



## Sector 12 and the Art of Burning

**Joseph Kainz**

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*A snarky, charismatic lead and nonstop action make this series title an irresistible addition.*

Joseph Kainz's *Sector 12 and the Art of Burning* blends humor, adventure, and heart into an over-the-top space adventure.

Once again, Ranger 2-12—alias Relentless or Rel—finds himself the only one capable of stopping a growing threat that has spilled over from Sector 13 and is targeting Rangers specifically and without mercy.

One horrendous war crime pushes him over the edge; Rel does what he does best, stirring up trouble and chasing down leads, including those in several acts of arson and corporate espionage. Events culminate in an epic battle for the fate of the Sector.

Though it is the third book in the Sector 12 series, *Sector 12 and the Art of Burning* sprinkles character histories and important backstory in liberally, making it an accessible starting point for new readers but also rewarding returning fans.

The narrative voice is distinctive, and rowdy humor is at play in full force, as seen in the increasingly pointed names that Rel gives to his frequently destroyed ships. Even though an unstoppable force is slaughtering Rangers and Rel is the next target, Rel keeps the book's proceedings firmly tongue in cheek. The action is over the top, incorporating sometimes ridiculous technology, but Rel's snarky commentary interjects believability and heart into the work.

In this entry, Rel adopts a more conversational voice than he has used in titles previous. The voice-over narration style is a fantastic complement to the book's plot and pacing. Even when the text veers into exposition—which happens frequently—it retains humor and charisma and keeps the story moving.

The plot stays tantalizingly centered on the mysterious attacks on the Rangers; those events maintain their suspense to the end. An important confrontation leads to a strong conclusion for this title, though plenty remains to threaten other sectors, and Rel still has hard tasks ahead.

A conclusion that finds Rel recruiting youthful allies with little chance of survival in a battle against superior forces encapsulates the book's strengths. The scope of the conflict, varied characters, witty dialogue, snappy action sequences, and Rel's distinct voice imbue the pivotal event with gravitas without diminishing the series' trademark humor.

The unique nature of Rel's region of space grows both clearer and darker, promising earth-shattering confrontations and revelations in the future. The buildup to the next book in the series is excellent, and overarching connections between novels are developed in a satisfying way.

Because the fate of the other Rangers plays into this novel so acutely, forcing Rel into action, world building is

stronger and more fleshed out here than in entries previous. The nature of the Rangers and their organization is expounded upon, and Rel is interestingly rounded out, examined against other heroes and graduating into a lead with surprising emotional strength, though retaining his irreverent humor and riotous actions.

With polished prose and snappy dialogue, *Sector 12 and the Art of Burning* lays strong foundations for future books.

JOHN M. MURRAY (April 7, 2018)

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