



## Shadow of a Dead Star

*Michael Shean*

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## **Shadow of a Dead Star** Michael Shean

Seattle, 2078. The future hasn't been kind to the spirit of humanity; commercial obsession and technological fetishism rules the day, religion and belief has died screaming in the fires of war, and what remains is moral decrepitude. Life in the future is hard on the soul.

As an agent of the Industrial Security Bureau, Thomas Walken knows that better than anyone. His job is to keep the worst kind of black-market technology out of the hands of citizens, technology born out of the shadowy nation nicknamed Wonderland. But the kind of fantasies that come out of that place aren't for the good people of the world. Wonderland technology is like black magic made real.

Walken's newest assignment starts out simply: intercept a smuggled shipment of Princess Dolls, little girls turned into sex toys, and bring them into custody. But when the girls are hijacked from federal custody and Walken gives chase, he finds a trail of bodies in their wake. Before he's through, Walken will find himself confronted revelations that will answer every question that the troubled lawman has ever had about himself and the world he lives in - but his mind and soul may not survive it.

A dark, brooding piece of future noir, SHADOW OF A DEAD STAR will take you down the rabbit hole on a ride you won't soon forget.

## **Shadow of a Dead Star Details**

Date : Published December 1st 2011 by Curiosity Quills Press (first published June 21st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Michael Shean

Format : Kindle Edition 383 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Cyberpunk, Dystopia, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Shadow of a Dead Star for online ebook

### Morgan Linden says

I have had the pleasure of being a part of the 'process' for Shadow, beta reading among other things. Neither cyberpunk for crime are my usual tastes so I went in not actually expecting to enjoy the book, and the fact I really did is a huge point in the novel's favour, given it had major genre-preference hurdles to jump.

The main thread that grabs hold of any reader is the strength of the characterisation. From the conflicted protagonist to the side characters who manage to be morally bankrupt but still eminently believable, these are people, whole and fully formed, and it's their interactions that make the pitch-black crumbling world so tangible. The direct path between the world we inhabit today and the one painted in Shadow is very uncomfortably visible. This could indeed be our own near future. And we would all be screwed.

Fiercely original and well-written book.

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### Red Haircrow says

Please see the note below regarding edition, which is primarily the reason why it took me longer to read and review this book than my average: I had an earlier edition that had many editing errors.

That being said, there was an edge to Shadows of a Dead Star, incorporating mystery and darkness, an eeriness that attracts you but creates a sense of anxiety so that you're reluctant to look full on: for fear of what you might learn. Mood and tension was great, and main character Walken, was both sympathetic and strong, with understandable vulnerabilities. Very well presented, I thought.

It might be considered strange but in conjunction with everything else, what I liked most about this book was its length, approximately 115 pages. There wasn't pages and pages of superfluous information, slowing pace and progression. The writing was stylish but not trying to overly impress; instead the author used language that was gripping but not pretentious. Shean used vivid descriptions and imagery that surprised and satisfied, just enough, never over the top. Very much reminding me of Christopher Hinz's, Paratwa Trilogy, which had a strange beauty but was undeniably shocking and sometimes brutal, Shadows of a Dead Star was a book I was glad I gave another chance.

Note: This novel was listed as being self-published by Michael Shean, June 2011, then assumingly republished by Curiosity Quills Press, December 2011. After completing my review, as usual, I read through others, a number of which used editing and grammar issues as reason to rate the novel lower. Please take this fact into consideration regarding edition, making sure to get the updated, corrected version.

Originally published on review/interview site [http://flyingwithredhaircrow.wordpress...](http://flyingwithredhaircrow.wordpress.com)

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### Holly Full Moon Bites Book Reviews says

**May have slight spoilers.**

In author Michael Shean's novel *Shadow of a Dead Star* we meet our main character Agent Thomas Walken and a woman by the name of Bobbi.

Thomas Walken works for the United States Industrial Security Bureau in Seattle. The year is 2078. Religion and faith is a thing of the past and technology is the way of the world now.

With all that technology comes bad though, the stuff from Wonderland. It is Walken's job to keep Wonderland stuff out of people's hands. But his latest job, a simple intercepting of three Dolls (human children turned technological sex dolls) has turned into a mystery bigger than anything he has ever faced before.

