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Jo Anderton

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Tanyana is among the highest ranking in her far-future society—a skilled *pionner*, able to use a mixture of ritual and innate talent to manipulate the particles that hold all matter together. But an accident brings her life crashing down around her ears. She is cast down amongst the lowest of the low, little more than a garbage collector.

Who did this to her, and for what sinister purpose? Her quest to find out will take her to parts of the city she never knew existed, and open the door to a world she could never have imagined.

Debris Details

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Author : Jo Anderton

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From Reader Review Debris for online ebook

S.B. Wright says

Someone is doing a damn fine job at Angry Robot in picking up talented authors. Debris is Jo Anderton's debut novel, though you wouldn't know it on a reading of Debris.

Jo blends genres with the skill of someone who has more than one novel under their wing.

Like Jamieson's Roil, Debris is a book that avoids being easily categorised. Angry Robot calls it Science Fantasy and files it under Science Fiction. I am at a loss to come up with anything more definitive or more accurate than that.

The world building is infused with a number of influences that create a unique and coherent world. The naming of the characters has an Eastern European or Russian flavour, this combined with the symbol of the bear, the ever watchful "puppet men", the cold and the references to the old city gave me a strong post glasnost/ final fantasy feel.

The magic system, while definitely fantastical is presented in such a way that it feels very much like a technology, the result of a revolution like the Industrial. Pion's to me, don't seem to be a mystical force, more like sub atomic particles. It feels perhaps like magic but with modern technical sensibility or perspective placed upon it.

The wonderful world building aside, the core of this novel is the unravelling of a mystery and a search for justice- there's adventure, some explicit romance but ultimately Anderton hooks us in and tantalises us with mysteries both central to the plot and tangential.

Tanyana is a strong character and Anderton has done a wonderful job of pointing her in harms way without resorting to clichéd fantasy tropes. There's no rampaging orcs, or evil outsiders. Indeed there's a small element of distrust in the powers that be, the powers that are supposed to look after the people of the city of Movoc-under-Keeper.

It's worth noting that Debris is written in the first person, which can be a difficult perspective to pull off for experienced authors. Anderton has done it well, all the more so for it being her first outing. This point of view created an intimacy that drew me in as a reader, that and the fall from grace and resurrection made her readily identifiable and familiar.

For all its brilliance I felt the ending was a little toned down. A side effect of Anderton's wonderful world building. I was expecting more revelations perhaps. This is a small disappointment though and I would heartily recommend it to lovers of science fiction and fantasy.

It falls into that category of wonderful books that play successfully with different genres in interesting ways. You'll enjoy it if you like Roil, The Alloy of Law or Burn Bright.

It is both gritty and fantastical. I can't wait for Suited (book two) in the middle of the year.

Mieneke says

On the back of every Angry Robot book are categories the book can be filed under; in the case of *Debris*, these were: science fiction, Meets the Eye, Hidden Powers, Puppet Man Cabal and Fantastic Journey. Now all of these are quite applicable and some of them unique to this story – I don't think I've ever run into a Puppet Man Cabal anywhere else – but it is the first one that is most debatable to me. While *Debris* contains SF-nal qualities, a far-future setting, the collector suits, the almost scientific application of pions, there is something to be said for this being a fantasy story, with a magic system, disembodied voices and honestly, a far more fantasy feel than a science fiction feel. I can certainly see why people would think *Debris* a fantasy novel. In other words, it's the genre-bending kind of novel that Angry Robot is known for publishing. But I enjoy my genre being bent and with *Debris*, it got a good workout indeed.

From the start of the novel we are thrown into the deep end with binding, the intricate magic system that pervades the society of Movoc-Under-Keeper. The numerous uses the pions are put to, are fascinating and dangerous. Pions are literally the glue holding most of Movoc-Under-Keeper together and when they are loosed, things go very wrong. In fact, it reminded me a bit of our dependence on electricity. This past weekend there was a major power outage in a town called Nieuwegein, here in The Netherlands, which lasted for almost two days and it was kind of scary to see how disruptive this was to people's lives, beyond the not being able to watch TV or use the computer. Complete malls had to stay closed and the police actually ran extra patrols to deter looting. The scenes that follow after some of the pions became disrupted and unstable, while far worse in effect, were quite similar.

One of the by-products of pion-working is debris and when too much debris accumulates it will disrupt nearby pion systems. This is where debris collectors come in; they are people who can't see pions, but instead can see debris. The administrators of the city have them fitted with special, rather mysterious suits, which allow them to collect the debris and dispose of it, so it doesn't cause problems in the city. I thought this was an interesting spin on a magic system, with a definite cost to magic use, similar to our use of fossil fuels and their output of green house gasses. What did surprise me, or rather it didn't surprise me, as much as it didn't seem logical, was the lack of regard the collectors are held in. It seemed to me that they provided an extremely important service, perhaps even more important than those the binders render. Then again, our society isn't always as respectful of our garbage men and cleaners as we should be.

Even if I really connected to *Debris*' main character, Tanyana, I found her a bit confusing. Tan vacillates between outrage and action and acceptance and inaction. There has been a lot of discussion about character agency recently and Tanyana's character arc definitely reminded me of said discussion. She moves from an independent, powerful architect to a lowly debris collector and seems to lose all grip on her life. At first, just after the accident that pre-curses her fall, it's understandable; she's groggy, in shock and not totally aware of what is going on, but later on she seems mired in acceptance. Every time she discovers a new clue to what actually happened with Grandeur, instead of following up on it, she slides back into the almost-contented 'slices of life', where she's just out collecting or hanging out with Kichlan and Lad. Granted, she regains control toward the end of the book, but the switching between action and inaction on the Grandeur-arc actually made the pacing feel off at times. And the partial resolution to the mystery of Tanyana's fall, while explaining some of Tan's lack of agency, left as many, if not more, questions open to be answered in the next book.

