



Railhead

Philip Reeve

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Come with me, Zen Starling, she had said. The girl in the red coat. But how did she know his name?

The Great Network is a place of drones and androids, maintenance spiders and Station Angels. The place of the thousand gates, where sentient trains criss-cross the galaxy in a heartbeat.

Zen Starling is a petty thief, a street urchin from Thunder City.

So when mysterious stranger Raven sends Zen and his new friend Nova on a mission to infiltrate the Emperor's train, he jumps at the chance to traverse the Great Network, to cross the galaxy in a heartbeat, to meet interesting people - and to steal their stuff.

But the Great Network is a dangerous place, and Zen has no idea where his journey will take him.

Railhead Details

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Author : Philip Reeve

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From Reader Review Railhead for online ebook

Lisazj1 says

4.5 stars, and I absolutely loved this! Wildly imaginative, incredible world building, and the same can be said for the story as well. Great, layered characters living in a very diverse society, and a heist with just a little romance mixed in had me glued to the page all the way to the end!

I had this book on my tbr list forever because it sounded interesting and it surpassed all my expectations. It definitely will not take me as long to get to Black Light Express.

This is an awesome gift from The Birthday Elf, who doesn't want to tell me who she is. *but *might* have outted herself! ;)* Thank you so much, I really enjoyed reading!! xx

Helen says

4.5 Stars

What a delightfully weird read. I don't think even it's harshest critics could deny that this book brings something completely different to YA sci-fi, which is quite an achievement as this is definitely an over-saturated market. Railhead follows Zen Starling, a petty thief who's recruited by the mysterious Raven to infiltrate the most powerful family in the galaxy and steal something for him. The story is set thousands of years in the future and revolves around an intergalactic rail network that goes through tunnels which essentially function like wormholes; a distance of ten thousand light years becomes a short commute to work on these trains. I love this concept, with the idea of each station being in a different, distinct world. Some worlds are industrial and smoggy, such as Zen's home, and others are constantly sunny and filled with the holiday homes of the galaxy's richest. Maybe one of the reasons I loved this concept so much, aside from the refreshing novelty of it all, was because I'm a bit of a 'railhead' myself and have always enjoyed travelling on trains. Although this intergalactic train service certainly puts my own commute through a small stretch of English countryside into perspective.

As if this rail network wasn't strange enough, the trains themselves seem to be alive and have their own thoughts which they are able to communicate to people. Each train has its own distinctive character, from the sadistic *Thought Fox* to the incredibly sassy *Damask Rose*, a train which probably has more wit and humour than most literary characters I've read.

"It was not a train that said much, or sang for joy as it sped along, the way other trains did, but after it had smashed that barrier it laughed softly to itself. The deep, unsettling sound gurgled out of the speakers in the carriage ceiling, startling Zen, who sat perched on the edge of his seat, impatient for the journey to be over."

This book also addresses deeper issues of gender and what it really means via the 'Motorik' (life-like robots who can change gender at will), and also issues of what it means to be human, via the very same Motorik. One of the main characters, Nova, is one of them and it wasn't lost on me that she also happened to be the most compassionate and emotionally sensitive character in the book. Nova herself certainly doesn't see what makes her so different from Zen, besides the fact that she is made from a different substance.

"I am human," she said. "I have a processor for a brain instead of a lump of meat, and my body is made from different substances, but I have feelings and dreams and things, like humans do."

Deep stuff for what was originally marketed as a children's sci-fi novel.

However, there were other bizarre elements in this world which I felt weren't executed quite as well as the sentient trains. The 'Hive Monks', figures made up from insects who are at some point able to become sentient (for some reason...?), were just creepy and I felt as if they just unnecessarily weighed down the plot. Zen didn't like being around them, I didn't like reading about them, and I don't know why the author felt the need to include any more bizarre sci-fi elements. I hope they'll be absent from the sequel.

