

## ANGEL RISING by Dirk Flinthart

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Tasmanian author Dirk Flinthart's Angel Rising is set in the fictional New Ceres, which is explained in Tansy Rayner Roberts' introduction to the novella as "a future world ruled by anachronists, enforcing the mores and social structure of Eighteenth Century Earth on their populace."

Flinthart is well respected among aficionados of speculative fiction, and deservedly so. His vibrant, unique and enviably word-perfect prose has appeared regularly in Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine (with Flinthart further extending himself to play a role on the publishing co-op of the magazine), as well as New Ceres #1, Year's Best Australian Fantasy and Science Fiction #2, Agog Ripping Reads, and Agog Smashing Tales, amongst others. Flinthart also edited the recently released Canterbury 2100 anthology. Whew. I'm tired just reading Flinthart's achievements — and the man has a family, to boot!

Angel Rising reacquaints regular readers of Flinthart's work with George Gordon, Proctor to New Ceres, obligated to protect it and free to use whatever means necessary to do so. Sent to the Sunrise Isles by the enigmatic Lady Governor, Gordon (with liver freshly rewritten and a dire shortage of his beloved cheese) must investigate a recent Fallen Angel — an illegal entrant from Offworld. In the course of his duties — and within mere minutes of his arrival — Gordon meets samurai, ninjas, militant nuns, shape shifters, and of course, locates the Fallen Angel. Her actual identity and the true nature of Gordon's task are revealed, and Gordon must make choices and take paths he never could have predicted. Set amid the vivid backdrop of New Ceres, Gordon's adventures take on a whole new dimension of decadent imagery and possibility. The novella is a cracking yarn, moving at a blistering pace through a world where anything can happen at any moment, and the semblance of order is just that.

As always, Flinthart's writing is accessible, snappy and bursting with life. There's no downtime in his tale, and as a result the novella feels like an extremely quick read as the pages burn by in a blur. The twists are frequent, sudden and fun, and the characters are remarkably developed and whole. The much-praised fight scenes truly are as good as they're cracked up to be — I simply couldn't get enough of them. In fact, I reread them several times. Angel Rising has the feel of part of a grand multi-genre swashbuckling science fiction saga, further sweetened by the added freedom the New Ceres world provides.

At times, the blistering pace of the plot's new developments and twists befuddled my fragile mind, and I needed to read sections over again (sometimes in retrospect) to fully appreciate their meaning and piece them into the entirety of the tale — especially since Flinthart's grasp of science and technology is impressively displayed, and surpasses mine. However, as far as criticisms go, this is a minute one. Flinthart's novella is pure enjoyment from start to finish.

Obviously fans of the New Ceres world will appreciate this novella. It's also a good taster for those who have never delved into New Ceres before — Angel Rising will certainly wet your whistle and leave you hungry for more! Really, anyone who enjoys good science fiction, fantasy, adventure and even the samurai, ninja and battle tales of old will get a kick out of Flinthart's novella. You'll want to hunt down Flinthart's other works when you finish Angel Rising — and I doubt you'll be disappointed by your findings.

Dirk Flinthart can be found online at <http://flinthart.livejournal.com>.