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Hot Sky at Midnight

Robert Silverberg



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Several decades into the future, the long series of corporate and government decisions that favored shortterm profit over long-term solutions to ecological problems and polution has left the Eath in a state of disaster, almost uninhabitable. The icecap have melted and many coastal communities have been flooded out. The ozone layer is destroyed. There are some areas that are livable with breathing masks and injections that protect the skin from the now-deadly rays of the sun but the refuge, for all who can afford it, has become the near-space orbital colonies built and run by private companies and open only to those who are willing and able to pay.

Valparaiso Nuevo is one of these colonies. Run by a shadowy dictator known only as the Generalissimo, it is haven and a center of action for hustlers, conspirators and people looking for an edge. Victor Farkas, operative of the megacorporation Kyocera-Merck Ltd., is blind but gifted with hypersensitive "blindsight." He comes to the habitat in search of a renegade geneticist of legendary skill. Back on Earth, Nick Rhodes, head of Samurai Industries, which is attempting to breed humans that can thrive in the horrendous conditions expected to prevail on Earth struggles with his conscience as he manipulates genetic structures and lives. Paul Carpenter works for a Japanese mega-corporation, seeking promotion and survival, but loses his job as a ship captain after a mutiny. Rhodes introduces him to an acquaintance of his girlfriend Isabelle. Jolanda is a talented sculptor, a passionate lover and a secret plotter. She embroils Carpenter in a scheme to take over Valparaiso Nuevo along with Enron, an Israeli spy, Farkas, and Rhodes. Their goals are individually motivated but the deadly combination of ambition, distrust, greed, stupidity, and lust leads to a dramatic conclusion that replicates in miniature the history of man's destruction of his own living space on the planet. A bleak picture of future Earth and a complex plot peopled with dark, rich characters, comes together as one of Silverberg's finer novels.

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