The other characters I really liked were Kichlan and Lad. Kichlan is the right kind of surly and mysterious

and for once I didn't roll my eyes at the inevitable love triangle he formed with Tan and Devich. What makes him endearing is his devotion to and protectiveness of Lad; he is willing to risk anything to keep him safe and that touched a chord with me. It helped that Lad reminded me a lot of my toddler, who has bouts of the terrible two's at the moment and who can switch from adorable to Godzilla in a split second, just like Lad, and who is as rough and clumsy in her affections at times as Lad is—the amount of accidental head butts or knees in the shins we get a day are painful. In fact, it almost made me wonder if Anderton didn't have a toddler of her own to use as inspiration! The way Lad's condition ties into the plot was marvellous and I loved that in the end Tan and Kichlan realise that his state of being isn't something to be cured, but to be cherished.

Debris is a book that had problems and delights for me, but what remains after finishing it is both a sense of unfinished business and the enjoyment of a fun read. Make no mistake, *Debris* definitely doesn't stand on its own in terms of answering all the questions it poses, but the journey through the set up of the questions and the gathering of the few answers we do get in this book, make for a pleasant enough ride that I look forward to starting *Suited*, the next book in the sequence, as soon as I finish my current read. Look for a review of *Suited* next week.

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

[Come to think of it, this probably isn't much of a compliment considering the end result. (hide spoiler)]

Liviu says

This has been a surprisingly compelling book that took over my reading a bit unexpectedly; I took a fast look when I got the earc from Angry Robot and I thought "I've seen this story hundreds of times before and this does not stand out" but the first person voice of the novel stayed with me so some days later when in the mood for such, I got back to the novel and once i opened I had to read it before I could move on to something else.

Not only that but I really liked it so I will reread it first before reading something else; and it's all because of the compelling narration from the main heroine, showing once again that when first person narration works for me, it really does so to speak (and of course the reverse as in the recent Prince of Thorns misfire for example)

As mentioned the storyline is very standard - well off, high achiever but from no account family, respected professional is set up and thrown out of her job, has to start doing some nasty job instead, finds crew of oddballs, tough, rough but ultimately likeable, and presumably works towards getting her revenge, finding the dark secrets that her dismiaal covered etc - you've seen it I bet many times either in sff or in thrillers/crime...

The setup is covered in the blurb above and it has some resemblance with the awesome JC Wright Golden Age - still the best US sf debut of the 00's so far imho - though it is not as sophisticated sfnal as there.

Still, the worldbuilidng is quite interesting, but of course the strengths of the novel are in the voice, the characters - both the heroine and the supporting cast and the mysteries of the universe; there is action,

romance, some twists and the story ends at a good point while I really want the sequel and further adventures of Tanyana and her friends.

Highly recommended, will add the FBC review closer to pub date

FBC Review:

INTRODUCTION: When I saw the blurb below for Debris in the Angry Robot fall 2011 lineup, I was intrigued, so I took a fast look when I got the e-arc from the publisher. At that very short glance, I thought "I've seen this story hundreds of times before and this does not stand out", but the first person voice of the novel unexpectedly stayed with me, so some days later I got back to the novel and once I opened it, I had to read it before I could move on to something else.

Debris is advertised as the first book in the Veiled Worlds trilogy.

"Tanyana is among the highest ranking in her far-future society – a skilled pionner, able to use a mixture of ritual and innate talent to manipulate the particles that hold all matter together. But an accident brings her life crashing down around her ears. She is cast down amongst the lowest of the low, little more than a garbage collector. But who did this to her, and for what sinister purpose? Her quest to find out will take her to parts of the city she never knew existed, and open the door to a world she could never have imagined. "

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: Debris has been a surprisingly compelling book that took over my reading a bit unexpectedly. All because of the compelling narration from the main heroine, showing once again that when first person narration works, it really does so.

As mentioned above, the storyline is very standard at least in the first half of the novel - well off, high achiever but from a family that is not really important, Tanyana, a respected professional is set up to spectacularly and expensively fail in an important task and is thrown out of her job, so she has to start doing some nasty low-level work instead. There she meets a crew of oddballs, tough, rough but ultimately likeable, and from then on she presumably works towards getting her revenge, finding the dark secrets that her dismissal covered etc - you've seen it I bet many times either in sff or in thrillers/crime...

The setup is covered in the blurb above and it has two main characteristics: urban action and a far future technology that allows people with the right talents and training to manipulate matter at its basic level. While considering the second part of the novel, there is a case for considering Debris as fantasy, especially that the novel focuses on people, their interactions and abilities rather than on technology, its ethos is clearly modern and science fictional, based on rationality and technology however advanced and unexplained, with the backward looking and conservative elements associated with fantasy - destined ones, bloodlines, etc - missing.

So the strengths of the novel are in the voice, the characters - both the heroine and the supporting cast - and the mysteries of the universe. There is action, romance, some twists and the story ends at a good point while I really want the sequel and further adventures of Tanyana and her friends.

Another aspect I enjoyed about Debris, was its fast moving style that flows well on the page and compelled me to turn the pages once I got hooked by the narrator's voice:

"Enough of this," I told the pions. My pions. Stern, but kind, I was a mother, a teacher, a firm hand. "We have a job to do. Enough."

