Clarion Review

Science Fiction

Tourist Trap: A Novel of the Jarnian Confederation
Sue Ann Bowling
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

Roi has come a long way from his days living as the dancing slave known as Snowy. He has a new family, he has just graduated at the top of his class, and he has a future laid out before him that includes membership in the elite inner council of the Jarnian Confederation. His father, Lai, rewards him for all that he has accomplished with an adventure expedition to the planet Falaron for Roi and his three best friends, Flame, Timi, and Amber.

The trip turns out to be much more than the group bargained for. Roi's half-brother, Zhiam, is a power-hungry madman. When it was discovered that Roi was not just Lai's son but also the son with the higher Ceren index, Zhiam was replaced by Roi as Lai's heir. Now Zhiam is determined to kill Roi and take back what he believes is his rightful place. He sees the adventure expedition as the perfect opportunity for Roi to suffer a fatal accident—and he will use all of his considerable power to make sure it happens.

Fans of Sue Ann Bowling's novel *Homecoming* will not be disappointed with its sequel. *Tourist Trap* returns the reader to the world of the Jarnian Confederation—to Roi, Lai, Marna, and all of their friends and relations. The author does a stellar job of bringing these characters to life, allowing the reader to not only see their actions but to understand the culture and politics that motivate them.

The novel's plot is also solid and interesting, and if there are times when it feels slow it is only because Bowling offers rich descriptions of the landscape in which she has set her story. For example, she describes a planet called Eversummer: "The planet, with its rotational axis almost perpendicular to its orbital plane, had no seasons. The poles were bitterly cold, glaciated wastelands where the sun forever rolled around the horizon. The equatorial belt was an unchanging steam bath, the permanent home of daily tropical thunderstorms, varied by hurricanes along its poleward borders."

Bowling then goes on to explain how the world of Evensummer has survived, what the inhabitants have available to eat, and the strange beliefs and practices that have evolved as a result. It is this sort of exacting detail that makes *Tourist Trap* truly excellent and exciting science fiction. The characters grow naturally from their various cultures, and the cultures stem from the what-ifs of a carefully thought-out alien landscape.

Tourist Trap is refreshing, intelligent, and a great deal of fun. The already initiated will be thrilled with Bowling's new book, and those who are new to the Jarnian Confederation will find it no less thrilling. All readers will finish it with satisfaction and look forward to the next installment.

Catherine Thureson