

A Kiss for Damocles

Shai's universe is filled with fallen empires, implacable war machines, lost civilizations, hostile xenos, the occasional ancient unspeakable horror... and she's going to bring the ruckus to every corner of it.



A Kiss for Damocles is the newest SF adventure from J. Kenton Pierce and Raconteur Press. Blending classic space opera elements with themes of hope and resilience, it's the perfect novel for fans of David Weber, Dan Simmons, or Lois McMaster Bujold.

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Shaifennen Roehe is a frontier scavenger on Hesperides, a lost colony wrecked by an ancient war and a volcanic cataclysm. She finds the wreck of a small starship. Salvaged for materials and tech, it will turn her homestead into a boomtown. Shai's mother is busy re-establishing the local government and sends Shai to trade some of her salvage for desperately need supplies.

In Greenline Town, Shai is embroiled in the local politics of competing merchant princes and ambitious politicians. She makes some friends and some very dangerous enemies such as the very ambitious First Councilor Nathaniel who she causes to lose face and political clout.

Gang members ambush Shai and her party the next day, starting a firefight in a crowded market. Separated from her group, Shai fights a running back-alley battle and ducks into a service tunnel. She steps on a broken grate and falls into the sewers where she becomes lost.

Shai manages to survive until the sewer plant's manager and a militia captain find her. Because taking Shai into "protective custody" would start a war, the officer violates her orders and helps smuggle Shai to safety.

As an outdoor memorial service is held for those lost in the fighting a, massive shadow sweeps over the crowd. Nathaniel uses the maiden flight of Greenline's prototype airship to gain public support and firm up his wavering political power.

Undistracted by the political show, Shai recognizes the strategic advantage even a few airships create. She cannot trade any more salvage with Greenline, lest it be used to produce more airships that will be used for Nathaniel's expansionist plans. While her trade mission was profitable, Shai realizes she must secure more allies for her people in addition to new markets for her salvage.

About the Author



I'm a retired Goth and somewhat disgruntled yet generally mild-mannered veteran of the Gulf War, with experience in molecular biology, social services, and way too much retail when younger. I've lived in Miami for a few years, Bratislava for a few months, and mainly just circles around Pittsburgh's Event Horizon.

Chronic daydreaming as a child was a natural gateway to gaming excessively, from the venerable Atari 2600 and the Commodore 64 along with D&D, on through countless pen & paper RPG's and eventually MMO's. I often had more fun creating new characters and filling out those tiny little character bio screens than playing. Must have about 6 pages of Alts on City of Heroes. My fleet mates in the Star Trek Online guild "TOS Veterans" started up some RP stories and encouraged me to beef up my main toon's bio. What was intended to be maybe a few hundred words of character background turned into 25K of story/fanfic.

About then, I realized that I wasn't satisfied simply consuming stories or weaving my characters into other people's worlds. By which I mean that an Augment girl raised by Vulcans and a particularly maladjusted Andorian Redshirt jumped the wall and demanded their own, original story world.

They're kind of pushy. Zeddie with her relentless polite expectation of being better treated than as some recurring guest star, and Shai with her...less than polite expectation. By which I mean threats of grievous bodily harm.

Combine that unsatisfied hunger with the fact that James H. Schmitz, Robert H. Heinlein, and Andre Norton had all passed away and quit writing the type of stories I really loved, I started brewing up a story world Shai and Zeddie could terrori--, ah, call their own.

I'm delighted when my characters engage someone's imagination and I hope that someday they bring a touch of comfort and companionship to some future lonely, misfit kids who find best friends in books.

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What makes the world of Hesperides Colony unique?

Hesperides Colony is set in a space opera post-apocalyptic frontier universe. Despite centuries of isolation following a devastating invasion and volcanic catastrophe, the colonists haven't gone primitive even if they sometimes have to rely on primitive technology for some things. They aren't praying to Sky People, Ancient Ones, or an old snack machine. They know who they were and are, and what was taken from them. And they're gonna take back their place in the stars.

Tell us about the main character in *A Kiss for Damocles*.

Shaifennen Roehe is kind of like Laura Ingalls Wilder, if she'd been raised by Snake Pliskin and had Joe Pesci for her Spirit Animal. She's not got a lick of "quit" in her, and sometimes her mouth up and says things she regrets. She's the country girl with grease on her coveralls and skinned knuckles who'll help you tear apart an engine or pick rocks in the field without complaint. She's also the one you have to carry out of the bar because if she hears somebody badmouth her friends, it's on. Some consider her a loveable scamp with the stars in her eyes and grenades in her pockets, others use terms like "That venomous rodent."

Who else will we meet?

Zeddie is her best friend and sort of moral compass. A tall and rangy girl who's probably a throwback to some colonists with heavy-worlder mods, although she harbors a secret fear that she's descended from the genetically optimized shock troops who were the spearhead of the invasion that wrecked Hesperides Colony. Zeddie is a member of a militant Order which protects travelers, carries news and trade offers, and serves as unofficial arbiters when communities have some sort of conflict. They are diplomatic, courteous, and nice...until it's time not to be nice. They are very skilled at being not nice in defense of innocents.

What are they up against?

That...would be telling. A number of forces are arrayed against Shai and her allies, from scheming merchant princes, ambitious Townie politicians, an assortment of bandits and gangs, and hostile wildlife. Oh, and conspirators engaged in a centuries-old shadow war who seek to overwhelm the last guardians of a free civilization and impose a totalitarian order on Hesperides Colony.



The Raconteur Press adventure...

Raconteur Press publishes fun pulp adventure tales with worthy protagonists attempting to achieve a noble outcome through honorable means. This doesn't exclude pathos, and we accept that sometimes the good guy doesn't win; but we reject nihilism or hopelessness in story.

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