But they couldn't hear me, or wouldn't. So I approached them, balancing on hot steel beams wet with condensation. I reached up to the closest finger bone, placed my hand against its stretching, writhing not-quite-metal-anymore form so the pions in me and the pions in it could touch, could mingle.

"Listen—"

But then, only then, so connected to the finger bone, so focused, did I see them.

Pions, yes, but not like any pions I had never known. Red, painfully red, and buried so deep inside reality that even the collective skill in the building site below hadn't seen them. When I tried to communicate with them they burned like tiny suns and heat washed over me, and anger, such a terrible tearing anger I could feel from my head to my chest and deep, deep inside me. In my own pion systems."

Overall, *Debris* (A+) is a fascinating sff adventure that grabs you from the first page and does not let go till the end, delivering a tale of fall and redemption as narrated by a very intriguing heroine. One of my highly recommended novels of 2011 for which the sequel has become another read on receive book.

Jane says

In many ways *Debris* was a somewhat frustrating read. The world-building is top-notch and the premise of the plot is intriguing. It's just that, while it is a solid read, the book doesn't really fulfill the promise that those two elements suggest.

Tanyana works pions - the smallest particles of energy/matter that make up every object in Movoc. Her ability is so great that she has become one of the premiere architects in the city. Her latest project is working on a massive 800 foot tall sculpture that will put her at the pinnacle of her profession. One day as she works the pions with her circle, she begins to lose control of the pions. They seem to almost be working against her rather than with her and the loss of control is so great that the massive statue comes crashing down, taking Tanyana with it.

When Tanyana wakes, she finds herself scarred and alone in a bleak room. And for the first time in her life she is unable to see any pions at all. Without that ability, the powers that be decide the only thing she will now be able to do is collect debris. Debris are the remnants left over from all those pions being put to work. It gathers in pockets and must be collected or it will gum up the works. Before she can process what has happened, Tanyana is assigned to a debris collecting team and abandoned by just about everyone who knew her. Her only remaining connection is Devich, the man who is responsible for implanting the strange metal that makes up the suit she needs for debris collecting. While she adjusts to her new circumstances Tanyana gets to know her team-leader, Kichlan and his apparently developmentally delayed brother Lad.

I kept thinking, as I read, that this was a YA novel. Tanyana's personal story arc, from arrogant architect to humbled but wiser debris collector feels a bit coming-of-age. While it is understandable that this tragedy has had an earth-shaking effect on her psyche, Tanyana's immaturity in the face of it reads more like a teenager's response than an adult's. She is determined to prove the accident was not her fault and yet every time she gets a small piece of the puzzle, she lets it drop and attempts more denial. Part of this is writerly - in that the author needs to keep the reader in the dark and thus Tanyana remains willfully blind - but part of it is

Tanyana's character as written. When she realizes, early on, that she in no way will be able to pay her bills in her swank apartment, does she attempt to sell the belongings that are worth some money and find a cheaper place? No, she pretends that bills and rent don't exist and then is shocked when violent men come to the apartment to throw her out and take all her belongings to pay those bills.

This example is indicative of who Tanyana is. When something displeases her, she pretends it doesn't exist. When something frustrates her, she lets it drop. It makes her realistic as human beings go, but it also makes her hard to root for. When she does so little to control her own trajectory, she becomes less interesting. As I said, some of this is writerly choice in setting up the suspense and I get that. But it also affects the pacing. Tanyana's inertia makes the middle part of the book slow-going as she shows little progress - either in her quest or in her personal life.

All that said, I do think there is a very clever idea here and the author has done a good job of creating her world. Enough so that I will read the next book.

Cat says

The world of Debris is a fantastic place. I think the author did a fantastic job of creating this world without overloading us with information all at once. I did take it upon myself to look up the definition of a pion. For the record, a pion is: a meson that is a combination of up and down quarks and antiquarks, that may be positive, negative, or neutral, and that has a mass about 270 times that of the electron (from Merriam-Webster). Basically, it's a really small bit of energy, which is what you get from the book anyway.

The entire book is very cleverly imagined. It's the most original sci fi/fantasy story I've read in a long time. It's a world where energy – little bits of energy – is everything. The worldbuilding elements are all there. There is a lot of description in a lot of points, but it is not burdensome. We see the world as Tanyana does; we follow her every step up of the way from her fall and the loss of her power. When Tanyana loses her ability to see or manipulate that energy, the world goes dark, to a certain extent. Things like paper and gas lamps are nearly unheard of among higher circles. Only those who can't see the energy – can't see pions – use those sorts of things. While there is a lot of description in certain parts, there are sometimes where there is not enough description. I think it was a bit unbalanced, there were chapters where I wished the circumstances were better described, and still other chapters where they were described far too well. It was well done and clever enough that this didn't bother me as much as it might have in another book.

I'm going to assume that Tanyana was not supposed to be likeable in the beginning. Sometimes, I would feel sorry for her and I would wish her better luck, but then the very next page and I'd change my mind. She's selfish and she believes she deserves better treatment than the entire rest of the population. Tanyana was skilled, she was the best there was, and she lost it all. She was used to being treated better for what she could do, now she has to learn how to prove herself for who she truly was. She grows toward the end of the book, just as a character should. At the beginning, she is insistent that no one could possibly know or understand her. I mean, how in the world could these people possibly know what happened to her? I wouldn't suppose that there's something like gossip in her world? If there is, she seems to think she's above it. By the end, she is more willing to understand. By the end, Tanyana has formed a bond with the people she never would have looked at before and was willing to fight for them, as we see in the final pages of this book. I found that I enjoyed watching her journey from rich snob to understanding debris collector. She learns throughout the book, exactly as a good character should. At the end of the book, I appreciate her journey and I'm excited to see her grow more in the next one.

