

Inheritance: Rare Earth Trilogy, Volume 1

Lou Iovino

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With its palpable instances of sabotage and tragedy, Inheritance is an exciting, mystery-filled introduction to a new science fiction series.

Inheritance, the first volume in Lou Iovino's Rare Earth Trilogy, is a fast-paced, invigorating science fiction novel in which astrominers ply their hazardous trade, prying valuable minerals loose from asteroids while competing against multinational outfits.

In the near future, when spacefaring is commonplace and raw materials harvested in the cosmos are prized, Thea is new to astromining. The daughter of a deceased astromining legend, she had no intention of taking up her father's business before inheriting his ship, the *Zephyr*. Now, she and her ragtag crew contend with a crowded field of mining interests, including the all-powerful Conglomerate, which has all but cornered the market on raw materials thanks to their unsavory tactics.

Thea may be inexperienced, but her gumption, sense of justice, and empathy make her a compelling heroine. And the cast is rounded out by her crewmates, who include an ornery English pilot, Rory; a feisty tech expert, Lola; and two bickering miners, Elliott and Beetle. All are underdogs whose backstories are clear. And bridging Thea's world with the Conglomerate is Darcy, a former classmate who now handles shady Conglomerate missions. The erstwhile friends' heated confrontations up the book's emotional ante.

In this convincing workaday vision of the future, the lower classes toil just to get by while the rich get richer. The worldbuilding includes clear, concise explanations of the gravitational science and timing required to pull off a successful mining haul, augmenting the suspense when Thea and her crew pull off tricky maneuvers like pinging their ship and asteroids off each other like billiard balls. The stakes are palpable during passages in which sabotage and tragedy hit the *Zephyr*, when Thea reckons with self-doubt and loss. Subtle details flesh the futuristic settings out, including a leader board that measures Thea's successes against other independent and international operators; updates on how certain commodities have grown in value on Earth while others, including gold, have become almost worthless; and a wry explanation of how the US flag left behind by the Apollo 11 astronauts survived lunar conditions.

The story moves at a satisfying pace through the ups and downs of the astrominers' dangerous work, scenes of which are juxtaposed to the backroom workings of technology corporations. A conspiracy threatens Thea's livelihood and life; it is infused with mystery leading up to the cliffhanger conclusion, which leaves the book's major questions unresolved but is still entertaining.

In the speculative science fiction novel *Inheritance*, a reluctant astrominer contends with shadowy conspiracies and encounters a surprise figure from her past.

HO LIN (August 5, 2024)

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