

Denver Moon: The Minds of Mars

Warren Hammond

Joshua Viola

Hex Publishers

(240pp)

978-0-9986667-3-0

This is cinematic science fiction, moving at a fast pace and building up a complex world.

Warren Hammond and Joshua Viola's *Denver Moon: The Minds of Mars* is brisk science fiction enlivened by lovable characters and a bone-chilling mystery.

Denver Moon is part of a futuristic human society that calls Mars home, but life on Mars isn't as smooth as they had hoped. A fever has spread across the planet, causing people to act out rabidly. As Denver struggles to save her fever-ravaged people, new evidence arises to suggest that her long-dead grandfather—one of the founders of Mars—may have been keeping secrets that could unravel the entire colony.

The novel's characters are what really make it stand out. From sassy and intelligent Denver to her lovable, insecure AI, Smith, to their robotic friend Nigel, the cast is full of unique, strong voices that drive the narrative. Denver's Japanese heritage, though, ends up being incidental, an element that is brushed aside within Mars culture. Likewise, Nigel's Britishness is encapsulated by a few quick quips and his repetitive, affectionate use of "love."

While the mystery element leaves some heavy breadcrumbs, there's still plenty left to be discovered. Denver's past—and that of the entire colony—is complex and dark, and world building is clever and multifaceted.

Mars is drawn as a colorful and fascinating place. The idea that colorblind people are immune to the fever is pounded so heavily into the story that it becomes redundant, with reminders left every few pages. Colorblindness is misconstrued in the process, with its nuances ignored; Denver is portrayed as seeing only in black and white, even not seeing things at times.

Denver narrates. Her voice is strong, and her descriptions, while they are vivid, are not too long-winded. Dialogue is realistic, and character voices are individualized. Clichés are littered throughout the story, however, and discussions tend to be excessively expository. Too much backstory is piled into the early chapters.

Told in a manner that is reminiscent of an action film, with high tension and a guided view of the narrator's world, the story is fast moving and exciting, working toward a satisfying, if abrupt, conclusion. A short story helps to hint at what's to come in the future.

Denver Moon: The Minds of Mars is brief and complex science fiction whose compelling characters are sure to speak to genre fans.

TIA SMITH (January 17, 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.