



Imminent

Michael Kirchhoff

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Imminent is a quirky unique science-fiction adventure. Two advanced species the pacifist Imminent and the pugnacious Zeastians share a planetary system called Loknyss; a beautiful world that they fear would be despoiled if not outright destroyed if they settled their vast ideological and religious differences there violently. Consequently they petition the United States government to authorize a small-scale conflict on our planet using an isolated battlefield in a remote region of Alaska an area ecologically suitable for their needs. Since the Imminent won't wage war directly they hire human intermediaries to support their cause and procure a mercenary race the Aberrations to fight in their stead.

While the book is not exactly a comedy idiosyncratic humor and clever turns of phrase add peculiar delight throughout the work. For example Benjamin Kyszlewsky is a human hired by the Imminent to assist one of their operatives Deborah. Despite the vast biological differences between their species Benjamin falls deeply in love with Deborah. A proofreader by trade his character is described as follows: "Benjamin had dismissed the notion of romantic involvement with a woman in his adolescence when he discerned that his physical appearance combined with his feeble sense of self worth rendered him incapable of attachment or seduction. His life-long romantic seclusion gave Benjamin a sense of safe complacency."

Characterization is the author's strong suit. From a defrocked priest who faces a crisis of faith after impregnating his alien girlfriend to a Zeastian warrior who teaches a scared little girl how to stand up to her abusive older cousin almost all of the characters feel real—even the aliens despite their peculiar-sounding names. There is much to like about Kirchhoff's vision and creativity too though his execution falls a little short at times.

Early in the story Benjamin waxes overlong about his love for Deborah in several unnecessary passages that make readers want to toss the book aside before they truly get into the story. Excess verbosity of this type throughout the work not only impairs pacing but also hurts overall readability. Some of the philosophical discussions particularly those contrasting the collective consciousness of the Imminent's OneStream versus the fierce individuality of the Zeastian's belief system are tedious in the extreme. Using a "less is more" approach the book could easily be shortened by some twenty or thirty percent.

Imminent is probably not for everyone particularly readers who may be easily offended by religious discussions yet it is a uniquely interesting read. As the author states it is a "story about murder philosophy friendship and strange dietary preferences." Oddly enough that sums things up perfectly.

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