When the Dolls are snatched in-route to take them away Walken must then hunt down the ones responsible—but he soon finds himself thrown into a bloody game that he doesn't know the rules to and the only person to help keep him alive is Bobbi. A woman who worked for the man who may be behind this all, but what other choice does he have if he wants to stay alive and find out what is going on?

In the end when Walken finds out the truth of not only the Dolls, the game, but of Wonderland itself he must make a decision that will forever change his life—and maybe even that of humanity—if he lives.

I know that is not a very good description of this book and that I am not doing it justice. Quite honestly every time I try to find a way to explain this book the words '*awesome, amazing, must read and want more*' come to mind. lol

First off I have to say that I am not a fan of Science Fiction. Sure there have been one or two (mostly erotica novels I admit, and *Bone Wires* (not erotica) by this author as well) that I have enjoyed but this has to be the first Science Fiction book that I have ever loved before (again excluding *Bone Wires* which I really liked). Which is why when I tell you that I really loved this book—it is a very big thing for me.

Science Fiction that is non-erotica usually just does not hold my attention—I do not know why but it is true nonetheless.

*Shadow of a Dead Star* was completely different though. It caught my attention from the very first page and held it until the very last surprising-OMG-cliffhanger word.

Walken is a strong character, but also very flawed which makes me love him all the more. He is just a man trying to do his job in a world gone crazy, a world that doesn't care anymore. But Walken does.

His relationship with Bobbi is also very interesting, they are both attracted to each other from the start it seems but like any relationship have more than a few bumps—their maybe more than other peoples because of the situation they are in. I do want more of this relationship—it was solid and Bobbi and Walken felt so *right* for each other.

The plot of this book is so very intricate and though we may get hints as to the ending or who is behind it all I have to say I was shocked as h\*\*\* when the whole thing was revealed. I, in no way saw it coming, not until everything was explained in the ending. Only then did I say 'ohhhh!' as all the clues from the book clicked into place.

As only a great book can do Shadow of a Dead Star takes you on a twisting journey through a dark and dangerous world that leaves you reeling and desperately in need of book two in the end.

Absolutely amazing, epic and one of the best books I have ever read. I will be buying a paperback copy of this novel just so I can have it on my shelf—and yes, I will probably read it again when I get it too. :)

I would recommend this book to anyone. Even if like me you do not really enjoy science fiction much—Shadow of a Dead Star is a must read for anyone who is looking for a book that will stay with them for a long time in coming.

***\*I received a hardcover/paperback/eBook copy/ARC of this book for free to review from the author/publisher; this in no way influenced my review, all opinions are 100% honest and my own.***

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## Katy says

**Book Info:** Genre: Cyberpunk/Science Fiction/Detective Noir

Reading Level: Adult

**My Thoughts:** This is a very dark book – the world in 2078 is not a nice place at all. Seattle has completely changed – what used to be a quirky and artistic place has been replaced with corporate sterility, only the Verge standing between the New City and the Old City retains any of the original charm.

The book was well-written with good characterization and a smooth plot flow, but for some reason I just couldn't get into it; my mind kept wandering away and I'd have to re-read a section and force myself to keep going. It makes no sense to me, because this is the sort of book I tend to like – science fiction mixed with thriller and police procedural. I almost didn't finish it, but I pushed through and managed to do so. The last 8 percent of the story is pretty important to understanding the whole thing, so I was glad I did so. However, I just didn't like the story all that much – nothing wrong with it, it just didn't hold my attention. Maybe it was just too dark – because it was very, very dark. If you like dark fiction, you should check it out.

**Disclosure:** I received a free e-Galley from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

**Synopsis:** Seattle, 2078. The future hasn't been kind to the spirit of humanity; commercial obsession and technological fetishism rules the day, religion and belief has died screaming in the fires of war, and what remains is moral decrepitude. Life in the future is hard on the soul.

As an agent of the Industrial Security Bureau, Thomas Walken knows that better than anyone. His job is to keep the worst kind of black-market technology out of the hands of citizens, technology born out of the shadowy nation nicknamed Wonderland. But the kind of fantasies that come out of that place aren't for the good people of the world. Wonderland technology is like black magic made real.

