



Breakaway

Joel Shepherd

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Cassandra Kresnov is a highly advanced hunter-killer android. She has escaped the League and fled to Callay, a member of the Federation. Because of her fighting skills she was able to save the president's life and is now a trusted member of the security forces. However, not all Tanushans are happy to have her on their turf and Cassandra has to tread carefully. As Callay moves towards a vote on whether to break away from the Federation, confusion reigns and terrorist groups plot their own agendas.

Cassandra becomes involved with two young troubleshooters for the secret service and finds out more than she ever wanted to know about the Tanushan underground and those on the fringes.

Furthermore, there is a delegation from the League in Tanusha, and Cassandra is not sure that they won't try to take her back. Breakaway is a great story with a cracking plot and strong characters. At its heart is the enigma of Cassandra: Is she more human than human, or is she totally untrustworthy?

Breakaway Details

Date : Published April 3rd 2007 by Pyr (first published December 18th 2002)

ISBN : 9781591025405

Author : Joel Shepherd

Format : Paperback 425 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Cyberpunk, Fiction, War, Military Fiction

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From Reader Review Breakaway for online ebook

Sarah says

Toller zweiter Teil in der Reihe um Cassandra Kresnov!

[Enthält eventuell SPOILER zu Band 1]

Schauplatz ist wieder die Stadt Tanusha auf Callay, die sich seit Band 1 plötzlich mit der Tatsache konfrontiert sieht, mehr oder weniger Mittelpunkt der aktuellen politischen Entwicklungen zu sein. Nicht darauf vorbereitet, muss die Stadt mit den Konsequenzen eines löchrigen Sicherheitssystems und fehlenden Notfallplänen umgehen. Helfen soll dabei Sandy, die Androidin und Protagonistin aus Band 1. Doch auch sie muss nach den vorangegangenen Geschehnissen ihren Platz zwischen den Fronten der Liga und der Förderung finden und sich dem Kreuzfeuer der Debatten um künstliche Intelligenz und Biotechnik stellen. Insbesondere die Entwicklung von Sandy seit Band hat mir richtig gut gefallen, ihr Umfeld hat sich verändert und so verändert auch sie sich. Ihre Vorstellungen und Bedürfnisse als auch die Entwicklung komplexer Moralstrukturen erscheinen in der beschriebenen Form absolut authentisch. Ebenfalls interessant sind die Themen, über die an verschiedenen Stellen aufgrund der Handlung diskutiert wird: Anerkennung künstlicher Intelligenz, Rechte von Androiden, Vorurteile, Xenophobie, Modifikationen an Menschen und politische Instrumentalisierung. Dabei wirkt das Buch nie schwerfällig, sondern behält sich die Leichtigkeit dank der Charaktere und ihrer untereinander wirkenden Dynamik bei. Das einzige, was mich ein bisschen gestört hat, war die Menge an Action in der ersten Hälfte des Buches. Michael Bay hätte bestimmt Spaß gehabt.

Ralph McEwen says

Interesting plot with a lot of political insights of the expanded human occupied universe. Not as much action as the first book though. The ending made me go looking straight away for the third book in this series. I really like the Cassandra character.

Nathan says

The second book in the Cassandra Kresnov series does not disappoint. Everything that I liked about the first book, the people, the action, and the intrigue get better and the story somehow explores the human condition more deeply than the first book.

If you like action/intrigue science fiction, this is one of the better series of books out there.

Robert says

I am continuing to like these - interesting future; lots of action tangled with extreme tech

Paradoxical says

Something about this book really rubbed me the wrong way. I hopped into it with faint hopes of it being something better and more exciting than the first, only to find my interest wane as I continued on and my tolerance levels dipping very low. All of the characters ended up irritating me and I found any fondness for Cassandra vanishing right before my eyes. And that's probably what killed it--that I can't even bring myself to like Cassandra when she's the main character and I usually love main characters.

