

Invitations from Afar: A Need to Know

Linda A. W. King

AuthorHouse (Jun 11, 2012)

Softcover \$24.95 (616pp)

978-1-4772-0388-0

There is a little something for everyone here, with plenty of action, mystery, suspense, romance, and science fiction.

When a top-secret mission to Jupiter's moon Ganymede experiences unexpected complications, a team of astronauts is thrust into a dangerous game of survival while engaging the help of surprising new friends and allies. For everyone who lamented the end of NASA's space shuttle program, Linda A.W. King's *Invitations from Afar: A Need to Know* offers an alternative future where shuttles travel safely into space and astronauts explore the farthest reaches of the solar system.

As a summer intern at Johnson Space Center and recently accepted student of the Houston Aerospace Academy, twenty-year-old Jana Novacek should not have been a candidate to join the illustrious crew of the solarship *Copernicus* on its mysterious voyage. But when Jackson Medwin, commander of the first manned Mars landing, singles her out, Jana jumps at the opportunity. When the primary mission goal is revealed and the team reaches Ganymede, Jana finally realizes why her presence is vital. Now she must focus on surviving the return trip to share the truth with the world.

Set sometime near the "trimillennium," King's future Earth is a realistic blend of next-generation technology and current human nature, making for a setting that's believable and immensely exciting. The narrative alternates between present time and a series of flashbacks in the form of Jana's personal journal entries. Jana's reflections fill in the details of her joining the crew, subsequent training, and time spent on Ganymede. Each chapter is labeled with a time and place for instant orientation, which is helpful.

The suspense and tension build as pieces of a possible conspiracy are revealed, and the goals and personalities of each crew member become more evident. Numerous grammatical and punctuation errors—including dropped quotation marks, mixed tenses, and a tendency to misplace adverbs—detract from the flow. Even so, the pacing is even, and the story progresses in what is a truly original look at the possibilities of space travel and exploration.

King is extremely detail-oriented, which will please those interested in backstories and specifics of day-to-day living. However, there are several scenes that seem either misplaced or unnecessary for character development or to the overall story line, and at more than 600 pages, these scenes would not be missed if removed.

Invitations from Afar has a little something for everyone. There is plenty of action, mystery, suspense, romance, and, of course, science fiction, but Jana describes the heart of the story best: "It was more than I ever dreamed of, more than I ever knew to dream."

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (December 1, 2014)

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.