



Immortality Bytes: Digital Minds Don't Get Hungry

Daniel Lawrence Abrams

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Immortality Bytes is a humorous dystopian novel about the eternal tug-of-war between man and machine, wealth and poverty, and logic and emotion.

Undeserving people fight for control of an immortality machine in Daniel Lawrence Abrams's satirical science fiction novel *Immortality Bytes*.

In a future where robots abound and humans no longer need to do anything they don't want to (or anything at all), immortality is on the cusp of becoming reality. Stu, an AI programmer in search of his big break, is caught in the middle of the new development: his ex-girlfriend Roxy invented the immortality program, his current girlfriend Maria spearheads a lackadaisical protest against it, and his new boss wants him to spy on Roxy's company to find out if her incredible claims are true. As Stu's situation gets more untenable, he fights to stay one step ahead of a clever, resourceful, and powerful opponent that he has not even begun to understand.

The quick-moving novel brings real-life concerns about AI and unchecked capitalism to absurd conclusions: machines have taken over every meaningful job, and the ultrawealthy pay the lower classes not to have children. This leaves ordinary people like Stu scrambling for a new sense of purpose. Traditional markers of achievement are pushed out of reach—an effective allegory for the modern world.

In a future dominated by machines, Stu retains gratifying humanity, veering between generosity, cockiness, and selfishness while staying self-aware enough to weigh the ethical implications of his own and other people's actions—or lack of action, as only the rare few like Maria can be bothered to speak out against injustice anymore. These unpredictable human elements allow the story to deliver social commentary in fun ways, as with the introduction of a ruthless mercenary who kills people without qualms but draws the line at cultural appropriation. But some elements ring false, as when proud liberal Maria praises a transphobic writer and says nothing about Stu's use of an ableist insult.

The direct, energetic prose conveys the characters' entertaining thought processes and passes judgment on their shortcomings. Stu's opponents include outrageous billionaires, their omnipresent lackeys, and a Russian hacker with a nobler motive than almost everyone else, including Stu. Bonus materials expand upon how the world's technology works, the characters' political views, and side characters' lives. Much of this material is illuminating, though a few of the snippets run long. Still, the book's ending shows that slivers of fairness can still be found and exploited, even in a world designed to be unfair.

Working toward a bittersweet ending, *Immortality Bytes* is a humorous dystopian novel about the eternal tug-of-war between man and machine, wealth and poverty, and logic and emotion.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September 16, 2024)

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