All in all, I really enjoyed this book and I'm rating it at 4.5 stars because it genuinely surprised me and broke away from the typical mould of sci-fi novels, with regards to both the plot and the relationship between the characters. Although I generally round down my 4.5 star ratings to 4 stars, the fact that this book is so underrated and practically unheard of on the sci-fi scene, makes me more inclined to be generous. So I'll round it up to five stars and hope the second book can maintain the high standard of the first.

Emma says

Everyone was a passenger on a runaway train.

Stunning, imaginative, original. Character led Sci fi...LOVED it!

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

DNF at 100 pages in. I think I would've loved this book if I'd read it at a younger age. Unfortunately, I think this series is no longer for me. The characters are fine, the dialog is well-written, and the worldbuilding is interesting, but this is far more middle-grade than anything else. Not my thing.

The writing is really getting on my nerves. It's really immature, complete with that severe overuse of ellipses here. Oh well.

(Review not posted, as I don't have much of a review so much as a realization that this series is no longer for me.)

Jason says

5 Stars

Railhead Philip Reeve is a magical science fiction cyberpunk adventure. I rounded up this review to full marks because of how imaginative and just darn fun this adventure is. Zen Starling, is our main protagonist, our star of the story and is a young man(with a great name too).

This is a far future story. Zen is small time Thief and an otherwise mischievous young man that has spent most of his life moving from one place/world to another with his sister and crazed mother. Zen is a Railhead, a person that lives to travel on the sentinet trains that travel through "worm holes" from world to world. Reeve has created a wonderful world of inventions, science, and near magical technologies. There is a great deal of world building and some cases backstory that makes this book work.

Some big themes are explored in this book. Love is an underlying theme to the whole thing. What it means to be human is explored. And more. Railhead is fast paced and well written. Although this book is appropriate for the young adult crowd, it is not written down to them. Reeve fills the pages with action and imagination and I loved it.

A fantastic read that fans of science fiction, cyberpunk, and even fantasy will enjoy.

Justine says

4.5 stars rounded up. After thinking about it for a couple of days I rounded up my star rating on this one. This book is just so imaginative it really deserves it.

Railhead is set in a fantastic future where sentient trains transport people across vast distances to other planets by means of K-Gates, a technology pioneered and protected by Guardians, powerful AIs who long ago appointed themselves caretakers of humanity. Zen Starling is a petty thief who is minding his own business when opportunity comes knocking with an offer it appears he can't refuse. What follows is an exciting heist story that quickly becomes something more, because of course the object of the heist is the key to a closely held and dangerous secret.

Not enough can be said about the amazing world building in this book. It is incredibly detailed and imaginative, immediately bringing the story to life. Zen Starling is a flawed main character who struggles to do the "right thing" in the face of an increasingly difficult situation. Used to being in a relatively simple world of black and white and small time stakes, he finds himself suddenly in uncertain waters and having to make decisions with implications that extend far beyond just himself.

The non-human characters in the story are equally well developed. The Motorik, or android, Nova starts out by recruiting Zen to work for her maker Raven, but it is obvious that she likes Zen too. She seems to have control over her own programming, but it's clear that Zen still harbours some bias and confusion about her motives simply because she is a machine and can be programmed.

The whole issue of how much a non-human entity can feel and how it might express self identity is dealt with very well throughout the book. This is an ongoing issue not just for the humanoid Motoriks, but also for the sentient trains themselves, and other characters such as the insect colonies who have formed into single-minded Hive Monks

The finish to the story brings everything nicely to a close, but leaves the door open to more books being set in this world. I would be more than happy to read any that are.

Dana says

More middle grade than YA, but I did enjoy this sci-fi adventure. At times it felt a little jumbled and all over the place, however the uniqueness of the world kept me interested.