The book was captivating. It not only bought my attention but it also earned it. Except for the slow beginning, there wasn't a moment where I didn't want to flip to the next page. Most of this book was read during my breaks at work. I hate taking breaks because I hate not doing anything, it's just a character flaw, but this book made me look forward to my breaks. It made me wish they were longer so I could read more. I loved that there was no dumping of information in the book. There were things in the book that were never exactly explained, they simply had to be discovered or inferred. Other things were explained later as they were explained to Tanyana. It was very well done, though, and I never really felt confused or lost in the book.

There were a few things about the book that bothered me. First was the unanswered questions. So many questions were raised in the process of this novel and only a few were answered or sort of explained. I suppose that's what the sequel is for, but now I'm concerned that this will turn into an infodump in the next book. I felt like the promise of this novel wasn't particularly fulfilled within the pages of this book, but I guess I had originally assumed it was standalone. I guess we'll see with the sequel. Part of me wishes it was a standalone novel, if simply for the fact that I generally tend to prefer standalone against series. I also didn't appreciate the abundance of sex scenes in the novel. Ok, so I use abundance a bit liberally, but my point remains: there was no point. They served no purpose and did nothing to push the plot along. Nevermind the moral issue of it for a minute, there was no reason for them. Even the romance itself approached too quickly for me, although that was a little more forgivable. The romance itself helped to push the plot along, it made sense for Tanyana and where she was at that time. The sex didn't. I think it was just an unnecessary plot point and could have very well been excluded.

Over all, a great debut novel from Jo Anderton. I'm looking forward to seeing more from her in the future – especially a certain book two coming out next year – and I definitely think she has a lot of potential as a science fiction author.

(See original review [here](#).)

Nikki says

As usual, I love the way Angry Robot select the books they publish. Whatever faults each book has, there's something intriguing and worth taking a gamble on at the core. Whatever my doubts about whichever individual book, pretty much all of them are compelling, compulsive reads.

Debris suffered because it felt like set-up, really. It mostly builds a world, establishes the rules, and sets up for the later plot. The main character -- and narrator -- has a lot of setbacks, a bumpy ride down from the heights of society to the lows, and that isn't that compelling a story when you don't sympathise with the character, or understand her. E.g. I knew a certain character was a creep from minute one, and for someone we're told is so gifted and intelligent she takes a long time to grasp what seemed to me obvious.

I've read reviews of this book and the next that suggest the set-up is worth it, so perhaps when I get chance I'll pick up the next book, but I'm not in a hurry. Nonetheless, Debris was easy to read, and the central ideas are intriguing.

Bibliotropic says

Even if I hadn't read a description of this novel that said it drew many themes from manga and anime, I would have been able to tell. It was quite easy to picture this entire novel as an anime, and to that end, the themes and imagery were quite clear and creative, and I would have very much enjoyed watching it.

But some things that would be great visually don't always transfer well to text, and I found this to be the case in a few instances of *Debris*. Not that the novel was lacking or flawed in that sense, but I found myself thinking more than once that one scene or another would have made a better visual presentation than a textual one. This was particularly the case when it came to the character of Tanyana investigating debris. Many of the attacks and overloads of debris felt episodic rather than part of a flowing story, almost in the way that shows do when they fill half of their episodes of "new bad guy of the week" plots.

Still, it's quite clear that Anderton has a brilliantly creative mind, and really put the effort into world-building. Creating the history of the world with brief tie-ins to our own history, culture-building, creating rich and interesting characters; it was all there, and it was a treat to read. Her writing is smooth and moves the plot along quite easily, and in spite of the somewhat episodic segments of the story, the pacing was also quite good, pulling the reader in and building layers onto the mystery of pions, debris, and the puppet-men who watched over everything that was happening.

Where it seemed Anderton fell down, though, was in foreshadowing. From the very beginning it was clear that Devich wasn't all he appeared to be, and that although Tanyana had some friction with Kichlan (no rhyming pun intended), they were obviously going to sort it out and get involved with each other. Kichlan almost fit the "grumpy love interest" archetype to a T, and Devich practically wandered around carrying a sign reading, "I'm using you, Tanyana," the entire time. Why Tanyana didn't pick up on at least Devich's motivations, I can't say. She's demonstrably not a stupid woman, but he practically tells her that he's going to betray her at one point and she just brushes it off. Subtly was not the name of the game in *Debris*, and it spoiled a bit of the reading for me. It's hard to want to invest yourself in a character when you can't help but wonder how she can be so uncharacteristically blind.

Still, for the few flaws it had, it was still fun to read, and I enjoyed Anderton's writing and creativity more than enough to want to read the sequel when it's released. While this may not be the book for everyone, it definitely had strong merits that endeared me to it, and I enjoyed following the plot and trying to figure out the mystery of debris and pions alongside Tanyana. I would recommend this book mostly to fantasy fans who are accustomed to the plot and imagery found in anime, as I think that would help them appreciate it all the more, and to those fans who are looking for an easy and fun read that doesn't lack for mystery and talent.

Ben Babcock says

What do you do when you undergo an accident that leaves you unable to interact with the basic technology underpinning your society? What do you do when that accident leaves you fit for one task few others would care to assume? What do you do when your new status leaves your old friends uncomfortable and your new ones unimpressed with you?

