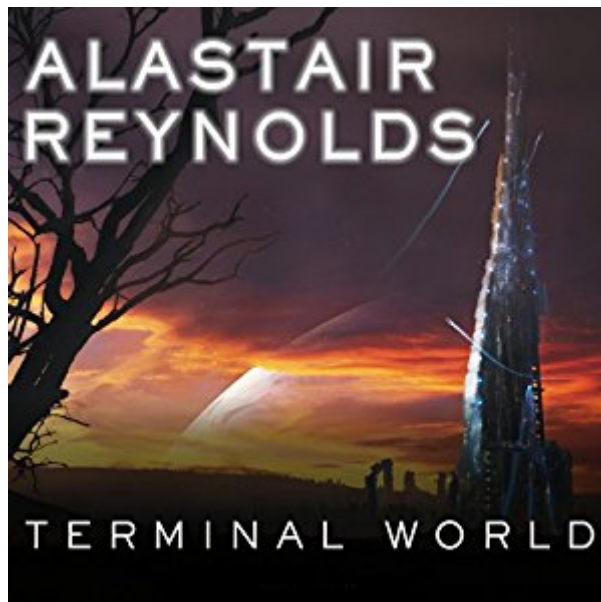


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Terminal World



Synopsis

Spearpoint, the last human city, is an atmosphere-piercing spire of vast size. Clinging to its skin are the zones, a series of semi-autonomous city-states, each of which enjoys a different-and rigidly enforced-level of technology. Following an infiltration mission that went tragically wrong, Quillon has been living incognito, working as a pathologist in the district morgue. But when a near-dead angel drops onto his dissecting table, Quillon's world is wrenched apart one more time. If Quillon is to save his life, he must leave his home and journey into the cold and hostile lands beyond Spearpoint's base, starting an exile that will take him further than he could ever imagine. But there is far more at stake than just Quillon's own survival, for the limiting technologies of the zones are determined not by governments or police but by the very nature of reality-and reality itself is showing worrying signs of instability. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

The author gets points for an imaginative landscape and situation. The story is slow and while steam punk has to be accepted with a certain amount of reasonable speculation, the author also injects some legitimate scientific anomalies which stretches the steam punk theme, especially for the character Tulwar. I found this slow overall and although I warmed up to the protagonist eventually, it was hard. This author has often brought solid science to his novels and this one left me quite cold at the end because the "semi resolution" might as well have been magic, except that leading up to it, the magic "solution" certainly wasn't obvious. Reynolds is a solid author and I

congratulate him on trying to meld steam punk and scifi, but he missed, and the prose wasn't worth the other shortcomings. I think China Mieville still holds the steam punk reigns with Perdido St. Station and while that was magnificent, the Iron Council story was as unsatisfying as this one was. But unlike this one, the Iron Council's prose made it all the worthwhile. I haven't given up on Reynolds, but this one didn't work.

One of my favorite Reynolds works. The mystique and imaginative approach he takes in a far future dystopia is amazing. A concept I have never explored and would never have thought to.

Alastair Reynolds definitely is one of the most imaginative writers of contemporary science fiction. In Terminal World he blends a post-apocalyptic steampunk setting with a mysterious version of modern physics and post-humanism. Admittedly, the noir element gets a little old, but it is only visible in the first few pages anyway. It is somewhat hard to summarize the story without giving away too much of the solution. What starts as the main character Quillon's flight from Spearpoint turns into a quest across different zones where certain levels of technology start to fail. And when these zones begin to shift dramatically across the world, it threatens the future of all of mankind (in its different stages). While I still consider House of Suns and Pushing Ice to be the pinnacle of Reynolds' work, Terminal World is among par with Revelation Space and it actually builds on a similar level of physics. Fans of A Fire Upon The Deep will likely enjoy Terminal World. Those who didn't like the former may want to give Reynolds a try here, because it is much easier to approach. Everyone else... start with Terminal World.

The book is imaginative. for the most part I liked the book, but it let me down in the end. I mean, it had some good multi-layered ideas in it, but it simply fizzled out. I really think that it was worth 2.5 stars, but I couldn't do that. It really adds a new spin on this whole steampunk idea. I'm normally more of a fan of cyberpunk rather than steampunk, but it contained a lot of well thought out ideas and had a lot of potential. I hope that future books I read by Alastair Reynolds are more complete.

This is set on a terraformed world, many thousands of years in the future, when the world's history has been largely forgotten. The planet is dominated by a single city, Spearpoint, built on an artificial mountain spiking high into space. The world is divided into shifting "zones" which limit the available technology in a given area. (This is reminiscent of the interstellar zones of Vernor Vinge's "A Fire Upon the Deep".) High up on Spearpoint live the angels, who can fly and who have access to

futuristic high technology. Lower down are cities limited to 20th c electricity, lower still limited to steam, lower still to horse power. Wandering the world are the "skullboys", large gangs of drug-crazed killers. An entire civilized culture, the "swarm", live in a moving airship city. Our hero is a disguised renegade angel, now a doctor, fleeing his former compatriots. A sudden enormous zone shift throws the world into disarray. Our hero struggles first to survive and then to bring aid to the devastated Spearpoint. Reynolds writes well and the portrayals of the different technological levels are skillfully done, with many clever ideas. However, the novel moves very slowly, particularly in the central sections where there are many minor events but little real plot development. Part of the problem is that our heroes faces many local challenges, but no overarching enemy, so the mood is often more of a travelogue than a conventional adventure. (The skullboys make poor adversaries, because of their disorganized nature.) Things do pick up near the end, and Reynolds provides a reasonably satisfying conclusion. Overall four stars. There is some good writing and some good ideas, compensating for a slow plot.

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