

Full Tide of Night

By J. R. Dunn

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J. R. Dunn is definitely a science fiction writer for the new millennium. In his latest book, *Full Tide of Night*, he tackles the subjects of terra forming, artificial intelligence, religion and revolution in his own inimitable fashion. The hardware-driven stories of the past are not his forte. If I have a quibble with Dunn's writing style, it would be that he tends to over-analyze his subject. I tend to like a more direct writing style, one that moves along at a brisk pace with less time spent at the scenic rest stops. Yet, this very aspect of Dunn's writing is what makes it so memorable. You close his book on the final page of the final chapter and find yourself thinking about what he so punctiliously taught you about the human condition.

Full Tide of Night is a classic "What if?" story, as is so much of science fiction. What if you could leave the problems and mistakes of earth behind and start all over again somewhere else? Would you avoid the pitfalls of those historical figures who went before? Would the society you create be a utopia? Would the place you adopted as your new home become a second Eden? Dunn focuses his laser intensity on these subjects, providing a thoroughly interesting read in the process. Some complaints have been made regarding his political and religious views, as reflected in his writing, but I feel he handles each divergent point-of-view with a surprising amount of even-handedness—developing sympathy in characters many would write off as despicable.

Dunn isn't a gadget writer of science fiction. He doesn't trot out all the hardware and revel in its "gee whiz!" features—like a car salesman. He introduces what future technology there is in matter-of-fact terms and as it would be in real life. Sometimes he has some fun examining it through the eyes of people not familiar with it but, for the most part, his futuristic technology is viewed by his characters as we would view a plane, a VCR, or a cell phone. Even when he deals with artificial intelligence, it is highly anthropomorphic. I feel he does this on purpose, for AI is a construct of man, and what would *we* be most comfortable with?

As science fiction goes, this is a five star read. *Full Tide of Night* is easily as good as his previous book, *Days of Cain*. I'm impressed with his choices of subject matter in each of his novels. Dunn seems at home in any milieu. At the end, we realize *Full Tide of Night* is, as are all memorable stories, a *people* story. We also realize that Dunn is, after all, a *writer* of people stories. They may be dictators, heroes, or fools but they are first and foremost people.

