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Revelation Space



Synopsis

Nine hundred thousand years ago, something annihilated the Amarantin civilization just as it was on the verge of discovering space flight. Now one scientist, Dan Sylveste, will stop at nothing to solve the Amarantin riddle before ancient history repeats itself. With no other resources at his disposal, Sylveste forges a dangerous alliance with the cyborg crew of the starship Nostalgia for Infinity. But as he closes in on the secret, a killer closes in on him because the Amarantin were destroyed for a reason. And if that reason is uncovered, the universe-and reality itself-could be irrevocably altered.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Revelation Space - Novel, Science Fiction - [0733 - 2016-11-24] Revelation Space by Alastair Reynolds is a stand alone novel and is also well-known as book 1 in the 6 book "Revelation Space" series published during 2000-2007.. In this story mankind has evolved into various conflicting factions and has established colonies on other planets all without the use of FTL - faster than light travel. Scientist-archeologist Dan Sylveste is excavating an alien artifact on the planet Resurgam. The hieroglyphical markings on this nine thousand centuries monument gives a picture of a planet destroying encounter with vastly superior alien technology. We learn that the aliens - referred to as the "Inhabitators" are ancient survivors of the "Dawn War". The Inhabitators, victors in a galaxy wide centuries long war are dedicated to prevent at all cost another species from spreading the seeds of conflict. Prevention is in the form of automatic sentinels that react with ferocious planet annihilating

power if certain technological triggers are activated. Sylvester cunningly maneuvers himself to become involved in a fascinating and fantastical series of events that results in a mystical-like confronting with the Inhibitors artifact. There are numerous ideas, characters and back story allusions peppered throughout this novel. At time I felt like I had mistakenly read the last book in a sequential series when I was in fact reading book 1. I can understand an authors' desire to materialize an all encompassing "outer space" theme for a series but without footnotes or a glossary this reader was somewhat dazed and confused. Mr. Reynolds, with his Ph. D in astronomy is a master at technological extrapolation. Therefore this story exhibits many "hard" aspects of hardware type science-fiction that will cause long time fans weep with joy and others to whimper with annoyance. My trades paperback edition of this title ran 600 pages with a small font. I enjoyed this story with one major reservation - it would of been a much better reading experience if the page count was 300 instead of 600. Mr. Reynolds takes three pages to describe an event or a dramatic situation when one concise page would do just fine. Where was the editor when this manuscript was submitted? If you are ready to curl up with a snappy long winded tour-de-force of space war run amok then this is the book for you my friend. I will be on the look out for book 2 "Chasm City" (2001).

Revelation Space is ambitious. My sense is that Alastair Reynolds tried to write an epic novel, but "epic" means something more than "long." At bottom, Revelation Space is an action-adventure story -- a good one, but not much more than that. Maybe that's all Reynolds intended, but given the novel's heft, I suspect he wanted to combine a science fiction adventure with a novel of grand ideas. If so, his success was only partial. This isn't a novel that lends itself to a brief summary. Suffice it to say that Sylvester believes himself to be the only person who has returned alive and sane from a journey into Revelation Space, home of the Shrouders. Sylvester has since made his life on Resurgam, where a series of problems have interfered with his study of the alien race that once inhabited the planet: Sylvester's enemies want to gain control of his father (Calvin), who no longer exists in corporeal form; political unrest leads to his kidnapping; the Ultras (humans who have adapted to a life spent in interplanetary travel) want to snatch Sylvester and Calvin from Resurgam in the hope that they can restore the health of their ship's frozen captain, the victim of a virus that is slowly infecting the entire ship. An assassin named Khouri contrives to join the crew of the Ultra ship after being recruited by the Mademoiselle to kill Sylvester. Khouri doesn't know whether to believe that Sylvester is the threat to humankind that the Mademoiselle makes him out to be, and in any event she has problems of her own: the Mademoiselle and something called Sun Stealer are

waging a war to control her. The story goes on from there ... and on ... and onMy most significant complaint about Revelation Space is that Reynolds overloads the reader with redundant and irrelevant information, making this lengthy novel longer than it needs to be. Revelation Space suffers from an excess of exposition: paragraph after mind numbing paragraph of background detail that the reader doesn't need to know. As for grand ideas: the concept of revelation space implies the occurrence of revelations. Certainly the few humans who enter the Shroud and manage to return are changed by the experience, but those changes seem little different from standard science fiction fare. The notion of Pattern Jugglers seeded in the oceans of various worlds and the unique function they serve is intriguing, but it is also the closest Reynolds comes to a grand idea. The rest of the novel we've seen before: weaponized battle suits; an interstellar ship that more or less takes on a life of its own; a lost alien civilization that tries to escape its fate, leaving behind markers which guide intrepid humans to trouble. The cutely named entity known as the Sun Stealer comes across as a familiar quasi-cybernetic threat, while the virus that is transforming the Ultra captain into something nonhuman is equally recognizable. Arguably, there's an epic story buried in the background. We're told about the Dawn War that ended a billion years ago; its aftermath explains why there is so little alien life in the galaxy as Reynolds imagines it. Yet that episode of galactic history is told in several paragraphs that inform the surrounding story. The story of the Dawn War might have been more intriguing than the one Reynolds told. In the end, all the words add up to not much that's new or eventful, leaving a clever but overly long tale of science fiction adventure. The ending smartly ties together the novel's larger concepts, but those concepts are diminished by the unremarkable story that surrounds them. Revelation Space is good for what it is: an entertaining, but far from ground-breaking, story of people on a quest to understand their part in the universe. For that reason, I recommend it to science fiction fans, but I don't think it deserves the full measure of praise that has been heaped upon it.

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