EVERGREEN BOOK REVIEW
by
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The environment, and what we do about it, or what we should do, is at the heart of the new science fiction novel Evergreen. Even though author Bruce Golden takes us to another planet—a planet of his creation, we know the lessons learned by the characters there apply equally to the planet Earth.

Evergreen is still a frontier planet where many forms of technology are limited by solar activity and the planet’s magnetic field. Solar power is the only power other than muscle and sweat, so you might think the colonists of this planet would be environmentally friendly—but not necessarily so—not as far as the planet itself is concerned.

The colony is being built on the backs of its indentured lumberjacks, while “the company” that owns the planetary mineral rights begins to set up mining operations.

When an ancient artifact is discovered on Evergreen, a heretic priest back on Earth becomes convinced it’s the link that will prove his theory about the existence of an extraterrestrial “City of God.” He forms an expedition to Evergreen that includes a renowned archaeology professor and others. Traveling aboard the same ship that will take them to Evergreen is Eamon, a young man wracked
by both guilt and a need for vengeance. After years of searching, Eamon be-
lieves he’s finally tracked down the man responsible for his mother’s death. He
intends to find the man and kill him. In order to do so, he has contracted him-
self to join the timber jockey workforce, which is made up mostly of debtors
and convicts.

At this future point of man’s exploration of space, several inhabitable plan-
ets have been discovered, but, as yet, not a single intelligent species outside of
mankind has been found. However, an exobiologist studying a primate species
on Evergreen believes these “ursu” may be only thousands of years away from
evolving into a sort of primitive intelligence. She’ll discover these creatures
have a past as well as a future.

However, there’s another intelligence on Evergreen. One not so readily visi-
ble. The vegetal consciousness that is the planet Evergreen—the ecosystem of
this world—represents the wisdom of nature in this novel. And it’s that wis-
dom, that intelligence, which leads the tale and all of its characters into one in-
credible climax.

As for the relevant issue of environmental protection, it’s not something
Golden slaps you across the face with. No character ever broaches it—there’s
no editorializing. But, by the end of the book, the message is clear, and so are
the questions. Should mankind be allowed to do whatever he wants with what-
ever planet he encounters? By extension should he be able to do whatever he
wants with planet Earth? The parallels are obvious because this is a world much like Earth. In fact, Golden says he used some actual bits of history from the timber mining that went on around the Lake Tahoe area as inspiration for the book.

Evergreen has everything you look for in a good science fiction novel. Believably tormented characters, unique world-building, realistic dialogue, adventure, exploration, alien lifeforms, conflict, resolution . . . by the time the book ended, I only wished it was longer. If I had one criticism, it’s that the short chapters moved too fast. I wanted more of this alien world, and wanted to know what happened to these characters next—at least those who still survived the wrath of the planet to reach the final page.