

THE
EREBUS
EQUILIBRIUM

NEIL C. CLADINGBOEL

Equilibrium Books™



Australia

Reflections first published in America by Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc.
©2000 ISBN 0 9703682 9 1 CD ISBN 0 9703682 8 3

The Anvil Amulet first published in America by Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc.
© 2001 ISBN 1 58939 076 8

Wrath Tide first published in America by Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc.
© 2001 ISBN 1 58939 101 2

Portions of *The Anvil Amulet* first appeared in *A Potpourri of Creativity* under the title *Ghost of Elysium*, published by Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc.

© 2000/2002 ISBN 1-58939-210-8.

All characters and situations in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to living persons is purely coincidental.

The Erebus Equilibrium by Neil C. Cladingboel.

ISBN-13: 978-1-920764-00-5

ISBN-10: 1-920764-00-3

Copyright © 2000-2002 Neil Charles Cladingboel. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author and Equilibrium Books.

Cover artwork, layout and design by Equilibrium Books.

Manufactured and printed in Australia.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-publication Data

Cladingboel, Neil C., (Neil Charles), 1959- .
The erebus equilibrium.

ISBN 1-920764-00-3.

I. Title.

A823.4

This one volume omnibus edition first published in Australia 2002. Reprinted 2005.

Equilibrium Books
PO Box 1456 Mandurah WA 6210 Australia
<http://www.equilibriumbooks.com>

ABN 29 101 629 413

THE EREBUS EQUILIBRIUM

NEIL C. CLADINGBOEL

BOOK 1: REFLECTIONS

BOOK 2: THE ANVIL AMULET

BOOK 3: WRAITH TIDE

"DESTINY LIES BEHIND DOORS THAT STARE..."

Titles by Neil C. Cladingboel

The Erebus Equilibrium

Reflections
The Anvil Amulet
Wraith Tide
*Beloved Sons**

Bortag's Curse

Short Fiction

Tale Spin
Weatherwood
Anomaly
Ghost of Elysium

Poetry

Visions of Transition

**Forthcoming*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Suffering a devastating childhood loss, Jonathan Edward Malone becomes withdrawn and despaired, blaming himself for the tragedies that have befallen his family.

Twenty years later, the discovery of a hidden message on the back of an antique looking-glass plummets Jonathan into a subconscious adventure of mystery, betrayal, revelation and intrigue as he desperately searches for a solution to the riddle of the glass.

But, as Jonathan soon discovers, the secrets of *The Erebus Equilibrium* are only the beginning of an extraordinary and spectacular journey!

This one volume paperback edition includes the complete and revised texts of *Reflections*, *The Anvil Amulet* and *Wraith Tide*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in the United Kingdom in 1959, Neil Charles Cladingboel moved to Australia with his family in 1961, spending his early years in Woomera, the heart of the Australian Outback, before settling in Melbourne where he completed his schooling.

After an extensive background in Catering and Hospitality, which took him around the country, Neil embarked on a new career in Real Estate and Land Marketing. Having dabbled with creative writing for many years, Neil has previously published *Reflections*, *The Anvil Amulet* and *Wraith Tide*, books one, two and three of *The Erebus Equilibrium* fantasy trilogy, *Tale Spin and Visions of Transition*, a collection of short fiction, and the short stories, *Weatherwood*, *Anomaly* and *Ghost of Elysium*.

Neil currently resides in Mandurah, Western Australia with his wife, Thea. His latest work is *Bortag's Curse*, a sequel to *The Erebus Equilibrium* series.

For news and updates please visit www.erebus.com.au

FROM THE AUTHOR

Twenty-seven years ago I set about writing what I hoped would be a unique Science Fiction/Fantasy series. The project was shelved many times, for a variety of reasons, until in 1999 I dusted off the cobwebs and set about completing book one. The result was *Reflections*, finally published in November 2000.

Since then, I have completed and published all three books of *The Erebus Equilibrium* and present them here again, reprinted in one complete volume.

As always, I dedicate this work to the many relatives and friends who have helped nurture this amazing creation, and of course, to my loving wife, Thea.

Neil Cladingboel
Mandurah, September 2005.

BOOK TWO:
THE ANVIL AMULET

PROLOGUE

Jonathan Malone had never enjoyed the rain, and today was no different. The darkness and moisture created a sombre atmosphere as he daydreamed, silent and alone, letting the gentle yet constant rain flush his tear-filled eyes. The salty rivulets mirrored those that trickled silently across the surfaces of his parents' headstones.

