



Murder of Crows

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What would you consider freedom? For some, it's choosing their way to die.

Murder of Crows is based in a not-so-far-flung universe where humanity did not reach the stars but instead found itself mired in corporate takeovers. Since interstellar travel was never developed, asteroids were towed into orbit around Earth and terraformed into smaller planets to deal with excess population. While most of the asteroids were designed for colonization, Eris was destined for constant commercial warfare. Most people just call it "War World" after their favorite show.

In this new age of gladiatorial combat, the athletes are divided into teams and each person is cloned prior to the games. When they die, their consciousness and memories are transferred into new clones and the process begins all over again. What the rest of humanity doesn't realize is that each death and resurrection is incredibly painful and disorienting, let alone the monetary cost that is forced upon them.

Rarely do any of them make it off the asteroid.

Drawing on themes of grief, freedom and coping with an uncaring world, Murder of Crows tells the story of one of the best teams in the system, centering on the trauma these men and women experience as they die for public entertainment.

Author's note: As of June 14, 2016, Murder of Crows has been updated for a sixth time to deal with certain proofreading and editing missteps. It should be a much better read this time around.

Murder of Crows Details

Date : Published May 1st 2012

ISBN :

Author : Kevin Kauffmann

Format : Kindle Edition 270 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Murder of Crows for online ebook

Thesalus says

While the book has no plot to speak of, it offers an interesting chronicle of a burgeoning existential crisis, but within an obvious context of contention that will undoubtedly be resolved in the remainder of the trilogy. Ryan Jenkins is a gladiator in the War World games, the circus du jour that the Trade Union set up to for nebulous reasons of pillaging the Earth to fabricate inhabitable worlds for the highest bidders. With each death, they are painfully resurrected in a new body for the next spectacle. His team mates-a menagerie of personalities in the various stages of grief-line up one by one as unwitting conspirators in the dissolution of "boy soldier" Ryan Jenkins.

Dialogue was difficult to follow as the point-of-view may switch without warning mid-conversation and dropped or overloaded epithets do nothing to ameliorate this confusion.

Overall, the book was an insular thought experiment on an interesting concept with shaky execution and little knowledge of the world at large. The latter can be explained by the enforced seclusion of the gladiators, and I expect that the remaining books in trilogy will address this as the scope broadens.

Katie says

I found Murder of Crows to be a quick, enjoyable read. Kauffmann has some really good ideas and expands on them well. The structure is very interesting, following several characters but really revolving around Jenkins and his own personal struggle. As a sci-fi I would consider it pretty light, more using the future setting to develop his story and characters rather than using characters and a basic, throwaway plot to explore an apocalyptic future. I find the character development and internal struggles the strongest point of the book, as not one or two but many of the characters are developed into a large cast of fuller characters. I think this all serves to create a rich experience in a believable (albeit frightening!) potential future.

There are many intense, violent scenes but I didn't find them to be overtly gruesome. Kauffmann uses the bleak situation of the soldiers to further develop their stories. The book does include strong language and fairly graphic descriptions of the soldier's deaths, but instead of detracting I find the brutal clarity to be refreshing and helpful as I try to grasp the experience the characters are going through from my comfy nest of pillows. The characters are all flawed, none of them perfect people, and every one of them has his debts to pay, whether he plays in the war Games or not, and I think this adds to a believable universe.

I will say while the writing was smooth and quick, there was a tendency to go off on a tangent which some readers may have difficulty following, and sometimes the dialogue becomes 'unlabeled' and it's really up to an attentive reader to keep up with who is talking. Some of the writing and phrases could get a little repetitive and there were a few editing errors.

The plot itself could be felt at first as a sort of dragging underlying presence. Something was building but it was unclear what at first. While this can be deterring to some readers, I actually found this to be in keeping with the story. Instead of an omniscient eye on the soldier's world, you find yourself slogging through Eris itself, learning with the characters instead of knowing and waiting for them to catch up to you, the all-knowing reader. While as a strategy I think this doesn't usually work, I believe it has a place in a novel like

Murder of Crows. It really picks up later in the book and the end is very strong, leading right into the next book. There is great continuity and while there remain a few points the author could improve upon, I found this to be a very enjoyable read as well as it's sequel, and I look forward to reading the third installment of the trilogy and other works by this author.

