



Empire of Dust

Jacey Bedford

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Mega corporations, more powerful than any one planetary government, use their agents to race each other for resources across the galaxy. The agents, or psi-techs, are implanted with telepath technology. The psi-techs are bound to the mega-corps -- that is, if they want to retain their sanity.

Cara Carlinni is an impossible thing – a runaway psi-tech. She knows Alphacorp can find its implant-augmented telepaths, anywhere, anytime, mind-to-mind. So even though it's driving her half-crazy, she's powered down and has been surviving on transqs and willpower. So far, so good. It's been almost a year, and her mind is still her own.

She's on the run from Ari van Blaiden, a powerful executive, after discovering massive corruption in Alphacorp. Cara barely escapes his forces, yet again, on a backwater planet, and gets out just in time due to the help of straight-laced Ben Benjamin, a psi-tech Navigator for Alphacorp's biggest company rival.

Cara and Ben struggle to survive a star-spanning manhunt, black-ops raids, and fleets of resource-hungry raiders. Betrayal follows betrayal, and friends become enemies. Suddenly the most important skill is knowing whom to trust.

Empire of Dust Details

Date : Published November 4th 2014 by DAW

ISBN :

Author : Jacey Bedford

Format : Kindle Edition 544 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Space, Space Opera, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Empire of Dust for online ebook

Ddem says

quite superficial novel: noticeable imbalance of the technology level in the different parts of the pictured world, the psi-tech main idea is pretty good, but very weak in depth, way too simple characters and dialogs, incoherent behaviour/thought of characters - one moment they are hard as rock, next one they are full of tears. and the worst - large part of plot revolves around Ben and Cara feelings to each other and their digging in it (??????).

oh, and the happy-end is like cheap hollywood movie.
don't ask me why I started reading this book, I don't know:)

Lindsay says

Highly enjoyable science fiction adventure with romantic elements. In fact, compulsively readable.

Cara is a Psi-1 telepath (interstellar range at that level) who is on the run from her former lover Ari. Ari is a corrupt official of one of the enormous corporate entities that seem to have all the power in this future. She comes across Rakesh Benjamin, a Psi-1 navigator who rescues her from a nasty situation. In an effort to lay low they are signed up to spend a year on a colony planet with a large group of psi-hating luddites. That's dangerous enough, but the colony leader is an unbalanced incredibly charismatic man with paranoid tendencies.

There's a large cast of supporting characters and there's some nuance there. The colony leader is one of the putative villains, but he's a bit more complex than that. The supporting cast of Benjamin's Psi-Tech team are excellent as well, as is the young and stupid colonist Max Constant who is one of the point of view characters. Cara herself is an interesting character as she struggles with tampering in her brain from her time with Ari, something that's well written here. Also the world-building, both in the FPA worlds and on the colony world is quite excellent. Lots of crunchy little details and it all seems to be well thought out, from the basic gist of the platinum economy to the differing social mores across the different locale.

The book also resolves itself well while leaving plenty of meat for a sequel. (view spoiler)

So that's all that's great with the book. It has two main problems though, the first of which is that it's very long for what it is. And there's stuff that could obviously come out. The tendency for UK SF though is towards huge self-indulgent tomes as in Peter F. Hamilton or Gary Gibson (both of which are good comparisons for this book) so I don't expect it's out of place. The other more serious flaw, is the central coincidence of Cara and Benjamin meeting. It would be a massive spoiler to explain that coincidence, but it's probably not too much to say that they have similar and slightly overlapping histories.

Ultimately, I forgive those things, because it's a cracking good book and I'm really looking forward to the sequel.

Sarah says

[http://www.bookwormblues.net/2014/11/...](http://www.bookwormblues.net/2014/11/)

Scott Roberts says

The book cover looks medieval and very nice. I give this book 5 stars.

S.J. Higbee says

I really loved Cara – she is desperate and frightened when we first meet her. Clearly used to dealing with the sleazier side of life, she doesn't hesitate to sleep with Ben, the pilot who offers to take her off-planet, thinking it's part of the deal. But over the length of the book, which includes chases, murders and helping establish a colony on a new world, Cara begins to find herself again. Bedford effectively depicts a woman struggling to put an abusive past behind her and build a new life for herself – and I really enjoyed the fact that it certainly isn't all plain sailing just because she finds someone who cares for her.

I'm aware I may have given the impression this book is all about the romance, and while it is an element, it certainly isn't the driving force or main theme of the book, which is far more mainstream epic space opera – that of corruption and the ruthlessness of big corporations. Once again, we have a future where it is huge capitalist corporations driving colonisation of planets. Inevitably, it comes down to profit – and you won't be surprised to learn that when eye-watering sums of money are involved, the people running those corporations regard those in the way as expendable. It doesn't help that they are a poorly regarded, eccentric cult with relatively few resources...

