



From Darkest Skies

Sam Peters

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After a five year sabbatical following the tragic death of his wife and fellow agent Alysha, Keon Rause returns to the distant colony world of Magenta to resume service with the Magentan Intelligence Service. With him he brings an artificial recreation of his wife's personality, a simulacrum built from every digital trace she left behind. She has been constructed with one purpose - to discover the truth behind her own death - but Keon's relationship with her has grown into something more, something frighteningly dependent, something that verges on love.

Cashing in old favours, Keon uses his return to the Service to take on a series of cases that allow him and the artificial Alysha to piece together his wife's last days. His investigations lead him inexorably along the same paths Alysha followed five years earlier, to a sinister and deadly group with an unhealthy fascination for the unknowable alien Masters; but as the wider world of Magenta is threatened with an imminent crisis, Keon finds himself in a dilemma: do his duty and stand with his team to expose a villainous crime, or sacrifice them all for the truth about his wife?

From Darkest Skies Details

Date : Published April 20th 2017 by Gollancz

ISBN :

Author : Sam Peters

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Mystery

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From Reader Review From Darkest Skies for online ebook

Izy says

Rating~ 3.5 stars

From darkest skies is about a grieving husband, an AI trying to solve her *own* murder and a crime team to investigating a new version of a drug.

Keon Rouse, a government agent after the death of his wife Alysha, left his planet Magenta. He returns home after being accused of theft and is immediately involved in an investigation of a drug that has killed many and is projected to kill a lot more.

Keon unable to move on after his wife's death decides to build an AI called Liss with the data footprint left behind by his wife. Keon really loved his wife but he also felt guilty and unable to let go of previous life has kept his AI with him which was both sad yet fascinating.

I quite enjoyed Koen and Liss. The plot of the story with it's conspiracies, the drug case, Alyssa's murder and Keon's need to find answers leaves us with interesting answers and more questions.

As a fan or the genre, I really liked the world building, the AI aspect itself was fascinating and I'm looking forward to reading more from Sam Peters.

ARC was generously provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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Laura Newsholme says

I really wanted to like this book more than I did. It tells the story of Keon Rause, an investigative officer whose wife died in a terrorist bombing 5 years ago and his reluctant return to his home planet, Magenta to rejoin his old life. The plot is very intricate and I found it a little hard to keep straight, but I think this was because I sometimes found my attention drifting as I was reading. It just wasn't as compelling as the content should have made it and I honestly cannot put my finger on why. The characters were all quite interesting, albeit somewhat unbelievable, and the many plot twists with drugs and conspiracies and media moguls and immigration protests are well constructed and thought out. For some reason, I just didn't connect with it, but I feel confident in saying that I know it will appeal to people who like spy thrillers or sci-fi with a detective bent.

Sheriene says

I received this book in a Goodreads Giveaway. I must confess, I am not normaly one to read the SF genre but I have been trying to broaden my reading and was intrigued by the premise: A man builds an AI to help him investigate his wifes death several years previous. I love crime stories so I thought this would be a good book

to get me started in the SF genre. When I received the book, the cover suggests a sci-fi romance, but I didn't really get that so much when I read the book.

Anyway, genre defining aside, there was much to enjoy in this book. It was well written and the plot was clever: Keon returns to Magenta in disgrace, starts investigating a suspicious drug death and at the same time, looks into the last days of his wife to try to find out why she was killed. There were a lot of enjoyable twists as the story progresses. The story was reasonably well paced, though a lot was packed into the ending and it felt a bit rushed as a result, but all questions were satisfactorily answered and a few new ones posed.

The characters: Keon Rause was believable as a still grieving husband, the team he works with on Magenta are varied and interesting and the AI Liss was interesting as a counter to Keon's memories of Alysha.

The world building was brilliant. I don't just mean the idea of a far off planet, Magenta and what the effects of the planet would do to a person, nor the way society would adapt it to their needs, but also about the Marsters and how this feeds in to the reality of the story.

For me, this book was what I had hoped for: an easy way to tackle a genre I wouldn't normally read, because it had elements of genres I do often read. For me, this book was a good starting point to explore SF more fully. Lastly, I'm curious as to whether this is a one off or will become part of a series- it does feel like it would lend itself well as the beginning book in a series, but maybe that's just wishful thinking.

Gary says

6.9 out of 10 @ <https://1000yearplan.com/2018/05/03/c...>

Sam Peters' *From Darkest Skies* is a sci-fi crime thriller that follows Keona Rause, an intelligence agent who returns from Earth to the colony world of Magenta to solve the years-old murder of his wife, fellow agent Alysha. The twist is that he has secretly brought with him an artificial (and illegal) reconstruction of his late wife, whose memories and personality are culled from public records in this casually accepted, media saturated surveillance state. "Lys" can help uncover clues based on memories of the real Alysha's recorded life, but Alysha's private thoughts are as much a mystery to Lys as they are to the still-suffering Keona – and that hidden element unfortunately holds the key to explaining the choices that led to her death.

