



## Freenet

*Steve Stanton*

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*“A non-stop, furiously paced story.” — Robert Charles Wilson, award-winning author*

A nuanced story about artificial intelligence and digital immortality, *Freenet* plunges readers into the far future, when humans have closed distances in time and space through wormhole tunnels between interplanetary colonies. Consciousness has been digitized and cybersouls uploaded to a near-omniscient data matrix in a world where information is currency and the truth belongs to whoever has the greatest bandwidth.

When Simara Ying crash-lands on the desert planet Bali, she finds herself trapped in a cave-dwelling culture with no social network for support. Her rescuer, Zen Valda, is yanked into a new universe of complications he can scarcely grasp and into an infinite network of data he never knew existed. When brash V-net anchorman Roni Hendrik starts investigating how Simara became the subject of an interplanetary manhunt, he finds a dangerous emergence in the network that threatens all human life.

*Freenet* is an exciting new novel about the power of information, as well as the strength of love, in a post-digital age.

## Freenet Details

Date : Published April 12th 2016 by ECW Press

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Author : Steve Stanton

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# From Reader Review Freenet for online ebook

## Debbie says

*Received from ECWPress in exchange for an completely unbiased review.*

Also posted on Silk & Serif

*Simara has spent her entire life in space living with a sexually abusive stepfather. Before the death of her mother Simara only experienced her stepfather's abuse from afar, but now without her mother she becomes the primary target of his wrath. One day the abuse becomes too much and the naive girl who has ever lived in space flees to the Dark Zone; a planet where no digital signal can penetrate to the planet's surface. There she meets Zen and uncovers a plot against special children like her who have a special connection to the virtual world's AI "Mother".*

*Zen, a strong, damaged and weary boy is on a routine salvage run when he finds an unconscious girl in one of the space ships that fall from the sky. He brings her home and nurses her back to health in hopes that perhaps this one will live – he will not have to bury another stranger. Samara isn't what he expects and after saving her life a second time he is forced to leave his home planet, the only place he has ever known, and travel into the wide abyss of space with Simara as his guide. Unfortunately, it appears the authorities have been waiting for Simara's return and Zen's new found loyalty to the little star child will be pushed to its limits before the young couple can finally be free of Simara's dark past.*

I struggled with writing a review for Freenet. **On the one hand Freenet had an interesting plot, fantastic twists and interesting cultures.** What if our society was in space, deprived of all of Earth's sense inspiring beauty and the only out was a virtual world called the 'Freenet'? Could a virtual net of digital information become sentient? How corrupt could humanity get? Simara's story is one of greed, corruption, sadness and human triumph over environmental circumstances. **Freenet had all the workings of an amazing story, a fantastic science fiction novel that could take your breath away at it's implications..but it missed the mark.**

This novel was a mixed bag of genius and frustrating character inconsistency and as a result, my opinion is a complete mixed bag as well!

I didn't particularly like any of the characters. There was a lot of "tell not show" kind of writing and a feeling of remoteness from the events unfolding. **The language used just didn't engage me in the way I wanted for a young adult science fiction novel because it felt more like a classical science fiction novel.** I am totally fine with the classical tones of sci-fi, but in this instance I felt like the novel was unable to decide which genre it wanted to be. **It was unusual – not terrible, but a bit jarring whenever I'd take a break and come back.**

On top of that the summary doesn't do the true story any justice with a promise of a wide scoping novel of awe inspiring societal upheaval when really this is a tale about a girl and a boy who fall for one another, save one another and a deep secret in Simara's beloved Freenet. I expected something entirely different from what I got, thanks to the summary, but I'm not complaining because I liked Simara and Zen's story more than what the summary promised.

Finally, I hated Simara. I get she's a naive and weak space walker who has been largely sheltered from the realities of life. She takes her life in her own hands, and having been in that kind of situation, it takes a

special kind of courage to go against someone who controls you so ultimately. So, when Simara consistently forced Zen to save her, her “uncontrollable” anger issues and the fact that she happily told everyone about how her stepfather abused and raped her..well her character fell apart for me. She literally tells Zen in her second line she’d been raped. **She just met this boy, she has no idea what kind of person he is, and she reveals her biggest secret and weakness to him.** I don’t know. **She repeatedly does things that give people power over her, becomes abusive like her stepfather and makes herself into the victim far too often to make her character likable.**

I’m not putting down victims of abuse; I just really wanted Simara to be as bad ass as the girl from the beginning of the novel.