I loved the growing friction between the team of experts all with brain implants to boost their telepathic, empathetic and healing talents and the colonists who wish to establish an agrarian idyll where technology is replaced by horse and bullock power and industry is severely restricted. Bedford is very good at keeping the pace going with a series of adventures that keep the narrative ticking along at a fair clip, all the while steadily ramping up the stakes. While I love this genre, all too often I find the characterisation suffers in the middle of establishing all the world-spanning action – but it is the characters and what happens to them that is firmly at the heart of this one, which leads to an action-packed finale.

All in all, this is a cracking read and I shall be looking out for the next one in the series, just as soon as I manage to find some space on my bulging book shelves. Highly recommended for fans of entertaining epic space opera.

9/10

Hanzel says

Starting this one, it quickly caught my attention, I really like science fiction that goes in a linear path, one that doesn't try to explain all the nuances of that universes' technology and etc. i.e a particular engine how it runs, how it is built, who built it and etc.

Story, story, story.....ok as simple as it is, this universes' foundation rest solely on individual having the psi ability whether it is psi tech/mech/engineer and all forms of ability and profession....it further classify you according to your strength in that particular ability (ie psitech 1 the best and psitech 5 the lowest but it also has its strength and weakness ie. {Lord help me this review definitely taxes my ability to repeat the word ie} you might be a psitech 1 but your empathy level is nonexistent.....bah sci-fi how can I love it, yet can't write properly about it.....

Anyway got a bit side tracked, (dang ie's), aside from the psi ability, the story is straight forward colonizing planets for megacorporations and how it's characters interact, of course not all characters are goody two shoes, there will always be the greedy boss.....

Why do you need to read it??? Well aside from the story running in a straight line and no explanations of the more mundane techs, it's a space drama on how humans no matter how high their technology, no matter how numerous the planets colonized, It will never be enough to satisfy human need and greed!!!

I will not recommend this one to those who are looking for the more serious stuff, it's like reading a tv series with a low budget!!

Timothy Boyd says

Really nice SiFi story. Good story line and characters. Interesting universe the story is set in. This would be a great book for a new SiFi reader starting to read SiFi stories or a younger reader. Recommended

astaliegurec says

My brain came close to liquefying and dripping out of my ears, but I managed to force my way through Jacey Bedford's "Empire of Dust" (the first of the two books in her "Psi-Tech" series). The first half of the book is very well-written and interesting, though it's definitely slow (and the sex scenes sure aren't appreciated (though they're mercifully short)). But, the second half just devolves into a horrible soap opera of drivel. Why an author would spend so much time and effort writing a book one way at the start and then just throwing it all away at the end, I don't know. I'll give her a star for the good technical writing and the fact that it's reasonably tied-up at the end. But, overall, the best I can do is rate it at a Pretty Bad 2 stars out of 5. Don't bother.

Sarah says

This was probably one of the funnest Space Operas I've read. Cara is on the run from Ari, who is trying to squash her like a bug from his (figurative) throne. She manages to persuade Ben to help her and before you know it, they're on a colony planet with a charismatic cult leader and a group of people who want to go back to the basics and live a no-tech, farming lifestyle. Cara and Ben and the team members with them are Psi-techs, which are tech enhanced psychics. There are some very interesting abilities among the members. I frankly loathed the leader of the group with his Psi-phobic ways.

I really enjoyed the colony pieces because I'm kind of a crazy fan of stories about pioneers, settlers, striking

it out on your own, etc. Love 'em. In this case, what I felt could have gotten quite boring since this was at least half the book, the boredom and idiocy was punctuated by enough action to keep me going through the next slower piece. It was fun and action packed and it had psychics and pioneers. A recipe for success!

Complaints: Ben Benjamin and Cara Carlinni? Gag. Also, there were two bad guys that held up pretty well until near the end, when the psychopathology seemed to break down and the motives got a bit hazy. But for a 550 page book, the complaints were relatively few and I really enjoyed it.

Psychopathology

Linda Robinson says

Engaging planet hopping read. There is a lot to love in this first book in the series: the gates, Folded Space, the concept of psychically prone people being enhanced and used by the Bigs to further their nefarious profiteering ends. Cara is a good shero, Ben is a good sidekick. The villains are too familiar. We could use a new method of depicting evil without it being a grinning deviant who likes to hurt things. The secondary characters are superb. The Lorient et al, Ronan, Gen, Max Constant. Backstory is given us via dialogue, reflection, character interaction. I put a hold on the second book after Chapter 1 of this book. One star goes away for repetitive phrases. Unfortunately that's probably on the editors, not the author. Excellent debut!

