

Neoprim: Zeta Trilogy, Book One

Rob Grafrath

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In the science fiction novel Neoprim, a young woman pieces together her forgotten past in an attempt to come to terms with her new reality.

In Rob Grafrath's first installment of the Zeta trilogy, *Neoprim*, two vastly different cultures inhabit one planet, on which a girl learns to accept her place among both.

In a past so distant that almost everyone has forgotten it, Earth was invaded by intelligence-seeking space monsters. Humans were forced to flee and settle on a new planet, Genesis. There, they reverted back to a primitive lifestyle, hoping that a lack of modern technology would keep them hidden from the monsters that stalk the stars.

Life on Genesis is all that Zeta knows. She lives an idyllic life with her family and tribe, oblivious to the fact that an advanced human race shares her planet and has recruited her to join them in the land of Nod. When Zeta wakes up among these strange people, she is in possession of odd abilities, but without any memory.

The Noddites teach Zeta their ways, including the secrets of Earth's past, she also relearns her own past in order to understand how, and why, she is in Nod. But when Zeta uncovers a tragedy from her past that proves too difficult to cope with, she risks losing her place in Nod.

A complex world is set up across the pages of *Neoprim*, one that combines a primitive landscape with an advanced, modern one. Specific, thorough imagery, as of the spindly trees in the forest where Zeta lives, bring the primitive landscape of Genesis to life. However, Nod is comparatively under described: a world of advanced, futuristic technology and people, but whose details are sparse and difficult to visualize. Further, there is little exposition present to establish the logistics and workings of this multilayered universe, leaving much of the backstory open to questions. The meanings of some central terms are also excluded.

But as the novel weaves through multiple timelines and locations, switching between the primitive and modern worlds, as well as between events from the past and of the present, the ever-changing nature of its plot proves to be engaging (even if it is sometimes difficult to know where, and in what time period, events are taking place). Zeta and the three mentors who assist her in her transition to Nod take the lead. Each is unique and authentic, with their thoughts, feelings, and flaws on display; even their speech patterns are unique to their personalities and cultures.

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MELISSA LANCE (November 14, 2021)

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