



The Northern Star: The Beginning

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2058. As the dwindling oil supply plunges the world into chaos, and "Mindlink" technology opens cyberspace to the masses, crippled soldier John Raimy becomes a powerful bionic to infiltrate China and retrieve the King Sleeper: a computer hacker so devastating on-line, he can decimate government infrastructure, subliminally persuade the masses, and even kill.

The Northern Star: The Beginning Details

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Author : Mike Gullickson

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From Reader Review The Northern Star: The Beginning for online ebook

Alex McGilvery says

The Northern Star
Mike Gullickson
Lightside/Darkside Entertainment LLC

The Northern Star takes place in the near future when the oil has all but run out. People have moved into the cities to make transportation easier. The thing that has saved the world is the Mindlink. The Mindlink allows the user to live in the virtual world and has made the real world little more than an apartment. John Raimey is a soldier in the new world. He and his team return to the U.S. to take up the fight against terrorists that live in the U.S. now that the Middle East oil is gone and the countries have been reduced to ashes. What John doesn't know is that terrorism is soon going to be the least of his worries. Someone has found a way to use the Mindlink to coerce world leaders. The real battle will not be fought over land, but over control of the Mindscape.

This book was a sleeper. I struggled a bit when the book opened. I didn't find the "advanced" technology to be that advanced. When I let go of that issue, I was pulled in by the characters and their interaction. Mike creates a varied cast of people and, just as in real life, sometimes it is hard to tell the villains from the heroes. This is the first book of a series and I will be looking forward to the next book. One thing that I very much appreciated was that there was sufficient closure at the end of this book to leave me satisfied and enough hints about what is coming to have me eager to pick up the next one.

The book is nicely put together for an independent press. There are a few minor typos, but I've seen as many in books by the big publishers. It is nicely printed on quality paper and feels good in your hand. The binding held up to my bad habit of laying the book down open which is often death on poor quality books.

Dan Polley says

A look into the online future of the human race. One interesting aspect I thought was that countries still had a form of government, but they were less necessary and sometimes impotent.

With the rise of a global MindLink product that allows people to tune into an online world, there was a lot of interplay between that world and how its setup affected the "real" world.

I thought the characters were a little stale at times, but that was more in terms of a few passages that I thought didn't add to their lives on the page.

Altogether a very good novel that ended up far from where I envisioned it would go -- and that's a good thing.

Read Ng says

This was a GoodReads giveaway win.

March 17, 2013

High tech weapons systems and cyber wars. Oh, so cool. Just where will the world be some 35 years from now? No this is not about climate change. It is all about power. How individuals and nations obtain and exploit each other to obtain more power for themselves. I don't know how to describe this story without taking the joy out of discovering for yourself. It is a great ride and I can't wait to read more. This is a great kickoff to a new series. This story doesn't end without some conclusions, but it still leaves enough loose ends to give you room to speculate as to where the tale will pick up next.

I will be looking for more of this storyline and the writings of Mike Gullickson. He tells a great story and has an active imagination.

November 6, 2014

A quick re-read in anticipation of part two. Still love the storyline.

Michael Brookes says

This is a fun read, set in the relatively near future the mindlink technology has opened cyberspace (as in realist environments) to the world. The developer has a complete monopoly on the technology and it proves to be a boon with the world having to change with the dwindling oil reserves finally having an effect on the economy. However there is a flaw in the technology, a weakness that can be exploited to wield power on a scale never before seen.

As well as the cyberspace angle we also have the development of a super soldier technology that promises to revolutionise warfare. This is all set against a world where serious measures have been taken to secure the last oil reserves.

I enjoyed reading this story, it's an interesting tale that has some nice twists and turns along the way. The use of the new technology is quite novel (more so the cyberspace flaws, but the supersoldier aspect is also solid), more than this there's a bit of a moral maze going on. I liked the fact that things aren't quite so clear cut as they seem when the story opens, quite often the human side of these type of stories is forgotten, but it is well explored here.