Giving personalities to trains was pretty cool. Hard to find much to say about this, while I enjoyed it for the most part it was still rather middle of the road. The ending was very frustrating. **2.5/5**

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

Railhead was a book that I had seen in my local library and appealed to me since at the time, I was looking for a science fiction novel to read and enjoy. However after finishing this one, I'm feeling slightly disappointed by how the story turned out. Zen Starling is a thief and goes stealing lots of people's possessions. He also lives in the Great Network which is full of trains and railway lines so exploring the areas is his main priority. He meets Raven who challenges him to steal from the Emperor's train and pretend to be a relative from the Emperor's family, he works with his friend Nova to uncover hidden secrets and not get killed in the process. With an interesting concept and lots of twists that I generally didn't see coming, a number of things sadly dampened my expectations. The terminology was confusing at times to understand, I struggled to connect with Zen as a character. He did remind me at times of the Artful Dodger from Oliver Twist however which is one of the fictional characters that I enjoy. The last thirty pages in particular were extremely thrilling but by this point, I felt that the writing style just didn't work for me. The ending was also a cliffhanger which I'm not a huge fan of.

I have tried to read Mortal Engines by the same author in the past but ended up DNF'ing it twice due to the complexity of the plotline. I am most likely not going to be reading the sequel for this one.

Puck says

“Thing about trains”, said Zen, “you’ll have to give them something, in return for carrying you. If you do, they’ll take you to any star-system that you want.”

It's been a long time since I've read a book with a world so rich. Philip Reeve wrote an absolute gem of a middle-grade sci-fi story, that will take you on a mind-blowing journey across the universe. You'll meet many people of colour, droids who acts like humans, and these incredible beings called Hive Monks:

"He was a colony of big brown beetles clinging to a roughly human-shaped armature which they'd made for themselves out of sticks and string and chicken bones. He wore a paper wasp's nest for a face, and out of the mouth hole came a voice that was made by a thousand saw-toothed limbs rubbing together."

On this journey we follow Zen Starling. Zen is a young, black, small-time criminal who spends his days

robbing unsuspecting shop owners and riding the space trains that can take you to any universe in the galaxy. One day a mysterious man called Raven approaches him with an offer: he wants Zen to infiltrate a space train owned by the Imperial Noon family to steal an object hidden away on that train. On this mission Zen will be accompanied by Nova, Raven's personal droid, and with her technological knowledge this job should be a piece of cake, right?

...Of course not, and Zen soon finds himself in an adventure too big and too dangerous for a boy of just twelve years old. There are ruthless drones, rich families fighting for power, a God with a wish for revenge, and connecting them all are the sentient space trains that link all the worlds in the galaxy with each other.

“You step aboard a train, and the train goes through a K-gate, and you step off on another planet, where the sun that was shining on you a moment ago is now just one of those tiny stars in the sky.”

But apart from the incredible world building and the thrilling heist, it are the diverse characters that make this story so compelling. Most of them are people of colour – white people are the minority – and among them we find men married to men, and women married to women. The humanlike droids Nova and Flex don't only raise questions about humanity but also about gender, and the space trains themselves show that you don't need a human body to have character.

I also think it's fascinating that many of the characters are morally grey, including Zen. He's a good kid, but not a good hero: *"He wasn't out to save the day, he just wanted to save himself and Nova."* To find such an imperfect hero in a middle-grade book is rare, but then again, none of the characters in this book are one-dimensional. Everyone, even the 'villains', have their own goals that make them neither good or bad.

So I would recommend **Railhead** to the curious ones. To the readers who like space and thieves and trains; who want to go on a heart-pounding adventure with eccentric characters whom asks us questions about humanity, authority, and knowledge.

This wild train ride certainly deserves four stars, and although you can read this as a stand-alone, I'm definitely interested in reading the second novel.

Read here my reviews of the other books in the *Railhead* series:

#2 Black Light Express | #3 Station Zero (upcoming)

Lindsay says

A heist, stargates, a space railway, sentient trains, robot friends and super-AIs. Why haven't you read this yet?

