



Tech, Lies, and Wizardry

J.S. Morin

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Getting caught between a local crime boss and a galactic syndicate makes you nostalgic for the rock and the hard place.

Carl Ramsey has a heist to run and the crew to pull it off. All he's missing is a specialized computer and the tech to run it. But when an unrelated robbery loses him both, the prospects for a successful job look grim. Unfortunately the one who hired them won't take excuses, and the owners of the computer come looking for their stolen gear. Caught between a local crime lord and thugs from a galaxy-spanning syndicate, Carl needs to come up with a plan that doesn't get them all killed.

His assets: his retired marine ex-wife, a drunkard mechanic, a feline security chief, and an old family friend who happens to be a wizard. His liabilities: a missing computer, a hospitalized tech, two ruthless criminal organizations looking for answers, and about two hours to sort it all out.

...no problem.

Tech, Lies, and Wizardry is the **free** short story prequel to *Black Ocean*, a science fiction fantasy series set in the 26th century. Do you wish there had been a second season of *Firefly*? Do you love the irreverent fun of *Guardians of the Galaxy*? Have you ever wondered how *Star Wars* would have turned out if Luke and Obi-wan had ditched the rebellion to become smugglers with Han and Chewie? Then *Black Ocean* is the series for you!

Pick up your copy of *Tech, Lies, and Wizardry*. You don't even have to steal it!

Interview with the Author

Q - So, what made you decide to write the *Black Ocean* series?

A – After rewatching *Firefly*, I wondered why no one since had made a series that recaptured the edge-of-the-law, outlaws-in-space feeling. Then it dawned on me that even though I'm not a TV producer, I could still write one of my own. *Black Ocean* isn't meant to be a successor to *Firefly*, or a clone, but I wanted to put together a "miscreants in space" series to fill that void the show left.

Since I'm a fantasy writer at heart, I added wizards.

Q – How do wizards fit in a sci-fi series?

A – Anyone who follows science fiction knows that a lot of hand-waving goes on. Faster than light (FTL) travel *probably* isn't possible. Artificial gravity would be more 2001: a Space Odyssey than the "we just walk on the floor" sort that *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* use. Those and a host of others I just left alone. Instead of waving my hand and having phony science appear, I just let wizards handle it with actual magic.

Arthur C. Clarke said that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," but I

wanted to have magic be magic, science be science, and for the two not get along at the office holiday party.

Q - So, what genre is this? Does it have a name?

A – There’s really no consensus that I’ve found on what to call a mix of space opera and high fantasy. I’ve heard it called science fantasy, futuristic fantasy, sci-fantasy, and sword and laser. There’s always just plain old space opera fantasy. I’ve found that it isn’t easy finding books like *Black Ocean* because no two people seem to call it the same thing.

Tech, Lies, and Wizardry Details

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From Reader Review Tech, Lies, and Wizardry for online ebook

Jason says

This is the prequel to the Black Ocean Series, and sees the introduction to the crew of Carl, Mort, Roddy, Mrly and Tanny as well as the Mobius. This is the true definition of Sci-Fi adventure – fast paced, lots of action, humour, and just for something that you didn't see coming – a Wizard.... Yes, you read that right – a Wizard.

I was sceptical as well to start with, this is touted as being a Firefly type series (and that couldn't be closer to the truth), but the Wizard thing kind of put me off, until I actually read it. Now I see what all the fuss is out. The addition of Magic to Firefly only makes it that much more fun, gives it new scope for some epic moments, as well as amazingly funny moments.

In this prequel Mission Carl and the crew are set to do a job for a crime boss, when someone they are meant to pick up for the job gets taken out. This someone also happens to be a relative of Tanny's extended family, which causes its own issues, along with the problems of they now can't do the job. Add to this that Tanny's family also have some issues, that would be the gangster family she has little to do with. Suddenly Carl and the crew find themselves stuck between an angry crime lord, Tanny's family and no way to do the job needed.

As with all these tales, this is just an exceptional story, lots of fun, with outstanding characters. Morin is a brilliant author and this is easily one of the best series out there.

This is a great introduction to the characters and the series, but doesn't need to be read first if you have started elsewhere. Good place to start for those that want to get into it though, and if you are a fan and haven't read it, then it's definitely worth it.

Michael says

A well written Sci-fi short story

This was an enjoyable, well written Sci-fi short story based on a group undertaking a job to steal a computer core whilst on a space station.

At 25 page's long I wish it could have been a little longer. I will look into reading more from this author.

Éric Kasprak says

This introduction short story does a perfect job of making me exited for the complete Black Ocean series. Right of the bat, we are thrown in the thick of it with the main crew/characters of the space ship "Moebius" while getting a glimpse of the atmosphere of the world created by the author. Already we see the characters having fun banter between them and not so elegantly pulling together to get out of a sticky, illegal situation. Love it.

