



Extended companion

W Krasinski

William Krasinski (Jan 28, 2014)

Softcover \$10.00 (260pp)

978-0-9910335-1-5

A hefty amount of wit takes this space opera into interstellar overdrive.

In *Extended companion*, W Krasinski throws us into a gritty future that blends the space operas of Peter F. Hamilton with the irreverence and wit of Douglas Adams. While the writing style may not appeal to all readers, it is hard not to enjoy a quirky tin-can space yarn spun with a heavy dose of wit.

In the distant future, humanity has discovered the awesome power of interstellar wormholes to travel great distances through space. Combined with genetic enhancements and surgical modifications, some of the chosen few have centuries of life to travel the galaxy. However, even with wormholes, interstellar travel means a lot of downtime. Most choose to use cryo chambers to sleep through the weeks and months of boredom, but Captain Wilek decides to spend his time training with his sword, sparring with his mechanical spider, and lamenting the loss of his love. With extended life comes the haunting notion that everyone around you will die, and Wilek seems intent on facing this long darkness alone. That is until Silea is assigned to his crew.

Unaware of her true mission, Silea is forced to try to unravel the strange behavior of her eccentric and aloof new boss. While the crew ogles her with barely contained enthusiasm, the captain seems to keep her at arm's length. They are just starting to get along when the ship receives orders to return to Earth, and that changes everything.

The premise is interesting and has plenty of potential. Yet, the choppy, disorganized writing prevents full immersion in the story. Sentences are often fragmented, and paragraphs jump between topics too quickly to follow. While this may be a commentary on the future of language, it also makes the book difficult to read. This is exacerbated by extremely short chapters, which cause the narrative to be broken up and staggered. With 105 chapters in under 260 pages, scenes and scenarios move so swiftly that they lack the development they require.

Dialogue is also scattered and difficult to keep track of, and so much time is spent at the beginning of the narrative explaining life in the future that there is nearly no real character development or plot momentum until after the first several chapters. Adding to this is an alternation between first and third person in chapter 1 (and elsewhere) that causes confusion from the outset.

The gender dynamics sometimes feel dated, like when Silea is forced to negotiate her sexual duties with the captain. However, with an uncritical eye, this interaction hearkens back to the laser-beam origins of the genre, and the informal language gives the book a bubble-gum appeal.

Extended companion is not for everyone, but it will interest those looking for a pulpy take on modern sci-fi with a heavy dose of humor.

ERIC ANDERSON (August 11, 2014)

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