Walken's newest assignment starts out simply: intercept a smuggled shipment of Princess Dolls, little girls turned into sex toys, and bring them into custody. But when the girls are hijacked from federal custody and Walken gives chase, he finds a trail of bodies in their wake. Before he's through, Walken will find himself confronted revelations that will answer every question that the troubled lawman has ever had about himself and the world he lives in - but his mind and soul may not survive it.

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### **Jessica says**

If you're a fan of detective stories, but feel like every single one is the same as the one before, welcome to your answer. I'm not sure whether to call *Shadow of a Dead Star* cyberpunk, tech noir, or a crime thriller. What I can say without a doubt, is that it's wonderfully original! Ready to step out of that mundane pile of mass market crime novels? Grab a copy of Michael Shean's book.

Thomas Walken, our main character, isn't your typical lawman. His world is dark, gritty, and full of some of the most horrific things he's ever seen. Despite everything that he's been through, Walken definitely isn't a hardened man. Deep down inside he is constantly questioning everything. Especially how he seems to fit into the mess he's found himself in now. What I loved about his character is that he is so believable. Caring and afraid on the inside, but doing his best to put forward a manly bravado on the outside. In a town like his, being soft just might get you killed.

Which brings me to my next point. The world, the city, that Michael Shean builds for his characters is absolutely fantastic. Equal parts terrifying, dark, and seedy, this is a world that is falling apart at the seams. Organized crime runs rampant. The city has pulled in on itself to protect what's left, leaving the outer parts crawling with filth and violence. Add into this a set of new technology that has the power to turn people into mindless drones, and it literally feels like hell on earth. While reading I felt every emotion that Walken felt, heightened by the world around him. Michael Shean builds a world that brims with the possibility of actually occurring, and soon. It's that very fact that allowed me to immerse myself so fully.

Reading *Shadow of a Dead Star* was like getting into a very fast car. I was terrified the entire time, but elated at finding out what would happen next. Every twist and turn brought something new and interesting to mull over, and with Walken at the wheel I was never sure where we would end up next. Although the pace is lightning fast, it flows beautifully. Michael Shean's writing is wonderfully descriptive and gripping. It was like I was right there, in the scenes. It's no surprise that I devoured this entire book from start to finish, without a single break.

Final verdict? *Shadow of a Dead Star* was something different and refreshing. It pulled out emotions long forgotten in reading piles of similar books, and reminded me of why it's important to take a chance on something new every now and then. Before this I'd never read a book in the cyberpunk genre, and I thought that all crime thrillers were filled with mundane characters and plots. How very wrong I was. If you're looking for something exciting, something dark and fantastic, look no further than this book. Strap yourself in tight. You're in for quite a ride.

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### **Icy Sedgwick says**

*Shadow of a Dead Star* is the first book in his Wonderland cycle, in a genre I can only describe as cyberpunk sci-fi noir.

Set in Seattle in 2078, *Shadow of a Dead Star* follows Industrial Security Bureau agent Thomas Walken. Walken is the grizzled, cynical hero who fights to keep black-market technology from making its way into the mainstream. When he intercepts a smuggled shipment of little girls hardwired as sex toys, he finds

himself tumbling down the rabbit hole into a nightmarish world of synthetic humans, hard-talking hackers and the kind of technology you thought only existed in *Blade Runner*.

Surrounded by conspiracies and caught on the run between three sectors of Seattle, each as brutal as the other but in completely different ways, Walken's resolve, abilities and strength are severely tested. He's not entirely on his own as his world crumbles around him - fate sends him Bobbi, a sparky young hacker with a sharp tongue and impressive tech skills. Question is, can Walken and Bobbi get to the bottom of the madness before a termination order is put on the Agent?

Science fiction is a genre I enjoy watching at the cinema but it's not usually a genre that I'd read. Luckily for me, *Shadow of a Dead Star* reads more like a gritty noir that just happens to feature cool technology and sci-fi ideas. It's testament to Shean's skill that everything seems completely plausible - and that I stayed up way too late to finish it, deciding I couldn't possibly put it down and pick it up the following day. It's an engaging read, full of complex characters, and bursting with invention. Whether you like sci fi, noir or cyberpunk, I'd highly recommend it.

