

Reboots: Diabolical Streak

Mercedes Lackey

Cody Martin

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This noir detective story set in a future with paranormal Earth inhabitants blends genres in an interesting way.

Reboots: Diabolical Streak is a noir-style detective story that takes place in a mash-up world of science fiction and fantasy. The writing is workmanlike, and the plot basically holds together, but the story too often uses blends of ideas from other works without adding much to them, and the fantasy and sci-fi elements have a haphazard feel. The book reads as a series of action-set tales rather than a cohesive, fully developed story.

The novel is set in the future, in the aftermath of a zombie war, in a world where non-human monsters and creatures ("paras") and regular people ("norms") live alongside one another. For a work in this genre, however, *Reboots* is deficient mainly in the author's attempts at world building. A few pages of exposition at the beginning provide brief background on how humans became aware of "paras" and how Earth inhabitants settled a different Earth-like planet. Then the book describes its setting by comparing each location to what role it would serve "in terms of the old Noir Films." Both the location on an alternate planet and the backstory of the zombie war are introduced as important, but they don't ultimately play much of a role in the story.

The plot concerns a "boggart" named Humph who works as an investigator and is hired to locate Harry, the missing heir to a secretive company. When Humph tracks him down, however, he finds he is being set up and has to rescue his charge from would-be assassins. Humph then spends much of the book on the run along with Harry and a Lorelei (a siren-like creature) who helps them escape another attack at a bar. The characters have to routinely fight their way out of situations as they try to piece together who's behind the setup. The action sequences are probably the best-written parts of the book, with their precise descriptions; however, they don't build much story momentum and become repetitive after a while. The ending feels obvious in that no feasible alternative explanation has been established, but it's random in that the events leading up to it don't truly fit the resolution.

The biggest issue with the story is the disconnect between the copious fantasy and sci-fi elements introduced and how little impact they have on what's mostly a straightforward detective story. The dialogue is strangely inconsistent at times, as Humph sometimes talks like a 1940s film-noir detective and other times with present-day snark. Any number of fantasy creatures appear in the background—vampire, werewolf, yeti, sasquatch, satyr—but often just as window dressing or only so a particular power can be used in a particular fight scene.

The book often feels like fan fiction, only based on the whole genres of fantasy and science fiction rather than on a specific franchise. There are interesting ideas introduced, but the book doesn't really pay them off, resulting in a by-the-numbers detective story in a sci-fi setting.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Spring 2014)

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