



The Starfighter Invitation

Andrea K. Höst

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The only thing bigger than the world's first full virtual reality game is the mystery surrounding its origins. Who is behind Ryzonart Games? How was such a huge advance in technology achieved?

Taia de Haas loves having her own virtual spaceship, and wants nothing more than to visit every planet in the solar system. But she cannot ignore the question of whether such a magnificent gift comes with strings attached. Is the game a trick, a trap, a subtle invasion? Or an opportunity to step up and fight for her own planet?

Caught in a tangle of riddles and lies, Taia can't resist trying to win answers from Ryzonart's mysterious administrators. But will finding the truth cost her the Singularity Game?

The Starfighter Invitation Details

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From Reader Review The Starfighter Invitation for online ebook

Gretar says

Inventive, well-paced, and great characterization.

The premise is a new virtual reality MMO involving AI. Unlike other recent books in this vein, though, the main characters are adults who are suspicious about the nature of the MMO and thoughtful about its implications. They waste no time on wide-eyed naïveté, and instead engage directly with the more interesting aspects of the game. One character says, “I’m so used to dystopias that I can’t help but look for the cracks.”

The wonder you can feel when playing a well designed MMO translates beautifully into the writing. The concept of seeing new places beyond the limits of our current ability to travel is skillfully realized. The idea that the rest of the players are all trying to do the same thing in the same game, and usually better than you, is also rendered surprisingly well.

I also like very much that Host is willing to write books with more characters than the typical number. It makes the world richer and more complete, and it makes her books less bound by conventional templates. The cast is large and varied, and I expect it will develop more over the next books.

Overall, this was captivating, and I can’t wait for the next installment.

Fides Mabanta says

:o

Profound as usual. I feel kind of bereft, waiting in the unknown and hoping for more Taia (& Dio) in the next book... ????????

Jennifer says

What a ride!

From the first page to the last I was fascinated by the complexity of this world within a world. I am totally looking forward to finding out if this will be a series and the next pieces of the puzzle! As usual I found the story well paced and hard to put aside.

Lexie says

Oh you clever, clever writer.

I stand by my comment that the first half feels like a game tutorial - which depending on how you interact

with reading or games could be frustrating and/or immersive. Some of it is dry, almost textbook like, as Taia is not given to undue dramatics in any form.

Much of it is so intriguing from a gaming standpoint - DS is what I want from a MMO. How could I not when portal Fantasies, "LitRPG" and isekai (transported to another world, specifically it's considered a subgenre in anime and manga largely) stories fascinate me? I want to be immersed wholeheartedly.

So on that level THE STARFIGHTER INVITATION works from start to finish for me

On another level very little happens until the last 45% when Taia and Dio make a bet in regards to her chances in surviving a long line quest set.

The same careful, deliberate detail is at play in Host's writing (something all her books share in common), but the urgency is a bit more amped. You know, as a reader, there is MORE. There has to be. And with each strategy and path that Taia and her Quest mates discuss you know the MORE is just in reach.

In truth this feels similar to AND ALL THE STARS (another crossover sci-fi novel by Host that involves the feeling that MORE is just around the corner with each chapter done).

Dio's admissions, clues, lies, truths, jokes, teasing and lectures all lead to an uncomfortable truth that I really want to go back and pick out all the moments that led to the end. I don't know if this Bio could handle it again though.

Fun asides:

- so much game, fantasy, SciFi and culture references
- maybe Dio wasn't meant to be like Dio from Last Exile, but te felt like that character so often
- my broody elf love of life Fenris was name dropped bc 2D romanceable folk is definitely where it's at
- aside from anything else I really enjoyed the conversations the chars had in relation to Self. DS starts your avatar off as your inner perceived "self image". There was good discussion about what that really meant (for one char the fact her perceived self-image was visibly thinner despite her years of fat activism made her deeply uncomfortable) vs. what it could mean
- I may have also had the song "Shelter" running thru my head the entire time

Laura (Kyahgirl) says

I really like the latter 2/3 of this book but the first part was painfully difficult to get into. I have noticed this more than once with this author but generally there is a pretty good reward for sticking it out. I look forward to more books in the series.

Meredith says

SF/F at its best

Some authors make you actually think while you read - you don't merely ingest a plot and storyline (you DO do that, and what a storyline and plot it is!), you also have extended existential and philosophical ponderances while being enveloped in the book. Host manages this particularly well, with her wild plot lines explored by some inevitably reserved and highly rational character....which might sound boring (?). But

think of it more like a slow burn romance for SF/F....the story is intriguing all along, but it takes a while to see all the pieces coalesce, but when it does, Host always, always delivers a dramatic finish. This book is no different - awesome premise (alien overlords, MMO games, time travel), a realistic and sympathetic lead character...what else could you ask for? Oh that's right...the next book in the series :). My waiting starts now...