Humanity has spread to the stars via a network of K-gates which are only passable in a sealed environment traveling at speed, so ... trains. The K-gate network is a multi-world rail network traveled by super-advanced trains with AIs. In one corner of the galaxy "railhead" and thief Zen Starling seems to be in more trouble

than usual.

Zen finds himself performing a "simple" heist, but soon finds himself caught up in an ancient grudge match between the ruling classes of this society, with the future fate of humanity in the balance.

This reads like a YA version of *The Commonwealth Saga* by Peter F. Hamilton and has elements of *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons as well, but has its own unique flavor besides. There's themes about different levels of intelligence and how they see each other and what they want. There's also some quiet elements of affection between all of the main players. The agent of the imperium could very easily have been an obsessive and vindictive one-dimensional character, but he was far from that. Raven, the "bad guy", has so many layers that it's difficult to condemn him.

It's got a lot of depth for a YA book and deserves to be read more widely than it has been.

Althea Ann says

Cyberpunk-ish YA adventure, with an immediately-appealing, immersive writing style.

Zen Starling makes his way by petty thievery. He lives with his older sister and his mother, who appears to be a paranoid schizophrenic. Throughout his childhood, she's dragged them from one place to the next, never settling down, insisting that they're being pursued by shadowy enemies. But as the adage says, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. And that's what Zen learns, when after stealing a necklace one day, he finds himself pursued by a high-tech drone. After also encountering a mysterious girl, and finding his favorite pawnbroker attacked, Zen realizes that he may be in a heap of trouble.

The initial set-up here reminded me a lot of 'The Ice Owl' by Carolyn Ives Gilman.
(<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>).

The primary 'gimmick' here is that easy, casual travel between worlds has been made possible by a network of trans-dimensional trains. No one really knows how they work, and the network's origin is shrouded in mystery - but they're a part of daily life that is taken for granted. So Zen can steal a necklace on one world, hop a train, and be back for dinner in another galaxy on time.

Overall, this was a very enjoyable book, but I did have a few issues with it, some more major than others.

On the very minor end - the character of Zen, the way he's written, feels 12 or 13. When, later in the story, he's expected to impersonate a college student and therefore must be at least 17, I found it very jarring.

I think the story as a whole would've been improved with less "Quest for the MacGuffin."

On a more significant level, there is a point in the story where Zen does something really, truly horrific. (view spoiler) Yes, he's kinda-sorta tricked into it, but his minor feelings of remorse weren't enough for me to continue seeing him as a sympathetic character, which the author clearly expected me to. If you're a good person at all, and you end up doing that level of a serious thing, you're going to be EFFED UP FOR LIFE. But Zen's more like, "Oh damn, that went rather badly. Oh well." For me to buy that, he'd've had to have been portrayed as a more calloused, hardened killer to start with - which he wasn't.

In addition, I felt there was a major plot hole: (view spoiler)

Last issue - big ol' setup-for-the-sequel ending.

But, I'd gladly read the sequel - or other books by Reeve.

Many thanks to NetGalley and Capstone for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

Tammy says

The nitty-gritty: An instant classic, *Railhead* deserves a spot up there with some of the best young adult fantasy/science fiction ever written.

The train was gone, but he could still see her, striding along beside him in the sodium glow from the trackside lamps. The smell of space clung to her, rich and smoky. What was this that he was feeling? It frightened him, whatever it was.

Finding a book that gives you the same feeling as a beloved favorite is a rare thing, so rare, in fact, that it's happened to me only a handful of times. *Railhead* is now one of these books for me, and the book it reminded me of isn't the same in *any* way, except that it gave me a similar tingly feeling that I had just discovered something special. The book I'm talking about is *The Golden Compass* by Philip Pullman (actually, the entire series is quite wonderful), which to this day remains at the top of my "best ever" list. *Railhead* has the same sense of wonder, complex plotting and fierce imagination. Reeve seamlessly incorporates his world-building details into an action-packed story that does more than just entertain—it delivers on emotional content as well. And in order to make your readers feel emotions, you must have deeply developed characters, and believe me when I say the characters in this story will stick with me for a *long* time.