What do you do when it turns out your accident was no accident, and no one will listen?

In *Debris*, Tanyana is among the elite of Varsnia. In her society, technology harnessing elementary particles known as pions powers almost everything. Tanyana is a pion-binder, one of the best, an architect of buildings and statues for the highest bidder. But an accident during an unexpected inspection renders Tanyana unable to see pions any more. Instead, she can see debris, a byproduct of pion usage that interferes with pions (and not much else). Tanyana becomes pressed into being a debris collector: the gig comes with a silver suit bonded to her wrists that provides some limited shapeshifting capabilities. Despite their critical role in society, debris collectors receive little notice and little respect.

There are hints that not all is as it should be—or used to be—almost from the beginning. Tanyana and her team of debris collectors lurch from one disaster to the next. Eventually, Tanyana discovers that she is a pawn in a larger gambit involving forces far beyond her comprehension. Her accident was no accident, and since then she has not been as abandoned as she thought—instead, she has been shaped and manipulated by people close to her as well as those watching from a distance.

My problem is that *I* felt like I was watching from a distance, and that did not help at all. In some books, the hint of grand conspiracies and hidden histories is tantalizing and can help drive the plot as we cheer for the characters to solve the mystery. In this case, I just didn't find myself invested in the characters or their problems.

Tanyana annoyed me at first, but then I realized it isn't her fault. She's actually a nice person, and proactive in her own way—what was annoying me was every person blaming Tanyana for everything that went wrong. She was like a personal magnet for the blame of Murphy's Law. Moreover, no one seemed to want to explain anything to Tanyana (and then they blamed her when she was ignorant of a procedure). These behaviours made every character seem like an ass, and I disliked all of them. (Except maybe Lad. Lad's cool.)

I also struggled with not knowing enough about the world Anderton has obviously gone to pains to construct. Pions are an actual thing. Are the magical pions of *Debris* supposed to be related? It's not clear. Anderton seems to indicate that everyone can see pions but not many are skilled at manipulating them as Tanyana used to be. What does everyone else spend their time doing? If pions have replaced the role of old school machines, what happened to all the scientists and engineers? I don't doubt that Anderton could provide a satisfactory explanation, because revolutions like the one she describes have certainly happened in our past. But for all the interesting ideas she throws in here, there are still aspects of her society that remain vague.

It's not all bad news. Anderton genuinely has something interesting here. I'd like to learn more about debris collecting, and I definitely want to know why the bad guys are so bent on doing something that seems to threaten existence as we know it—are they just evil, or are they misguided? Part of this curiosity is the result, of course, of that vagueness I mentioned above—but part of it is because Anderton whets my appetite with the right amount of conflict and questions.

Additionally, I loved watching Tanyana adapt to her new circumstances after her accident. Her world changes so completely. At first she lives in denial, thinking she might get to maintain her accustomed lifestyle. Gradually she realizes how wrong she is. She must make new friendships—many of her old “friends” desert her following her loss of status—and determine how to cope with her inability to use pions—which, in this society, is definitely a disability.

Debris is a kind of bland novel. It has some of the basic book nutrients: a passable plot, serviceable characters. It lacks the zest and spice that make a book memorable. I want more, but I don't know how much more—and certainly not with any urgency.

I wasn't overly fond of *Debris*, Jo Anderton's first book in this series, and I approached *Suited* with trepidation. I wasn't sure Anderton had what it would take to grab me and make me enjoy this book. And as I started reading, and the characters felt flat and uninspiring, I resigned myself to another dull review. Then it got interesting. The characters began changing. The stakes got higher. And by the end of the book, I was furiously flipping electronic pages as I raced to discover what would happen—and suddenly, Anderton had proved me wrong. Well done!

So, *Suited* starts off in a lacklustre way. Tanyana's team of debris collectors gets split up by the manipulative puppet men. Tanyana and Lad go to one, newly-formed team, while Lad's protective brother, Kichlan, stays with some of the others. This split creates an interesting dynamic, with Tanyana and Lad having to look out for each other. For the most part, however, *Suited* starts off slow. There is too much drama about (and whining from) the Keeper, the mysterious being whom only Lad (and Tanyana, when suited) can interact with. The Keeper is intimately connected with the debris that Tanyana and other collectors are charged with retrieving, but Anderton keeps her cards very close to her chest until the end of the book. As a result, I was frustrated and not particularly interested in liking any of these characters. Yet I soldiered on.

One issue I had with *Debris* was the paucity of detailed worldbuilding. Anderton tossed around terms like the “veche”, and I gathered that the book was set in a city called Movoc-under-Keeper that is part of a larger country called Varsnia. However, we never get a sense of what kind of city or country these places are. We don't get a very clear idea of the culture. Although there are hints that Varsnian society is highly stratified (Tanyana, before her accident, occupying that tenuous, upper-middle-class position of the nouveau bourgeoisie), there is very little description of how the ordinary citizens of Movoc-under-Keeper go about their lives. The pages are flat in this sense; they seem a little barren and empty in the background. On the macro level, we get almost no sense of the politics of this country. *Suited* does little to rectify the deficiencies of culture. However, it does clarify the relationships between the national and local veches and the puppet men. We learn about the origins of the puppet men and why the veche is interested in working with them, and all of this provides more context as Anderton sets up events for the third book.

