



# The Games

*Ted Kosmatka*

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**The Games** Ted Kosmatka

***Jurassic Park* meets *The Hunger Games* in this stunning new high-energy, high-concept tale from first-time novelist Ted Kosmatka, a Nebula Award and Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award finalist.**

**NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY***

Set in an amoral future where genetically engineered monstrosities fight each other to the death in an Olympic event, *The Games* envisions a harrowing world that may arrive sooner than you think.

Silas Williams is the brilliant geneticist in charge of preparing the U.S. entry into the Olympic Gladiator competition, an internationally sanctioned bloodsport with only one rule: no human DNA is permitted in the design of the entrants. Silas lives and breathes genetics; his designs have led the United States to the gold in every previous event. But the other countries are catching up. Now, desperate for an edge in the upcoming Games, Silas's boss engages an experimental supercomputer to design the genetic code for a gladiator that cannot be beaten.

The result is a highly specialized killing machine, its genome never before seen on earth. Not even Silas, with all his genius and experience, can understand the horror he had a hand in making. And no one, he fears, can anticipate the consequences of entrusting the act of creation to a computer's cold logic.

Now Silas races to understand what the computer has wrought, aided by a beautiful xenobiologist, Vidonia João. Yet as the fast-growing gladiator demonstrates preternatural strength, speed, and—most disquietingly—intelligence, Silas and Vidonia find their scientific curiosity giving way to a most unexpected emotion: sheer terror.

## **Praise for *The Games***

"Blends the best of Crichton and Koontz."—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Outstanding . . . very like something Michael Crichton might have written . . . [a] bold mix of horror and SF . . . Expect big things from [Ted] Kosmatka."—*Booklist* (starred review)

"Kosmatka successfully captures the thrill of groundbreaking technology. . . . The pleasure of his polished, action-packed storytelling is deepened by strong character development. This near-future SF thriller . . . seems destined for the big screen."—*Library Journal* (starred review)

## **The Games Details**

Date : Published March 13th 2012 by Del Rey

ISBN : 9780345526618

Author : Ted Kosmatka

Format : Hardcover 368 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Thriller, Fiction, Horror, Dystopia

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# From Reader Review The Games for online ebook

## Libbie Hawker (L.M. Ironside) says

Fast-paced, inventive, with a plausible use of real science, The Games is an exciting and fun read. Kosmatka's writing in this novel is sturdy and competent and straightforward, and that's the reason for a three-star review instead of a four or five. I'm a big fan of the author's short fiction, which flawlessly blends hard science with intensely emotional, gorgeous prose and literary-style character depth. I was hoping for an entire novel of that kind of writing in The Games, but instead I got a sci-fi action book...a good sci-fi action book, for sure, but not the kind of thing I usually come back to read over and over again.

It's a fun book, with some cool monsters and a great, fresh premise. Worth reading!

Even more worth reading are Ted Kosmatka's short stories. Hunt them down wherever you can. They're amazing.

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## Ric says

A book in two parts: the **first**, a very hard SF extrapolation on genetic engineering applied to the making of a monster warrior, and the **second**, an action-driven thriller with elements of *Street Fighter* (the game) and disaster movies of the 1970s.

I enjoyed the SF elements which were treated in the detailed, reasoned approach generally characterized as "*hard*" SF. Not knowing much about biology and genetics, it all seemed quite believable. However, the parts about the electric grid and power flow were less so; maybe this is a tech I understand more.

The action segments, especially the one-on-one monster battles, were thrilling enough. After the arena, I felt the rest of the book devolved into a hunting/running fight between the monster and its builder. Chase and fight sequences are tough to read since the reading (or listening) pace is glacial relative to the actual action. They're more fun in video form. One writing approach that may work in certain cases has the story jumping to the aftermath of the action and then the characters reconstruct the whole sequence. Another method, requiring much more skill, is to give the reader just segments of the action, enough to imply motion and speed, then fill in the gaps later.