Tyler says

~~minor spoilers/allusions ahead!~~

Okay, so this isn't the prettiest book. It's evidently self-published and shows all the signs thereof, but if you can get over the pretty jagged and occasionally sporadic writing style, you're in for a treat.

Some scenes are written much more clearly than others - you can tell where the author poured his heart into the pages and where he was trying to get the plot along to the next event.

That said, he still does a good job of characterizing so many unique individuals in rather short book.

Coming out of the book, I have a soft spot for almost every named character in the book. Except for one, but he was meant to be hated.

So, what I did think of the story? Well, that took me for surprise. I was expecting epic battles and shootouts, and sure we do get a fair share of warfare but most of the conflict here is emotional, and it's just done so well for what this book seems to be. It feels like a passion project that the author wanted to use to convey a certain emotional message, and he delivered. From young Roberts to newbie Jenkins and all the way up to old-man Carver and the lovable oaf Feldman, these guys go through their own emotional path - which currently is incomplete, as this is book one.

It was sad watching Jenkins' emotional journey, honestly. I knew it could conclude in one of two ways given the naming convention for the chapters, so hey I had a 50/50 shot and one could say Jenkins took that shot himself, but that scene was still heartbreakingly. Especially given the main gimmick here is that the Commission is basically pre-nerf Mercy and no one ever dies.

Hunter (Totally NOT a communist ?) says

I never finished this book, and I know I never will. It's been long time since I've put down this book, so I don't remember too much, including a plotline. I don't think there was a very clear story.

I also hated how much the author swore and cursed (but I still hear more at my school).

The violence didn't bother me because I play a lot of fighting games, and the plot synopsis mentioned fighting, so I knew exactly what I was getting myself into. The action was defiantly exciting, but I think I'll re-read some action books with a good plot instead of this.

Audree says

Ah! The story line had potential, but there were too many things I didn't like about this book. For one thing, the author swore and cursed too much for my taste. There were a lot of scenes of gruesome and violent death, and that was in only the first chapter or so. I couldn't finish the book, and I don't think I ever will. This is the lowest rating I think I have ever given a book. The writing wasn't that bad, reminded me of what one of the BBC network shows would have been if they were a book and knowing nothing of the author, I could tell he wasn't American with his use of the meters and kilometers for measurements. I know the main theme of this book is war and that's why there was so much violence, but it made me wince at some of the depictions of the 'soldiers' deaths. If you can get past that and the author's use of all those four letter words, maybe it could be a good book, but for me it wasn't, so read at your own risk.

Jack says

I was quite surprised that most people didn't seem to really like this book. The story was quite good, and although the book was quite nosy at some points, that usually doesn't stop people from reading most books. In fact, I found that though at first it didn't really mainly focus on Jenkins, I liked that. It had a good way of developing the characters of his other teammates, and exploring how each of them ticked. I think I especially liked how the author explained that though Warner was a jerk, he explained how he worked and wasn't such a bad guy. Honestly, with others books, the character are a just bit to black and white. In essence, there isn't really any black and white--- right or wrong in this world, and to believe that people are fully evil is naive at best even in stories. I say that because we're constantly changing in what we believe is correct, if anything, right and wrong can only be judge by perspective, and even than it's tricky.

So anyway, I liked that the author not exactly endeared the reader to the character, but shaped them into people and not random people wandering around the pages.

But what I really like was after explaining what the team was, the author quite solidly focused on Jenkins, instead of just floating around.

The writing in this story is not the best, but I liked it and even though people didn't seem to really love this book, I say give it a shot, at worst you'll find it okay.

Erik Sapp says

The book started out really good. About 25% of the way in, it turned into a slog. There's too many characters. The author tried to develop all of them, but there are just too many. It wasn't hard to keep them all straight, but they just weren't very interesting. There were too many battles, and they quickly became tedious. (There are supposed to be battles every other day, but detailing them all was too much.) The author created an interesting setting, but could not develop it as much as it deserved to be. It's also clear the author is trying to set up the next book in the series.

