

Trina Wants to be a Duck

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Being a duck seems a highly unlikely ambition for a talented alien and member of Chrontos a group of entities that roam the universe and step in to assist other beings in solving problems. But that's what Trina wants and no amount of persuasion or threats from her teammates or leaders can change her mind.

This odd premise is the basis for a tale that pits the entity known as Trina against her leaders as they try to hone her particular talents for Chrontos. As the story opens Trina is a duck but she is soon transferred to human form. She begins working at a newspaper and undergoing training as a human being—Chrontos must learn to fit in with other beings so that they carry out their true purpose. All she really wants however is to live the carefree life of a duck floating on the pond that she can see from her office window.

Trina progresses from writing “fluff pieces” for the local newspaper to fact checking for an investigative reporter. Her Chrontos training seems to dovetail with her ability to sense at considerable urging inconsistencies in witness statements surrounding a murder trial. She is being tested by her supervisors Gregor and Madelyn both as a human and as a Chrontos yet she insists that all she wants to do is take on the form of a duck.

This odd story has its own charm but the writing is stilted (“Trapped Trina released various shouts of frustration but promptly calmed and breathed deeply”) and lacks proper punctuation. Careful editing could have improved the flow of its prose. The tale itself is disjointed and hard to follow. Trina's various training sessions may make sense to her trainers but they don't satisfy Trina and are interspersed with her work on the local newspaper her arguments with her leaders and team members and her overriding desire to be a duck.

The instances of Chrontos in action are hardly compelling science fiction or fantasy. Instead they seem to be glimpses of ideas half-formed but not fully developed and are told rather than shown. The book reads more like a monologue than a story. There are a few interesting concepts such as Trina's journey with Robyn the investigative reporter along the dimension walk wherein the two are able to retrace the steps of those involved in the murder investigation. But the execution suffers from a lack of depth and immediacy. There are also hints of Trina's relationship with a reporter at the newspaper but it is so subtly touched on that it's little more advanced at the end of the book than it was at the beginning.

Probably the most charming part of the book is Trina's desire to lead the life of a duck. In the complicated world readers experience daily some may agree with her that it's a “very nice life.”

MARLENE SATTER (February 28, 2008)

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