**In short, I liked Freenet for its plot twists, the ending and the interesting cultures Stanton created on Zen’s planet.** I definitely enjoyed seeing how Stanton tackled the issues of low-stimulation in long term space flight and the long term segregation of generations of people in the Dead Zone. **It delivered on the science fiction front in a way that I found highly satisfying,** but on the young adult spectrum I couldn’t relate. The character of Simara was frustrating and Zen’s lack of sexual loyalty to his ‘wife’ bothered me on so many levels.

This book will appeal to readers who enjoy staunch science fiction, novels about virtual reality and are comfortable with issues such as rape and cheating. **I definitely don’t suggest this novel to young adult fans since this novel is lacking some of the fundamental emotional elements and the novel deals with some adult issues.** I would probably suggest this book to lovers of NA.

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### **StarlightBook Reviewsxo says**

#### **Surf The Freenet This Spring**

Hey folks! I know it’s been a while since I last did a book review, but I’m glad to say that I’m back with another fantastic pick I know you’ll enjoy.

Steve Stanton is a Canadian author from Central Ontario who has published the “The Bloodlight Chronicles: Reconciliation” trilogy, and now “Freenet”. The latter will make its debut sometime this April via ECW Press.

This rapid-paced story is about a girl named Simara Ying who crash lands her spaceship on a desert planet called Bali in attempting to flee from her abusive stepfather. She then meets a young cave-man named Zen Valda who saves her life after the accident. Ying has lost all connection to her one source of social communication, which is hooked up to something called the V-net. The more Valda tries to help her out the more he gets yanked into misadventures by a female space trader he barely knows.

“Freenet is an exciting new novel about the power of information, as well as strength of love, in a post-digital age.”

The book is split into three parts: The first part focuses on Simara’s story of where she’s been, as well as how she got to Bali, then unfolds to explain Zen’s lifestyle and ends with Roni Hendrik - a V-net anchorman alongside Gladyz van-Dam - both partners on their show called The Daily Buzz.

There are so many great parts in the novel but what stands out to me the most is how dependent the main character is to technology. Not only did I choose this book to check out something new, but also because we as a society have become so reliant on the Internet and technology. If we found ourselves in similar situations at any given point it's as if our civilization would collapse. Everyone already can't be without being on Facebook, Twitter, Google etc. It's just so overwhelming how tied we are to our devices on a daily basis.

I also enjoyed the parts where Roni and Gladyz do interviews with Valda and Ying, therefore, reminding me of The Hunger Games as well as parts in Divergent when the press get involved; glamorizing disasters instead of using their voices for the power of good.

There were a few pros and cons I have to pick out. First, the cons: I felt like the storytelling was rushed - a bit more details could've been thrown in and characters also weren't very developed, especially Valda who I felt lacked a bit in personality. As for the book's greatest qualities: the use of strong female characters from beginning to end - that is especially true with Simara who had great use of witty banter back and forth when speaking to Zen.

Overall it was a great read, as well as a unique idea if you're really into the science fiction genre. You might enjoy it if you liked "1984", "Brave New World", etc. Check out Stanton's Twitter account (@SfStanton).

<http://main.nimrodstreet.com/articles...>

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### **Paige says**

I really enjoyed this book. I am a fan of the sci-fi genre, and this story gave me almost everything I could hope for. The plot was portrayed in a unique way, and the ending was quite a surprise. Very, Phillip K Dick. I liked that the book ended up being something completely different than what I originally perceived it to be. If you're a fan of the genre, I highly recommend this book.

\*\*I won this book from a goodreads giveaway

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### **Lisa Boyd says**

3.5 Stars. This intergalactic novel was pretty awesome. I really liked the relationship between Zen and Simara and I was really quite surprised by the last third of the novel.

I would suggest this to folks that enjoy scifi and this idea that we will transition to an alternative digital world or landscape. This was pretty neat and I read it in two sittings. I still am not sure about the ending but it did bring me hours of enjoyment reading the story.

I received an egalley for review from NetGally and ECW Press, Thanks!

