

The High Hunt: The Orion Guild: Book One

Adam Connell

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Connell fearlessly explores the baser instincts of humanity in this gritty, concisely constructed sci-fi adventure.

A visceral tracking and hunting adventure in a futuristic setting, *The High Hunt: The Orion Guild, Book One* engages readers even as it makes them squirm. Experienced novelist Adam Connell pulls no punches as he immerses his audience into the culture of The Orion Guild, a group of paid hunters who openly acknowledge the thrill of the kill. Connell fearlessly explores the baser instincts of humanity as The Orion Guild faces not only the beasts they are hired to eradicate but also a ruthless band of rogue hunters who don't mind getting a little human blood on their hands.

Connell is expert at conveying a lot of information without a lot of verbiage, and he drops readers right into the action with his first line: "It's so much like the damn beast that took my arm, Lansing thought." Immediately, readers know they are dealing with powerful creatures and a veteran fighter who won't back down. Connell continues in this vein, peppering each scene with barbed banter that seamlessly establishes Grand Marksman Lansing's cocky attitude and his contentious relationships with his team members.

Strong visual imagery, starting with the mud-and-skull-filled cover, creates a fully realized world for the hunters tasked with culling a herd of beasts called Brindles of their diseased pack mates, so their keepers can continue to sell the animals' exquisitely aphrodisiac meat. The team uses old-fashioned methods—guns and knives—that result in plenty of blood, gore, guts, and bones, which Connell describes vividly, making the attack scenes engaging and realistic, if not exactly comfortable. Action fans will enjoy the near-constant battles, and science fiction lovers will appreciate Connell's thoughtful, but not excessive, attention to details like armor and rifle technology.

Successful simply as an action novel, *The High Hunt* also does what some of the best science fiction has always done: it illuminates important truths about humanity. Through Lansing's ruthless rival Bledsoe, once exiled for hunting humans, Connell shows mankind's darkest side. What makes this so intriguing is not that Bledsoe is clearly evil but that many of Lansing's own people have become a little too enamored of their own violent side. The hunters, for instance, are quite eager to collect gruesome trophies—bloody bags of Brindle teeth, for example—from each of their kills, as proof of their victory in battle. They're not in it just to do the job; they want the thrill and the glory, too.

It's this complexity that makes *The High Hunt* more than an entertaining, fast-paced adventure. Readers will see themselves in Lansing, Bledsoe, and their teams, and will likely want to continue following Connell's characters in future volumes of series.

SHEILA M. TRASK (September 3, 2013)

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