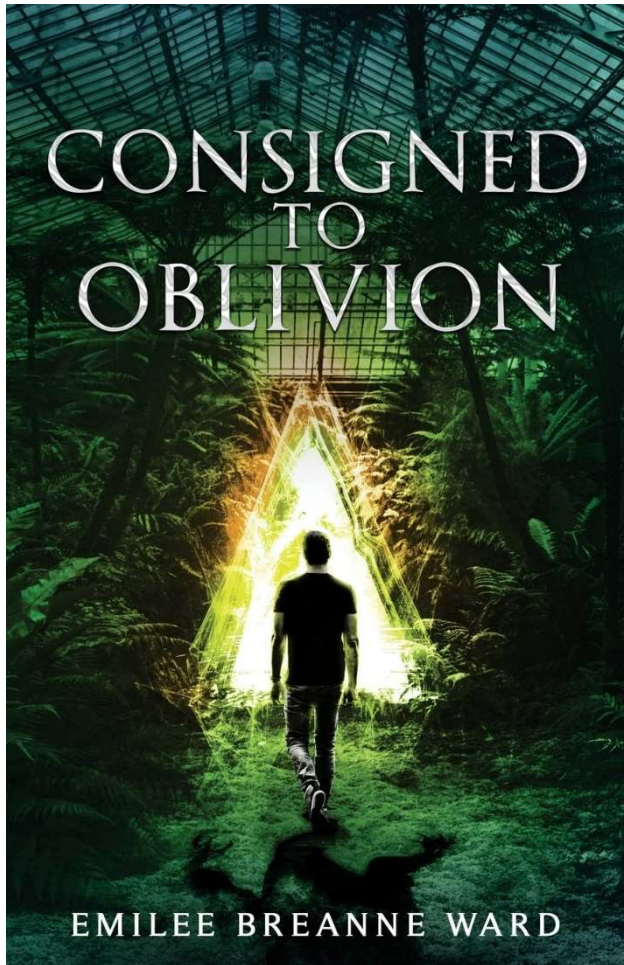


‘Consigned to Oblivion’ a worthwhile adventure

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“Consigned to Oblivion” by Emilee Breanne Ward. Owensboro, KY: Emilee Breanne Ward, 2024, 352 pages, \$28.00 (hardcover).



“Pat did not believe in magic but he did believe in monsters,” Emilee Breanne Ward explains in the prologue to “Cosigned to Oblivion,” her recently released debut science fiction novel. “This fear of monsters started at a young age. His father Owen Sherwood would find him rocking back and forth in his bed, shaking uncontrollably because of a nightmare he could not wake from. This pained Owen, who had spent his life creating technology to make peoples’ lives better. The summer before Pat’s 12th birthday, his father had begun experimenting with a new technology meant to free his son from his mental suffering.”

“He had always been obsessive, but when it came to his son he was maniacal,” Ward continues. “Pat was Owen’s world after his wife died. When Pat turned 13, his father was ready to try out what he had created. Money was no object and resources were not hard to come by in the city of Kimber, which contained over 300,000 people and 10 different hospitals. Owen selected Mercy Research Hospital because it was smaller and designed in such a way that it was easier to keep the procedure private from the public. He also took great pains to secure Dr. Everett Winston to perform the surgery on Pat. He was known for his

steady hands and the ability to successfully implement experimental treatments.”

So beings a breathtaking journey that connoisseurs of the human condition – as well as anyone who ponders the big questions of life – will find excruciatingly irresistible. Ward’s prose is enthralling and eerily seductive; the mental scenes she paints with her exquisite command of language are both visceral and transcendent. Moreover, the world she has created solely out of her imagination comes to life more powerfully with each page and leaves the reader spellbound with anticipation.

Honestly, I stayed up way too late a couple of nights as I was making my way through her narrative simply because I literally couldn’t find a good stopping place.

The basic premise revolves around the notion that society is in the grips of a mental illness pandemic that has made any semblance of a normal life beyond the reach of most citizens. When a cure is somewhat inadvertently developed by an eccentric genius who is simply trying to make life more bearable for his son, optimism is reborn that the dystopian hell everyone has come to inhabit may indeed be coming to an end. Their hopefulness is short lived, however, when the

groundbreaking solution quickly devolves into a hellscape much worse than what precipitated its introduction.

“As he stood before this portal shivering, he realized he was currently depressed because of the loss of what he built with his imagination,” the author writes at the conclusion of the eighth chapter. “The place beyond the portal seemed to have popped into existence after the chip was implanted in his brain and he had the nagging feeling that all the things he saw within the portal were things he had seen before.”

The text is saturated with references to philosophical ideas and religious overtones that many readers will find relatable on multiple levels. It’s one of those increasingly rare manuscripts that reveal more complexity and layers of denseness with each successive passage. In fact, the primary reason it took me so long to get to the end had to do with the subtle intricacies woven into each word, paragraph and chapter. Just when you thought you had it figured out, you realize you are nowhere near the central truths Ward is describing in such vivid yet nonlinear detail.

Ful disclosure: I first met Ward when she was a graduate student at Western Kentucky University; she completed her master’s degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education, together with a graduate certificate in Career Services, in August 2019. A former Admissions Counselor at Brescia University, she is currently self-employed. She has been writing creatively since the age of nine; at age fourteen she started professional storytelling – and placed two years in a row at the National Youth Storytelling competition. Her portfolio includes, “A Slice of Life With a Cup of Tea,” an album of six original stories under her maiden name Emilee Seaman. When not writing or thinking about writing, she enjoys going to live concerts, cooking food from scratch, ministering to the community through her church, advocating for people with disabilities, watching cheesy 80’s murder mystery shows, and zip-lining. She currently lives in Owensboro, Kentucky, with her husband, two children, and their cat Henry.

I’m not going to reveal the plot or give away anything that would dampen the experience of reading “Consigned to Oblivion” for yourself, but I will provide an example of what you will encounter should you decide to submerge yourself in this mind-bending adventure. Consider the following from the twenty-second chapter (and one I found oddly intriguing). This deals with an encounter one of the main characters has with a religious service:

“Pat didn’t respond but studied his nails closely. He wasn’t very happy about this development, but hopefully, it would just be a one-time thing. He had been around some Christians who seemed to only care about preaching at him instead of being a friend. Usually, when his mental illness reared its ugly head, they gave up. That signaled to Pat that he was too far gone to be worth saving.”

And a little later:

“Something crawled inside him. A few congregants looked their way and it felt as though they were looking through him. He also noticed Sirona sitting with a few women close to the front of the room. He had the strong desire to shout that he wasn’t here voluntarily and that this wasn’t his ‘thing.’ At this stage in his life, he hadn’t been very concerned with how people perceived him, but at this moment he wanted people to know that he didn’t belong here.

Needless to say, this “Consigned to Oblivion” comes highly recommended. You can order your copy from any of the major booksellers or from Ward’s personal website: www.emileebreanneward.com. You won’t regret the investment.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.