

The Babel Apocalypse

By Vyvyan Evans

science fiction crime near future

Review by Sam Tyler

Most of us have a subject at school that we struggled with more than others and for me that was languages. Maths, English, Science, I was fine, but my brain does not feel designed for languages. So, if someone offered me a chip that would allow me to instantly understand all languages on Earth, I would be tempted, but what happens if that chip stopped working? Would I have become lazy and stopped processing the language at a base level? No more French, German, but also no more English. In Vyvyan Evan's **The Babel Apocalypse** the whole world is in danger of going dark as suddenly no one can understand one another.

Whilst on compassionate leave Europol detective Emyr Morgan suddenly finds himself on his biggest case, one that may change the world forever. In what looks to be a terrorist attack, the infrastructure for several global language networks have been destroyed. Only a few remain, including that used by law enforcement. Billions of people have gone 'feral' unable to talk to one another or access basic technology. Morgan must find out who is behind the catastrophe and bring them to justice. His first suspect is the enigmatic, rich, and powerful, Ebba Black, the last remaining natural language speaker and leader of the Babel organisation.

Science fiction can be played low key, but as a genre it often takes big swings on interesting ideas. **Babel** is what I call a high concept book. What would the world be like if we all understood one another and then suddenly could not? Society would have shifted to a state of apathy with language, taking it for granted. This book shows the folly of this. The neural implants that most of the population have are no longer functioning. In this world, the older generation were implanted at a later stage and have some base language, but new generations are implanted at birth. These people have never heard real language; therefore, they are plunged into terror.

Babel could have been a series of James Herbert vignettes about the population struggling to survive, but instead it concentrates on Morgan's investigation and relationship with Black. These are two important people within their own organisations. There is a deeper conspiracy happening and the book explores this. It feels like a science fiction version of a Dan Brown book mixed with James Bond. The investigation does get bogged down a little at the start, but once the action heats up, there are some excellent set pieces, including an impressive shoot out in the woods.

Evans has chosen some interesting characters in both Morgan and Black. They are almost heightened characters, edgier and sexier than your average spy and terrorist. You get an early impression of the type of man Morgan is by the way he treats his colleagues and describes the woman around him. Not someone to be left alone with. Black is a similarly highly charged character. This leads to some high stakes action, but also some moments of melodrama.

I like the concept of language implants that Evans has created. The author has obviously thought through the concept and extrapolated their world. If this were true, what would happen next etc. I do think that basing a society on a chip set is risky, but you could see something similar happening in our own world should all silicon chips stop working. The world makes basic mistakes, but so does Morgan. His passion gets in the way of lateral thinking and the consequences are great, especially towards the end. Cooler heads will prevail, and the book is part one of a longer series that will see the calculated Black showing the way. **Babel** is a high concept science fiction novel with good action and melodramatic characters. One for a sci fi fan looking for a lighter read, but one that still has interesting ideas.

Written on 2nd May 2023 by Sam Tyler.



Book details

The Babel Apocalypse

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