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Firmament: Machiavellian



Synopsis

On their way back to Earth from the newly discovered world of Kainus Ge, the Surveyor rescues the personnel of a malfunctioning science station. Young medical assistant Andi quickly befriends the newcomers, particularly the charming captain, but things get complicated when the scientists offer the impossible--a way to improve the barren planet and the lives of all its inhabitants. There's only one problem: their solution requires the Surveyor to enter the one area of the galaxy which is off-limits to travel. As the Captain struggles with his decisions, Andi and her father become suspicious of the "accidents" that keep happening on the ship. Could it be coincidence, or is someone trying to sabotage their mission? Can they uncover the truth in time to stop the Captain from wrecking his career and losing his ship forever?

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Customer Reviews

Before you hurt yourself trying to actually imagine Star Trek getting saved, don't go there. It was just a joke to give you the right idea. If the crew of the Enterprise included some Christians - and if the script didn't feature aliens and other elements for which I personally won't

watch it - that's the world of Firmament: Machiavellian. I came in on the middle of the Firmament series, so it took me a bit to get oriented. For example, I actually spent a few pages trying to figure out if Andi was a boy or a girl. But everything was pretty well recapped in the first chapter or two, and I felt satisfied that I wasn't missing any important backstory. So don't worry if you haven't read the other Firmament books, and you want to read this one because it looks most interesting (or because it's on sale for \$.99, as the case may be). The premise of Machiavellian is fairly believable, within the world of Firmament. Artfully, Pennington leaves herself a good bit of situational flexibility to shape the story, with the captain and crew of the Surveyor operating more or less like an autonomous pirate ship. There is a bit of fudgery with the math and physics: Traveling at the speed of light, the Surveyor reaches the center of our galaxy in a few days. According to scientific observation, the radius of the Milky Way is actually at least 50,000 light years. But only critique-geeks like me would ever notice things like that, or waste the time to look them up. I love the message of Machiavellian. Doing evil for a good end is never justified, and Pennington makes that very clear. I like Andi, and I like the way the other characters play off each other. There is one point when Andi's mentor tells her to accomplish a task pretty much requiring deceit, doesn't specify how she should do it, then later chews her out for lying to get the job done. She feels that he is being unfair, and quite frankly, I agree. Machiavellian started at walking speed for me, but the pace picked up as it went along. When the end neared, I stopped taking breaks and read straight through to the finish. The book contains no bad language, and there is very little violence - an accidental murder here, someone banging someone's head against a wall there. (Claustrophobes should also be aware that a couple of people get locked in boxes for a few short pages.) Pennington successfully demonstrates that you don't need blood and gore to make an exciting Christian sci-fi piece.

Summary: As they are returning from the planet Kainus Ge, the star ship Surveyor picks up a distress signal. They bring on board a crew from a science station and meet the captain - a sweet talking, friendly man who has a plan which could save the citizens of Kainus Ge. However, his plan could also cause Captain Trent to lose his ship. Andi is soon not only questioning her own father, but what classifies as right and wrong. I can't get enough of this series. I love it. Not just the characters, but the actual Science Fiction and space travel. Everything about it makes me feel like I'm back on the Enterprise going where no man has gone before. Unlike the other two books in this series, this one takes a more serious look. Some of the light hearted adventure feel was gone and there were times I was yelling my head off at Trent. (Example, NO TRENT NO! DON'T YOU DARE!) I think there were a couple moments I was frustrated with Andi, which is rare because I love

that girl, but it was the understanding kind because Neopleon had me going a few times. Can that guy smooth talk or what? There were also some brother/sister moments which would have made me hug the book if I had been able to stop turning the pages long enough. I did miss Crash. Oh how I missed him. But August made up for it. (And I might have been alone in my missing. I'm sure Andi did, but I seriously doubt Trent did.) Over all, I can't say much for the sake of spoilers, but this is a MUST READ. Just read the other two first since they need to go in order. An amazing series!!

Where to begin? It appears Firmament is going to be one of those refreshing series in which each successive book only gets better. Machiavellian was wonderful. It had such suspense and twisty plot-lines. I was hanging onto every word and -- just like with the previous books -- I couldn't put it down until I'd finished it within twenty-four hours (What can I say? I'm a fast reader, it's a capital book, and the afternoon was quiet). This story introduced intriguing questions about the universe beyond our knowledge today (what is in the galactic core? I must know!) and it also had possibly one of my favorite elements in any book: tangled moral conflict. The title IS "Machiavellian" after all. Honestly, the characters' struggle with "doing something wrong to do something right" is one of the best aspects of this novel. Pennington wrote that masterfully and with the perfect blend of confusion and torment in Andi's mind. I'll certainly be reading it again soon. Incidentally, books where the antagonist is difficult to pin down are such fun. The bad guy (once I figured out who he was) was delightfully different. I alternately liked him and very much disliked him. I understood his reasoning, but I wanted to lock him somewhere he could never make mischief with his "good intentions" again. Speaking of which, that scene with Andi and Doctor Pearson? Talk about suspense! It was making me stressed. Oh, and then that gut-wrenching scene that was so unexpected and dreadful it was worthy of a new Goodreads shelf on my account specifically for this book. I was too stunned in that scene to even tear up. And you know those guys who you can't possibly imagine crying.... and the moment when they do? That happened. My emotions were all over the place. The first books in Firmament were interesting, but I felt they lacked a certain amount of description that left grey patches in my mental view of the places where we spend time in with the story. Machiavellian changed that completely. It was so much better written with all the tiny details that create atmosphere and pull you into a world. It made me very happy. Content-wise: squeaky clean as always. One cut-off swear word.

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