

Astronauts and Heretics

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An ardent missionary beams to another galaxy--but finds his convictions and personality altered in transmission.

A bounty hunter pursues a replicant from out of history. This is not called termination. It is called "impeachment."

Aliens invade a globally depressed Earth with a sinister weapon: A new line of curiously addictive consumer products.

Superheroes must control their powers. Or a shadowy government agency will do it for them.

Plus the Second Coming, with a special guest appearance by the Patron Saint of Television.

Welcome to seven adventures in space, time, and from under the floorboards.

These stories were previously published in *Realms of Fantasy*, *Interzone*, *Rosebud*, *Science Fiction Age*, and other respected venues.

"In *ASTRONAUTS AND HERETICS*, author Tom Marcinko takes us on science-fictional journeys that have the special knack of making us think, dread and laugh, often at the same time. From the dystopic possibilities of superhuman powers and a real-world return of Christ, to the comedic mashup of 'Seinfeld' with 'Deep Space Nine,' to a truly original tale about interstellar Catholic missionaries, Marcinko's collection is sure to engage your mind, funny bone, and heart."--Mark A. Rayner, author of *MARVELLOUS HAIRY* and *THE AMADEUS NET*.

"Witty and unflinching...sharp and entertaining...If you're craving dark humor and a twist on Armageddon, 'A Close Personal Relationship' is the perfect fix."—Maggie Jamison, *TANGENT ONLINE*

"I had really weird dreams I don't remember last night after reading 'Whiter Teeth, Fresher Breath' before I went to bed. Nice work. Seriously. I think I read the majority of these in one form or another way back when ... but the whole "collected works" thing really brings out the tone and humor(s) in them."--Hop Wechsler, co-author, *THE HUMAN MUSEUM*

Astronauts and Heretics Details

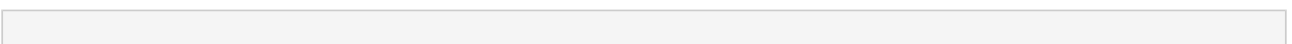
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From Reader Review Astronauts and Heretics for online ebook

SR says

This is a really thoughtful collection of stories. I loved Deep Space Sein despite having watched full episodes of NEITHER Star Trek NOR Seinfeld, which goes to show either Marcinko's writing abilities or the pervasiveness of trek & seinfeld in pop culture today...

Recommended to anyone who's a fan of comic book superheroes, American Gods, and China Miéville.

Joel Neff says

The seven stories in this collection showcase a writer fully in command of his craft and talent. They range from the comic (Deep Space Sein - seriously, a mash-up of DS9 and Seinfeld, it's just genius) to the darkly creepy (Whiter Teeth, Fresher Breath) to the hopeful (everything else).

My one, single, complaint is that Marcinko seems to be a writer who values brevity above all else. Yet his characters are so real, and his ideas so intriguing that I find that each story ends long before I'm ready.

This is a great collection and I'm looking forward to finding anything else Marcinko has ever written.

The stories are:

Faith in a Higher Power (4/5 stars)

Whiter Teeth, Fresher Breath (5/5 stars)

Henry the Human Flea (3/5 stars)

Deep Space Sein (5/5 stars)

The Nixon Wrangler's Tale (5/5 stars)

A Close Personal Relationship (4/5 stars)

Heretics (3/5 stars)

Stephane says

Very interesting collections of short stories, each with a unique little spin on some "sci fi" trope. Each reads more as well written thought experiments, with some comedy thrown in (Deep Space Sein: a mash up of Seinfeld and Star Trek; A Closer Personal Relationship: the second coming is not quite what we expected).

The story are short, interesting and well written.

A very fast, very clever, very good read.

Tom Marcinko says

Is there some way I could identify myself as the person who wrote the stories in this book, and thank everybody who posted a review?

It's a bracing thing to read comments on your work, positive or negative, from strangers. They tend to tell you what they really think.

A hand, please, for my very talented friend Richard Laugharn, who designed the cover.

And thanks to the several and sundry editors who published these stories, and actually gave me money for them.

Allison Lara says

I enjoyed the Star Trek/Seinfeld crossover and the "oh crap fundies were right" horror story.

Onionboy says

This was a collection of short sci-fi stories. If there was a theme, I didn't quite catch it. The stories were odd, and didn't pay off for me. I prefer my sci-fi short stories to have a twist or interesting ending, which I did not find here. I didn't enjoy this much at all.

Rajiv says

I saw the recommendation on Boing Boing and just had to read this collection of short stories.

To be honest, I was a bit disappointed with the overall quality of the stories. The descriptions were written masterfully, drawing readers in with succinct teasers. The stories themselves felt jumbled however, and they lacked the quality of the teasers that drew me in.

There are wonderful concepts hiding in the stories, but they are muddled by poor editing. The pacing and characterizations need work; there were some typos in there as well. The stories themselves were quite imaginative though. You will never look at a toothbrush the same way again. Religion, science, superheroes, and aliens are handled very well. The story I liked the most was about "Junior". You will understand when you read it.

Simply put, the stories are offbeat and some are fantastic, though they lack the expected polish. If you're looking for good science fiction that pushes boundaries then this is it. Be aware that you'll have to contend with what seems like drafts of stories rather than the finished products.

Deanna says

This collection of sci-fi short stories was offered free in the Kindle store. A few of them were really fun or thought-provoking. My favorite was Deep Space Sein - a Star Trek/Seinfeld mash-up. It made me laugh out loud a couple of times. A couple I thought were too short; I wished they were a little longer. I look forward to reading more by this author.

Eveh says

These seven stories are loaded with SF goodness: they are gritty, bleak, losing-my-religion, often-hilarious, wag-the-alien, Seinfeld-loving targeted missiles. (You won't look at your toothbrush or skyscrapers or the Pope the same way—unless you're too busy wondering which version of you was retrieved and reassembled today.)

I've read entire novels that contain fewer ideas and less world-building than one of these finely crafted short stories (although "Henry the Human Flea" did not seem as fleshed out as all the others--no pun intended). This guy's laser-sharp humor, cynicism tempered with a battered optimism, and just plain wonderful, tightly packed writing made me want to duck for cover: what the frak could he do to my head if let loose at full length?

Justin Tappan says

A mixed bag of short sci-fi/fantasy tales.

Some hit, some didn't. One in particular downright confused me.

A short and sweet read.

Paul says

A collection of good sci-fi short stories from what I understand to be new author. I'd like to see a couple of these turned into longer works.

Ed Hammerbeck says

Decent sci-fi with some interesting ideas.

Lynette Aspey says

My first disclaimer is that I love the short-story format, and I'm a dedicated and avid SF&F reader. I fall very firmly in the audience bracket for this collection and I was not only surprised but delighted by what I found therein.

A humanist theme resonates through all of the stories, and the writer demonstrates a keen eye for observation and a wry sense of humour. So, on one hand I recognise that this collection will not suit everyone, I also unreservedly recommend it to readers who look for more than light entertainment in their short fiction. I very rarely give 5-stars, but Marcinko's originality won me over.

Mike says

Mildly entertaining and immediately forgotten.

Molly says

Very hook-y short sf, but the hooks just aren't that compelling. Still not sure I know what's the deal with the story about the toothpaste. ::shrug:: I read it on a plane.