SFReader says

This is the debut novel of Jacey Bedford.

I always try to read debut novels ASAP, since I've been there and know what it's like to have a new book go out into the harsh, harsh world. This is the first of the Psi-Tech novels, and I'm looking forward to the next one.

The premise: Cara Carlinni is a psi-tech who's running from the Alphacorp corporation who technically owns her, since it funded the Telepath technology implanted in her head. Escaping is supposed to be impossible, but she's managed to elude those hunting her and keep the secrets she's stolen from Alphacorp safe . . . and to herself. But they've finally caught up to her, and only the intervention and help of Ben Benjamin, another psi-tech, a Navigator, who takes her to a new colony that supposed to go tech-free . . . and perfect place to hide. Or so they both think.

The main premise is great, and the idea of a future in which there are no governments, only megacorporations running everything, is shockingly easy to believe. And also heartbreaking. The world -- or should I say universe? -- is well thought out and the characters are engaging.

Read more are SFReader.com: Empire of Dust, by Jacey Bedford

Grace says

I come away from this one with a very bland feeling. The characters are very one-dimensional, and their dialogue is very on-the-nose in a way that feels blocked and unnatural. The pacing is weird as well -

basically, it's as though the dialogue was written to service a very specific goal in the scene, and then characters shuffle onstage just in time to say their line. That results in characters being very fortuitously present to say exactly what moves the thought along, even if they have absolutely no business being in that area. "Where the hell did you come from?!" was a frequent thought as I reread paragraphs, and one with no good answer. It feels very unformed and amateur.

And then there are the sex scenes, and the sexual violence scenes. These are similarly written in a very surface, tell-don't-show way that actually led me to skim over some of them because I just found them embarrassing to read. Not because the acts themselves scandalize me, but because it was like reading bad porn. And by that I mean taking a scene from a low-budget porn film, then faithfully describing it in text. Unpleasant, especially when these are characters you'd actually like to see make a connection. The writing style in general had little finesse, so maybe it's just this area where it was most needed and I found it most lacking.

There's also a huge missed opportunity that I'm going to throw under the header of Spoilers: (view spoiler)

This book was very long and not at all complex. Everyone showed up, did their thing and barely changed at all. The main antagonist was slightly more interesting than everyone else, but - look, there's just nothing there with most of these characters. They're shallow and even their thoughts are just rehashing the obvious. The plot is too linear to carry such flat characters, and the writing not complex enough to add depth. Skip it.

Joshua Palmatier says

This is the debut novel of Jacey Bedford. I always try to read debut novels ASAP, since I've been there and know what it's like to have a new book go out into the harsh, harsh world. This is the first of the *Psi-Tech* novels, and I'm looking forward to the next one.

The premise: Cara Carlinni is a psi-tech who's running from the Alphacorp corporation who technically owns her, since it funded the Telepath technology implanted in her head. Escaping is supposed to be impossible, but she's managed to elude those hunting her and keep the secrets she's stolen from Alphacorp safe . . . and to herself. But they've finally caught up to her, and only the intervention and help of Ben Benjamin, another psi-tech, a Navigator, who takes her to a new colony that supposed to go tech-free . . . and perfect place to hide. Or so they both think.

The main premise is great, and the idea of a future in which there are no governments, only megacorporations running everything, is shockingly easy to believe. And also heartbreaking. The world--or should I say universe?--is well thought out and the characters are engaging. In particular, I liked the world in which they run to in order to hide, and the backwater waystation that they use to get there. Perhaps that's because I like the darker, grittier underside of everything, and that's exactly what the waystation is, but I also like the idea of the complete unknown, like the new planet they are helping to colonize. Cara and Ben are interesting and they're relationship isn't the standard relationship you'd expect. It starts out with lies on both sides--since they both have something to hide--and awkward sex. It has to recover from both of those before it can grow into something else, and the stress of running, hiding, and the new colony and its rather fractious settlers may not give it the chance to grow.

So, a slightly new take on the relationship makes it interesting. Also the universe in which it's set, and the characters themselves, outside of their own tumultuous affair. The science is cool and can be played with

and used in many different ways, although it does have its limits, which create their own problems. The only real issue I had with the book is that the beginning is a little rough and perhaps a touch too long. I can't see any easy way to take what's there and cut it down without adversely affecting everything that comes after, but the book doesn't really kick into high gear until the two characters reach the waystation and then the new planet. But I think if you trust me and bear with the book at the beginning, you'll really enjoy what follows.