It's just... the sheer idiocy. Irrationality? Whatever. She hates the League with a vehemence and fine, I get it, they suck and screwed you over. She (view spoiler) I just--both sides *suck* and the fact that Cassandra supports one that wants to screw her over just as much as the other drives me batty. You know, you don't *have* to be solidly one side or the other. I think it's the way she defends the Federation that makes me want to climb up a wall.

And let's talk about how irritated I feel when Cassandra doesn't think of other GIs as their own person. "Vanessa, though, had a choice. Vanessa was her own person, and was under no obligations over where to place her affections." That line alone made me want to throw things. Vanessa was her own person because what? She studied business? She's smart? She went against social norms? Admirable, yes, but you don't discount a person just because they're not as smart or as sociable. The implications being that the other, lower designated GIs, are not as worthy. Not as special. It makes me think of the GIs on Cassandra's old team being like well loved pets to her.

Excuse me while I go throw bricks at something.

The book tries to do interesting things, maybe even give us something to think about in the entire artificial intelligence/robots/androids and what it means to be human sort of way. The pacing is a bit jerky, in that there are action bits and political bits and they don't really go smoothly into one another. There are portions where I think the author is trying to show how females are equal to males, but it's the emphasis on which bugs me. He's trying too hard, to the point there's an undercurrent of unpleasantness because he keeps pointing it out. Instead of showing us strong women he talks about it, places emphasis on it. Kind of shoves your face in it.

Yeah, no thanks.

I ended up skimming most of the middle. It bored me. It frustrated me. It kind of made me sad because I feel as if the author was trying to deliver a solid story and it just fell to pieces around me. The end, however, was like a light in the dark. It was interesting. It held my attention. It didn't make me want to throw the book into the wall. It brought out a variety of players that actually seemed diverse and broader than the entire League vs Federation business. Basically the ending saved me from saying that the entire book was a wash. Sooooo... 2 stars for the beginning, 1 star for the middle, and about 3-4 stars for the end. I'm going to say it averages out to 2 stars.

Ryun says

In last year's CROSSOVER, Joel Shepherd introduced synthetic humanoid killing machine Cassandra Kresnov, who not only was able to kill dozens of people in a relatively short timeframe, but also contemplate her existence and the meaning therein.

Now Pyr brings us BREAKAWAY, the second in a trilogy of books that have been available for years Down

Under, but woefully ignored by lesser publishers.

More: <http://www.bookgasm.com/reviews/sci-f...>

Mike Finn says

This is one of those books that it's easy to misrepresent. I've seen it described as a SF techno/political thriller about an ass-kicking, sexy, killer android. And it is. Except... it really isn't.

What keeps me reading these books is that it is not about how exciting it is to see a fembot in action. Cassandra Kresnov, who calls herself Sandy. is not human but she is a person, with emotions as well as an intellect, opinions and preferences as well as an accurate grasp of the data and in search of friendship and freedom and meaning rather than just personal survival.

The themes of the book are trust, loyalty, belonging, being loved, and what it means to be a person. The themes are explored against the background of a power struggle between competing ideologies carried out at the political and paramilitary level. No simple lines are drawn here. Sandy has to deal with the reality that politics are complex and many of the players are neither wholly good nor wholly bad, that she is hated by many, marked for death by some and loved by a few people close to her. By the end of the novel she seems to have decided that what matters is who she loves and who she is loved by - not a classic fembot orientation.

Another deviation from the fembot stereotype comes when Sandy is asked to rescue a boy who is being held hostage by terrorists. Her reaction is one of regret. She is completely certain that, despite how impossible the task would be for a human, she can kill all three terrorists and save the child. She doesn't want to do this because, in her mind, the certainty of the deaths turns these kills into murder. Yet she kills the men and saves the boy because she can't see an alternative. In her mind, this means that she did something that was wrong because she decided that it was necessary. No excuses, just an evaluation of her own actions.

