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Blue War

Jeffrey Thomas
Solaris Books (Feb 26, 2008)
Unknown $7.99 (416pp)
978-1-84416-532-2

Biotechnology has run amok, and cloned human remains have been found in an otherwise empty city. An uneasy political situation threatens to erupt into violence, perhaps even another war, over a precious source of fuel.

Over all this conflict is spread a mantle of government corruption and deceit—disaster on a hair trigger. But the action is taking place in another dimension, on the planet Sinan, and the empty city is growing at an incredible rate, devouring forests, graves, and anything else that gets in its path. Enter Jeremy Stake, former soldier and veteran of the Blue War, now a private investigator. Stake, a mutant, can mimic the appearance of those around him. It's not a skill he wants, but one he's learned to deal with—and it's proven useful during deep penetration deployments in the war.

Now a former comrade risen to captain wants him to use that skill and his other talents to investigate the spread of Bluetown, as it's called. A biotech firm has been building villages for the Jin Haa, one of the races on Sinan, but the smart matter that actually grows the villages has somehow become programmed, or infected, to run rampant. What was supposed to be just another village has taken off like wildfire. If it's not stopped, there could be war.

There's one more complication: Stake has never forgotten a certain enemy soldier who came under his protection when she was taken prisoner. The two fell in love, and conducted a brief but passionate affair. The thought of seeing her again on Sinan proves irresistible; however, Thi Gonh has married, and her husband is a jealous man. Readers of Sci-Fi, military fiction, and mystery will all find plenty to stimulate their imaginations in this fast-moving tale. Characters that come alive and all-too-believable technology move the plot along at breakneck speed.

Thomas's writing is smooth and swift, yet poetic, with a *noir* feel at times that enhances the darkest parts of his story: "When he came to himself he realized the procession had disappeared into the jungle like a train of ghosts."

There are unique elements, too, such as the benders, large airborne creatures that resemble jellyfish; their venom induces psychic trances that somehow transcend dimensions. *Blue War* is as multilayered as Bluetown itself, and utterly fascinating.

MARLENE SATTER (December 11, 2007)

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