I was also very frustrated with Tanyana's lack of agency in *Debris*. Part of this is a natural response to suddenly being rendered powerless, friendless, and alone—not to mention suffering a major trauma. Nevertheless, the refrain that she was being manipulated and used by the puppet men, which is continued in this book, started to become repetitive and annoying. At least in *Suited*, though, the ways in which the puppet men are shaping Tanyana—and to what ends—become more clear. Anderton further develops the antagonism between the Keepers and the puppet men, and Tanyana's role as a kind of pawn caught in the middle, effectively, albeit not necessarily with much skill or detail.

Suited's weaknesses are quite similar to its predecessor in this respect. Anderton clearly has good ideas, but almost all of my dissatisfaction with these books are a result of her description—or lack thereof. She's just frightfully vague at times. There are “doors” in the world that lead to a world of nothingness? It's not exactly *lazy* writing, because I get the sense that she tries very hard. It just doesn't quite measure up to my very exacting standards.

Somehow, though, everything pulls together in the final act. Tanyana has made some major discoveries. And finally, *finally*, she steps up and decides to go full metal jacket on the puppet men. (This is not a metaphor, as her suit is a metal-like substance!) The moment after Tanyana's new fugitive status forces her hand and forces her to declare that “enough is enough” was a moment I had been waiting for since halfway through *Debris*, and experiencing it was sweet indeed. In concert with the disturbing transformations wracking Tanyana's body, this declaration of war on the puppet men is a welcome (if predictable) turn of events.

(I wish Anderton could have done more with Tanyana's pregnancy, however, because the way she treats it makes it seem more like a plot point than anything else.)

There are almost two climaxes in the book, the first acting as a motivator for the second. In Tanyana's confrontation with Aleksey—who demonstrates what will become of her if she becomes merely a tool of the puppet men—we lose Lad. He sacrifices himself to save her, and in so doing provides Tanyana with the strength to forge ahead and survive, but at a cost. This leads to her declaration of war and taking the fight to the puppet men, who very nearly kick her ass. The last chapter is an adrenaline rush equivalent to nothing else in the rest of the book, not even the fight with Aleksey. Suddenly, the hints that Anderton has laid throughout the book come into focus—those not-so-subtle references to “programmers” start making sense. Again, the weakness of the description leaves me less-than-fully invested in the direction Anderton has chosen to take this story. I must admit to being intrigued, however!

Anyone who has read *Debris* and didn't absolutely hate it should do themselves a favour and read *Suited*. It is progress, for the story and the writing show promising development. I am now very eager to read book three. There is probably no better compliment than that!

My reviews of the *Veiled Worlds* series:

Suited →

Psychomacologist says

I was really disappointed with this book - it has such a promising premise and the world building is interesting, but by a quarter of the way in to it I wanted to punch Tanyana in the face for being such a self absorbed whiner.

Tanyana is constantly talking about how strong and self sufficient she is, yet she fails to display any of these qualities and at times is downright stupid. Her love interest, Devich, is obviously a massive creep who any self respecting woman would've kicked to the curb in short order, yet (the allegedly strong, empowered) Tanyana keeps him around and puts up with him manipulating her and mansplaining everything.

The main character also teeters dangerously close to Mary Sue territory - she's so good at everything (without even trying) that the plot becomes a dreary, tension-less mess. When the protagonist can solve every problem by instinct and luck (because she's Super Special) there's no sense of danger or rising stakes.

Pacing and plotting were big issues here, partly due to Tanyana's 'specialness'. I get the need to have the main character be good at things, but she's just too good at everything to be interesting. Except for telling when men are douchebags, which she completely sucks at.

A book with a lot of promise that ultimately fails to deliver. I would've thrown it at the wall if it wasn't on my beloved Kindle.

The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✨*♥♥ says

Interesting...

We start at 5 stars (I read it, right?):

-1 star: I was thinking about 4 stars here but the pseudo-'Slavic' references made the world a bit iffy. No, make that very iffy. Basically, from all the Slavic stuff, the author got only 'Pavel', 'Natasha' and 'kasha' right. And even 'kasha' recipe made me shudder: buckwheat with raisins, honey and nuts and other sweet stuff! Even reading about it feels unstomachable. Also, **why the hell was 'kasha' not named porridge? or maybe 'Haferbrei'? Could it have sounded way more lustig? N'est-ce pas? Added un peu de ich weiß nicht welche palabras? English texts interspersed with Slavic (Russian/Polish/Czech/Croatian? whatever...) words read about as 'gracious' and clever... not as these 4 sentences.**

+1 star: new world built on atom manipulating powers, the 'pions' thing (which is basically the atoms we know expressed as 'ions' + 'p'),

-1 star: not enough of this world background to get everything

+1 star: no tedious 'star-drive-building talks' (the issue that often plagues sci-fi)

-1 star: the love story was instant, unbelievable and creepy (you drill metal into her bones first and then you go to go around calling her 'my lady' and having the frisky sessions? Ouch!)

+1 star: compulsive readability

-1 star: all the class differences and social injustice stuff was nagging!

-1 star: the debris idea felt undeveloped: we hear about it all the time but what the hell is wrong with it?

Overall 3 stars.

Ranting Dragon says

<http://www.rantingdragon.com/debris-t...>

Debris is the debut novel of Australian author Jo Anderton and the first in a projected trilogy, The Veiled Worlds, to be published by Angry Robot Books. Despite some minor flaws, Debris is quite a solid first novel and showcases Anderton's substantial storytelling talent, marking her as a name to watch in the future.