About 75% of the way, I started having to force myself to read more. I wanted to, because I wanted to see how it ended. I made it, but that was a slog I don't want to experience again.

Chris says

This is just on the right side of 3 Stars for me. While I liked the plot line and the story itself at times it felt like the writing was a bit rough and the way in which the story shifted could be bit tiresome with how it jumped between characters and timeline. Made it hard at times to know how long had passed between different scenes. The characters themselves for the most part were done nicely and their personalities seemed to fit well with what I pictured they would be going through if forced into the situation and life they are in. Will check out the next book to see how Kauffmann continues the trilogy.

Y.I. Washington says

While the plot, characters and surprises were good, I found the writing a bit lacking. I am hopeful that his writing will improve because this is a great story line. I will read the next book.

Kauffmann's constant repetition of the same adjectives wore on my nerves. There were also a few editing mistakes.

I do hope to see improvement in the next book.

Allan Ashinoff says

I downloaded this book because it was a freebie from Amazon - I was pleasantly surprised. I found the concept of the book interesting and the author kept my interest. The only issue I have was that, for an action oriented book, it felt drawn out (this could be a matter of personal preference). Although I can't rave about this book, I did enjoy it enough to read the next two books in the series (also downloaded for free).

Eric Hinrichsen Jr. says

I got this book free, courtesy of /r/freebies on Reddit. I never turn down a free book because, hey, it's a free book. I also got the second book in the series, and I'm having serious trepidation about reading it.

The book follows several characters, mostly Ryan Jenkins, who, for one reason or another, have ended up as soldiers for hire on a show called "War World". Every time they die, they are resurrected by the company running the show... for a nominal fee. Due to the fee being so high, most of the soldiers don't expect to ever leave the world. Some soldiers are prisoners given a second chance (see Jenkins) or here for a fresh start (the stereotypical gentle-brute Feldman). I didn't really feel any empathy for some of the characters, seeing as how most were prisoners (save for maybe two). The biggest problem I have with the novel, overall though, is the plot.

There's a plot in here somewhere. If you're reading a book as a part of a series, you'd expect it to have a plot based in the novel, and an overall continuing subplot that lasts three books. There's no real problem that can

be solved in one book here, and makes no illusion of hiding it. If you're reading Harry Potter, for example, there's the problem in the current book (i.e. finding the Sorcerer's Stone) and then there's the overall series problem (i.e. guy who can murder anyone is coming back into power). A Murder of Crows mainly focuses on the overall series problems. One soldier is being messed with to see how much pain he can take by a sadistic doctor. The main character struggles with the fact that he's problem stuck in this game until actual death. There's a resistance brewing to stop the evil corporation from harming the "War World" players.

Overall, the writing drags on after a while. There's no real build-up to the end of the book. The ending actually references something that happened within the first fifty pages as if it's a major plot point. About half-way through, when I realized there was no conclusive end in sight, I had to force myself the rest of the way through.

The worst part about this novel, though, is that the last pages are actually very good. They leave the novel on a good cliffhanger and made me seriously consider reading the next book. I'll have to think about that though.

Jacob says

Well, what can I say. I got this as a free book, and I can certainly say I don't regret reading it. However, I couldn't help but be dragged down by the general poor prose. As the book continued on, it continuously got better and better, likely the result of the author settling in to the story. I look forward to reading the rest of the series, hopefully they'll tickle me just right.

eden Hudson says

I love the concept for this story (squads of prisoners warring with each other for the entertainment of the masses, then being cloned and regrown when they're killed in battle), but the constant jumping from one character's perspective to the next (occasionally within the same paragraph) was too confusing for me to follow and made it hard to get invested in anyone.

Ilona says

The story line had potential and I had high hopes for a good read. However I was disappointed as there were a lot of scenes of needlessly gruesome and violent death, and that was in only the first chapter or so. I didn't finish the book, and I doubt I ever will. The writing wasn't that bad and I know the main theme of this book was war and that's why there was so much violence, but for me there were too many depictions of the 'soldiers' deaths and resurrections.

Devon Richards says

Very good

Kept me spellbound the whole way. Read the whole series in just a few days. Look forward to more like this.
