brian Evenson is a fantastic piece of post apocalyptic fiction. This is my second read of an Evenson novel so I already considered myself a fan. After finishing this book, I am going to quickly grab up more of his works.

I have to say that as I started reading this book I was blown away with how much I felt that this would be a perfect story in Hugh Howey's Wool series, a post apocalyptic series that should not be missed. Immobility would fit perfectly into that world and take place a bit farther into the future. I seriously thought that I was going to read a passage about a field of silos.

Evenson's writing style and craft is what sets this book apart from the crowd. He has an incredibly stylistic way that he writes out his characters and his world. As this is a novella I was left wanting to know more. I wanted more backstory and more world building. I wanted more time with Horkai, and the Q's. And, I simply wanted more story.

This novella throws you right in with little time spent catching you up to speed. Top this off that Evenson quickly spins this tale into deep philosophical and spiritual territories and you will find that you cannot put it down. I was amazed at the level and depth and the way that Evenson made you feel on this journey.

The world and the plot around our main protagonist in a quote...

““You’re certain I don’t need a suit?” asked Horkai. “You’re certain I’ll be all right?”

Qanic nodded. “You always have been,” he said. “If not, we’d already know.”

“How?”

“Skin rash at first, mild in the beginning but getting worse and worse. Then you would start to vomit blood. Around here, it wouldn’t take long for your skin to break into sores and ulcerate. If we were exposed to as much as you’ve been exposed to today, our circulation would be damaged and our hearts would fail.”

“Why hasn’t that happened to me?”

Qanik shrugged. “You are okay,” he said. “You always have been. You are not in any trouble.”

“We are the ones that are in trouble,” said Qatik.

“That’s why you’re wearing the suits,” said Horkai.

“They are not enough,” said Qatik.

“Not enough?””

I am a huge Brian Evenson fan and give him my highest recommendations. Immobility is the perfect read for post apocalyptic fans that want something more than zombies and contain no teen love or angst!

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## **Lori says**

Listened 5/29/14 - 6/2/14

5 Stars - Highly Recommended / The Next Best (Audio)Book - A kickass audiobook if ever there was one / Get yer Post Apoc fix on now, Biatches.

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Audiobooks are strange animals. The story could be well written, the plot could be interesting, the characters engaging, but if the voice of the narrator grates on me; if their pacing is off; if they overly, painfully enunciate, the darn thing won't stand a chance.

For me, everything hinges on the narrator.

And in the case of Immobility, Brian Evenson's storytelling and Mauro Hantman's narration were a perfect match.

(Beware: The jacket copy for the book is a bit misleading. Written in second person, you might - not surprisingly - assume the book is also written that way. But fear not, "you" non-fans, you'll find the third person narration comforting.)

The story is set in a post apocalyptic world - brought about by what we are led to believe was a nuclear war, but is simply referred to as the Kollaps - and revolves around Josef Horkai, who has just been pulled out of a 30 year cryogenic sleep. As he begins to wake up, he realizes that he is paralyzed from the waist down, something that he seems to have no memory of. Heck, he seems to have no memory at all of being stored, of why he was stored, of where he is, who he is or what he was prior to the Kollaps.

All of these questions are answered by Rasmus, the leader of a group of people who have made their home in an old ruined university, and his two lackeys Olag and Olaf. Rasmus explains to Horkai that he is not like them, he can regenerate and survive outside in the brutal and inhospitable environment, but he is also infected with a debilitating disease that has left him crippled and will continue to cripple him over time, which is why he has been stored - to stop the disease from spreading while they work on a cure. The Community, as Rasmus refers to his group, needs Horkai's help to retrieve something that has been stolen from them, something very valuable, something very important, something... that their very survival hinges

on. And they will provide Horkai with two Mules - identical human-like men named Qatik and Qanik - whose sole purpose is to carry Horkai on their backs, like a burden, while traveling to the mountain where Rasmus believes the stolen capsule is hidden. Though Horkai can travel outside with no ill side effects, his Mules cannot. And though they are fitted with hazard suits, the clothing will only slow the effects of the radiation on them. Rasmus urges Horkai to make the trip there and back as quickly as possible - the longer the Mules are exposed, the quicker they will die.

All of this makes little sense to Horkai but with nothing else to go on, he agrees to do as Rasmus asks.

Brian Evenson allows us to see the world as Horkai sees it, with new and disbelieving eyes. We ponder the same things he ponders - Who is he? What's happened to the world? Where are all of the other people? What is the Community? How did he end up in storage with them? Who are these strange and obedient men he travels with? Why are they so willing to follow their purpose without questioning? How can they be so willing to die for him? What happens when he gets where they're going?

As Horkai pokes and prods at what little knowledge Qatik and Qanik have, and tries to reason out the situation he has found himself in, he begins to question his place in the mission and allows himself to doubt the sources of his information. Nothing makes sense. The pieces don't seem to fit. The Community, the Mules, Rasmus, even Olag and Olaf... something is going on and Horkai won't be at ease until he uncovers what that is.

This book reeks of cultish and organized religious behavior (and not in a bad way). The blind, adoring faith of the religious compares greatly to that of the members of the Community. The unquestioning obedience and willingness of the Mules to perform their purpose feels very much like the drink-the-koolaid mindset of cult members. The re-appearance of religious or cult-like tendencies, even when the religion we had is dead. And then there's Horkai, much like myself, who questions everything he hears and sees, not content to take what he is told at face value, unafraid to push for answers even when he knows those answers will remain to be vague and clouded. Immobility challenges the reader to look at humanity from a different angle. Not one of imminent survival-at-all-costs. But one of whether or not it should be allowed to survive at all. In Evenson's world, we have managed to kill most of our species (and all other species) off. Should we be given the opportunity to do it again? If we did manage to survive this, we will learn from our mistakes or continue to make more? Do we deserve a second chance?

I listened to this book every chance I could get - on my commute to and from work, driving out to run errands, sitting and waiting at my son's baseball game - I devoured it, because I was dying to learn what Horkai was learning. I needed to know what the endgame was. I couldn't shake the feeling that I knew how it was going to end and I needed to see if I was right.

I enjoyed putting the pieces of this novel together. As Horkai comes into contact with more people - like Mahonri for example, a "brother" who looks exactly like him, who calls himself a Keeper, and Rykte, the recluse who is content to remain un-influential in the trials and tribulations of humanity - as he began collecting more pieces of the puzzle, as realization begins to dawn on Horkai that he's a part of something much bigger and much more awful than he initially anticipated, I began to unravel the knotted road Horkai would end up travelling. And even though I had the ending pretty well pegged, I wasn't disappointed when Evenson delivered it.

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