Jennifer Johnson says

Fantasy at it's finest

This book is one of the most intriguing and the most thought provoking novels that I have ever read. From the creation of events and characters the book magnificently puts forth the authors talent. The framework and picturesque details leaves a lasting impression on one's mind leading it into a cycle of shifting between reality and fantasy.

A book you will not lay down!

Derek Jordan says

A good.. VERY short story.

It rumbles you right in and picks up almost too many characters to be first introduced to, but it does a good job with that. Then it rolls into the short story ... which is good. Really.. more of a "dip your toe" in the universe thing.

Something cool... Wizards in space... Not REALLY hit on heavy in this, but interesting anyway. Not something very heavy. usually tech is too mixed up in it. Maybe it is called something else. (The Force, Biometrics)

I think the only thing I really did not like is that once the book is over.... I wanted more of the story.. which ... I guess is the plan. It feels like a prologue... slightly more in depth than normal, but still... it feels like a story just began, rather than a story just ending.

Brittany Thibodeaux says

Introduction

This short story introduces us to Carl Ramsey and his misfit crew of ne'er-do-wells as they work to complete their latest less-than-legal job for local crime lord Lorstram. Their goal? Steal from a global crime syndicate - check. Next they need their new tech guy to work on the rig they've just nabbed and give it to Lorstram, but the newbie encounters some trouble when joining his cohorts for the gig. Things begin to look a bit gritty when members of the global crime syndicate are spotted on the space station. Only through Carl's business savvy and the entire group's badass abilities is there any hope of recovering the rig on time and completing the job on time.

Conflict and Plot

Carl's crew is faced with a dilemma when the computer they've just acquired is taken from their young tech with only two hours left to deliver. Worse yet, members of the global crime syndicate - from whom the computer was robbed - appears on the station station. Carl must use his own ingenuity and his team's keen abilities to put the odds back in their favor. Luckily for him, it helps to have friends in high places.

Characters

Carl Ramsey is the Black Ocean's Malcolm "Mal" Reynolds of the wayward group. His crew is an unlikely selection of characters, each offering their own unique abilities. Tanny is the marine with a sensible streak. Roddy is a laaku, a creature descended from chimp-like ancestors, and a user of all things tech. Mriy is an azrin, evolved from jungle cats to become a connoisseur of uncooked wings and a master of hunting. Mort gets thrown into the mix as a stir-crazy old wizard whose magic tends to foul up the technology in his

general vicinity. This crew's differences and skills make for a particularly amusing tale.

The characters are as credible as one could ask in a 25-page story. I never mind head-hopping, so despite the number of perspectives one encounters in this story, the characters are well-defined and credible. They are all unique and their personalities shine - naturally in some cases, and with a bit of nicked grease in others.

My favorite character is Mort. I like that he gets stir-crazy after being in the Mobius too long, and that he finds humor in the fact that gadgets go berserk in his presence. Then there's the fact that he uses magic, of course. And he doesn't use basic magic, like making light appear, or making flowers bloom, or some silly shit like that. His magic is serious.

The point of view shifts in "Tech, Lies, & Wizardry" with each scene. Most of these perspectives belong to the crew, but there are exceptions to that rule. As someone who began reading the "Wheel of Time" series as a young teen, I do not have a problem with - and actually enjoy - headhopping or perspective shifts, when done right. Mr. Morin performed well in this feat, especially considering the number of perspectives in the given amount of pages.

Strengths

I enjoyed this book, and read it in one short sitting. I was astonished that it was over so quickly, and found that I craved to read more about the rag-tag crew.

I was reminded of the Firefly crew while reading "Tech, Lies, & Wizardry", which is no surprise when one considers that Mr. Morin draws some inspiration from the series. I am also reminded of the late and great Terry Pratchett's humor, though. This was especially evident in passages such as the description of Roddy.

Descended from chimp-like ancestors, his furry species were quadridexterous. Roddy was taking advantage of that marvel of evolutionary biology to shovel chicken wings into his mouth while two-fisting cans of Earth's Preferred, a beer so reviled that it wasn't even commercially available on its eponymous world.

My favorite scene depicts Mort and Roddy as they seek out the stolen goods in an attempt to recover them. Roddy is keen when it comes to technology, but Mort's magic is a natural unwitting enemy, creating the most memorable - and amusing - scene in the story.

I loved that the story and characters hint at other tales and missions that the crew have undergone, perhaps eluding to future (but previously written) installments in the series.

Weaknesses

While there were no overt weaknesses to this story in my mind, I did wish that Tanny had a bit more of a role. Though I have read none of the other Black Ocean books (yet), I imagine her as a smart lady with a mean roundhouse kick.

Recommendations

I recommend this story without hesitation. It's a short read, accomplishing what so many do not: creating a desire for more in a small amount of pages, rather than a desire for brevity in a large number of pages.

