

## Ten Directions

**Samuel Winburn**

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*Both bold and surprisingly light, Ten Directions is a thoughtful exploration of what it means to be human.*

Blending science fiction, philosophy, religion, science, and morality, Samuel Winburn's engaging *Ten Directions* offers Earth one last chance at survival—through alien technology.

After Earth barely survived a global financial collapse, it began to turn its ecological damage around thanks to one man: August Bridges. As the CEO of Mirtopik, Bridges introduced a cryptocurrency related to environmental rescue; it ushered in a new technological era.

What no one knows is that, in his eagerness to fix the planet, Bridges has been in contact with an advanced extraterrestrial race. They provide him with unique technologies, including wormholes. That alien race sends one last message before a black hole wipes them from existence.

Even without the aliens' help, Bridges pushes forward. He draws on an eclectic group for help, including a monk and radio astronomer and a Martian scientist with Aboriginal ties. With potentially all life hanging in the balance, Bridges and his companions undertake a momentous odyssey.

*Ten Directions* tackles modern issues in an interesting light, including ecological catastrophe, financial instability, racial divides, and individual worth. While the main narrative focuses on Bridges as he throws caution to the wind, the story delves into broader issues with a light touch. Elements of philosophy and religion also pop up, but nothing is so heavy that it distracts from the story's fun technology and thrilling turns.

One of the more engaging characters is Calvin30, a thirtieth clone who works for Bridges as a hacker and assistant. As corporate property, clones have no rights, but that doesn't diminish Calvin30's characterization. He has a unique viewpoint that centers around rhythm, music, and poetry. His sections of the book are some of the best, especially harrowing scenes in India that include a kangaroo court and a series of escalating events.

The prose is incredibly polished. Italicized flashbacks are subtly interjected within unfolding events; they layer backstories with current motivations wonderfully, particularly with the monk and scientist characters. The monk, thanks to his dedicated meditation practices, interacts with important characters even when he is fighting off attackers; the Martian scientist's Aboriginal heritage comes into focus as her dreaming narrative weaves in and out of the story.

An abrupt ending seems to open the door for future books in a series.

*Ten Directions* is a science fiction adventure packed with intrigue, philosophical discourse, and meditative turns. It is both bold and surprisingly light—a thoughtful exploration of what it means to be human.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 12, 2018)

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