Clarion Review

General

The City of the Sky
T.J. Keogh
iUniverse
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Three Stars (out of Five)

"'Maybe I read about all of those things somewhere'" Sean said after relating his dream to Eliah one of the old masters of the Circularium Council. "'Maybe I'm subconsciously recreating a dream that I read about in some historical account.'" Eliah shook his head. "'No most of those details were never released to the public Sean. Especially the black fire. There is no possible way you could have known about that.' 'This all sounds absurd Eliah. You're telling me that I am the seventh Orandar. How am I supposed to believe that?'"

Thus Sean learns that his destiny is tied up with the old religious prophecies and his life takes a profound change of direction in T.J. Keogh's first novel *The City of the Sky*. The Ozzeans in Ansenar the orbiting city which was built in the twenty-second century have now developed their own culture and they have not communicated with Earth for about five centuries. The peaceful city's technology is advanced well beyond that of war torn Earth but now the weaponless culture will risk sending Sean as its first ambassador to Earth. A battle station from Earth passes through a time warp leaves a probe in the past and returns. In the midst of suspicion and danger the Ozzaeans seek a treaty of cooperation with Earth and Earth seeks technological help in return. An assassin is causing trouble the Ozzaeans are willing to pursue a treaty against reason and the mysterious Circularium Council seems to have hidden reasons to promote the negotiations.

Even Sean doesn't fully understand the situation. Commander Banx asks him directly "'Are these people content to live in isolation or is there hope for something more?'" Sean answers "'I don't really know. I'd like to think that the fact I'm an ambassador is some indication of our desire to reach out but I can't be sure. There's a lot going on I don't understand…'" At last the treaty is all but approved and everything seems settled but the mysteries of the time warp and the prophecies are only beginning to unravel leaving plenty of

adventure to develop in the next book.

In *The City of the Sky* Keogh has presented a science fiction novel that holds readers' attention with a complex intriguing plot climactic tension and slowly unraveling mystery. Science and technology are believable and only a very few minor difficulties arise such as understanding why the Ozzaeans returned to speaking English after developing their own language; perhaps the author didn't want to deal with translation issues. Characters are not deep; readers bounce back and forth between emotional moments and character's emotions are sometimes told rather than shown. However like a good storyteller Keogh doesn't say all he knows leaving readers hungry for more.