So yes, I LOVED *Railhead*. I sobbed at the end. I feared for the characters' lives. My heart pounded every time a train rushed through a K-gate. I fell in love with Zen and Nova (especially Nova!) and Flex and Raven and the *Damask Rose* and the *Thought Fox*. I cringed in horror—but was also fascinated by—the Hive Monks. I wanted to grab random people off the street and read aloud to them from the book, because Reeve's prose demands it. But let me back up a little and set things up for you...

Zen Starling is a petty thief and a "railhead," a kid who hops on trains and rides from world to world and back again. In this future, a vast galaxy of planets and moons are connected by the mysterious K-gates, portals that lead instantaneously from one world to the next. Through these gates rush the trains on a system of rails called the Great Network, stopping at each world the way our trains stop at subway stations.

Zen lives in near poverty with his mother and his sister Myka, and earns money for the family by stealing and selling jewelry and other small items he can easily swipe. But Zen's activities have attracted the

attention of a mysterious man named Raven, who has a very interesting proposition for him. Raven is desperate to get his hands on an artifact that is secreted away on the royal Noon family's train, and Raven believes that Zen is just the one to steal it for him. Zen agrees to the job—and the paycheck that Raven promises him—and he and Raven's human-like android Nova set off to complete the job. But things don't go *quite* as planned, and Zen finds himself on the run from not only the Noon family, but some powerful higher-ups as well.

OK, let's talk about the trains first, because I *know* you want to:-) Reeve's trains are sentient and can think and speak, and when they are attacked or break down, they are able to self-heal. And just like the humans, there are good trains and bad trains, and just like humans, it's not always easy to tell who's who. Raven's train is the *Thought Fox*, who is conniving and distrustful, just like Raven. My favorite train was the *Damask Rose*, an old abandoned train that Zen and Nova use to escape the Noon family. Reeve describes his trains in loving and joyful detail, and Zen is entranced by each train he meets, just like a classic car enthusiast might be. I loved the relationships that formed between the humans and the trains, and throughout the course of the story, they save each other more than once.

And you can't talk about the trains without mentioning the K-gates. As the story goes, the gates were created by the Guardians, god-like creatures who rule the worlds and keep order. There are exactly 964 K-gates, each one leading to a different world. Imagine the story possibilities, if Reeve had more time to explore his galaxy! But each world he does describe is unique and magical, and those descriptions made me want to find my own train and hit the rails.

I loved so many of the characters, but my very favorite was Nova, a "Motorik," androids that were developed to make life more efficient for humans. Nova is special, though, and has "taught" herself to be human, which she wants to be more than anything in the world. She's given herself freckles and she watches old movies, little things that she thinks will help her pass as human. Nova's growing relationship with Zen was one of my favorite parts of the story, although Reeve puts them through hell, and there are plenty of tears before the end.

My other favorite character was another Motorik named Flex, who changes sex halfway through the story (because Motoriks can do that!). Flex is an artist who has made a reputation for himself as a tagger, and his greatest joy is painting trains. And of course there is Zen, a boy who justifies stealing because he's protecting his family. Zen doesn't always make the right decisions (but then what kind of story would this be if he did?), but I never stopped rooting for him. And Raven—I've barely talked about him at all! Raven turned out to be one of the most interesting characters in the book. (And that's all I'm going to say here...)

I've read other reviews that call the ending a cliff-hanger, but I have to disagree. Yes, it is an open-ended ending, but for me it hit all the right notes. I was left with a feeling of hope and possibility and I *loved* the ending just as it is. (Although I did just hear that Reeve will be writing a sequel to *Railhead* (!!)) which makes me over-the-moon happy.)

