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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ SCIENCE FICTION

Tracking Terra

J.K. Scott
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Sara Alessa Giustino, the central character in J.K. Scott's *Tracking Terra*, tells David, possibly a former lover, what it's like to be ageless: "My life's purpose is to advance my consciousness. My longevity offers me a multitude of experiences to accelerate my knowledge and understanding. This process contributes to the conscious evolution of my higher self. That's what my long life is about."

Sara received the gift of agelessness five-hundred years earlier, in exchange for work as an agent for the Kryios, an Andromedan race that oversees and protects mankind. Awaiting assignments, Sara is alerted by a mysterious note found in a borrowed book. She believes the note will lead her to her long-lost paramour, but once she locates the man she calls David, he doesn't recognize her. Suspicious of her motives, he ferrets out some of her secrets after taking her to a fortress hidden high in the Arizona hills. Simultaneously, her questions about him increase when she discovers an Urstar–one of four pillars of energy powering Earth—hidden in his mansion. Despite their personal animosity, the two are suddenly transported to Peru by the energy of the Urstar. There, Sara must stealthily combat deadly enemies of Kyrios. Observing her efforts, David drops his doubts about her, and they join forces.

J. K. Scott lives in Arizona and traveled to South America to do research for *Tracking Terra*. She paints her settings vividly, from a dark cave in the Andes to the open space of the American Southwest.

Scott moves her characters smoothly through physical and metaphysical realms, whether the mode of transport is foot, vehicle, or Urstar energy. The personal interactions lock tidily in place amidst a multitude of players meeting in ever more bizarre circumstances. At times, her writing rises above the ordinary, as when Sara finally weakens David's resistance, leading to their first highly anticipated and brilliantly choreographed bedroom scene. It unfolds in terms not of the usual body parts, but of chakras and psychic emanations: "David's vibrational essence expanded to absorb our energies…our combined consciousness pulsated into the ether." What could have been awkward in the hands of another writer is, with Scott's craftsmanship, intriguing and sensuous.

This nonstop science-fiction thriller would have benefited from a few slower moments—a chance to more thoroughly develop some of the story's big concepts: time-space travel, mind reading, cloning, interplanetary competition, the destruction of memory, and agelessness. Many characters come and go, taxing the mind to keep them all sorted out.

On balance, however, this latest offering from J. K. Scott will please her fans and attract more readers. She takes two intelligent, attractive people, throws them into tricky scrapes, and challenges them to find clever ways out of trouble. At its core, *Tracking Terra* is girl meets, mistrusts, fights with, and conquers boy—always a crackling formula, whether earthbound or star-crossed.

BARBARA BAMBERGER SCOTT (January 29, 2013)

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