The novel's greatest strength is its worldbuilding and its depiction of the nuanced relationship between advanced technology and the human mind. Lys can literally be housed inside tech that interacts with Keona's thoughts; she can see what he sees and hold internal conversations with him as the action develops, and this dynamic results in some of the novel's sharpest moments. Where *From Darkest Skies* falters is in the overly methodical pacing of its plot, which unfolds rhythmically and never raises the temperature above lukewarm. The lack of a clear-cut antagonist hurts it as well. The premise of the book also relies heavily on the notion that Keona is falling in love with Alysha 2.0, but I never found the supposed romance convincing.

Peters is a talented hard-SF writer, and *From Darkest Skies* is often a colorful and intriguing novel reminiscent of Alastair Reynolds space opera procedurals. It works better when speculating about a tech-steeped future for humanity than it does as a whodunit or an action thriller.

Kate says

Enjoyable SF crime fiction set on the extraordinary planet of Magenta

Carley Adair says

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway . I really enjoyed this book. I wasn't sure what it was going to be like but I enjoyed all the characters and I really enjoyed the story . This was definitely worth the read .

Anne Szlachcic says

This book is a wonderful Sci-Fi thriller with a complex story line with many twist and turns that keeps the reader wondering what will happen next .

Keon Rouse has , since the death of his wife Alysha in a bombing on the colony world Magenta , spent the last five years on Earth .

After a security breach and the theft of one of the 'Masters' objects from a display, for which he is held responsible - he is given just 15 hours to leave Earth and return to Magenta .

He has brought with him an illegal AI shell of Alysha , built from her data footprint .His knows his relationship with the Shell is unhealthy but he can't let her go , he still has too many unanswered questions .

Within hours of landing Rouse is ordered back to work for the Intelligence Services and is partnered with three diverse colleagues . Their case is the death of a Reality Star from a 'gen' drug overdosethese drugs are not normally killers but their investigation leads them to believe that the drug has been modified to a specific genetic marker ----- many more user are likely to die unless they can find the source .

The more they investigate the drugs angle , the more they case begins to appear link to the people behind his wife's death .

How wide is the conspiracy ? who is trying to hamper their efforts ? and who is trying to kill them ?

The characterisation , dialogue and interactions between Keon and the members of his team make this book a enjoyable read . I hope that is not the last book in this Universe as without spoiling the ending many more questions arise than those answered .

I was given an Arc of this book by the Publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review .

Roy says

A solid scifi crime thriller that deals with losing your love ones and attempting to let go. The protagonist has lost his wife from a bombing, but has an AI construct that has all the memories and thoughts of the deceased wife. They go on a journey/mystery to discover the truth but discover much more about themselves. The plot never boils above room temperature. I was waiting for it to take off but it never did. I also found the lack of a really well developed antagonist was lacking. There had also been much talk about the protagonist falling in love with his AI wife but I honestly didn't see it at all, it felt non-existent.

Justine says

Originally posted to I Should Read That

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. This review is spoiler-free.

I wasn't entirely sure what to expect from this book. I had assumed it would be pretty much a straight science fiction novel heavily featuring AI with a bit of mystery. Instead Peters has created an exciting high-concept sci-fi-meets-crime story with a dash of noir.

The rich world building in *From Darkest Skies* was my favourite part of the book. Peters doesn't dump too much information on you at once. Instead, you're able to discover and wonder at a decent pace. The planet Magenta's surface, weather systems, and lifestyles were integrated well with the story and worked perfectly. The technology in the book is impressive without being overwhelming — the reader isn't bogged down by technical explanations, confusing science, or mind-numbing explanations. The world building is revealed in a very natural and effective way and I really enjoyed learning more about the planet and the way of life under its surface.

Speaking of technology, I love a good AI book and this one felt very realistic. Liss is an important part of the book but not its main focus, yet you still get a good feel for the tech that created her and duplicated Alysha's memories. I actually expected her to play a much more significant role in the book — I thought it would be more about Keon's tentative and budding relationship with the AI. Instead, he spends more time trying to get his working life back together in order to investigate what happened to his wife. The main focus of the book is truly on Alysha and their relationship, not Liss and the ethics behind her existence. I was a little disappointed by this, but I have a feeling this is something we will explore later on in the series.

Keon is our main character, along with Liss and the ever-present ghost of Alysha. Keon is incredibly single-minded — his whole point of existence is to figure out what happened to his wife. Although he's sometimes annoyingly stubborn, Peters does a good job of making sure the reader is aware of why Keon does what he does. There are other characters in this book, mostly made up of his team. I really enjoyed his relationship with his colleagues — they're a diverse bunch and played well off of one another. However, this novel is really driven by Keon himself.

