

Dark Matters: Book 1 in the Dark Matters Trilogy**Michael Dow**

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With an original and compelling story line, this is an unnerving yet engrossing sci-fi story.

Three seemingly disparate story lines unfold in *Dark Matters*, a science-fiction story that takes place sixty years in the future. Technology has grown nonchalantly and unobtrusively alongside human endeavors. Or so it seems at first glance, in Michael Dow's engrossing novel that follows several memorable characters whose stories ultimately collide.

Rudolph "Rudy" Dersch has just become CEO of General Resources, Incorporated (GRI)—the world's first large-scale corporation with holdings in nearly everything—and is informed by a board member that he's also been chosen to be a member of the Consortium, a select group of wealthy individuals whose mission is to help run the world (behind the scenes) and maintain the status quo. Monique Durand, the quietly independently wealthy manager of a Washington, DC, art gallery, has been having inexplicable "visions" the past year. Dr. Jonas Hanssen leads a small lab in Honolulu seeking to find an asteroid that can be mined; in his spare time he works on a secret project.

Dow does an excellent job depicting these and ancillary characters. Rudy, married nearly twenty years to his born-in-privilege wife, Victoria, is a fan of twentieth-century culture; that's why he's named his home-bot, Rosie, and office-assistant-bot, Grace, after TV-show characters.

The author walks a fine line between what is ordinary in this world and what could actually become nefarious and chilling. It's unnerving; however, that's what makes it a page-turner. What will happen next in this ostensibly normal (to outside appearances) world?

The dialogue is a treat. Here's the response to Rudy's question about whether politicians are Consortium members: "No," Arthur said. "Too much ego; too little talent."

The author uses his characters to nicely fill in necessary background information, which is good since genres such as this can occasionally be laden down with scientific jargon. Explanations on the technology used and other factors of everyday life in the year 2075—all very creative and imaginative—are inserted almost discreetly into the text. Victoria reminisces on her husband: "Rudy had asked to marry her for life—an unusual gesture in a world of limited-term marriage contracts."

This is the first book in a planned trilogy. Even those who are not fans of science fiction will find themselves caught up in this original and compelling story.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (Spring 2016)

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