Overall, this was a **horror story** but I hardly noticed, quite a feat by first-novelist Kosmatka. Will read more of his work.

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## Terry Brooks says

The choice was easy this month. I just finished a new book called THE GAMES by a writer named Ted Kosmatka. No, it is not a riff on THE HUNGER GAMES. It isn't even fantasy. It is a SciFi Thriller about a future in which the Olympic Games includes an event pitting genetically manufactured creatures against each other in blood sport reminiscent of ancient gladiatorial contests. What happens when the perfect fighting machine becomes a threat to its creators? Nothing good, you can be sure. A page turner with a new take on

the future of the Olympics should genetic manipulation suddenly become fashionable.

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## **David says**

Content: 3

Audiobook: 2

In the Games, each country puts forward a genetically engineered creature, a gladiator that will fight with others to the death. The only rule is that the creature cannot contain any human DNA. It is a source of national pride in biotechnology, that the American creatures have always won, up to the present day. But this year, the American monstrosity is different type of killing machine. A genius has created a super-computer that has redesigned the genetic code from the ground up. The creature is born with an array of characteristics that don't seem to contribute to what is necessary to win the Games. Their purpose does not become clear until it participates in the Games.

This book does not have much in the way of character development. The reader does not have much empathy for the main characters. But the book is a real thriller, and it is next to impossible to put down before the bone-chilling climax.

I did not read this book; I listened to it as an audiobook. Scott Brick is a good narrator, although he does little to differentiate the voices of the characters. And the sound level is rather low; I blame Random House Audio for a poor audio production.

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## **sanny says**

Interesting beginning, long draggy pointless middle, predictable climax, probably exciting ending but I couldn't be bothered anymore. Perhaps would work better in book form rather than as an audiobook because Scott Brick's narration didn't really evoke any sort of emotion from me (maybe it's the plot at fault, I dunno) other than 'uh-huh, so...okaay...duh...yawn'

The actual Games upon which the book was titled, much like The Scorpio Races, was wrapped up in about a tenth portion of the whole story. But at least the latter had a more interesting storyline with better atmospheric execution.

Did not finish this, maybe I'd finish listening to it just to prove something, maybe I won't, but either way, I think, one audiobook is enough for me.

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## **Sachin Dev says**

This book blew me away. I cannot believe this is the FIRST novel by Ted Kosmatka, the man who had won Nebula/Hugo for his shorter works, really creates a pitch-perfect science fiction thriller that is executed in the most stunning manner for his first book.

I was hooked right from page one - I was taking a break from my "newer" novels to be reviewed and bought

this book as I've 'heard' great things. You know, SF is no longer my thing. But the way Ted writes, he'd got HUGE TALONS hooked deep into me, right from the first chapter on.

Olympic games that involves genetic monstrosities fighting each other ? Intriguing. In America, in 2044 where each country is out to prove its supremacy in this genetic engineering race, a errant genius creates a sentient AI that seeds the plan for the decimation of the human race worldwide. The plan is set in motion - and America's foremost geneticist Silas Williams, an unknown pawn in the play of things, creates a 'gladiator' as per the supercomputer's design. The genetic makeup of which is previously unheard of. He has his misgivings and they hire a 'xenobiologist', Vidonia Joao who could probably crack this puzzle. But this puzzle is a living thing, that has it's own mission that could prove to be terrifying.

The novel begins with this prologue that introduces us to Evan Chandler, the errant genius child and then switches over to Silas as the "gladiator" is born and goes through an astonishing pace of growth. There are not too many secondary characters other than Chandler or Williams - Ted keeps it pretty taut, rapidly unspooling into a bloody thriller - yielding to layers of horror, graphic and unrepentant as the scale of terror is finally revealed in the second half of the book.

