

Bleak stories of the future of civilization have become popular lately as we have begun to seriously wrestle with climate change, overpopulation and other global issues. Erin Anderson confronts these crises by writing a story that is both troubling and exciting. Anderson is an excellent writer. Her imagination knows no bounds as she introduces technological advances in an understandable way. I particularly like the overcoat that automatically adjusts to the outside temperature. She creates a detailed world of limited natural resources controlled by a world government intent on maintaining authority. As in any good story there is a conflict, this time provided by rebels seeking freedom and opportunities for themselves.

The story centers on Dr. Jarian Voss, a research scientist working for The People's Coalition developing sophisticated devices using the latest technology. Told through journal entries recorded by Voss interspersed with an occasional chapter written in the third person, we see Voss grow from a nervous and fearful man of science to a more fully realized member of humanity. He is supported by a team of well-developed characters, some of whom are fully human while others are cyborgs with all the issues they carry. This is a story which poses the ultimate question: Do we have individual responsibility for standing up to injustice no matter what dangers we might face?

My only criticism of the book is the title. Memoir of a Mad Scientist suggests an out-of-control genius with no thought for the consequences of his madness. In fact Jarian Voss had to break the bonds of his methodical training to become a fully realized human being. By doing so, the author gives us an ultimately hopeful future.

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