There are *so* many other things I could talk about: the Station Angels, Malik, the Hive Monks, the datasea, and so much more—but I don't want to give away all of the gems of *Railhead*. Rather, I want *all* of you to read this book, and right away if possible. Hey, I need someone to talk to about it!

Big thanks to the publisher for supplying a review copy. Above quote was taken from an uncorrected proof and may differ in the final version of the book. This review originally appeared on Books, Bones & Buffy

Kogiopsis says

"The Guardians mean well, but they have shunted the whole human race onto a branch line of history, and we keep trundling round in circles. It's time someone changed that."

A copy of this book was provided to me by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. No external considerations went into this review.

I've been meaning to read Philip Reeve for *years*, but the library gods have always conspired against me - the first Hungry Cities book is never in the same branch that I am, ever, and since Fever Crumb is set in the same universe, I don't want to just start there... but after this book, I'm going to need to make more of an effort, because Reeve's writing is *fabulous*.

Sci fi and fantasy are my 'home' genres, my literary comfort zone, but the more I read the more a sense I have that not all of them are really... written in a way that reflects the modern world of their authors and audiences. There's such a wealth of history to both genres, ideas that have been proposed and explored and re-examined, tropes that have become iconic or hated - and of course, the people who tend to grow up to write speculative fiction are also those who grew up reading it, so they're saturated in decades-old conventions, and in a lot of ways even the most diligent author ends up echoing those conventions.

What was immediately refreshing to me about this book was how much it felt like a projection of the future really grown out of our current world. The technology feels like a natural derivation of current innovations (drones, and a vast interstellar internet known as the Datasea), the worldbuilding pushes biotech and 3-D printing into the limelight, and the culture is big and messy and... I don't know how to say this other than it has a Millennial feel to it that I loved. It's also a setting in which the vast majority of people aren't white, to the point that seeing someone who is is extremely weird. Add to that a few little nods to science fiction's history, like the fact that the energy of the train gates is 'Kwisatz Haderech' energy, named for "one of the languages of Old Earth", or the mention of Klingon as one of those languages, and it's just... simultaneously so much more concrete and so much more creative than a lot of the science fiction settings I've encountered.

I'd like to talk about the plot of this book, but honestly I'm not sure I can discuss the most interesting aspects. Of course, it's not just a heist story; when is anything *just* a heist story? Politics, morality, radicalism, survival, prejudice - all of these factors come into play to varying degrees. Perhaps most fundamentally, it's a story about Zen Starling becoming more than he was and more than he imagined he could be. And, like many science fiction stories, it's about what humanity means, both in terms of the definition of personhood and a sense of what we, as a species, are *meant to be*. As Robert Browning said, "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Science fiction is one of the ways we reach, and Railhead does a lovely job of portraying that, especially in its resolution.

Characters I can discuss, if perhaps not as many or in as much depth as I want to. Essentially, it boils down to two:

Zen Starling struck me as... someone soft-hearted, despite his criminal livelihood, who simply wanted stability and security and the chance to experience the beauty of the universe. It made him sympathetic, as he

was sucked into centuries-old schemes, because his desires were so simple. He's not caught up in the drama so much as dragged helplessly into it, wanting nothing more than to do what is asked of him so he can get out.

Nova was one of those characters who fundamentally gets at the question of what it means to be human. (Interestingly, the book mentions that androids like her have been reclassified as 'human' to allow them to serve as cheap labor despite quotas designed to keep robotic workers out- another layer to the conversation.) She suffers a little bit from being the only female character really present for most of the book, and functioning largely as support for Zen to boot, but she's still interesting to read about, and the interplay between her personality and Zen's preconceptions about Motoriks makes for an interesting development as they begin to get to know each other.

Other characters' participation and development is too spoilery to be mentioned here. However, about all of them I can say this: when I finished, I was left with the strong sense that this book needs a sequel. It absolutely can stand alone, but there are so many drastic changes in the resolution, so many characters embarking on new paths, that there are clearly more stories to be told in this universe. I hope Reeve chooses to do so, because I'd love to read them.