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### **A.F. says**

*Shadow of a Dead Star* by Michael Shean is grungy, slightly nihilistic, fabulously enigmatic cyberpunk at its best, painted in the hues fashioned by Philip K. Dick. The world inside the pages is screaming neon, ad driven, nanotech chic laid over top a seedy underbelly of dissipation.

The novel begins with Agent Thomas Walken investigating the arrival of contraband tech into the futuristic city of Seattle, just another corrupt excess imported from a place called Wonderland. But this routine bust turns into a something else, a blood-soaked conspiracy that turns Walken into a fugitive looking for elusive answers to a very sinister problem.

The author knows how to build a futuristic world, and some of the best passages in the book are the way he describes the landscape and surroundings in which the characters live and breathe; he vividly creates a Seattle fallen through a cyber-tech rabbit hole. And the inhabitants that dwell among the distorted spires are brought to life with equal skill, showing a darker side of humanity, with their flaws and self-interest on display. Even the protagonist has a murky, bitter side that unfolds as he plummets into the mystery he is trying to unravel.

It is that mystery that is at the center of a well-written, complex, multi-layered plot that peels away with suspense and tension, drawing the reader ever further into its web. I thought I knew where the book was headed until the finale took a sudden turn, morphing from the body of the story, and twisting everything that went before into an enigmatic question. While I suspect some readers may find the conclusion disconcerting, I thought it was an interesting and bold choice. It may not have been the ending I wanted as a reader, but I think it fit with the overall tone of the book and it does leave you thinking.

*Shadow of a Dead Star* is a fascinating book, and a definite recommend.

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## **William Vitka says**

It's a dark, dirty future. And it makes for superb reading.

Michael Shean's 'Shadow of a Dead Star' is written with shades of Jim Thompson and Philip K. Dick, but it's unlikely you've ever immersed yourself in anything else quite like it. And even while sharing some tonal similarities with those great authors, Shean's work is not derivative.

The book begins as a gritty detective story, but after it has hooked its claws into you, the tale twists. Mutates. Goes in directions you'll never see coming -- but which also make perfect sense.

Call it TechNoir, or CyberPulp.

Just so long as you call it original.

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## **Ian Caithness says**

Science-fiction has often been disregarded as a sub-genre of fiction, a sideline to the mainstream literature that most readers will know and love. It comes as no surprise, given that most of the world's literary prizes such as the Man Booker Prize, the Costa Award and the Nobel Prize in Literature often go to "mainstream" fiction rather than to the lesser known sub-genres of literature. Science-fiction, however, has always had a cult following who find pleasure in the works of Iain M. Banks, Isaac Asimov and Philip K. Dick. It is a genre that produces the most memorable and, perhaps, absurd plots and stories in literature and it does so with pleasure. Science-fiction provides writers with an opportunity to explore the deepest recesses of their minds, to tap into the wealth of dark and sinister ideas that are hidden and locked in a mental vault.

Shadow of a Dead Star fits this bill to the core. In this thrilling and captivating novel, Michael Shean creates a dystopic and post-apocalyptic vision of the world where libertarianism has been taken to the extreme, where biological implants are the norm and society is dominated by the idea of consumerism and commercialisation. It's a world we all know and have seen before but the messages that Shean brings across in this novel haunt us.

The opening chapters of the novel introduces us to Thomas Walken, a federal agent in the Investigative Security Bureau, a division of the police force that explores and protects people from contraband and illicit technology. Like many science-fiction novels, the protagonist is "different" from his fellow men. He sees the world differently. He refuses to accept the changes to society, remaining distinctly natural in a world where the unnatural is the accepted - sexual fetishes involving mascot heads, nerve implants that blur the line between pain and pleasure, recreational drugs in excess. It's a world that, for some, is perfection but this isn't what makes this novel distinct from other science-fiction or dystopic works. H.G. Wells did it in *A Sleeper Awakes*, Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*, George Orwell in *1984*.

What makes this novel distinct is how vivid and graphic this world is. Shean portrays a world that is shockingly brutal and Walken is in the centre of this brutality. In *Shadow of a Dead Star*, Walken faces another attempt to bring contraband technology known as "Princess Dolls" into Seattle which are bio-

implanted robots that were once small girls. For the ultra-rich, they are presents for their children. For sexual deviants, they are paedophilic toys to be abused and enjoyed. When Walken gets involved in this case, he soon discovers that these Princess Dolls are different and, as he becomes more involved in the case, it becomes a twisted and decadent example of how people will do anything to achieve their interests.