The author's writing is crisp and flows well, there's a good pace to the story and it kept me interested all the way through. Nothing in life is perfect however and there's a couple of minor issues. The first is the world the story is set in, it's an interesting world, but I would really have liked to see it developed further. It does provide an effective backdrop, but its richness could have been brought more into the story. The other issue is the characters, as with the background they're fine and do their job, but more could have been done for the reader to get to know them better.

They're minor quibbles though and it is an entertaining read that provides some interesting concepts to think

about.

Drew says

The Northern Star takes a look at a (almost) post oil world where there is little air or car travel and virtual reality is used for most every day interactions and terrorism is a daily part of life. The book follows a couple of groups of people and how they use and try to change this virtual world. The author does a good job of mixing in action and character development and at the end the change in many of the characters is considerable, but not unbelievable with all that they respectively go through. It's a well written, thought provoking sci-fi/thriller blend.

Matt Knepper says

I had very mixed feelings about this book. At times, I was completely enthralled. At other times, I was bored and frustrated with the story. I went for several days at a time without even thinking about picking up the book. There were certainly highs and lows; the high points were stellar, but the low points were a challenge to get through.

There were a lot of characters, none of them too deep. As I was reading, I had a hard time figuring out which characters were important or relevant to the story. Truthfully, I'm not sure who the protagonist was. Sometimes I couldn't even tell who the characters were. For instance, Dr. Evan Lindo was often referred to as Lindo. No problem; that makes sense. Later, he was referred to as Evan. By that point, I had forgotten his first name, and didn't realize it was the same person. For a few of the characters, it went back and forth between first and last name. This was my biggest complaint. It doesn't make the book unreadable, but it's a personal pet peeve.

With so many characters, there were a lot of independent plotlines. Some of them didn't even contribute to the main story. (view spoiler)

When I started reading, I really enjoyed the book. At some point, though, the story lost me. I also really enjoyed the ending, but it seemed pretty rushed. I expected there to be a lot more conflict in the final battle, but the resolution came too easily.

I felt like this novel had a lot of potential. It was just too complicated and disjointed for me. Had it focused more on one main storyline and fewer characters that were more thoroughly developed, I would have loved it. Unfortunately, I just couldn't get into it.

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads.

Natalie says

So, this book came in the mail one day and I have no freaking clue where it came from. But the premise looked really good, so I just praised the book gods who deposited this book on my doorstep and started

reading.

I found the book to be pretty ho hum right from the get go and my frustration just mounted as I got deeper in. The premise - the oil is gone and a new technology is going to change the face of the world - as I said, sounded awesome. The delivery, however, didn't every really deliver. The prose felt really milquetoast and the characters were all caricatures, not to mention the author has a kind of weird fixation on autism. It was clear the author had grand visions for his world and he really almost got there, but in the end, he just wasn't able to make it come to life in a way that wasn't cliché

At one point I started dog-ear-ing pages that had things that didn't make sense or were irritating. I lasted about 100 pages, dog-ear-ing something about every 5-10 pages, before I finally gave up. There was just too much. There's voter apathy, but millions show up to a street protest. Revo's lived her life as a tough as nails scientist, but falls to pieces as the slightest provocation. The guy does something with his right leg on one page, but then it's the left on next. A gun magazine only holds enough bullets to fire for a third of a second. There's clunky, ridiculous dialog.

In the end, I was really disappointed with the world building and the characters. I won't be reading the next two books in the series.

Craig says

received free ebook copy in exchange for honest review

I found *The Northern Star: The Beginning* to be an enjoyable read, especially the further into the book I got. I did notice a couple grammatical errors, but they certainly didn't detract from the story. The future the author depicted certainly felt all to plausible.

The only part I found a little lacking was in terms of character development. Most of the characters felt, not completely one dimensional but close to it. Even when the author attempted to flesh them out, it only seemed to confuse me more. I could not really get a grasp on several of the characters and their motivations. In some ways they didn't seem to react in ways that would be natural to the type of character I understood them to be.

Overall I felt that *The Northern Star: The Beginning* by Mike Gullickson is certainly worth the read for fans of Sci-Fi and speculative fiction.

Matt Simpson says

I was sent this book through the Goodreads first reads giveaway. But this is a book I would gladly pay for.