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## **Nina says**

Steve Stanton's fourth science fiction book Freenet explores humanity in the far future after we have created the "Macpherson Doorway" through folded space-time, and vaulted ourselves with the blink of an eye into a galaxy far far away and 12 million years into the future. No traffic back through the doorway is permitted since a quarantine was placed some dozen years ago to prevent any unwanted DNA from sneaking through from Earth to "New Jerusalem". The story flows seamlessly from one perspective to another with crisp page-turning narrative, action and intrigue. Ultimately, Stanton's Freenet flows like a fresh turbulent river, scouring and building up sediment then meandering like an oxbow into areas that surprise. He lulls you into expectation, based on your own vision of the digital world, then—like a bubble bursting—releases a quantum paradox of wormhole possibility.

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## **Angela Todorov says**

I am about a third of the way through and I am really enjoying it!

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## **Jaime says**

I was infuriated with the way the author portrayed women and women who've best sexually assaulted. All of the women were described mainly by their sexual attractiveness and the male characters on their sexual appeal (or lack thereof) to the women. The fact that Simara had been sexually assaulted and then was immediately able to talk openly about to a man and was instantly attracted to him and comfortable running around in her underwear just simply did not sit well with me at all. Especially seeing as this book was written by a man and the whole issue seemed to be treated with a great deal of carelessness.

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## **Danielle says**

Read this review and more on my blog.

*I received a free copy of Freenet for my honest opinion.*

Freenet is told in the POV of Simara, a young girl who has lived the majority of her life in space; Zen, who lives on the planet Bali and Roni, a news presenter. The entire book is split approximately into 1/3rd for each individuals POV.

Unfortunately I was not able to connect with any of the characters in Freenet. I found the planet Bali, and the culture that it has to be more interesting than the characters. All 3 of the main characters were very 1 dimensional, and i found them quite annoying.

I am also slightly confused by what Freenet's premises was meant to be about. To be fair, Freenet does leave you on a major cliffhanger at the end, and if i had enjoyed the story more, i would have loved it.

I would recommend Freenet to anyone who likes a more psychological science fiction thriller.

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## **Sherron says**

Overall? Not good. Details: Three discrete POVs:

1 Girl: story starts out with VR interaction that brought to mind Feed by M T Anderson. So I was excited and expecting good things. Nyet. Plot is easy to follow; delivery, naive; humor, cheesy (and somewhat unintentional, I think).

2 Boy: plot develops. Girl experiencing stranger in a strange land. Unrealistic social taboos. Maybe this chapter serves to link the first to the last? Otherwise, it's the same as the first.

Neither section was great, but I thought they were pretty funny. In addition, I have to credit the author for not providing long interior monologues (pet peeve). Also good job showing instead of telling. I thought that the people who gave this low ratings were maybe being picky or didn't appreciate the clumsy style that I found so endearing. I had mild certainty that part three would wind up in the same vein. However.....

3 Newsguy. Starts ok and descends into WTF. I re listened the the last hour twice, to make sure it's as bad as all that. Besides the main WTFery, it also contains unnecessary science inaccuracies. Disappointing.

Instead of this book:

For VR integration, read Feed by MT Anderson.

For goofy SF, read AL-ICE by Charles Lamb.

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## **Alanya Lynda says**

Unfortunately not a book written in my reading style. I found it irritating and confusing. I did make a number of attempts but really could not engage in the story - which other than the book blurb I honestly would not know what it was about.

I received this book as an advance copy via Netgallery for an honest review.

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## **Lindsay says**

A handful of good ideas wrapped in an incoherent, poorly executed mess of a book.

Fleeing from an attempted rape by her step-father Simara crash-lands on a desert planet and is rescued by a local boy. There's a romance and then Simara leads her new "husband" Zen into space. After a trumped up legal charge they then crashland (again) on a different planet where they become a news item.

The first third of the book is quite interesting. We have a literal "digital native", cyberlinked to an impressive extent to an omnipresent network, but crashlanded on a planet where solar radiation prevents the existence of such a network. Simara is very much the fish-out-of-water amid the planetary culture she finds herself in and the culture itself is quite interesting. That being said, the writing here is quite ridiculous and tone-deaf, with a

rape-survivor alternately being quite ok with some violations, but reacting violently to others, and a local legal system that seems to indicate unmarried females as fair game.

But that's nothing compared to the complete ridiculousness of the book once they leave the planet. If the first section from Simara's point of view is a ridiculous and tone-deaf kind-of-romance, the second section is an inane adventure with some truly stupid dialogue. Then the book changes again in the final part, giving us the single most clueless reporter and conspiracy scheme I've ever heard of, and an even lower depth of dialogue.

