




Speculative Fiction Book Review

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| Book Title | Dead Star |
| Author | Simon Kewin |
| Date | May 2020 |
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My introduction to science fiction came via Arthur C Clarke. His stories meant more to me than any other SF writer of the time for three main reasons:

1. His settings, his worlds, the technology were all built on credible science. (Time has shown the extent of this credibility). What happened took place because of scientific principles which he explained in ways I understood. He knew storytelling and science needed to work together.
2. His characters were people who you warmed to, you engaged with them on an emotional level. Like the science, they were credible too. They were people who reacted to the science – becoming an extension of the concepts.
3. His definition of societies and how they reacted to the science and technology. Often this was the basis of his stories, it was the way they reacted that mattered. Sometimes with curiosity, or fear, often both.

Can you see how they lead into each other? They conclude in stories about people responding to these scientific concepts, with the same sense of awe as the reader.

I highlight points because this is precisely why I enjoyed *Dead Star* so much. Simon Kewin has captured these same qualities. We encounter a cruel, ruthless, galaxy-wide regime committing an act of genocide, motivated by religious obsession. The protagonist is the only survivor, mortally injured until she's rebuilt by a man being hunted by the regime. On the micro-level, the story follows their relationship as Selene moves from resenting his rescue and wanting to die, to become the centre of the rebellion against Concordance, the evil regime. It's a tale of warmth and affection as it battles evil, Clarke would approve.

The science and world building (galaxy building is more accurate) introduces us to a variety of SF high concepts that may not be original but are new interpretations. For instance, the sentient spacecraft has been a feature of writers like Anne McCaffery, Ann Leckie and my favourite, John Meaney. Here these minds are more than just the ship, they are enigmatic and they're broken, unreliable perhaps but with the promise of vital answers. I mentioned John Meaney because *Dead Star* includes the concept of something beyond conventional space. Meaney calls it mu-space, Kewins calls it metaspaces. It allows the inclusion of concepts that extend and bewilder the imagination. Again, in ways Clarke would approve.

I have to conclude by saying this is a wonderful, ambitious, exciting and incredibly well written SF story, worthy of me labelling Simon Kewins as the next Arthur C Clarke.