It had been six years since his father had been killed then reunited with his mother in Erebus. So much had happened since, and yet so much had remained unchanged. The elation and joy of finding Sarah alive would be forever tainted with the constant reminder of the night his father had died.

As Kronac had so often told him, the balance must always be maintained. And so it seemed, that in Jonathan's briefest moments of happiness, there would always be sorrow; and no truer word could describe what he so often felt. Sarah was as alive as he and yet both were now parentless.

He seldom spoke of those dark nights in his life, yet often wondered with amazement at the life-force that apparently shared his body. The voice had been silent since his return from Erebus and he'd seen only Jarek, briefly, when his father's body had been returned home. Thankfully, an autopsy had shown a death from natural causes and no investigation had been required.

Yet in spite of all that his eyes had witnessed, Jonathan still questioned his so-called powers and occasional embodiment of God. Only the constant presence of a maturing Sarah quieted these thoughts and anxieties.

He'd managed to find some brief references to Erebus, and the Underworld, in Greek Mythology reference books at the local library, but the details were at best, patchy, and did nothing to quench his thirst for knowledge of the dimension he had unwittingly discovered.

He broke from his daydreaming just long enough to look across to Sarah's grave, smiling, as he remembered her exuberant face the night he had rescued her. To the rest of the world Sarah Malone had died on a stormy night in Waimerie in 1975. Her resurrection was a secret that could never be explained and the Sarah who now shared their home and lives was, to an unsuspecting world, an orphaned relative from a small town in Canada.

Her marble stone glistened in the gentle rain, reflecting arrows of distant light that punctured the clearing clouds on the evening horizon. As Jonathan stood with respectful silence his thoughts strayed to tonight's debutante ball and how proud he would be to witness Sarah's debut. He could almost imagine her face, smiling up at him from the reflective surface of the stone, as she prepared herself for the momentous occasion.

He knew that he should leave soon or else risk being late, yet he couldn't bear to tear himself away from the memories that both uplifted and tortured his thoughts when he visited the family graves.

Suddenly, Sarah's headstone appeared to shatter; erupting into flame that poured forth from the broken marble, dancing up into the air above her grave before cooling to a smoky fog that rose slowly to meet Jonathan's startled eyes.

Stupefied, he watched the silent smoke snake and swirl as a mysterious head manifested through the vortex of the retreating fog. Seconds later, he was confronted by a withered face, obscured somewhat beneath the folds of a dark-green cape.

He could see very little of the creature that floated before him. The visible skin that surrounded its mouth seemed burned or scarred, riddled with sores and welts. What he could see of its throat and neck appeared to be suffering the same affliction. The rest of the creature's head was lost amongst the layers of material that enshrouded the mysterious stranger.

"You must come with me now or else all our futures will be lost," the creature spoke with a strange, yet urgent voice, pointing a withered finger at Jonathan.

"What?" Jonathan replied.

"You must stop tonight's celebration and come with me, before it's too late!" The creature's hands came together then, as if in silent prayer, as it turned quickly to look over its shoulder. "Please, I have very little time and I—"

"Who are you?" Jonathan interrupted. "Are you from Erebus?"

"Please, that is not important now. Just take my hand and come with me."

"I can't do that. I don't know who or what you are and unless you explain yourself I'm afraid I'll be going nowhere; least of all with you. Has Jarek sent you perhaps?"

"No, but I can't explain! There isn't time—please, just come with me now," the creature pleaded, letting the cape fall slowly from its head.

Jonathan gasped. "What happened to you?"

"That is of no concern to you now, Jonathan. We must leave straight away!" The hairless skull and withered face were covered with numerous blemishes and pus-filled sores. Yet in spite of its hideous appearance, Jonathan could see that the face seemed to belong to an aging woman with pallid blue eyes. He could only wonder at the plague or affliction that had befallen her.

"My God! What did this to you?"

"I cannot speak of such things now, I—"

"Then I cannot come with you. You have spoken my name yet I do not recognise you at all. I'm sorry, but I cannot go anywhere with you," he said, kindly.

"Jonathan, you must! Please, before—" she stopped, looked over her shoulder again, then was gone, leaving a bewildered Jonathan staring once more at the reflective surface of the rain-washed marble stone.