FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Science Fiction

The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction
George Mann
George Mann, editor
Solaris / BL Publishing
978-1-84416-448-6
(January 31, 2007)

"My mother was a slave named Violet4264. I'd always wanted to see where she'd carved her life in stone." So says Porkpie early on in "C-Rock City," a tale that looks at an issue as old as humanity itself: slavery. Part of the anthology from new imprint Solaris, this story offers one view of a universe made up of familiar and disturbingly alien elements.

The collection, assembled by George Mann, editor of *The Mammoth Book of Science Fiction* and author of two science fiction novels, offers a wide range of views among its stories. Their takes on life and existence offer more than just entertainment or escape.

Jeffrey Thomas's "In His Sights" offers a doom-tinged future war that pays homage to the present war debate: "Officially, it was to lend support to the emerging Jin Haa Nation. But everyone knew it was really all about those rich subterranean gases." Soldier Jeremy Stake's body has the chameleon-like ability to mirror the visages of other peoples and races. He's returned from the war with his face frozen into the features of the last Ha Jiin soldier he killed—and another vet pursues what he thinks is an enemy spy.

Another grim future vision—but one with a scintilla of hope—is presented in "C-Rock City" by Jay Lake and Greg van Eekhout. Blind slaves built this space city, and carved beautiful, eloquent proof of their existence in its tunnels. Porkpie, son of a slave, has come to find some trace of his mother. On his quest deep underground, he finds far more than he bargained for.

James Lovegrove's "The Bowdler Strain" is a humorous jab at both germ warfare and the unforeseen consequences of GMOs, as logoviruses escape from the lab and infect all England . While scientists and the military fight one logovirus with another, consequences escalate until communication is reduced to unintelligibility. "Personal Jesus" by Paul Di Filippo takes iPod technology and blends it with the Rapture and aliens, as people who live their lives in

accordance with personal advice rendered by their godPods suddenly find themselves left behind.

While nearly all these tales pack strong impact, among the finest are “Last Contact” by Stephen Baxter and “The Farewell Party” by Eric Brown. Each offers a take on the end of the world as we know it, and each is poignant in its own way.

Sixteen stories present sixteen views of a future bedeviled, haunted, or otherwise influenced by humanity’s current foibles. With contributions by well-known and new authors ranging from Brian Aldiss to Tony Ballantyne, the collection presents a range of visions from military science fiction to dark fantasy and humor.

Sometimes dark visions can be the most fascinating of all.