In any case, as I said, I'm looking forward to the second book coming out later this year called **Crossways**. This is definitely a book that I'd suggest sci-fi lovers take a look at.

Jaine Fenn says

Space Opera isn't dead; instead, delightfully, it has grown up. Empire of Dust, the debut novel from Jacey Bedford, published by DAW, is a fine example of a novel which has its roots in the sub-genre, but grows beyond it.

Cara Carlini is a woman with a past, and she's running away from it as fast as she can. She'll take whatever help she can get, though always with her eyes open. She's also a psi-tech, one of the significant minority in Bedford's universe whose innate psionic talents have been enhanced with technology to make them indispensable to the corporate and criminal organisations who call the shots. Cara throws her lot in with Ben Benjamin because he's in the right place at the right time, but this turns out to be a life-changing decision for them both.

The skill of this book lies in Bedford's ability to seamlessly combine intrigue-heavy, multi-viewpoint plotting with human stories featuring characters you care about - a rare feat in this genre. The main 'love' triangle is handled particularly well. Note the quotation marks – this is anything but a standard romance, because we're dealing with people who can alter memories and plant compulsions.

As well as the central relationships, and the questions they raise about free will, trust and loyalty, the book deals with themes of prejudice, and idealism vs pragmatism. Cara and Ben find themselves thrust into the close company of the anti-psi-tech Ecolibrians whose utopian dreams are set to come into conflict with the market forces in this highly capitalist future. Bedford is carefully non-judgemental in her handling of moral issues – even her antagonists are given their say – and the book has a pleasing weight and balance as a result.

Bedford's punchy, readable style propels the reader easily through the complexities of the well-paced plot, and her world-building, whilst utilising some tropes, also displays interesting and original touches which bode well for future novels.

The book is not without flaws – the opening is somewhat loaded with backstory, and there are a couple of coincidences driving parts of the plot – but these are small and forgivable, especially bearing in mind this is a first novel. It'll be interesting to see where the story goes next.

Sherwood Smith says

Here are the basic elements that appeal to me in space opera:

* Interesting aliens, weird cultures and larger than life characters, which must include interesting women.

* Space ships in action

* Emotional complexity

* Big ideas—including glimpses of the numinous—without anything being dogmatic

* Layered or polysemous surprises

*An interesting blend of real science and the handwavium that allows for FTL and Psi, but examines the consequences of both.

Any combination of these, with complex characters, is sure to grab me, and *Empire of Dust* definitely met those demands.

The future here is less about empires and space battles than it is about amoral, greedy megacorporations. These ones trade in planets the way the present day ones trade in companies. The similarity is the (depressingly) realistic greed and utter disregard for the people at the bottom of the power pyramid.

Cara Carlini is on the run from a powerful Alphacorps executive. She's a psi-tech, but trying to keep from using her talents as she knows that those chasing her will catch up for certain. Meanwhile, she cannot be certain she can trust her own head: have they messed with her, or not?

She ends up begging a ride from Raske (Ben) Benjamin, a psi-tech navigator for Alphacorps' main rival, the Trust. He's on the lam after his own disasters, but gets pulled in by the one executive at the Trust he is loyal to, in order to shepherd a bunch of colonists to a new world.

The catch? The colonists, led by a visionary named Lorient, want to go back to human life in the pre-tech days, working with their hands . . . and they really hate psi-techs.

Second catch? Cara and Ben have to pretend they are married.

The book begins with a bang. Cara is on the run. It slows some when they reach the colonists' planet, but the focus is now on character development, clashing paradigms, and emotional turmoil. The reader is gradually introduced to a lot of new characters—every one of whom we need to know by the second half, when things began to happen. The pacing is kept brisk by the readers knowing certain things that the characters don't, so we've got the tension of waiting for the gun on the mantel to go off.

After that, the tension builds and keeps building, with no slack moments until the powerful end. During that first half, I was able to lay it aside when other things claimed my attention, always looking forward to picking it up, but the second half? I had to read straight through in one day, ending very late at night.

Are there problems? There are what might be considered debut novel issues (like at the beginning, characters being introduced by sitting alone in rooms as their history is given us by the narrative voice in a quad-flashback, but in all cases the data was interesting); one small eyebrow raiser occurred when Carla, asked her age, responded that that was an inappropriate question to ask a woman, and I thought, really? We're not past that in the far future? There was also the (now) problematical use of the word "exotic" to describe one of the most profoundly enigmatic, and interesting, characters in the entire book (one I really hope will get her own

story), but these are such tiny creeps.

Overall this book fulfilled my craving for good space opera, and I am so glad that it will be a series. I look forward to rereading it before the next one comes out, which I plan to grab as soon as it is available.
