

Risen: The Battle for Darracia (Book III)

Michael Phillip Cash

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With a compelling and complex political backdrop, Cash has written a thrilling conclusion to his sci-fi series.

The exciting third volume of the Darracia saga returns to a crippled planet whose people must battle the odds to restore peace and their way of life. Like the first two books in the series, *Risen* is packed with rich social tensions, political maneuvering, and fierce struggles. Michael Phillip Cash has come through again, this time with an engaging and fast-paced conclusion to the series.

Darracia is a changing planet. With the king and the rest of the ruling class imprisoned or missing and their people enslaved, the future of their world looks bleak. The invasion of the Plantans has left the floating city in ruins and the Desa smoldering. The Quayroos were scattered or killed, and the remaining Darracians are powerless against their new rulers. For some, this struggle is a chance to use coercion and rumors to climb the social ladder, while others use the addictive drug graphen to subdue and manipulate those with power.

To free his people from slavery and imprisonment, King V'sair must first convince his strange and reclusive captors to let him go, while Reminda, his mother, and Tulani, the High Priestess and V'Sair's love, must fight just to stay alive. Even if they can escape and overcome the invaders, they must learn from the mistakes of yesteryear and take back their planet to build a just society free of social divisions. Can V'sair push past historical differences to create a new world?

Despite a few typos and awkward grammatical errors, the novel is well written and boasts captivating descriptions of scenery and costume. The author brings entire scenes to life with carefully selected detail, like the texture of the walls in the aquatic city of the Welks. As with the previous books in the series, the characters are not as fleshed out as they could be, though they have grown with their struggles and reflect these hardships through convincing dialogue.

The clash of cultures and traditions is particularly well done and gives extra richness to the discussion of the economic impacts of interplanetary wars. Cash's real talent comes through in his ability to create convincing and compelling divisions and alliances between differing peoples, and to use them to build a complex political backdrop to the narrative. In fact, this complexity warrants a longer book, and the brevity of this volume may leave some readers wanting more. This is exemplified by some very short chapters that cut topics off before they are thoroughly explored. Though this third volume completes the story of V'sair, the tale it describes could easily justify a book twice its length.

Overall, *Risen* is a captivating and exciting third part in the Darracia series, and those who enjoyed the first two volumes will be equally enthralled with this one.

ERIC ANDERSON (August 11, 2014)

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