Shean, like most other science-fiction writers, has created a world that is bordering on the apocalyptic and, in doing so, is drawing parallels to the current. Shean is engaging in a social commentary about technology and its advances, whether consciously or not. What's more, the novel reeks of an author's political views engaging in the novel - socialism versus consumerism and libertarianism. That's not something unusual in science-fiction but it soon becomes frustrating. At every turn, Walken seems to be the voice of socialism in a world where local government has been replaced with corporate business, where policing has been sub-contracted to private security firms.

Fans of Iain M. Banks and his Culture novels will find the voices similar. The truth of the matter is that, even despite the political under-tones, it's a powerful and brilliant novel. It revels in the glorification of sexual fetish, the dystopian being utopian to some. Michael Shean is a promising writer who could very well be a future star in the science-fiction genre if he continues in this line of writing. An excellent debut novel with technological fetishism and sexualisation as its forefront - too graphic for some, delightful for others, a thrilling read for all.

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### **Nathan Yocum says**

Shadow of a Dead Star is a first rate cyberpunk thriller. Michael Shean creates a storyline and world as fully realized as Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy or Walter Jon William's Hardwired. A must read for fans of the genre.

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### **John says**

Idealistic detective in future Seattle investigates children (supposedly) programmed to be sex toys and finds himself swept up in a scheme much, much larger than he supposes. The noir atmosphere is competently established and maintained, but there's a lot of gruesome death, gratuitous grossitude (the organlegging hospital, for instance) and the plot is centered on a deception of such baroque complexity that it really doesn't hang together. I didn't feel that the author established sufficient reason for the Instigator to have gone to all that trouble to get the protagonist into her office so that she could explain everything (instead of having him figure it all out for himself, which would have made this a much better book). I am also not a fan of open endings.

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### **Scott says**

I have tried not to spoil any major plot points in this review, but if you really want to read the book with no foreknowledge, you shouldn't read any farther than the end of next sentence.

In Shadow of a Dead Star, new author Michael Shean skillfully creates and then ultimately squanders a promising, dystopian, future world. The novel, intended to be the first in a series, follows the adventures of Thomas Walken, a federal agent tasked with uncovering and stopping the most atrocious technological

abuses of a future society dominated by corporations and their endless pursuit of wealth, technology, and depravity. Part detective noir and part dark, technological thriller, the story follows Walken's attempts to discover the true purpose behind a group of three small girls who have been turned into inhuman, unthinking slaves by the biological modification wizards of "Wonderland," a future Singapore that deals in illicit biological technology.

Shean constructs a world at once hopeless, horrifying, and enticing. He makes good use of Walken's story arc to show us this world's highest and lowest points. Of particular note is Shean's skill with writing action. In each action sequence, he shows us enough of the struggle and doubt in Walken's mind to draw us in to the conflict without slowing the pace of the sequence so much that the action begins to feel stilted. Shean also shows an impressive grasp of detective noir by playing with traditional noir roles. In making the femme fatale character the primary driving force behind the investigation, he creates a strong character who has more interesting interplay with Walken's brooding cynicism than would the more passive female lead from a stereotypical noir story.

Just as the story is building to its action-driven climax, however, everything falls apart. The action abruptly ends and the thrill and horror that accompany Walken's active discovery of the villainous plot behind the mystery give way to an overlong scene of clumsy, expository monologue from the primary villain. Shean explains, rather than shows, that the intricate world he has built in the bulk of the novel is, in fact, a mere container for a far more trite and mundane science fiction plot than the reader has been lead to believe. The true plot, and the manner in which it is revealed, are far more likely to leave readers scratching their heads and asking, "Really?" than they are to create a sense of anticipation for future stories told in the Wonderland universe.

Shadow of a Dead Star remains a solid freshman effort from Shean and is a worthy read for fans of dystopian science fiction. The weak ending leaves concern as to the future of the Wonderland series, but there is plenty of reason here to believe that as Shean's writing matures, he can become a masterful creator of science fiction worlds and characters.

