



Sector 12 and the Art of Falling

Joseph Kainz

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With flavors of a western but set in space, this military adventure is over-the-top fun.

Joseph Kainz's raucous, ribald space adventure *Sector 12 and the Art of Falling* follows a heroic agent who's combating a conspiracy.

Ranger 2-12, adopting the moniker "Red," returns for another mission in the Kill Zone, a region of hostile space primarily occupied by nonhuman races. Red receives a call for Ranger assistance on a colonized planet besieged by marauders.

Though the call was intended for a specific, indisposed Ranger, it is one that Red is ultimately unable to ignore. He intervenes and becomes swept up in an even larger threat. As a human and a Ranger, he has very little recognized authority, but he manages to scrappily adapt and overcome all odds.

Sector 12 and the Art of Falling is the second entry in the Sector 12 series. While events and characters are referenced and built upon from the previous book, more than ample context is spread throughout the book, making it an accessible entry point.

This is military science fiction unlike most titles in the genre. Instead of focusing on hyping one side or the other, the emphasis is on humor and explosive action, with Red embodying both. His narration builds upon inside-joke-filled reports to his superiors, rife with funny asides: when a weapon launches him in the air, he reports that a planet suddenly hit him.

Red's voice is the strongest; interactive dialogue with other characters is less robust, though characterizations and scene settings are stellar. Every character benefits from realistic motivations that allow the novel's events depth and that give meaning to its twists and turns, from character deaths to dramatic reveals. Scenes are built up through Red's interjections and musings; his perspective adds a glimmer to stale descriptions or lines that might otherwise be limited.

While they are appropriate and fitting for his character, Red's frequent information dumps are the only weak point in the story. Frequently, especially when a new technology or alien race is introduced, Red will slam events to a halt to explain it in great detail. The information is relevant and filled with humor and wit, but it still slows the action down. It could as easily have been spread out or slipped into footnotes without hampering the otherwise strong pacing.

Ranger 2-12's second adventure blends western tropes with military science fiction to produce a swashbuckling adventure filled with humor, warmth, and heart. *Sector 12 and the Art of Falling* appeals to fans of the genre, the cult classic *Firefly*, or anyone looking for a fun and over-the-top adventure.

JOHN M. MURRAY (March 21, 2018)

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