

Dark Nights

Christopher A. Gray

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Fascinating high-tech possibilities bring intrigue to this smart science-fiction novel.

Christopher A. Gray's *Dark Nights* takes interplanetary warfare, sentient AI, interdimensional travel, and other common sci-fi concepts and reworks them in an exciting new direction.

On a dark night, a mysterious planet appears in Earth's solar system. This planet, named FLO, looks just like Earth, down to the continents. Doug Lockwood, an astrophysicist, joins an elite team to find out more about the planet and discovers that FLO has more in common with Earth than just appearances. The planet is run by a prophetic and sentient computer named Mekhos. First developed as an experiment in artificial intelligence, Mekhos puts both FLO and Earth in grave danger. The two societies, each with their own agendas behind the scenes, must work together to prevent their worlds from being destroyed.

Much of the first act of the novel is focused on the buildup as the characters await signs of life on this mirroring planet, and every new scientific discovery on the planet adds an element of suspense. The nearly plausible science is important, and much of the beginning of the book focuses on it. The pace picks up about fifty pages in, and the payoff is worth the wait.

Use of the third-person-omniscient point of view gives the story a unique voice, though some opportunities seem unexplored. For example, Doug is clearly grief-stricken by the death of his wife in a tragic car accident. As events unfold, his emotional state could have been brought much more to the forefront and enriched the story. Likewise, there are many other characters who could have been more developed, including the different scientists working with Doug.

People who like the "what-if" type of science novels will get the most enjoyment out of this book. While it is not character driven, it asks some interesting questions about life on Earth as well as questions about what life would be like if things had turned out differently. It explores a world where technology has excelled at an expedited rate. It is a novel that also explores different dimensions, backed up by passionate science that seems to make sense.

This is a book that fans of high-tech action, suspense, and hard science-fiction will enjoy.

SONYA LOVY (Summer 2014)

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