Fans of both science fiction and fantasy will enjoy this tale. Particularly, fans of Firefly/Serenity will enjoy the cast and their capabilities.

David Caldwell says

A crew of a small spaceship sometimes has to take on jobs that are not completely legal. When things go to plan, it is no big deal. But when the newest member of their crew gets hurt, it is just the start of their problems.

This short story is the introduction to a series. You have spaceships, wizards, and gangsters thrown into the mix. The action is quick with humor to balance it. The characters are interesting and I want to find out more about them. I always appreciate some more exotic aliens in these types of stories. I will definitely be reading more of the series.

Dan says

Not awful but fairly lame and empty and does not even appeal to me as entertainment but then that is me.

So, put it another way, nothing truly objectionable about this story or I would have given it a one or two star but I won't be listening to any more of these though the right person might find them fun and who knows as this is just an opener they may develop to the point where you actually care about some of the characters and possibly even realize that something actually is being said.

Fionna Guillaume says

A well-crafted short story, blending fantasy-style magic with a high-tech futuristic sci-fi world. I appreciated how well the characters were drawn, especially considering the story's length. I got a sense of the community and each person's role in it, without anything being overdrawn or forced. Such a great setting, written with strong voice and such a natural ease - even when describing weird futuristic foods and tools - as to draw you in right away. Mostly, it is a perfect introduction to the larger series, allowing you to meet the characters and get to know the world before diving into full Space Opera Fantasy mode. Worth a read!

Ryan Crown says

Really enjoyed this story. It does a good job of quickly introducing the characters and story world, while at the same time telling an engaging, fun to read story. It definitely got me excited to read the first full novel in the series (which I immediately started reading after finishing this).

One of the most intriguing parts of the story -- and I'm curious to see how the author develops this in future stories -- is the idea of wizards/magic in a science fiction setting. I would highly recommend anyone who enjoys sci-fi to give this one a look. It's a quick read, and a good introduction to the larger series.

Mandy Walkden-Brown says

Excellent beginning to a space opera series with bonus wizard included. It's probably been said before, but it

needs repeating - if you loved Firefly, as I did, then this series is a perfect, and necessary, addition to your space opera collection. The characters here are very similar in their devil-may-care attitudes. Although I do not remember any alien crew members descended from chimps or cats on board for Firefly's exploits... There are some sneaky goings-on, which I guess is par for the course, and these just add to the fun. I will definitely be traveling with the Mobius for all her journeys. Highly recommended!

Rachel Noel says

I really enjoyed this. I've never read any of the books in Morin's series, but I will have to fix that after reading this very short introduction/back story to everything. The characters are intelligently written and clever in their dialogue. This was a great way to introduce people to the series and I'm now going to have to go pick those books up.

Kerry says

Well I knew this was a short story, but wow. Let my Kindle read it to me while washing dishes, book finished, dishes are not.

This isn't my usual kind of book, but I must admit, it peaked my interest. Now I have to get the next one to see what is actually happening because I am so confused. I was just starting to get into it....

Lloyd Andrew Green says

Tech, Lies and Wizardry is not just an enticing choice for a title. There's a great story attached to this space opera, which does not disappoint. I picked this read knowing that it was a short story (about 25 pages) but as soon after it began, I wished that it could be so much longer.

Morin's crew of diverse personalities (and/or creatures), are interesting and very well fleshed out. The author quickly shows this, as the unlikely band are thrust into an unexpected mission at the Orion Space Station. The way they "get the job done" is both unexpected and entertaining. I'm curious to know what happens next to this rag tail crew that reminds of the Firefly TV series that I always enjoyed.

Bravo to J.S. Morin for a great lead in to what I'm certain are many entertaining novels.

TDCbookreviews says

Welcome to Orion space station nine. Here you will meet a team of bandits; the likes of which you have never seen before. First there is Carl, Mort (a cantankerous old wizard) and Roddy (A Laaku). To round out the crew you are introduced to Mriy (An Azrin) and Tanny.

Crime boss Elliot Lorstram has hired the team to steal a special data crystal for him. Unfortunately, the mission begins to crumble when Chip, the team's data tech is assaulted and almost dies.

Tension is added when two other crime bosses are spotted on the space station. The team cannot let them

know that they are working for Lofstrom. Instead they turn the tables on Lorstram in order to get themselves out of a sticky situation. I don't want to say anymore because I would give away the ending. Sit back and read for yourself. You won't regret it.

I absolutely enjoyed this prequel to the Black Orion series. It is a page turning, must read for any sci-fi fan. You will have fun trying to picture these alien beings. My imagination ran wild trying to picture Roddy. He is described as a small chimp like being with four arms. Pretty cool. Right?

This one earns four out of five stars. The suspense and mystery mixed in with the Star Wars type of theme drew me in from start to finish. I am definitely planning to read the rest of the Black Orion series. Kudos J.S. Morin. Job well done
