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TITLE INFORMATION

THE BABEL APOCALYPSE

Vyvyan Evans

Nephilim Publishing (388 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

The first installment of Evans' Songs of the Sage SF series explores a near future in which language is a streamed commodity controlled by corporations.

In the early 22nd century, learned language is largely obsolete. The majority of the world's populace is "chipped" at birth with a neural implant that streams "Unilanguage" technology, which is controlled by powerful mega-corporations. The language-streaming business is a highly lucrative and rapidly evolving industry—but when a catastrophic global language outage inexplicably sweeps much of the world, humankind quickly devolves into chaos. Emyr Morgan, head of the Europol Cybercrime Division, is tasked with investigating the outage. The grand-scale conspiracy that he uncovers is ingeniously intricate and involves the most powerful people on the planet. He soon finds himself on the run, with only one person in his corner: the enigmatic Ebba Black, a linguistics professor, heiress, hacker extraordinaire, and the world's last natural speaker of multiple dead or proscribed languages. She also may head a terrorist organization; Morgan muses, "I had never in my whole life met anyone quite like her" in a moment of comic understatement. The novel is powered by a multitude of narrative elements: deeply considered and meticulously described worldbuilding, an impressively complex storyline with numerous bombshell plot twists, emotionally compelling characters, and weighty themes concerning the power of language and the danger of humankind's becoming overly dependent on technology. When the intriguingly complex elevated to another level; the pace becomes breakneck and the action nonstop, leading up to a stand-up-and-applaud conclusion that not only satisfies, but sets the stage for the next installment.

A perfect fusion of SF, thriller, and mystery—smart speculative fiction at its very best.

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