This is a book that again dips into the folds of science fiction to give us a hard-hitting truth about unethical science that spills out because of man's greed for power. The head of Olympic Commission, Baskov is one face of the evil. This set up closely resembles Crichton's structure of writing a "scientific" thriller where the face of pure evil is science gone wrong but there are catalysts to the same in terms of human intervention. The novel posits wide-reaching sociological and philosophical questions on the future of humanity - there are some clever SF-nal touches to remind us that this is indeed, set in the future but nothing outrageous enough to take the focus away from the horror of genetics. Silas as the central character really is a pretty sympathetic character we can identify with - conflicted, upright and the moral compass through which the reader views the events unfold. Vidonia provides able support. The rest of them fade against the bloody backdrop of terror unsheathed as the Gladiator gets into form.

An entirely original novel, Ted Kosmatka announces his arrival to the genre pretty well. An entertaining SF thriller for all genre fans and readers outside who are in the mood for something original that rivals Crichton and Koontz.

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## **Tom LA says**

Excellent near future thriller, with some very original twists on the Michael Crichton formula. It definitely raises above the ocean of non-A-list action / sf / thriller books. Very visual story-telling (an example on the opposite extreme would be Isaac Asimov), and solid scientific background. It's rather obvious what this book wants to be, and I'm always surprised to find reviewers who choose to read a book with a broken net and blood splatter on the cover, somehow expecting major character depth à la Jane Austen ("Oh, the characters are not very developed..". Who cares??).

Spoiler alert ---- A couple of comments for those of you who have already read the book: 1) the ultimate "why" was a little too vague for me and I felt it should have been further articulated. Basically, the only reason why Pea decides to help in the end is that, while he created the gladiator race, he felt they were destructive, while humans are constructive. That 11th hour change of mind left me a bit puzzled. 2) I was

expecting the matter of the directive "Survive the competition" to resurface towards the end, but it didn't. It could have been interesting to find out a bit more about what happened then and how exactly those instructions influenced the creation of the gladiator.

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## **j says**

You had me at, "In this amoral future, genetically engineered monsters fight to the death at public Olympic gaming events."

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## **Thomas Edmund says**

In the future, performance enhancing drugs aren't the concern of choice for the Olympics, genetic modification is. But rather than trying to ban GE the international community instead decides to hold a gladiatorial competition each year where the only rule is 'no human genes'

The U.S. has won the competition for the past few years (and thus the right to host the olympics [like I said preposterous]) but this time around the geneticists may have bitten off more than they can chew.

Silas (not evil despite the name) the lead scientist of the project is raising the most ambitious project yet, the problem is someone else has a plan for his creation, and it isn't just to win The Games.

While the premise, is highly ridiculous, and is an uncomfortable smash between GE and AI plots, the story flows well and the characters are someone sympathetic.

Basically if not taken too seriously The Games is an enjoyable read, I just wouldn't expect literary accolades coming its way anytime soon.

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## **Jack says**

Ted is an alumnus of the increasingly famous Highland Writers Group in NW Indiana. He's another person that I have, on occasion, dined with, drank with and had grand discussions. Probably one of the most intellectual members of our group to become published, but also a down-to-earth kind of guy that you can simply sit down with and have an interesting discussion.

I am normally not fond of dystopian computer stories; at least, not since reading D.F. Jones's "Colossus" many, many years ago. Like Heinlein, I believe that the computer is helpful to mankind. It is mankind that slowly drags down the intellectual possibilities to its most base use.

That said, Ted Kosmatka has written an engaging novel that has been published to fit right into the timeframe of the Olympic Games. As everyone knows, certain sports, and certainly the Olympic Games, have become something of a "bloodless" substitute for battle. This tradition goes back millennia, not only among the Greeks, but among humanity for as long as they have been around. This is bloodless battle for tribal – or National – pride.

In this dystopia of the near future, someone has upped the stakes. Genetically-engineered “Gladiators” are created in the labs, using the vision of certain exceptional humans and computer programs that design the means to pair and cross various chromosomes in a human attempt to play God. They create impossible matches to do battle and slake the blood-thirst of a overstimulated and increasingly introverted society, hooked more on gadgets than on reality. Ted takes the current state of affairs in popular culture where we are inundated with "reality" shows to make our own mundane lives seem more "normal", and extends it, props it against the event that prides itself in brotherhood and sportsmanship.

