

## 30th Century: Revived

**Mark Kingston Levin**

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*Science fiction and erotica both make their way into this complicated novel.*

Mark Kingston Levin's novel *30th Century: Revived* combines elements of science fiction, erotica, and a political thriller into a novel that sometimes seems unsure of which story it wants to tell.

This book is the second part of a trilogy, and its prologue promises a science fiction adventure inspired by dark energy research and based in the sciences of genetic manipulation and time travel. It suggests a coming story in which human beings will be pitted against superhumans referred to as Syndos. The story proper opens up with its main character, Jennifer Hero, arriving in Tahiti soon after she and her twin sister, Jenny, have saved humanity.

However, this promise of an adventure based in science is soon lost. As it progresses, the plot unravels. Several chapters are dedicated to a subplot in which Jennifer's husband, Marty, reads her novel; the novel itself is included in the book in its near entirety. The purpose of this story within a story remains unclear.

Halfway through the book, a story line focusing on Jennifer and Marty engaging in erotic activities with their swinger friends replaces the science fiction story line, and then the book takes another turn when Jennifer decides she wants to become pregnant. Yet another story arc is introduced later, this time involving Jennifer and her allies fighting international terrorism while continuing to be swingers.

The book's sex scenes are graphic and run on for several pages. In the final third of the book, Jennifer is the victim of a brutal sexual assault; the connected scene is long to the point of being gratuitous, and it reinforces prejudices against Middle Eastern men. In its aftermath come problematic issues: Jennifer goes on to have a relationship with one of her attackers as part of her healing process, all with Marty's blessing.

The language is clunky, exposition-laden, and removed from natural speech. Space is given to characters' explanations of their research; these monologues run long and don't seem in tune with how scientific research and publishing actually work. The scientific implications of genetically modified humans are only briefly touched upon, and when they are mentioned they are treated as a nonissue. Time travel is included as a confusing afterthought, as are the chronological risks involved in such travel.

With elements of science fiction and erotica, *30th Century: Revived* is a perambulating and sometimes unpleasant novel.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (February 23, 2019)

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