




# Speculative Fiction Book Review

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| Book Title | <b>After the Sky</b>  |
| Author     | <b>Milo James Fowler</b>  |
| Date       | <b>June 2020</b>  |
| Stars      |  |

'After the Sky' is a dystopian novel set after a series of horrific wars which has pretty much wiped out all life on the planet, save for communities buried in bunkers beneath the surface. These communities are defined by their purpose, once the All Clear has been given, breeders, engineers, traders and the like. The principles of the pre-apocalypse planning soon go awry and this is where the book begins.

The book has an interesting premise, a variation of the likes of John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*. Some of the bunkered survivors have special abilities that's turned them into something akin to X Men characters – we've got a Wolverine, Quicksilver, Jean Grey etc. They need these abilities to fight off mutated ex-humans who've turned cannibal so we've got *The Walking Dead* in terms of media franchises too.

Still, like I said, the premise is interesting. Where do these abilities come from? And what do you do with them, once you've got them?

The story is told from multiple perspectives and while this helps develop several interesting and exciting narratives, it frequently leads to those characters asking questions of themselves and their environment. Questions they can't answer most of the time. It gets frustrating after a while. Furthermore, told in first person each time, these stories are limited to that person's experiences at the time. It requires the story to be overlapped quite often in order to maintain the narrative. That's frustrating. The character of Milton especially so. He wrestles with his internal demons for most of the story, as a classic unreliable narrator, his perspective is especially frustrating.

All that said, this is an exciting story. There are lots of great twists and turns. The action is fairly relentless with imaginative set pieces. It's well written from this point of view. My only real criticism is the lack of characterisation for the majority of the characters. It's not that the detail isn't there, as such. It's that so much of the time characterisation is offered more in the form of rhetorical questions in internal monologues. I'm a massive fan of the first person narrative, some of the character voices work well. I just wanted to have something more definitive provided every once in a while.

I recommend the story, it's a classic dystopian adventure with superheroes and a ruthless villain.