ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SCIENCE FICTION

Of War and Consequence: The Consortium Chain, Book One
Harrington Martin
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Three Stars (out of Five)

"This land is far too good for the likes of these worms! Let us bring upon them the rage they wrought!"

Now that would have been a great opening line for Harrington Martin's *Of War and Consequence: The Consortium Chain*. Unfortunately, it comes two pages into the second chapter and four pages after Martin has thoroughly confused the reader with a lengthy introduction into his Medieval-era parallel universe full of airships, tunnels, mystical minerals, warriors with regenerating body parts, and endless wars fought across the churning waters of the Sea of Regrett.

There is a strong chance that many readers will blearily zone out in those first fifteen pages, not just because they are laden with information but also because the author writes them with all of the panache of a government-issued factbook. This is a shame in more ways than one, as the story is good, the characters fairly interesting, and the setting both unique and colorful.

Martin would have served his readers better by jumping right into the story and filling in the details about the world as the narrative unfolded. Easing and teasing readers into an unknown world gives them a sense of exploration and discovery. It also makes them keep turning the page to learn more, rather than having to thumb back to the introduction or skip ahead to the glossary.

The plot is a bit confusing, as is the cast of characters and what those characters represent. Readers can guess that Pantheona Lord Kraetonum is probably the bad guy because he dishes out lines like, “Shall I remove your heart for my trophy case?” However, the enemies he fights like to skewer his people in the heart with a nasty spear-like weapon with a hook on one end and a trident on the other. And the war chiefs of this group wield an enormous version of said nasty weapon, “whose hook end is faceted with avorusium.” That is a rare mineral that counteracts convesium (a mineral that enables long life, quick healing, limb regeneration, and telekinetic-like power for Kraetonum and his boys).

Further confusion over whether the good guys are all that good is fueled by their actions after a battle when, as Martin explains, “Revelers picked up appendages that lay around the gates, and children gathered hunks of flesh; these were all standard practices for the embattled people of Banthyk.”

Martin also leaves the reader in doubt as to which of the lords of Banthyk is actually the hero or heroine of the story. Forget the first two, Jahrok Wor and Jahnder Wor, as they don’t live long into the story. Is the hero, then, that brave, impetuous, powerful, lusty, yet somewhat dim “mountain of a man,” Lord Harfayan Sha? Or is it his wife, “the fair-haired exquisiteness,” she of the “impeccably formed body,” Milady Farahanna Sha?

Of War and Consequence is a fun if at times confusing read that, with a little restructuring, could be a much better and far more engaging book. Fortunately, Martin has set the stage for further events to unfold, and hopefully his next book in this series will be cleaner, clearer, and less confusing than his opening act.

Mark G. McLaughlin