What goes up must come down

Debris takes place in Movoc, a remarkable technologically advanced city that sits in the shadow of a symbolic mountain known as the Keeper. Since the revolutionary discovery that most individuals possess the ability to manipulate the small building blocks of matter known as pions through certain geometric configurations and ritual gestures, Movoc-under-Keeper has led the world in everything from architecture to art and medicine. However, while it may seem like a utopia for those who possess significant pion-binding ability, beneath society's surface lies corruption and oppression. An underclass of 'collectors' are forced to collect the bi-product of pion-manipulation, known as debris, and are shunned by the rest of society.

Like many recent debut novels, Debris is told from a single first-person viewpoint, that of the protagonist Tanyana. When we are first introduced to Tanyana, she is one of the city's elite, a prodigal pion binder and master architect, working on her most ambitious project yet. However, she soon falls victim to a suspicious accident. Her masterpiece is destroyed, she is left scarred, and her connection to the world of pions is severed. Bound into a bizarre 'collecting suit', Tanyana must learn to adapt to life at the lowest rung of

society, all the while attempting to discover the truth about her fall. However, there is more to the world of pions and debris than meets the eye. Beneath the surface of society brews something far greater and more dangerous than she ever imagined.

A perfect set-up for some truly epic conflicts

Have you ever read a novel where you had a few gripes with certain characters but were never once tempted to put the book down? How about a novel where at certain points you were not 100% sure what you were reading or what the author was trying to achieve, yet despite it all you were intrigued and still kept coming back for more? This pretty much summarizes my experience with Debris.

A dystopian world of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ and the tale of an individual’s fall from the highest rungs of society are not exactly new to the fantasy genre, yet Anderton manages to put her own spin on these familiar tropes and make them feel fresh. The world itself is unique, containing a number of intriguing aspects. For instance, the opposing forces of debris and pions make for a compelling and complex magic system. The collecting suit and its relationship with its wearer is also quite a fascinating concept that has many potential uses throughout the series. In addition, the government organization, the veche, provides a satisfyingly foreboding presence and its agents, referred to as ‘the puppet men’, are undeniably creepy and sinister. Furthermore, I thought that the reliance of Movoc’s upper classes on pions and the division between ‘binders’ and ‘collectors’ were believable byproducts of a society wherein most individuals possess some degree of pion manipulating power. In some ways this may even be interpreted as social commentary on Western civilization’s own growing reliance on technology. Anderton also does a good job of depicting the culture shock suffered by someone used to having everything come easily, suddenly losing it all and being forced to work to fulfill even the most basic needs. Altogether, this provides an excellent stage for a number of conflicts to play out and for various questions to be explored throughout the story.

Imperfect characters you will grow to love

On the whole, the characters are quite well developed and believable. Initially I had some reservations about Tanyana, as I found her a little cold and self satisfied and disliked her haughty demeanor. Nevertheless, as the novel progressed she retained her distinctive ‘spark’ but adapted to circumstances and grew as a person, becoming much easier to relate to as a result. Due to the first person narrative we don’t get as much insight into some of the secondary characters as we could. Nevertheless, many are quite well developed and leave you wanting to learn more about them. For instance, I loved the warmth in the relationship between the group leader Kichlan and his ‘broken’ brother Lad. In addition, their landlord, Eugeny, also stood out as a complex and three-dimensional individual.

On the other hand, there was one character whose behavior just seemed odd throughout the entire novel and who wasn’t believable to me as a person. Without spoiling the novel for others, there turned out to be a legitimate reason for this strange characterization; however, the way it was executed was not particularly subtle. Usually I would consider this a major flaw as it failed to utilize what could, with a slightly lighter touch, have been a shocking surprise. Initially, it also seemed unrealistic to me that a protagonist who had previously been shown as competent and intelligent would fail to have seen this development coming. However, after contemplating why this didn’t bother me as much as I thought it should, I had a realization—this novel is not really about the unexpected reveal; it’s about the characters and their reactions to each other and the events around them. When I looked at the situation considering the fact that Tanyana had recently lost almost everything that made her who she once was, it seemed fitting that she would ignore seemingly obvious cues in a final desperate attempt to hold onto one last connection to her former life.

Building up to something even more climactic

As Debris is the first novel in a trilogy, its main purpose is to introduce the world and characters and set up

events that will culminate in later books. Anderton definitely achieves this and the necessary worldbuilding and characterization is quite fascinating, despite the fact it results in a slightly slower pace. Furthermore, the action really picks up at the end of the novel and there are a number of plot twists that I didn't see coming. The events that occur in the last quarter, as well as the connection I felt to the characters by this point, made me quite eager to find out what happens next.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I'll mention that there is some violence in this novel, though it's pretty mild by modern standards. Additionally, Anderton shows that she sure knows how to write a sex scene, although I'm sure it's nothing most adult readers can't deal with!

Why should you read this book?

Those who take pleasure in checking out new talent on the fantasy scene will have a hard time finding fault with this year's debuts, and Debris is yet another impressive and promising title to add to the list. Personally, I'm definitely looking forward to the rest of the series and can't wait to see where Anderton goes with her characters and world. I have a feeling that the next book, Suited, will be even more impressive.

Although Anderton makes what could be considered some strange choices throughout the novel, overall Debris worked for me and managed to immerse me in its world. I would definitely recommend it as a book that will appeal to readers who prefer their fantasy complete with a unique magic system, strange technologies, believable characterization and a dystopian edge.

