

Dusted by Stars

G. A. Matiasz

62 Mile Press (February 2022)

Softcover \$12.00 (120pp)

978-1-73700-550-6

In the rich futuristic settings of the novella pair Dusted by Stars, diverse histories, religions, and technologies are detailed with aplomb.

G. A. Matiasz's adventure-filled science fiction novellas explore themes of racism, politics, and religion with depth.

The book contains two stories: "Dusted by Stars" and a reprint of 2018's "The Death of David Pickett." In "Dusted by Stars," Stacey, a human from Mars, takes an intergalactic courier job that requires transporting a religious artifact to a sacred planet—though different beings from across the galaxy want to steal the artifact from her and her crew. And in "The Death of David Pickett," after a political activist championing antifascist, antiracist, and workers' rights principles dies in dystopian San Francisco, where the distrust of ruling bodies is rampant, Jesse becomes obsessed with the circumstances around the activist's death, wandering through active protests and trying to uncover the secrets behind a suspicious voice message. Chants like "Racist, sexist, antigay; SFPD [San Francisco Police Department] go away" run in the background of the tale.

Both stories are set in rich universes whose diverse histories, religions, and technologies are detailed well, as with through engaging reminiscences. For example, one scene recounts the events that led to the fall of Earth and the "rebirth" of Mars, shining light on the political bodies that supported the initiative and the ensuing wars and colonization efforts that Stacey's father participated in. And the accompanying illustrations reveal additional complexities, demystifying concepts like Floating Island, an area devoted to peace and worship where the political implications—and the frivolity—of pacifism are revealed.

People are fleshed out via their conversations, which integrate concerns regarding class and race divisions into everyday speech. For instance, Stacey uses the African American English vernacular word "bussin'" to describe something tasting good and is prone to speaking with cinematic embellishments; another character is more academic and technical in her speech patterns, incorporating terms like "prosaic" and saying "extraterrestrial" instead of "space." Further, other languages are transliterated into the text, including myriad alien dialects and terms, as with a card game, aklavor, that's played to kill time while in space. And Spanish and English terms are used by those who advocate for the working class, as with a strike called "huelga general" and with references to "hombres" who were murdered by police officers.

Marked by realism, the speculative narratives in *Dusted by Stars* are packed with adventure and intrigue; they incorporate the diverse voices of the United States' urban areas in futuristic settings.

GEORGE HAJJAR (April 11, 2024)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.