ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SCIENCE FICTION

Where Angels Fear to Tread: The Zygan Emprise, Book I
Yolanda Pascal
iUniverse
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Three Stars (out of Five)

This galactic adventure is centered around Shiloh, the star of a sci-fi television hit *Stargeant Guard*, who appears to be living the life of a teen celebrity in Los Angeles. In actuality, Shiloh and her costar Spud are undercover agents for the Zygan Federation, the ruling body of the universe. Although the citizens of Earth have not yet been made aware of its existence, the Federation keeps agents like Shiloh, and her brother before her, in place to promote its goals.

Shiloh's brother disappeared in service to the Zygans, and when she agrees to take his place as an agent, she embarks on a truly teen-friendly six-month training session in which classroom learning is minimized by uploading factual subject matter directly to the brain, leaving her free to "focus on the fun stuff, learning to drive, fly, fight, and work our Ergals." Ergals are devices which allow users to change appearance, levitate, shape-shift, and do a host of other things, and do much to advance the plot. In the words of Shiloh, her Ergal is "kind of like a Zygint version of a Swiss Army Knife."

A bad decision during a mission lands Shiloh in the midst of a covert operation. In an effort to make sense of her circumstances, she violates Zygan protocol, landing her in even deeper trouble. With the help of Spud and a diverse cast of alien characters, Shiloh crosses time and space in a thrilling adventure that weaves elements of Earth's culture—including the Ancient Greeks, a Christ-like character in the Ancient Middle East, and alien sightings in Roswell, New Mexico—into a galactic showdown between good and evil. Near the end of the book, some surprising revelations about the characters and the inner workings of Shiloh's Ergal raise questions about the motives of the Omega Archon, leader of the Zygan Empire, and the value of individuality and free will, weaving some philosophical threads into this brainy offering.

The text is studded with light-hearted references to popular culture, often in the form of footnotes, which add a humorous element in the style of Douglas Adam's Hitchhikers series. For example, an alien fuel problem leads the Zygans to build factories where the glowing yellow-green alien waste is sealed in plastic tubes and sold, "explaining" the existence of light

sticks. Casual readers may falter at the abundance of footnotes, alien terminology, and a complicated storyline. Multiple plot twists and non-stop action, including many intense battle sequences, will keep fans of hard-core space adventures engaged in the story. Cerebral science fiction fans will enjoy the carefully detailed links between the Zygan Emprise and our Earth's history.

Carolyn Bailey