It's like an editor or whoever bought the book did so based on the first third and then gave the rest of it to a 14-year old to finish off after canvassing his or her English class for science-fictional ideas to include.

A truly awful book.

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### **Sherry Ramsey says**

\*Note: I received an advance copy of this book in return for an honest review.

This fast-paced book pulls the reader through space, time, and the complexities of inner space with its multiple settings, viewpoints, and ideas. I didn't realize when I started it that it was the first in a series, so don't look for everything to be nicely tied up at the end--there's obviously a lot more story to come.

The three viewpoint characters offer very divergent views on life and society, which keeps the book interesting, although it does exact a bit of a price in that I didn't feel I connected with any of the main characters as strongly as I might have liked to. That said, it's a compelling story that kept me reading to see what was going to happen next, with intriguing glimpses into other worlds, cultures, and future technologies. Recommended if you like fast action, futuristic settings, and deep conspiracies.

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### **Bradley says**

This was a rather interesting novel in several ways, and it had potential to kick some serious butt, but the last portion of the novel, while interesting in its own right, didn't fit with the grand bulk of the first.

Follow me on this one. What starts out as a pretty cool romance between a girl way out of her element and a low-tech boy on his technologically backward and culturally strange desert world then becomes a pretty cool conspiracy in space and an exciting resolution. It was pretty darn okay and I got into the characters just fine and felt for them.

It's everything that happens afterward, with the media and the corporations that knocked me for a loop.

We've already established that the girl is deeply linked to the entire galactic network, she's lied about what she is, (an Omnidroid, a construct of human flesh and tech,) and that she was sexually abused and so it sets the stage for strained relations. It's a romance, though, so we have high hopes that Zen, who is apparently pretty much perfect, will both save her and her heart.

What only shows up late in the book, however, is the introduction of Doorways through time and space and

peoples who upload their consciousnesses, etc., which I don't have any issues with, per se, because these are ideas that are pretty common in SF.

My issue is with how this wishy-washy Reporter-Personality swings so easily, back and forth, between such wild-ass stories about what the Omnidroids are, first stirring negative opinions, then championing their cause, and then, after one stupid conversation with a corporation head (one who had invented the doors through space and time), just goes off and changes his mind again and it ENDS THE NOVEL.

WTF? The whole novel became something else in the last half, and then far from easing us into the big reveal which might have been pretty cool if it had been a major part of the rest of the novel, it just slaps a big band-aid on the tale and says its done.

I was sitting at a 4.5 or maybe even a 5 depending on how strong the ending would be.

Maybe that portion would have been just fine in a different story, or even in a different novel, but here it felt like poorly executed Iain M. Banks perception twist and it just didn't fit the rest of the tale.

I'm not that used to reading books with endings this bad. The particulars are fine, the ideas are fine, the characters are fine, but how the end reveal fits in with everything else? Not good. If we were aiming for a subtle godlike entity in the beginning, it should have ended subtle. Otherwise, match scales.

And the last part had no romance at all. The investment I'd put into the MC's was wasted, too. Sure, they're in the spotlight, but they're pretty much out of the picture.

I don't know which is worse. \*sigh\*

The worst part of this is pretty easy: It could have been pretty damn good. Where was the editor?

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## **Margaret Gaudio says**

\*\*I received this book as a Goodreads giveaway

This book was broken into thirds, with each part as the viewpoint of a different character. As I was reading this book, I wondered if this was the first thing written by Steve Stanton. Unfortunately, it isn't. I was hoping to say that eventually he could grow to be a better writer but...

While the story was interesting enough, the way the characters were written was a little flat. You could tell a male was writing this, especially when the book was from the viewpoint of the female lead (Simara).

Characters thoughts and actions jumped around quickly, with little explanation for why it was happening. The book was sexualized, but not in a way that was even remotely sexy. The way things were described was almost like a child, or someone else who has had no sexual experiences, would write them.

All in all, this book was fairly entertaining but left much to be desired. I would not suggest it to anyone.

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**Cindy says**

Interesting world building but the characters are too one dimensional and their relationships to one another seemed false.

Can't quite put my finger on it but I didn't like the way female characters in this book were precieved or portrayed by both the author and other characters... almost like someone with no knowlege of women or sexual experiences wrote these female characters...did not enjoy this book. :(

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