



The Stricken

Morgan Shamy

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Morgan Shamy's fantasy novel *The Stricken* introduces an atmospheric world in which people lead multiple existences.

In one life, Clara's only friend is a mysterious voice, Cael, that she's heard in her mind her entire life. He guides her but does little to satisfy her curiosity about who and what he is. Cael is present one moment and absent another.

On top of navigating her nebulous relationship with Cael, Clara runs home each day to hide her mother from daily storms of menacing black clouds that chip away at the townsfolk's memories and awareness. In time, people become mere shells of themselves; Clara remains immune to the attacks. Whether she's at school, walking through town, or trying to communicate with her remaining family members, she feels isolated and incomplete.

Another critical attack on her loved ones forces Clara to search for answers beyond the edges of her world. In the weatherless, colorless dimension of Khalom, she learns that she has another identity. Here, everyone knows her as a powerful girl of noble descent; Clara is left to discover such details on her own. In addition, her new love interest, Nowen, is as confusing as Cael, and most of her classmates fear or hate her.

The novel's progress is helped along by creative fights between different schools of magic: Time can fight against Body; Death fights against Earth. Clara begins to understand just how powerful she is and realizes what she must do to save everyone. Still, the dichotomy between Cael and Nowen complicates her understanding of what must be done—not just in one world, but in many.

Layers of self-discovery across multiple dimensions make *The Stricken* a unique, page-turning tale.

CLARISSA ADKINS (March / April 2024)

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