

First of His Kind: Sidus Book 1

Dan Sugralinov

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First of His Kind is an inventive, series-opening science fiction novel about the steep price of progress and knowledge.

In Dan Sugralinov's science fiction novel *First of His Kind*, stranded misfits band together to navigate an enticing yet dangerous new world.

After a mission gone wrong, Carter spends the next decade trying to remember what happened and to keep his head above water. When his memory returns, he realizes that his future may not be on Earth but on Sidus, a fantastical space station where aliens from across the galaxy commingle under the aegis of the inaccessible Sidus Mind. Sheer luck brings Carter to his goal, but it will still take intelligence, strength, trust, and mercy to survive Sidus.

The story is set in a dreary, all-too-probable future where megacorporations exercise great power, technology keeps everyone under close observation, and even the most basic items—like nonsynthesized food—are out of reach for ordinary people. Evocative of video games, Sidus exists in stunning contrast to the want and misery of Carter's life on Earth. It offers its citizens physical or intellectual upgrades, status points, and new locations to explore. But for all of Sidus's advancements, there is a dark side: it, too, keeps inhabitants under close scrutiny in order to dispense rewards and punishments, and the Sidus Mind does not help citizens who cannot pay for assistance. The economy runs on cryptocurrency that newcomers have a hard time earning in substantial amounts if they are unwilling to engage in painful combat.

As Carter and his newfound family navigate this dystopian landscape, they encounter many interesting alien species with different appearances and means of communication. But these characters sometimes spend too much time deciding on a solution, only to change their minds in an abrupt way. And the relationships between the diverse band of outcasts are underdeveloped—in part because of an unexpected calamity that separates them, sending Carter on another dangerous mission.

The story raises intriguing issues that have yet to be explored, such as what it means to be disabled and to deal with ableism, both internalized and from others, in a place where disabilities can be eliminated with a scan or a special drink. The Sidus Mind's motives remain mysterious and at times seem contradictory, as when Carter is told that the Mind will punish him for refusing to finish a fight, only for it to reward him for that same action. The story ends on a moment of modest triumph without an immediate cliffhanger, but it does a thorough job of establishing settings and challenges that Carter will have to face in future installments as he struggles to make sense of his past tragedies.

Part of a series, *First of His Kind* is a science fiction novel about the steep price of progress and knowledge.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (October 9, 2023)

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