



Shadow Wind

Kenneth McGill

CreateSpace

Unknown (pp)

978-1-4565-3696-1

The thirty-one page introduction to *Shadow Wind* is so good that it could—should—stand alone as a short story. A breathless, awe-inspiring read of epic proportions. If only Spielberg, Lucas, or Michael Bay would film it, Kenneth McGill's introduction would make a stunner of an opening sequence for a summer blockbuster.

To maintain that kind of pace is a lot to ask of any writer, even one with McGill's skills. His opener is a hard act to follow, but he does admirably, with workmanlike precision and a vision that is both fresh and unique. McGill blends together engaging themes of exploration, survival, intrigue, and humanity in a solid story with crisp characters and an absorbing plot.

The prologue depicts the final battle of a dying empire at war for twenty-nine generations. The empire's defeat sets the stage for the novel that follows, as the story jumps ahead many generations. The people who built that dead empire are scratching out a living as nomads and pilots for hire to the heirs of the conquerors.

One of the nomads is the principal character, Tol lo can. He struggles to hold on to what remains of the fading pride and memories of his people. In doing so, Tol lo can becomes caught up in a search undertaken by off-world archaeologists and scientists seeking the lost mysteries and secrets of his people and their once all-powerful empire.

This search takes place in frozen lands and hot deserts, aboard massive spaceships and lighter-than-air craft, and inside the minds of the key characters. Part adventure story, part story of exploration, *Shadow Wind* is also part political thriller, as factions within the ruling race demonstrate competing and conflicting agendas as to what it is they hope to find in their quest.

McGill weaves a very human story into what could have been just another space opera. His characters explore questions of life and death, conquest and submission, and the meaning and value of both a good life and a good death. "It is wrong to die easy," Tol lo can tells another character.

The story does falter and slow down about midway through the book, and there are instances when some confusing techno-babble leaves the reader puzzled. Eventually, McGill picks up the pace again, and for the finish resumes the clarity and freshness of writing and plot that makes the book's opening so engrossing. *Shadow Wind* is a very good read for any science fiction fan who likes action and adventure combined with the bigger questions of the universe.

MARK G. MCLAUGHLIN (June 7, 2011)

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