Stefan says

Tanyana is a talented and celebrated architect. She's one of the elite, someone who can control "pions," allowing her to manipulate matter with a thought. She's high up in the air, working on a towering statue, shaping the raw matter around her into art, when suddenly she finds herself under attack by strange, uncontrollable pions. When she regains consciousness after a horrible fall, it becomes clear that she has suffered more than just physical injuries: she's lost the ability to see pions and can now only see "debris," a sludgy byproduct of pion manipulation.

In an instant, Tanyana's charmed life comes to a grinding halt. While unconscious and recovering from her injuries, a tribunal has already found her guilty of negligence. Against her will, she is fitted with a strange powersuit and assigned to a team of debris collectors. Before long, the once-proud architect finds herself reduced to poverty, trudging through the poorest parts of the city with her team to gather the filthy debris in a constant race to make quota. Gradually, she learns more about the true nature of her suit, the history of pions and debris, and the true cause of her fall.

Read the entire review on my site [Far Beyond Reality!](#)

j says

Yeah, I'm not going to finish this one.

The thing is, I don't think this is a bad book, despite the middling rating here, where anything under, say, 3.75 stars indicates mixed reviews, at best. I thought it was fine. The world is unique, a blend of sci-fi and

magic that posits that there are small pieces of energy (pions) in all living things that can be spoken to/manipulated and used to build stuff, move heavy things, generate electricity -- do pretty much anything -- and though many people have minor skill at manipulating them, it is a revered, exclusive class that can control them adroitly.

The first-person narrator is interesting enough -- a pion master who loses control of a construction project, causing extensive damage and suffering an injury that results in the loss of her skills. The central mystery -- what happened to her and why -- is compelling enough. The genre trappings -- the unusual makeup of a pion-powered city, the weird bio-mechanical suit she is forced to wear in her new job as a "debris collector" (too much to explain, never mind) -- are nifty enough. The supporting characters I've encountered so far are fairly cliche but likeable enough.

Really, there is nothing *wrong* with the book. The whole thing is *enough*.

Except I don't much care if I finish it. I like reading it fine, but I don't feel compelled to do so. I have no motivation either -- my reading goal for the year is out the window, I got it from the library instead of buying it, it isn't for book club and no one else I know read or recommended it*. So I'm just going to stop. Don't get me wrong, I want to know what happens. I'd totally read a plot summary on Wikipedia to find out. I just won't read 300 more pages.

I might, though, if the cover didn't proudly proclaim "BOOK ONE OF THE VEILED WORLDS." Book one! Book one! I hate seeing book one on the cover for an untried author. Maybe let me decide if I like you before you ask me to commit to an entire series to figure out your story. I didn't like it when Rothfuss did it, and I can't exactly treat you any different. (Lie, I totally can and likely will in the future; I love being contradictory on Goodreads. Pisses people off.)

Aside: the cover of BOOK TWO OF THE VEILED WORLDS is kind of silly, eh?

**partial lie; Goodreads friend Ian recommended it via cover blurb. Sorry, Ian. It's a nice blurb.*

Marlene says

Debris, by Jo Anderton, is the first book of The Veiled World Trilogy. It is the story of the catastrophic fall, and eventual stumbling rise, of Tanyana Vladha. It is Tanyana's story, and it is told in her incredibly compelling voice.

Tanyana starts out as a pion-builder in the great city of Movoc-under-Keeper. Pion-builders are a combination of architect, engineer and designer, working with a substance that is part molecule, part light and part magic. It also turns out to be part myth, but that comes later. Most people in Tan's world can see pions, but few can do what she does, bend them to her will to create masterpieces--not just buildings, but also art and sculpture.

800 feet in the air, erecting a statue unfortunately named "Grandeur", in the middle of a surprise inspection by the strange government creatures known as the "veche", Tan's world falls apart. Literally. Her formerly obedient pions go wild, bringing the statue crashing to the ground, on top of her. Her injuries are extreme. Although pions later heal her physical damage, her great statue also struck her in the head, knocking out her ability to even perceive pions.

Tan falls from the elite of the builders to the lowest of the low. Damaged people become "Collectors", those who can see the debris that pion factories produce. Collectors are necessary. Pion factories power the lights, the heat, the water supply--everything we use electricity and fossil fuel for in our world. But debris collecting is dangerous as debris is toxic. So Tan, like all collectors, is fitted with a special collecting "suit", a suit that is bonded to, and extrudes from, her very bones. Her suit provides armor, weapons, and even locator beacons for debris. It also permanently marks her as "other".

Tan tries to juggle her old life and her new one. She doesn't want to fall. She saw what happened at Grandeur, and she knows it was deliberate. But every person involved has been exiled or their career has been derailed or they have been hushed up in some way. She has been changed almost beyond recognition. And in her fall, she discovers a different world, one that might be more genuine than the glittering but superficial society she left. But just as Tan begins to adapt, she learns that, just as the pions at Grandeur were deliberately agitating to crush her, now the debris is increasing, searching for her.

Escape rating A: The first time I sat down with this book, I picked myself up about 100 pages later. Tan is a character that just gets hold of you and doesn't let go. Writing a book in first person perspective is hard, and Anderton made Tan someone I wanted to get to know. I felt for her struggle, even on the occasions when I wanted to slap her to "get real already".

The Russian names of the characters add to the gritty feel. This is a dark, urban landscape, and it feels like it's only going to get darker and grimmer from here. There were glimpses of an older mythology that had been lost in the mists of time that were very nicely done. I'm amazed that this is Anderton's first novel. And I'm truly glad that Suited, the second book in the trilogy, is scheduled for April 2012.