Soede says

I absolutely adore this book (though it's still Snug Ship in my head). If you like MMOs, Snowcrash, Ready Player One, Buffy, geekdom, or idk People!! You'll probably love this book. I have strong faith in this author based on her previous body of work, so went into it feeling like it was MY book, esp as it's MMO themed, and for the first few pages, slightly distracted worrying if non-gamers would be put off by the on-point terminology. Very glad to see a couple other early reviewers saying that wasn't an issue for them!

I'm on to my second read and totally obsessed with everything Dio does and evaluating what it Means. I love how this author pays attention to the little moments, the subtle bits of body language, (or lack-of-body language), focuses on the pauses between action, which makes the action actually matter most to me. I like that it's a world that has bathrooms and doors that need to be closed behind you. It feels Real to me, not a set with nice perfect people in it, *yawn*. And I love the ratio of good guys to bad guys in all her books, cause it feels more real. (bad guys are vastly over rated).

All of my personal obsessions were touched on in this book, so much that it feels like I got my brain scanned and this was the matched result. MMO's, Mars, Apocalypse, Whedonesque banter, barely hinted at angst, quests, character creation screen, pop philosophical debates on Self....etc!!!

It's going to be hard for me to wait and see what happens to the entire cast of character (especially Imoenne!!) I'll just have to re-re-read everything else she's written!

Nicole says

I'm sorry to say I really didn't enjoy this book. I am a fan of the author so I have been waiting for it for some time, which may have also worked against it.

I found the premise initially interesting, however having to read what I through was constant minutia over and over again really made getting through this book a chore. By the time I reached the end and the big reveal, I was pretty much disinterested.

The things I find interesting about a book are the relationships between people, yet I thought most of these were barely explored. It felt a times like the main character has aspergers, then she would take charge of the situation and lead. She felt quite inconsistent to me, and not really likable at all.

I won't be reading anything else from this series.

J says

Really good I think.

-Some minor spelling and grammar errors.

-There are also some minor continuity errors--like whatever happened to rank three? Rank seven I could see mission just because there's a time skip there, but two to four happens back-to-back.

-Also some points that aren't really explained--like why is six a lucky number for Taia? Just because that was her rank at the time?

Nicki Cliffer says

Hreat start to the series

Andrea created a fascinating world and characters you care about. One of the things I liked was that the main character was neither the best of all nor the worst of all. She was a regular, albeit creative and steadfast person trying her best. Andrea raises important questions and definitely leaves you thinking. I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

Semunky says

Wow

I'm overwhelmed with surprise at how GOOD this book was and I can only offer singular words to describe it:

Rich.

Mysterious.

Intense.

Poignant.

Beautiful.

I can't wait for the next.

Evenstar Deane says

I wasn't sure if I would like this book because I'm not really into video games, I've only played a few over the years and no MMOs. That didn't matter at all.

This book is more a travelogue, describing a future where the earth is mostly underwater, the moon is destroyed, technology allows for amazing virtual reality games, and AIs control everything but need "Bios" for their magical powers - all within a virtual reality game that's being played not too far in our future. Like the main character, Taia, I want to be able to see the earth from space, go to Mars, go anywhere in the galaxy, in amazingly real virtual reality. I want the game to be real!

Everyone wonders how the game is possible, it seems too far beyond the current technology, and there's endless speculation about whether it's run by aliens or AIs and why they're doing it. The plot may be a little thin through the beginning of the book, buried in so much description, but the ending is amazing and

devastating.

Becky says

I picked this up yesterday and just finished it. I'm a big fan of this author. Coming from someone who wouldn't know a video game if it hit her in the head I think I followed along well enough. Host's other books prepared me in the sci fi way that made understanding a little easier although the video game lingo was a little harder to follow. I did eventually figure my way through it and give this one a solid three stars. I am not going to lie, I read her books for the romance. She does really really good very back seat romance that is just my type. So the romance was hinted at but not fully formed and I need the other books in the series to get to the angsty love scenes if she has them planned in the future.

Anne Duncan says

I loved this book. What I really love to read about in a book is interesting characters coming to care about each other, and this book delivered! I've read a lot of "the video game is real" media and i think this one compares favorably. I especially like comparing it to the manga, 1/2 prince because while both stories deal with the idea of what would we do if video game avatars really looked like us, this book takes a much more nuanced approach and really asks questions about self-perception. I liked the references to current gaming culture and even though i don't play video games I could follow everything that was happening. one downside to the book was that a lot of the world building was exposition dumps in conversations that were a bit hard for me to follow. but I think it was sufficiently balanced in those conversations with a deepening of connection between the characters. Overall i really enjoyed this book.

Donald Mclean says

Truthfully, I am not sure what I think of this book. It ends with an sad, out-of-left-field plot twist that becomes a giant cliffhanger. It might be brilliant and necessary (second book of Paksenarion by Elizabeth Moon) but without reading the next part of the story, it's hard to be sure.

Either way, I found the story compelling.

My other complaint is that there are really only two characters that have enough page time to be meaningful. Not really surprising considering the main character's back story, but still kind of disappointing considering how character rich the author's Stray books are.