This work produces two effects among its characters; those that come to have a moral crisis over whether what they are doing and creating is ethical and those that become so utterly immersed in virtual reality that they are no longer able to function in the real world as we know it.

No, wait... there is a third. Yes, there is a third effect; that of politics and finance, which drives the other two to push things to an extreme where the ONLY thing that counts is to win, without thinking of the moral and ethical consequences of their actions and only concentrating on the political status and monetary power it will garner for those at the top.

Ted takes us down all those paths with this book to a frightening conclusion. The only conclusion, really.

Part Jonesian dystopia, part Le Carré in its construction, this is a gripping science fiction thriller that keeps your attention riveted to the page. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

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### **Luis Diego Camacho Mora says**

La premisa para ciencia ficción es interesante. El libro es entretenido pero cuando tiene que explotar, no llega a la intensidad deseada, sin embargo se mantiene entretenido.

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### **April says**

In a technologically advanced future, people have added a genetic engineering contest to the Olympic Games. Each country uses it to show off its prowess, and the United States has won since the inception of this twisted arena fight to the death.

This time around, though, Silas Williams, head of development for the project, feels something has gone terribly wrong. Using a different tactic, Olympic development has allowed a computer genius to use his supercomputer to help create the creature. From its birth, Silas and several others working with it have wondered if maybe they've pushed too far this time. It's hyperintelligent, more like a true alien than an animal. Silas enlists his friend Ben and his new love interest, Vidonia, into helping him figure out what this thing really is- before it's too late.

Kosmatka did a great job in raising some important moral dilemmas in his exploration of genetic engineering and the creative process. Above and beyond what they've created this time, did they ever have the right to create creatures just to send them to their deaths? (This happens to be an issue I had with the premise as well. Would people be evil enough to condemn these creatures to death just for their entertainment? I hope not.)



Does the good that comes from engineering these creatures- like breakthroughs in biotechnology- justify doing it in the first place? Do we really know how to judge sentience in a creature, or for that matter, a computer? Can we ever fault a being, no matter how manipulated its inception, for wanting to do what it takes to survive? The author uses these questions to create a thoughtful story with some scary implications.

The characters were only mediocre from my point of view. Kosmatka captured intelligence and social awkwardness fairly well, but I felt no real passion from any of the characters either. Even the love story was a tad dull, though I did root for Silas and Vidonia as they raced against the clock to discover what this creature was and stop it from gaining the upper hand against its human creators.

Whatever else I might have felt about this book, I was surprised to notice a day after finishing it that it was on my mind. I ran through it as though I had watched it in the movie theatre. The story, while not bringing in much action until about halfway through, nevertheless flows nicely. By that halfway mark, I didn't want to put the book down.

Overall Kosmatka does a good job with a slightly flawed premise. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes thoughtful science fiction or scientific ethical dilemmas. A solid four stars.

I received this book from the LibraryThing Early Reviewers program.

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### **Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says**

By the time I was done with this, I just didn't care at all about it.

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### **Sarah says**

The prologue to this book is very intriguing - though disturbing on several levels. I was really ready to begin the rest of the story in chapter 1, but was disappointed with the manner in which Silas' character is introduced. It almost seems as if readers were supposed to be impressed with Silas and the direction of the story, but I just couldn't stay interested. The gladiator "monstrosity" that comes out of the cow at the beginning was a built-up moment that fell flat on its face as soon as we were treated to the full description of the creature. I can't say that I was able to stay engaged with this novel. It was just too busy and all over the place for me.