Overall, I liked *From Darkest Skies*. It wasn't what I was expecting, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. While it doesn't stand out amongst the crowded sci-fi market, it's an enjoyable read that I would recommend. I'm very much looking forward to continuing on with this series and have the sequel, *From Distant Stars*, on my shelf now.

Rumfuddle says

Just couldn't get in to this, not sure why.

Might have almost warranted a 3* but the invisibility suite put stop to that.

Kath says

Continuing with my self-imposed mission to diversify my reading, I chose this one to try as I have recently had a good outing with sci-fi as a genre and this one also piqued my crime fiction interest. Keon Rouse is a government agent and native of Magenta. His story here starts when his work assignment on Gibraltar has been cut short due to an incident that he may or may not have been involved in. We also learn early on that his wife, Alysha, is dead, in a bombing on a night-goods-train. I say dead, she is to all intents and purposes, although he does have a rather nifty AI version of her, who he names Liss, who he is using to try and solve her own murder. After re-acclimatising to Magenta's strong gravity, Keon meets with his team, some assigned to him, others requested by him, hand picked to assist him with his side-mission. Find out who killed his wife, and why?

On the whole, I enjoyed this foray into the sci-fi world. I do admit that, being not as familiar with the genre as the hard core fan, I did initially struggle a tad with some of the concepts but, instead of fighting it and trying to "get" everything, I found that doing a bit of simple "accepting" made my overall journey a lot more comfortable. Making a character list as I went also helped immensely! The crime that Keon was officially meant to investigate was interesting and I really enjoyed the puzzle solving antics of Keon and his team, especially some of the trips they made along the way. Characterisation was good, once I had the characters cemented in my head, and I found that they all had depth and individual skills that they all brought, complementing each other well. Liss, I found to be interesting. Having watched and enjoyed the new series of Westworld (which this book has been compared to) I was quite easily able to believe in her.

The story itself went along at a fair lick, but at the right speed. Certain incidents from the past were injected in just the right places to enhance the current day narrative. Description was enough to set the scene without being over intrusive. It was a little complex and convoluted at times but I pretty much managed to stay with it even with a rather busy ending!

All in all, another success story to add to my "branching out" genre wise. I have learned a few more things from this book that I will be able to take with me next time I take the plunge.

My thanks go to the Publisher and Netgalley for the chance to read this book.

Chloe Smith says

All reviews can be found at <https://thereadinglodge.wordpress.com/>

From Darkest Skies is a science-fiction thriller that follows our main character Keon Rouse, as he is sent back to his home world of Magenta where he must face his past and try to make a new life for himself. However, his past always haunts him thanks to the shell of his wife he created following her untimely death. As he falls back into the role he previously held within the intelligence service of Magenta, Keon can't help but try and find out the truth behind his wife's death in order to understand her actions.

I first heard about this novel not long after completing Westworld, a concept that this novel has been compared to. Though I can see the similarities with the shell of Keon's wife, I wouldn't make a direct comparison between the two. That isn't to say that this novel isn't something you should read – you really should! If you're a fan, like myself, of science-fiction that focuses primarily on the characters as opposed to the technology, then this is one for you.

Following my love of Becky Chambers science-fiction series (you all know it), I've found my love for character-drive science fiction, and this is no exception. Sam Peters thrusts you into Keon's life bringing together all his hurt and love surrounding his dead wife Alysha. But, not only does Peters really know how to create flawed characters that are full of life and personality, he knows how to weave in the world-building and the technicalities of technological science-fiction without it seeming imposing or like you have been buried under a pile of information.

Keon, our main character, is a man who has become flawed by the death of his wife. Unable to move past her death, he has spent a lot of money to illegally create a shell that an AI of his wife can inhabit in order to communicate and have some resemblance of his previous life. Peters keeps Keon's love alive throughout the novel, with each new thread of his investigation becoming somehow linked and helping Keon get ever closer to the truth of her death, and why she was where she was at the time. It is clear that Keon feels some sort of guilt towards her death in his inability to understand her mindset at the time, and this is something that travels with him right through to the bitter end.

From Darkest Skies is a novel that flows brilliantly with pacing, writing style, and overall structure. The world of Magenta and the politics of this society are easily understandable and I loved the array of cultures that Peters brings together. Our main group of characters are a mixture of Earthers and Magentans with different belief systems, and altogether different personalities. In particular, I really enjoyed the character of Rangesh who came across as flighty in his thought processes, but surprisingly smart behind this demeanour. I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, and I truly hope that I can go back to this world someday as I felt like there was some unfinished business towards the end of the novel.

