

Status Human

Daniel Weisbeck

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Status Human is an action-oriented science fiction novel about androids whose human components bring them strength.

In Daniel Weisbeck's science fiction novel *Status Human*, a sentient android does battle with a mercenary corporation and with her own worries about being destined to be alone.

In this series entry, Silon, a self-aware android who was told that she was designed as a replicant of a deceased child for a grieving father, hides out with her guardian on an idyllic island, where she's beginning to fall in love with a human boy. The truth about her creation is more complex than she knows, though, and her makers want her back. The island is thrown into chaos when they send their goons to capture her.

The novel takes a dramatic shift to focus on a new character, Susan, in its distinct second part. Its clearest links to Silon's story take the form of complex moral questions about human genetic loyalty and android loyalty to fellow androids, including whom a manufactured consciousness should feel loyal to. Still, the story is fast, active, and crisp, and its high stakes hold attention. To build up the futuristic world, programming language and logic are presented in clear, detailed terms, and parenthetical asides share the necessary background information, if in a way that sometimes diminishes the book's suspense. For example, Susan discusses meeting Charlie in a nightclub; a direct address to Silon is inserted to reveal that Charlie is the one responsible for changing Silon's programming with a gene-editing program, giving her the ability to make decisions based on what she learns, feels, and remembers—to be more human.

For much of the novel, Silon and Susan are teenagers with relatable teenage concerns, including whether they fit in with their peer groups and whether their new sensations and physical attractions toward others are normal. These elements contrast with mentions of sexual violence and other violent scenes, including beheadings that are described in lethal detail; the emotional reactions of the cast become focal in such moments. Humor sometimes pokes through, as when Silon considers "the list of human things I'm good at—fighting, killing, lying, and now cooking. Things are moving in the right direction." She is a smart, sarcastic, and fallible heroine, "a complex bio-robotic organism being run by essentially a teenage girl."

Status Human is an action-oriented science fiction novel about androids whose human components bring them strength but lead to risks too.

MICHELE SHARPE (September 16, 2022)

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