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### **Tom Whalley says**

Somewhere between the horrible Citizens United court case and realizing Google not only powered my search engine but also built my phone and browser, I stopped reading cyberpunk. It seemed irrelevant, really, to pick up books that were "what if the past tried to describe today" because they'd all skew more violent than reality. Cyberpunk was a genre, and I say was, that existed to point out if we don't watch out, we'll all be owned by corporations and kept under heel by militarized, private-interest police forces.

We didn't watch out. Sorry, Gibson, Dick, and Stephenson. Our bad.

Michael Shean's Shadow of a Dead Star shows we've still got some watching out to do. It is a corporate dystopic book written post-Google; it latches onto science fiction harder than earlier cyberpunk stories would, but it kind of has to. Which, unfortunately, means there's a bit of a learning curve at the start; a bit more infodumps than you'd usually read, a bit more information you have to chew. It's worth the work; break through that and you'll read a rich, dark, solid, dark, realistic, dark, well-planned view of The World That Might Be. It's not just a good story, it's a warning. That's wha...

oh, what did I say dark a lot? This book's *dark*.

The root of decent cyberpunk stories almost *has* to be in noir. A detective, or cop, or hacker, or journalist, should be investigating a dark crime that an interconnected series of shitheads are all tied up together to hide. Shadow follows Thomas Walken, an agent of an information agency, as he investigates some Princess Dolls - children who have been mindwiped, technologically modified, and sold as sex toys. *That* kind of dark.

It has all the trappings of a first novel - a protagonist who is always right, an awkward learning curve, a rush to the ending - but *Shadow of a Dead Star* succeeds where others have failed in building a real world full of believable characters following realistic motivations. It's also full of that kind of specifically weird imagery that I just love. Michael Shean didn't write a perfect novel with this, but he wrote a damn sight better than a lot of other people's firsts, and I'm definitely starting the sequel this week.

Final note: if you want a standalone book, don't read this. Thomas Walken's story ends here, all wrapped up. *Wonderland's* doesn't. At all. I can't, in good faith, recommend this to people who don't want to get into a series.

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### **Joseph says**

*Shadow of a Dead Star* by Michael Shean is a dark, near-futuristic, science fiction novel that takes place in Seattle in the year 2078. The world is different. The European War has set the civilization back but let technology advance. Old cities are deserted, except for the roving gangs that are out to rob you for what you have, including body parts. Civilized portions are patrolled by private police forces and somewhat overseen by the Bureau of Industrial Security. Thomas Walken works for the Bureau. Walken a former cop was recruited based on his job and his abilities. He is the best at what he does. Private police carry out most of the day to day law enforcement for those important enough for protection while completely ignoring those who are not. The Bureau becomes involved in federal matters like *Wonderland*. *Wonderland* is technology of evil. For example, Walken becomes involved in a case involving very young girls who are cyber enhanced sex slaves. Walken like most people are disgusted by the practice and these particular sex slaves may be something even more sinister.

*Shadow of a Dead Star* is fast moving and very, very dark view of the future. The future is the worst case scenario. Humanity has fallen to the lowest common denominator. Technology, all though impressive, is also oppressive. There is no where to hide if someone is looking for you. Corporations for the most part run their bit of the world, and they are for the most part untouchable. Genefex, is perhaps the most powerful. The story evolves nicely from a crime investigation to something far bigger and far more devious than imagined. Walken turns to friends when the system turns against him. Luckily for him Roberta "Bobbi" January is his friend.

*Shadow of a Dead Star* is a book that will pull you in and not let you go. The reader will be pulled in by the characters, story, technology, or the depravity that humanity has become. *Shadow of a Dead Star* is perhaps one of the best science fiction novels I have read in quite some time. Fast paced, original, and very dark. I am looking forward to the sequel: *Redeye*

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### **Tarrin Lupo says**

This book paints a pretty darn realistic future of government and corporate control of everything. The authors insight to the future is very believable and very well done. This book was a joy to read, and it keeps the reader entertained. You quickly find out that this conspiracy goes much deeper then "the dolls" and makes this novel impossible to put down. The ending was great, and I did not see it coming. Go buy this book!

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