The story, set in a world 35 years in the future, is at least semi-plausible. No space travel, but technology a couple of jumps forward from what is available today, and the depletion of one of the most-used natural resources - oil. The Chinese, Islamic Fundamentalist and Power-hungry Military Officer antagonists are very real and imaginable as well.

Mike Gullickson uses a contemporary language that helps with the flow, and I feel like he captures the use of slang and vernacular without coming off as vulgar. His writing seems more like listening to a conversation, rather than much of the posturing, big-worded entries many contemporary authors tend to use.

The story is paced well, until close to the end. After the "final crisis", where Xan and the Chinese military abduct the King Sleeper, things seem to happen rather quickly without any dramatic build-up. I felt that at least a couple of paragraphs of Raimey's internal debate could have been used, or a brief discussion with his wife and daughter about what he should do could have been included and would have helped add a little drama to the decision.

I was also shocked to find myself only 20 pages from being done a 350-page book and the climax had yet to happen. When it did, it felt like I had been slapped in the face with a large amount of plot in such a short amount of words. Again, it could have been drawn out, even another 20 pages, and I feel it would have helped the story out immensely.

So all in all, if the only complaint a reader has is that the book was not long enough, I think you're doing ok!

I'm eagerly awaiting the second and third installments.

Scott says

The Northern Star: The Beginning takes place in the not so distant future. The oil is gone and travel has almost ground to a halt. Not long ago a technological discovery came about that changed everything. A helmet that allows people to plug into a virtual universe where they can do all there interacting in whatever environment they would like. This discovery has allowed society to continue even with the virtual cessation of international travel. However like all technological improvements there are people who can twist it to their own ends.

One of the major themes of The Northern Star revolves around a new battle suit that has been developed by the Americans. This suit is designed to replace an entire army and be controlled by a person melded to the frame. There is also an autistic child who has what basically amounts to super powers in the virtual landscape that will have an unbelievable affect on the world.

The story has a decent pace though there are spots that slow down a bit to fully explain all of the tech. The battle suit made me think of the Mech Warrior computer games that I used to play a long time ago. It really brought a vivid image of the suit to my mind. The majority of the characters were very obsessed with their own thing which led them to feel a little undeveloped. There were a few standout characters that really helped to flush out the world of the book.

This has been a pretty strong start to a series and I'm interested in seeing what the second book has to offer. From my understanding it is currently in editing stages so it should be out fairly soon.

Review copy provided by the author.

Stacey says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway. Sci-fi is not my typical genre of choice, but this book kept me interested throughout. The premise - that the world is out of oil, and we live in a cyber-world - isn't implausible. It wasn't so "out there" that I felt lost - indeed, in 2058, there are still things like Asperger's and people still worry about going to the gym! Well written and well done.

Mandy says

A Book Through Goodreads First Reads

This was an interesting book. Set in the near future, the internet isn't confined to a screen. The MinkLink system gives a full-fledged feel to it, going anywhere and looking like anyone.

Only there's a dark side to this. The US government want to use it to find terrorists.

Then there's an attack upon a MinkLink Core, and things start to get really interesting.

Despite this book not something I usually read, I quite enjoyed it. My favorite character, by far, was Justin. My next favorite character is surprisingly Xan. I thought her was fascinating.

There were a couple of elements that I didn't like, but they were more my personal beefs, which included some drug usage and one of other favorite characters is injured. Also there were a couple of chapters that had some random hops to a different character that effected continuity, but they were not too bad.

All in all, I was fascinated by the technology and the stories of the characters.

Grady says

Science Fiction wedded to reality: There's the rub!

Science fiction literature and movies appeal to a certain audience, whether that is because those who like it are dreaming of an escape from the world as it is today, or because such stories make the implausible plausible within the confines to that period of time the story usurps. Others find sci-fi stories off-putting because they usually are concentrated on wildly imaginative machines and powers that defy explanation on a rational basis. As we move into the highspeed technology world that grows daily creating realities thought impossible only a few decades ago, stories once labeled as sci-fi are becoming closer to reportage.