As for providing additional constructive criticism, I didn't enjoy my time with the novel; therefore I'll waste no more time in going on about its shortcomings in a review.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

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### **Leanna says**

[a big nuclear explosion that destroys everything? Followed by an ambiguous epilogue in which we discover that - crikey! - one of the eggs has survived... and... maybe... one more...??? Sorry,

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## Trudi says

### 3.5 stars

**DO NOT** pick this book up for character development (there isn't much of that).

**DO NOT** pick this book up for meaty prose of a philosophical bent that introduces new ideas and deep thoughts. Nope. Not much of that either.

**DO** pick this book up for a pulpy, page-turning thrill where, if you don't ask too many questions, and fully suspend all disbelief, you will be majorly entertained by high octane action sequences of cinematic gore and splendor. Cause we all need that guilt-free catharsis once in a while, don't we? Sure we do!

I picked up this book expecting an adrenaline rush laced with dark overtones of fight-to-the-death, futurized Gladiatorial scenes -- a Hunger Games meets Jurassic Park type of deal -- and that's *sort of* what I got, with some exceptions.

First of all, there are no "Games" plural, there is a lengthy 200 page lead up to *the Game* singular -- attached to the Olympics in some weird and wild (and not entirely believable) unseemly epic event of internationally sanctioned blood sport. All the countries of the world are monkeying with genetics in a Frankenstein-ish ethics-be-damned way to create monstrous animal (never human!) hybrids (as Mother Nature weeps in horror). All this effort with the sole purpose of annihilating competitors in Gladiatorial-UFC cage matches and be *the only creation (abomination) left standing* (if Jeff Probst and Joe Rogan had a lovechild, it would be this scuzzy event).

When you combine scientists with capitalists, great leaps forward are made, always. Throw in a healthy dose of national pride, and anything can happen.

These caged death matches is the "anything" that debut novelist Ted Kosmatka imagines. And for the most part, I was on board all the way.

In the first 200 pages leading up to "the big Event" I really thought Kosmatka was laying the groundwork for something much more profound and significant, but the last 200 pages fail to bear that out. It's standard monster of the week fare -- exciting and fun -- but *standard* nevertheless. We've seen this before, we've seen it done *better elsewhere*, yet I still like Kosmatka's spin on things and he definitely shows promise as a full-length novelist.

I wasn't entirely sold on the AI aspects of the story -- there is a "super-computer" that plays a HUGE role in influencing events -- but I never really bought into it. "Brannin/Pea" is *pregnant* with potential -- HAL 9000 worthy -- but I felt in the end that part of the novel could have been developed so much more effectively.

**Final thoughts:** Fun (check). Awesome action sequences (check). Book to change your life? Eh, not so much. But they can't all do that. This is an escape hatch book and I really did enjoy it. Recommended!

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## Lisa Eskra says

I had high hopes for this one, but it never really came together for me. It didn't help that there were so many plot holes and inaccuracies, I could drive a truck through them.

The blurb casts this as "Jurassic Park" meets "Hunger Games." It's more like "Spartacus: Blood and Sand" with mutants (and without the compelling plot that went along with it). And I don't know about anyone else, but the gladiator seemed to look a lot like Toothless from "How to Train Your Dragon".

The entire premise for the novel is really far-fetched. Genetic mutants competing in a gladiatorial competition as part of the Olympics? Honestly, how would this be any different than adding cock-fighting? Or dog-racing (or anything else featuring something besides people)? It really needed to be an independent sporting event. Something new. It was a poor decision to connect it with the Olympics; it makes absolutely no sense in the scope of the Olympics. They allow genetic manipulation in this event but none of the human ones. And it's always in the United States. And it's attended by the President and other heads of state. That pretty much sounds NOTHING like the Olympics.

Some of the science stuff sounds like it was copied right out of a biology textbook. The description of gel electrophoresis stands out in my mind. "He stained the newly attenuated DNA with an ethidium bromide standard and bathed the set in ultraviolet light for a full six minutes. As expected, the result was an unbroken fluorescence down the entire column of gel lane. Benjamin then used the Southern blot technique to develop the reference standard he'd need later." During the climax, he gives an MSDS rundown of sulfuric acid, but then makes the blatant error of saying it smells like rotten eggs. Know your subject, please.