P.S. Other cultural thing I loved, but couldn't work in earlier: marriages, both dynastic and romantic, between queer couples. Also, there was a genderfluid character, which is always exciting! (view spoiler)

Emily May says

"Aren't you curious? Don't you want to know what's beyond that gate?"

This is a book for the curious. This is for those readers who get excited by possibility. If you like the idea of a great, wild universe spread out before you, full of mysteries and secrets, then I highly recommend you step into this world.

Reeve has created one of the **richest, most imaginative worlds I have ever read about**. It's set many centuries into our future, when Old Earth has been left behind and a great network of mysterious train tracks run through the universe. Let one take you where you want to go, where you've never been, or even to places you never knew existed.

"You step aboard a train, and the train goes through a K-gate, and you step off on another planet, where the sun that was shining on you a moment ago is now just one of those tiny stars in the sky."

It's a compelling heist, set to the backdrop of this complex web of science, mystery, droids and emperors, all of which make up the future of space civilization. To be honest, **it took my breath away**. I read this book in wide-eyed wonderment from the very first pages to the ending. Words and imagery collide to make the impossible seem so real.

It's a **fast-paced, constantly-moving journey of excitement**, as Zen Starling - a street rat from Thunder City - is given the opportunity to play a part, infiltrate the Emperor's train, hang out with the aristocrats and,

ultimately, steal an old, mysterious box for the equally mysterious Raven.

Yes, yes, it is all of that. It's pretending and nearly dying and uncovering secrets. It's runaway trains and betrayals and weird creatures called Hive Monks:

“He was a Hive Monk, a colony of big brown beetles clinging to a roughly human-shaped armature.”

BUT this book is so much richer than all of that. **Every word counts.** Questions arise about authority and the relationship between power and knowledge (how those in power have the ability to define knowledge and truth). Reeve's droids beg the question of what it means to be human. Are sentient droids really anything other than people made from different materials?

“I am human,” she said. “I have a processor for a brain instead of a lump of meat, and my body is made of different substances, but I have feelings and dreams and things, like humans do.”

It's also a really diverse novel. Most of the characters, including Zen, are described as "brown" or "dark-skinned" with white people being a minority. Which actually makes a lot more sense than most novels, given that white people are only about 15% of today's population and that is estimated to drop below 10% in the next fifty years.

Not only that, but there is diverse sexuality with men married to men and women married to women. And the genderless droids make room for discussion about the differences between men and women - how much difference really exists beyond the way the world sees you?

It's such a great story, both interesting in concept, and heart-pounding. I loved how there were **no simple villains** and the "bad guy" is not all he seems. He has his own back story that shapes him into more than a one-dimensional character with a mindless agenda. And Zen Starling is not a typical hero either. He does some awful things in order to survive and he is allowed to make mistakes and be selfish.

In short: **This is a clever sci-fi novel that makes space seem utterly magical.**

Doors to other worlds, ancient civilizations, and a whole universe of possibility. The ending closes the door on this chapter, but it's left in a perfect position to open another one. I get goosebumps just thinking about where that might take us...

“He was going to miss everything. But he guessed that was how everybody always felt. Everyone was losing things, leaving things behind, clinging to old memories as they rushed into the future. Everyone was a passenger on a runaway train.”

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Gabry says

3.5, in realtà.

È uno stile molto descrittivo, non ci si può distrarre un attimo perché viene descritto ogni minimo particolare di questo mondo futuristico.

Il punto forte è proprio l'ambientazione, i treni che viaggiano nello spazio, i Motorik, i Monaci Alveare e le famiglie imperiali.

Il protagonista ho cominciato ad apprezzarlo da metà libro mentre ho amato Nova, la piccola Motorik con le lentiggini!

Un bel cattivo, con un buon piano e ben costruito.

La storia magari un po' prevedibile in alcuni punti, ma sono comunque curiosa di leggere il seguito!
