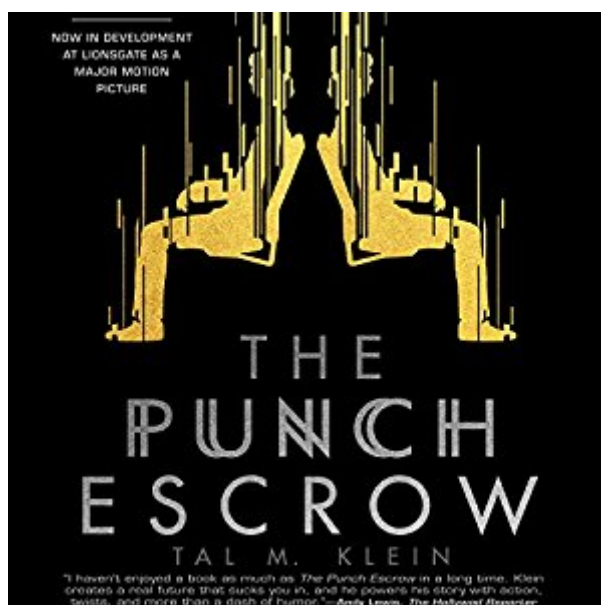


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The Punch Escrow



Synopsis

It's the year 2147. Advancements in nanotechnology have enabled us to control aging. We've genetically engineered mosquitoes to feast on carbon fumes instead of blood, ending air pollution. And teleportation has become the ideal mode of transportation, offered exclusively by International Transport - a secretive firm headquartered in New York City. Their slogan:

Departure...Arrival...Delight! Joel Byram, our smartass protagonist, is an everyday 22nd century guy. He spends his days training artificial-intelligence engines to act more human, jamming out to 1980s new wave - an extremely obscure genre - and trying to salvage his deteriorating marriage. Joel is pretty much an everyday guy with everyday problems - until he's accidentally duplicated while teleporting. Now Joel must outsmart the shadowy organization that controls teleportation, outrun the religious sect out to destroy it, and find a way to get back to the woman he loves in a world that now has two of him.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's 2147 and the world is a fascinating place to live. Don't want to age? No problem as due to nanotechnology, humans can live as long as their heart desires. Hungry? Just ask your fancy 3D printer to whip you up a meal. Need to take a trip across the world? All it takes is a blink of the eye due to teleportation. Yes, the world is a perfect place for those looking for instant gratification. But not everyone is excited about all these advancements that science has given them. There is a religious group that is opposed to teleportation, believing that it basically is playing God and that when people use the teleportation device, they are dying in one place and resurrecting in

another. And these thoughts aren't as farfetched as one might believe. Enter Joel Byram. Joel is a smart guy. His job is to train artificial intelligence to act more human and he is really good at what he does. His marriage however is not the best. His wife, Sylvia, is never at home as she is working on a top-secret project that she can't discuss, but it's big and will change the world. Determined to rekindle the romance that they once knew, Joel and his wife plan a trip to Costa Rica. Sylvia leaves before Joel and they are to meet up once Joel arrives. Those plans are destroyed however when someone blows up the teleportation center that Joel was in. But due to a glitch, Joel is still alive in two different places. And that my dear reader is when the action ramps up and this story gets exciting. I'm not going to say anymore for fear of giving anything away, but there are some serious twists and turns that will keep you turning the pages until the very end. If you are a fan of hard science fiction, then you're going to love *The Punch Escrow*, a new and exciting novel by Tal M. Klein. I'm not even going to pretend that I understood some of what was going on while reading this story, but I can appreciate the author's writing and his talent for storytelling, and the research that went into writing this book. The characters are believable and the suspense is gripping. Most of the story moved along at a steady pace. I say most because there are a few footnotes throughout that slowed down my reading somewhat. I can understand the importance of having the added information, it just slowed me down a bit. Mr. Klein did a fantastic job telling this story which will instantly hook readers from page one and with its compelling narrative, keep them captivated until the very end. Pick this one up. You won't be disappointed!

I originally purchased this book because I am a fan of Matthew Mercer, who is the reader of the Audible Edition, but from page 1 I was hooked by the story. The main character was relatable and believable, the dialogue was clever, and the concept and execution of the story was highly enjoyable. Anyone who is a fan of science fiction, mystery, espionage, and/or action would be a fan of this novel, not to mention any fans of 80's pop culture. I will definitely be reading other books written by Klein in the future!

Please Note: I received an advance reader's copy of this book as part of the Irish Banana Blog tour promoting this book. This did not influence the opinions of my review in any way. *The Punch Escrow*, by Tal. M. Klein, is set in a future where technology has transformed the world. Some of the innovations are predictable, such as everyone having chip implants and the widespread use of cyber-currency. The most transformative technology of the new age is teleportation. The use of this

technology, and it's moral implications is at the center of this novel. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and devoured it in a few days. With plenty of imaginative world-building, action, and existential dilemmas, this an entertaining book that every fan of science fiction should read.

What I Liked:
World-Building: While some of the uses for technology are ones I think most people will predict, others were delightful and fun. Of course, there were the requisite driver-less cars, and Google Glass type interfaces. I particularly enjoyed the 22nd century's way of solving air pollution! I think this is why the book seems so believable to me. Many of the innovations are things that I hope will actually occur in the future. I also like that the wise-cracking main character, Joel, takes time to humorously explain these technological breakthroughs, as well as the "history" of these inventions.
Action: This is a fast-paced book with Joel, Joel's brother, and their wife, Sylvia trying to find each other, and evade those who want to erase the evidence of the two Joels. Besides the International Transport company trying to "clear" one of the Joels, there are also religious fanatics who want to capture the two Joels and display them as examples of the evils of teleportation. There are at least three storylines happening at once, but the author does an excellent job of keeping everything from getting too confusing. Don't get me wrong, some of the plot IS confusing, but that is deliberate and helps the reader to understand how bewildered Joel, Joel's brother, and Sylvia must feel.
Existential Angst: There are several moral conundrums in this book which will make the reader think, and may be fun for a book club to discuss. What if you get promoted to an amazing job, only to realize that your company is doing something horribly immoral? Would you quit? Now that you know their secret, would the company try to have you (or your loved ones) killed to keep you silent. What would happen if you were suddenly replicated? Who would be the "real" you? If you were their spouse, how could you choose between them? These were great dilemmas to ponder, and led to me thinking about progress versus purity. Do we want genetically altered food that may keep costs down, and help us feed a growing population? Or do we want to keep the food supply "pure"? Do we want medical innovation that will allow people to live forever, or should people age naturally?

What I Was Mixed About: My only criticism of the book (and it is a tiny one), was how the book ended. I appreciated that the main story was resolved, but felt that there didn't need to be any cliffhangers. If the author wants to create a sequel, there are many avenues for him to explore. Let the characters have a moment of happiness, please.

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