Clarion Review

Science Fiction

The Krracts Encounter
Robert Woodard
BookSurge
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Three Stars (out of Five)

According to NASA, if our solar system were the size of a quarter, then the Milky Way galaxy would be the size of the United States. There is no way to determine how many galaxies exist in the universe. With infinite space to explore, the possibilities of what might be out there are equally infinite. The science fiction genre takes advantage of this limitlessness, freeing the imagination of authors to explore what might be, both now and in the future.

In The Krracts Encounter, first-time author Robert Woodard explores a future in which space exploration has expanded and mining operations in outer space are common, as the Earth's natural resources have been largely used up. When a probe sent out by the Mercantile Enterprises mining company disappears, a crew embarks on a small ship named the Privateer to investigate at the probe's last known location. What they find is an alien space craft with orders to detain the Privateer for research. The ensuing struggle is a study in strategy, as each ship's captain tries to predict what the other will do next.

This novel will please readers who want more science then fiction. The author is adept at describing battles, weaponry, and the details of both human and alien cultures, as well as the aliens' physiology. Woodard writes, "krracts had a light tan colored hide covering their body to help with living in the hot climate of their planet. Blood vessels ran close to small vent holes in the hide for releasing heat."

Though Woodard has clearly been heavily influenced by other popular franchises (his description of the bridge of the Privateer will be familiar to fans of Star Trek), he does have a unique voice and a clear and entertaining writing style. However, those who are looking for a character-driven story will need to turn elsewhere. While each character has a distinct personality that motivates his or her behavior, there is no emotional interaction between any of characters, and none of them have apparent goals, hopes, or dreams beyond their immediate

situation.

There is potential here for an interesting series, but the lack of character development or overarching story in this first installment may leave readers feeling somewhat unsatisfied.

Catherine Thureson