Joanne Harris says

A masterly piece of writing and plotting that manages to merge classy space-opera with a police procedural as twisty as a Christie - and yet I found myself reading it with the growing realization that, in spite of its originality, excellent characterization and beautiful execution, there lies at its heart a trope that serves as the elephant in the room of a great deal of otherwise good sci-fi. It's a trope that we find in much AI fiction - the assumption that AI women are somehow better - more human, more real, in fact - than real ones. It's true of the excellent Westworld (unfairly brought out to promote this book, as if it wasn't good enough to stand up on its own). It's true of Humans. And it's true in this novel, too. The AI reconstruction of the protagonist's dead wife is more long-suffering, more understanding, more supportive, less secretive, even more insightful than the original. And every other woman he meets - mostly strong, independent women in authority - he seems to react to negatively. They're all either bitches, or obstructions, or he wants to slap them. And after a while, I found myself wanting to slap *him*, too. Now I know that this is a gut reaction to a common sci-fi trope, but sci-fi has had a bad rep in the past for alienating women readers, and mostly for just cause. I wouldn't let something like this get in the way of anyone enjoying the book, but it would be nice to see male authors writing *actual women* as sensitively and empathically as they write AI ones.

? percy ♡ says

I AM SPEECHLESS.

but only metaphorically, because, y'know, i'm typing this right now.

but holy shit. *holy shit* this was phenomenal.

the plot was absolutely incredible and i'm trying to figure out how to convey to you how amazing it is without giving it away. it is astonishingly complex and clever, and completely unpredictable, especially the ending. there was a cliffhanger, but the best sort; where the main mystery is wrapped up, but suddenly SURPRISE! here's this extra thing that you literally weren't expecting at all!!

it was also very well-written, with complex and interesting characters that i really connected to throughout, especially the protagonist, keon. and the *world-building*, holy shit. in the beginning peters somehow managed to explain about the masters and why humans were scattered onto different planets without info-dumping, which i was really impressed by.

this was a super original and intriguing futuristic sci-fi thriller, and a must for all sci-fi fans. i'd also recommend it for anyone who likes mysteries and thrillers even if they're not that into sci-fi.

S.J. Higbee says

This noir thriller has a wonderful setting – the planet Magenta has an unfriendly, heavy gravity and terrible weather, to the extent that buildings are more like bunkers in order to survive the terrible storms and the only transport system is an underground railway. Peters' scene setting is spot on, establishing the mood music of this classy murder mystery – an important component in noir crime. The protagonist is also suitably moody with a full suite of emotional luggage on account of his wife's death – it has haunted him that although the person who actually set off the bomb was brought to justice, the conspiracy behind the crime was never fully uncovered. In a desperate attempt to try to uncover Alysha's last movements – Rause has no idea why she cleaned out their bank account and what she was doing on the train in the first place – he has Liss constructed, based on every scrap of information he possesses about Alysha. However, this leaves him with a construct who looks, sounds and acts like his dead wife – so five years on he is no closer to coming to terms with his loss.

It's a great premise. Peters drops us in the middle of this world, which I really loved – though initially I slightly struggled with the welter of unfamiliar names, though by the time I was 20% into the story, I had become sufficiently acclimatised to the world this was no longer a problem. And the reason for their unfamiliarity became apparent well before the end.

This police procedural is tightly constructed, with various clues and a number of suspects who are considered by Rause and his team. I also thoroughly enjoyed the cast of supporting characters – Rangesh, who has been undercover with the drugs squad, bounces off the page with his West Coast slang and his unorthodox fashion sense – Rause is rocked when he turns up for duty in a flamboyantly coloured caftan. Rangesh provides much of the welcome shafts of humour in amongst Rause's gritted determination to discover what happened to his wife.

Alongside the murder mystery, Peters also raises the problem of how to grieve when technology can provide a replacement with a strong likeness to the dead person; there are also issues around the artefacts left behind by a powerful alien race as various powerful corporations race to try and uncover their secrets; Magenta is a colony world with a sudden influx of immigrants from Earth which is also causing resentment. Without losing pace or focus, we get an insight into these problems along with others bubbling under the surface that add to the texture and richness of this world. Peters' unfussy style keeps things moving at a fair clip as the

complex case of a series of drugs-related deaths crisscrosses the five-year-old bombing incident. Like many noir thrillers, this is one where you need to pay attention or you'll miss something vital. Indeed at the end, I found myself backtracking to ensure I fully understood what was going on, as the denouement unspooled with something of a rush and it took me a couple of goes before I worked out all the ramifications – though I'll freely admit I wasn't at my shiny best at the time.

I was heartened to note there are plenty of dangling plotpoints, which I'm hoping will mean there will be a second book set in this world – and if there is, then I'll be tracking it down. This is a world I very much want to dive back into.

While I obtained the arc of *From Darkest Skies* from the publisher via NetGalley, this has in no way influenced my unbiased review.

8/10