Joel Shepherd has given the book a good rhythm. It starts with action scenes: fast, graphic, lots of explosions and gunfire and mayhem in public places; then moves on to personal reflection, usually by Sandy, on what the action meant; then he dives into complex and fascinating political intrigue, then dwells on the beauty of the city and the civilization it represents, before repeating the sequence from the top. He manages the rhythm with skill and produces a much better book as a consequence of it.

"Breakaway" carries straight on from the first book, "Crossover" starting with one of what is to be many intense action scenes, chasing down bad guys bent on murder and mayhem. The person doing the chasing isn't Sandy but a new character, Ari Ruben, a hacker turned security guy who will give Sandy a lot to think about. Sandy will also be challenged by the political changes in The League, the alliance who created her and who she defected from in the first book. The political stress between Earth and its colonies continues to grow. Joel Shepherd has created fertile ground for a long series here.

Dina Pearlman, the narrator, continues to mangle the text with the use of random inflections that frequently slowed down my ability to process its meaning. She remains very good at dialogue and accents but I really wish they'd picked a different narrator for these books.

Rich says

A fast paced, very smart take on the moral questioning of when AI becomes 'human'. I found myself very much liking the historical recollections of twenty first century politics. It's very easy to see how our actions today blend into a very alien future not that different from our present.

Diana says

Less action in the second of this series... but still a fun read. Sandy is more human than most of her fleshy counterparts and you can really relate to her. A lot of amateur political intrigue, those parts could use some cleaning up. I need to feel a little more invested in the ideals of the civilisation for me to care what happens to it, I much rather care about how it affects Sandy et al.

Sarah says

I didn't enjoy this as much as the first one. I think it's because everything that's happening is politically motivated and I don't understand the politics. I guess I should have paid closer attention to the first book :)

Bill says

Data as a gorgeous female. What's it mean for an android to be human? Non stop action, pure entertainment.

3.5*

Shen says

What I like most about the book is sandy's character development. but the one thing I don't really agree with is why I gave it 3 stars. the relationship between sandy and vanessa. vanessa being bi and having a thing for sandy but sandy doesn't feel that way about vanessa. sheperd's reasoning behind this is that sandy would never have sexual feelings for vanessa because she wasn't built that way...but she's a robot that was built with sex as a tool she's basically a sex goddess who can kick ass and blow shit up. and the way that he's created the character is that if somebody offers her sex she's going to be interested especially if it's something she's never done before. So to say she wasn't built that is kinda stupid in my opinion. I would've preferred it alot more if the reason behind it was you're the first friend I've ever had, sex is just sex for me and I dont want to lose your friendship so no i'm not going to have sex with you.
but to have the character you created as a sex bot say i wouldn't enjoy having sex is such a cop out.

Sandra says

It has a hell of a climax. It's written by an Australian and it's interesting to see where he puts the US in the

future hierarchy of nations. :-) Right where we're headed with our arrogance.

Amyiw says

About 1/3 through and not as good as the first but still quite good. My main problem here is that after all that she has done for these people, she is being treated as a second class citizen with no real rights. She tries to do her job and the other police try to kill her, really? And then she gets in trouble for it. When she stops a tail, she is ordered to release her attacking capabilities. This is part of who she is, to me it was like asking to undergo a lobotomy with no judge and jury. Wow, I just am a bit irritated that she would put up with it. She now is a citizen, she has ever right to leave and create a new life somewhere else. She wanted a quiet life, go somewhere not so politically charged. Even the head of the police unit she is working for, seems to not be protecting her or taking up for her. The CSA says that since her rights are in the question that she has to play the game and give in. The president is slimy in this one, right from the beginning. Ari is being set as a future partner but he is not being up front at all.

OK, now I'm done reading it, so it'll keep as an on going review above. I now understand why she was kept in the dark but I think it was done a little back handed just the same. I ended up liking this but still not as much as the first one. Much of my issue was the religion in the political arena. It sounded more of the problems of today and not of a future vision. I could see it in some ways, as religion still seems to be the driving force in the wars with millennia of history so why should it end. Still I would hope that we would become more enlightened and reading about a future with the same old radical religious suicide bombers dropped my interest a bit, this also with the politics and the religion so intertwined.

