

Selfies

Scott A. Young

Green Bar Books

(316pp)

978-1-964323-00-8

An irresistible duo forms, fighting for the truth on an unusual planet, in Selfies, an exciting series opener.

In Scott A. Young's science fiction novel *Selfies*, an innocent fugitive uncovers a threat to humanity.

Trapp is eager to return to Terra after a three-year contract working in orbit, especially after his near-fatal encounter with the technological wonder known as the Manifold: "With its ability to recharge enough high-voltage batteries to power whole towns, [the] invention single-handedly ended the Carbon War by rendering fossil fuels obsolete." But then his contract is voided and he's arrested for the murder of a living legend, Phileas, the inventor of the Manifold.

Faced with public execution or permanent indentured servitude, Trapp flees, skipping between locations including a massive underground cavern with the potential to host human colonies and a derelict oil rig that's been converted into an advanced laboratory by Phileas's granddaughter, Bretta. And while trying to prove his innocence, Trapp works to solve another murder committed decades prior. He also learns about a massive conspiracy with implications for all human beings.

The cast is well developed, with each person contributing to the larger narrative. Trapp evolves from his beginnings as an ordinary worker, growing into his role as a hero as he risks his life trying to uncover the truth. His allies and enemies are complex as well, generating intrigue: he encounters an admiral who's responsible for determining his guilt but who assists him in his escape; Bretta, who's perceived as a spoiled celebrity, is revealed to be a capable scientist who's as determined as Trapp to confront the threat to humanity. Also present are flawed human clones and androids who are capable of mirroring dead people, whose memories can be wiped or replaced. These AI have their own shifting allegiances which clash with Trapp's aims, resulting in consistent tension.

Balancing humor and drama, the book interjects its violent confrontations with jokes and quips:

As [the gun's] report rang in his ears and three distinct bullet holes riddled a distant stump, she shrugged and upended unspent rounds into her hand while saying, 'Grandpa didn't raise no wusses,' evoking an awestricken guffaw from Trapp.

And its realistic conversations foreshadow events well, revealing details that could otherwise be missed. Further, though *Selfies* is the first book in a series, it functions ably as a standalone, working toward an explosive, exciting conclusion that generates interest in Bretta's and Trapp's continuing tales.

A compelling, series-opening science fiction novel, *Selfies* begins with the murder of a technology visionary before unraveling a massive conspiracy.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May 17, 2024)

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