Kosmatka has some weird point-of-view work that I really didn't care for, characters popping up who may or may not have even been given a name and are never seen again. Very often, it seemed like the alternate POVs only served to postpone the tension, instead of adding interesting side-plots or expanding upon what Silas knows. This big, bad, exciting thing is about to happen and then -- we're farting around with Evan or whoever else. It annoyed me as a reader, and I started scanning through them.

Beyond Silas (who really treads Marty Stu territory), the rest are bland and underdeveloped. The VR world of Evan's creation is an odd side-plot in this novel that never really meshes well with the gladiator/Olympics. I felt like the author went overboard trying to humanize Evan, and from a likability standpoint, I never empathized with him. An evil supercomputer who thinks it's God, nice to see the author beating that to death. The gladiator is overpowered on every level and broke my threshold of disbelief for what's presented as plausible future technology.

I got a bit tired of characters describing their appearances and/or ancestry. It's a sloppy way to develop characters. Vidonia's introduction is rife with it, way to feed the perception that women are always judged on their looks first, as opposed to brains (it's okay for Evan to be a smart, fat slob but Vidonia needs a face like something from a "fashion show"). It is refreshing, though, to see a woman of color in a major role, but it quickly became obvious that her major purpose was to help develop Silas via some contrived relationship. As soon as they wind up sleeping together, her character is reduced to being his sexy plaything (instead of being a smart scientist working on the project). The ending tries to redeem her but it felt too little, too late.

In spite of these flaws, the book wasn't too bad. The action scenes are amazingly well written; the tension

and imagery is so visceral, it puts the reader right there in the midst of it. And that's even with the predictable plot (in that sense, comparing it to Jurassic Park does it no favors). Many scenes only develop characters without furthering the plot, which might have been okay if they weren't so transparent in purpose. As far as overall plot, not much happens until Part 3, when the gladiator competition actually starts. After that, it turns into something out of a B-rate sci-fi movie. And could the denouement have been any more cliché?

In summary, the novel never really gels. It's a techie mix of research and thriller with heaps of random melodrama for character-building. The text is pulled in too many directions. If the plot had been tighter and more believable, this would've been a good book.

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## **Rusty says**

Bio-engineering. Monsters. Savants. Olympics. Tall people. Super computers.

What more do you want? Naturally, Scott Sigler could have done this better, but it's not a bad read.

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## **Ben Babcock says**

Genetic engineering used to be purely science fiction. It's a mark of how far we've come that these things are now becoming part of our everyday world. The once-hypothetical question of how to deal with augmented athletes in events like the Olympics is no longer so hypothetical. In *The Games*, Ted Kosmatka deals with the question in a simple way: no tinkering with the human athletes, but attach a single event that allows countries to showcase their skills at genetic engineering. This is a blood match between designer monsters, and the United States has taken the gold every time. But the pressure is on to triumph again, and so the commission in charge takes control out of the hands of Silas Williams and has an experimental supercomputer design the monster instead. I'll let you guess what happens.

At first glance, *The Games* seems like a cheesy science-fiction thriller, easily dismissed as "probably enjoyable but not all that fulfilling". I gave it a try anyway, and my estimation was almost spot-on. It simmers for the first half, carefully laying out all the threads that will come together for the bloody climax. Then *The Games* discards that disguise in the second half to reveal itself as the adrenaline-fuelled thriller it wants to be.

There are some interesting ideas floating around here. The idea of designing creatures purely to fight to the death, while it rises moral qualms, is a fascinating look at the possible celebrity applications of genetic engineering. Kosmatka doesn't spend much time explaining how his near-future society differs from the present day; he definitely shows instead of tells. His characters drive hybrids, and there are hints of eerie differences like a "track" system that uses testing to determine what field of study the government will finance for each person. These are all nice touches because they communicate a sense of difference without actually getting in the way of the story.