Then the ending. It leaves a lot up in the air though I wouldn't call it a cliffhanger, there is no follow up just an abrupt end at the end of a long drawn out firefight, nearly 50 pages. After trudging through the confrontation, I expected a bit more of a wrap up.

Overall it still was very good. Had the intrigue of what was happening. Had the characters that made her life new and interesting and had a couple of new characters too. (view spoiler) Many parts were page turning, but a few, particularly the ending battle, were not. Over all a really good read.

Stefan says

Breakaway, the second Cassandra Kresnov novel by Australian SF and fantasy author Joel Shepherd, picks up soon after the ending of series opener Crossover. Sandy, a highly advanced artificial human with military training, is now attached to a squad of SWAT agents, while also helping the government of Callay review its network security. Despite the sensitive nature of this work, and her ongoing integration into Callay society, many political and religious factions still take issue with her presence. After the heavy-handed way in which the Federation handled the crisis described in Crossover, Callay is now reconsidering its relationship with the Earth-based federal government. Sandy is stuck right in the middle of this hotbed, living in a society that is religiously, politically and morally trying to come to terms with what she is and what she represents.

The novel starts off with a bang, throwing us right into a spectacular action scene with fascinating new side character Ari Ruben, then slows down noticeably with a description of Sandy enjoying the waves during a surfing trip on a day off. This rhythm of alternating breathless action scenes with slower-paced descriptions

of local color and daily life continues throughout Breakaway. Add to that a continued in-depth focus on the political set-up of Callay in particular and the Federation and League in general, and you may occasionally have the feeling that this is a stop-and-go novel, lurching from high-octane action scenes to slower-paced, even meditative scenes and dialogues focusing on the sociological and political underpinnings of the story. While I found that Joel Shepherd handled this two-speed narrative less effectively in this novel than in Crossover, making Breakaway less of a compulsive page-turner than its predecessor, this is still an immensely entertaining read.

Part of the enjoyment of reading Breakaway is the fact that many of the side-characters become more three-dimensional in this second novel. While some of them were a bit flat and interchangeable in Crossover — although that may be because the fast-paced plot of that novel just didn't allow much time for deeper characterization aside from the protagonist — several of Sandy's colleagues and acquaintances gain some welcome depth here, with some entertaining (and occasionally raunchy) banter between Sandy and SWAT team leader Vanessa Rice, as well as some great dialogue between Sandy and her Director, Ibrahim.

Another aspect of the series that gets fleshed out in Breakaway is the history of its fictional universe, with some welcome info about the events that took place in the handful of centuries between our present day and the novels' setting, including an explanation for the interesting ethnic population mix in the Cassandra Kresnov series, and some of the history between the League and the Federation. We also get more tantalizing looks at the city of Tanusha, for my money one of the most desirable fictional locations to live in: an expertly designed boomtown of 57 million inhabitants without a true city center, instead consisting of multiple hubs, built around one mega-highrise each — like a patchwork quilt of urban centers, each with its own individual flavor, all connected by public transportation. You can find an interesting article by Joel Shepherd about the sociological underpinnings of Callay and Tanusha at his blog.

With its focus on terrorism, political pettiness and religious intolerance, Breakaway (originally published in 2003 in Australia) may in some ways be a child of its time, written in the historical shadow of 9/11 and the 2002 Bali bombings. Joel Shepherd wraps these themes in a gripping SF story, set in an increasingly solid SF universe, and filled with believable characters and nail-biter action scenes. If you enjoyed Crossover and are willing to forgive some pacing issues, you'll find Breakaway a solid second novel in a fascinating trilogy.

(This review was also published on the Fantasy Literature website: www.fantasyliterature.com - come check us out!)
