



Speculative Fiction Book Review

Book Title	Red Star
Author	Simon Kewin
Date	September 2020
Stars	

In my review of Simon Kewin's first book in this series I described him as the next Arthur C Clarke. This second novel, *Red Star*, confirms that designation.

In my opinion, Clarke held a special place in science fiction. He made the science accessible to his readers whilst giving those narrative elements credibility. Put simply, you could believe what he was telling you would be true. In the future, things would be like this because the science would make it so.

Simon Kewin has done the same for me in this series. The concept of his spacecraft, their means of travel, the technology that permeates his universe, they are based on solid scientific theory. I don't know if that is true or not. My point is – the story is written as though it is.

The other thing about Clarke's writing, which is equally true here, is the vivid detail of all the characters and their ability to provoke engagement. This is a story filled with real people, in futuristic settings thinking/behaving/relating to each other in much the same way as we do now. Ada Selene, the story's main protagonist is such a character. Driven by a need for justice, filled with guilt and remorse, troubled by her hybrid body and a woman who can be impetuous and easily irritated. Ondo, her ally, is wonderfully eccentric and the perfect counterpoint to Selene. The introduction of Surtr and Eb, enigmatic servants to a forgotten race, reinforce this point. The first third of the book, as Selene gets to know Surtr, brings some genuine amusement to the story as she reacts to his Spock-like personality. There is also a clarity and freshness in the minor characters too, such as Hessia, an empath, who undergoes her own journey within the second half of the story. Much of the story rests on Selene's shoulders though and it is testimony to Kewin's writing that she is sufficiently complex and engaging to sustain this responsibility.

Again, like Clarke, this story is full of high concept science fiction yet not at the expense of tension and excitement. I struggled to put the book down, each chapter offered something new and dynamic. The ever-present threat of the villainous Concordance as well as the introduction The Morn guarantee nothing is ever simple and easy for Selene.

I strongly recommend this series to readers who love their science fiction high concept, intelligent, well written and real.