

Days of Iron

Russell Proctor

CreateSpace

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Days of Iron takes place several hundred years in the future—a time when space travel has progressed to such a point that the entire galaxy is being utilized, and Earth is just one port among many.

In author Russell Proctor's intergalactic universe, the human species has expanded as well. The population consists of both average human beings, called "Sapes," and two kinds of genetically engineered humans: Sirians, who are extraordinarily large, six-fingered, and strong, and Helots, who have been created solely as slaves, used for manual labor, and engineered with an inability to reproduce.

Maddy Hawthorn is a Sape, a colonist on a ship that left Earth two hundred years earlier and has finally arrived at its destination. Having lived her entire life on the "slowboat," she looks forward to leaving her cramped existence behind to join the new colony. Her plans are shattered, however, by a violent attack and the subsequent, fateful meeting with a Helot named Igil who yearns for freedom. Maddy identifies with Igil's resentment of the powerful ruling Elite, the "masters" of the universe.

Maddy, the Helot slave Igil, and a Sirian named Dorac are soon thrown together by circumstance and quickly swept up in a terrorist plot that ultimately brings them to the hub of the galaxy's power: Zeus, a huge mainframe that controls all technology necessary to keep the universe running to Elite specifications. Their unexpected alliance brings the three very different human beings to a sometimes reluctant understanding of one another and causes them to question their own views. Upon meeting Igil, Dorac is surprised and disturbed by his own prejudice against the slave, wondering "What did he have against the Helots? Had he lived that long among the Sapes that he had started to think like them?"

Readers are sure to find themselves invested in each main character's fate. Maddy, Igil, and Dorac each have their own motivation for the choices they make, and Proctor skillfully sketches out their individual stories and delves into the terrorist mindset as he weaves a compelling tale that never falters.

Days of Iron explores the ramifications of oppression and advanced technology, and every scene is imbued with a sense of realistic possibility. In the story's technologically superior time, for example, a communications specialist who can override sophisticated security systems is momentarily stumped when faced with something as simple and archaic as a pen and paper. Such subtle detail is peppered throughout the thought-provoking plot, adding credibility to the possibilities raised in the story.

With the exception of a few minor misspellings in the second half of the book, *Days of Iron* is a well-written, gripping story—a promising debut from a talented writer. It is perfectly paced and filled with enough action and intriguing characters to grab hold of readers from the first page to the last.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (August 2, 2011)

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