Mike Gullickson is a California based writer, fairly new to the literary scene, and a writer who has taken his long obsession with science fiction (from age twelve he states `if it was gothic, horror, science fiction, fantasy or gory, I was into it.') But what makes Gullickson unique among writer of science fiction and futurism (and one of the primary reasons this reader could better appreciate a genre not usually to my liking) is his ability to create a backdrop for his stories that is anchored in reality, people or places or situations to which we can easily relate to the point that his stories become all the more terrifying because they are more than feasible possibilities. He has addressed our current dependence on oil and the global struggles of control

of that dwindling resource, underlining that very real situation coupled with the rising incidents of terrorism and technological advances that simultaneously glut the media with images of terrorist acts and critical conditions distance us from confrontations in real time by viewing it all through the protective and poorly understood shield of the internet information source.

The Northern Star (Volume 1 The Beginning) opens in 2058 (actually the prologue begins in 2048), a time with oil depletion has created the battleground for the super powers of China, the US, and the EU who have united in a military fashion to occupy all of the oil rich countries, a situation that has driven the masses into ghettos, stimulated even further the Terror wars to the point where terrorist acts occur daily in the streets of the remaining cities. The only defense against this decimating progress is the creation by the corporation Mindcorp who has invented a computer based technology called Mindlink that allows people to have their mind outside their body: people can 'live' in a virtual reality online. Out of this, Tank Majors (or bionic soldiers) are created to combat the powerful perpetrators. Gullickson personalizes these bionic warriors, and here again the author's ability to create identifiable characters in a bizarre situation helps drive his story to a surprising end.

Mike Gullickson has found that path that appeals to both sci-fi and futurists addicts as well as those of us who do not usually appreciate this genre, and much of that is due to his skill in keeping the language contemporary as he steps beyond the crises we know as reality - and just pushes reality further. It works.

Grady Harp

Squire says

I was given this book in a Goodreads giveaway and it was not one of the giveaways I was excited about when I entered. But I was pleasantly surprised when I read it.

In 2058, the oil-based economy of the world has been destroyed and a global cyberspace society has taken its place. But it is one that is privately controlled by MindCorp. Governments are reduced to socialistic entities providing life's necessities for its citizens. In the US, that and a military trying to deal with terrorist actions within its borders. So when the US Government teams with MindCorp to try to stop the actions, the stage is set for one brilliant megalomaniac to set himself up as the ruler of the world. But then, there's the Chinese...

I enjoyed TNS:TB very much. It's a breathlessly-paced, violent sci-fi adventure that harkens back to the classic brave new world era while encompassing global politics and some pressing issues of today. It's extremely well-written and Gullickson proves himself adeptly sly in his prose. Many times he slipped important notes by me that caused me to go back and reread passages--not out of frustration, but out of a sense of wonder. At one point, I daresay, he would have been able to brainwash me along with his characters!

I'm not a tech-minded individual, but Gullickson was able to express some complex and terrifying ideas about technology into a format that I could understand--this book could have easily been rendered in jargon that could've had me tearing my hair out.

However, the book suffers from almost clichéd sci-fi notions and half-baked characterizations. The book is so dense with action and ideas that such development of character is tossed aside. Part of the problem might

have been that Gullickson's ideas of the book seemed to have changed halfway though. There's a terrific scenario in the jungles of Venezuela that doesn't seem to have any point to it in the end. A couple of characters are treated heavily in the beginning only to get axed later on.

But, in the end, it's entertainment value that matters, I suppose, and *The Northern Star: The Beginning* has more than enough to overcome it's flaws. I'm looking forward to the next 3(?) installments.

Jay says

A futuristic- completely realistic- sci fi roller coaster. This book has it all. Being the oil dependent people we are, it is terrifying a thought that it will be gone. We can all imagine that it will happen but in this book, in 2058 .. it's happened.

Your mind will be stretched further when you realize that in the year 2058 our fights will not be over land or rights, but over our mindscape as our lives play out in cyberspace. What life is like when our resources run dry and technology because both necessary and evil..

A plot driven book full of murder and intrigue and a sense of .. wow can this really happen? If our way of life was taken away, our ability to travel, to fly .. even to go to the store- what would we do?

Read this, find out!