Likewise, I enjoyed the philosophical tension inherent in the gladiator competition. On one hand, this is the elevation of science to an art form. As Silas observes, this competition provides an opportunity for countries

as well as individual scientists to show what they can do. And the byproduct of all this time spent designing killer creatures is nothing to shake a stick at: medicines, new gene therapies, and all sorts of important scientific discoveries. Although I can sympathize with the protesters outside the stadium, there is a lot to be said in favour of the competition.

On the other hand, there is a darker side. Winning the games has become a point of national pride for the United States. Chekhov once said, “There is no national science, just as there is no national multiplication table; what is national is no longer science.” And that is precisely how I feel about this competition: it’s a perversion of science, not because of *what* is being created but *why* it is being created at all. And there’s more than national pride at stake—the competition attracts large donors, and the companies in charge of manufacturing these creatures like that cash flow. Winning is an important way to secure contracts and accounts, and it’s this avarice that naturally leads to everything going FUBAR in the third act.

So Kosmatka sets up a very satisfying conflict on metaphysical as well as physical levels. Unfortunately, I hated the resolution of this thriller. I don’t mind what happens to Silas or to his reputation. (Is that cold and callous? Or is it merely a sign of how little I invest in one-dimensional thriller characters?) However, I wanted the bad guy to get his comeuppance in front of some kind of board of inquiry; I wanted him to answer for what he did. Instead he gets incinerated in a rather impersonal nuclear blast. What kind of justice is that?

Don’t even get me started about the relationship between Silas and Vidonia. Any hope *The Games* had of being anything *more* than a cheesy thriller went out the window the moment we learned the supporting character was an impossibly hot female scientist. Naturally enough, they hook up, because it just wouldn’t be right for the male and female leads in a thriller to be just friends. This is but one of the many branches *The Games* hit as it fell out of the cliché tree.

Oh, and there’s an entire subplot involving the nascent sentience of the supercomputer. As with everything else about this book, it is predictable and features nothing I haven’t seen done better elsewhere.

*The Games* isn’t quite as bad as *Fragment*. It restricts itself to a smaller cast of characters, to good effect, and its plot makes more sense, if it is somewhat dull in its plodding predictability. Both of these books have a biological bent to their science-fictional premises, which is probably why one reminded me of the other—but *The Games*’ premise has far more interesting social and ethical consequences than the reality-TV-show ideas in *Fragment*.

As I’ve said before, I’m somewhat biased against thrillers. They can’t help being what they are. *The Games* probably isn’t bad as far as thrillers go, nor is it all that good. It’s mostly just unremarkable. As a work of science fiction, it raises interesting questions about issues that are on our doorstep. But flat characters and an uncomplicated plot make this book difficult to praise as anything more than mediocre.

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## Mike (the Paladin) says

Ahh...again the dreaded 3 star rating. Not really good enough (in my opinion of course) to go all the way to 4 but better than the barely passable 2.

Also...I am definitely going to have to establish a "science-fantasy" shelf. This is a science fiction read but there are things in here that really strain the boundaries of science. I mean I'm only somewhat aware of what advances have been made in gene splicing and what may be possible...but I'm pretty sure this one tripped over reality.

So, do some major league "suspension of disbelief", prepare for some detailed sex scenes (I skipped those once it became clear exactly how detailed they were going to be)...a love story (view spoiler). Then gird up your loins.

This book put me much in mind of some of the 1950s science fiction/monster movies.

All in all, not a bad read.

We start out with the premise that in the "near future" one of the main Olympic events is the Gladiatorial competition between genetically "developed" competitors. The only rule is, "no human DNA".

Our hero (or one of them) is a well known genetic engineer. The US has so far dominated the Gladiatorial competition and he's why...

Till now. this year a virtual reality computer built by a strange eccentric genius has designed the US contender... and no one understands what "it" is or what "it" can do or even what genes "it" carries.

This can't lead to anything good....

Really, it can't.

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