Indifferent Sons - Richard Dean

The fault, with Richard Deans Indifferent Suns, lies not in the story but in the writing of that story. There is definitely a point and purpose here that Richard zeroes in on from the start. Specifically this story is about the old guard musing on the new guard and wishing for more respect from them but not having given that respect to their predecessors.

Richard does this really well, he knows what he wants to write and then writes it. However, again, the fault is not in the story (that is interesting) but in certain parts of the writing.

The biggest problems are in that there is no hook (or any reason to invest in the narrative. No one moment that captures the readers attention), in the characters and in the dialogue.

The writing of the story is interesting while not working completely. The excerpt from Muse frames the story well, effectively telling the reader what they are in store for. The football match works well as a metaphor for the upcoming debate between

Chris and Mike that forms the heart of this story. Particularly with the match ending in a goalless draw to emphasise that neither side is right here.

These two framing devices work in tandem to give the story a level of sophistication (as much as a hour of piece can gain) and work to make it interesting, at least from a lit-crit perspective.

The problem here is that there is no narrative hook that grabs the readers attention and invests them in the story, it is just interested in the debate and presenting its points to the reader. It doesn't try to get the reader behind anyone or get them invested. It just starts, there's definitely a structure here and this story does not meander -which is good-, but also nothing of note happens in the opening to suggest conflict/ suspense/ intrigue to follow (even if that conflict/suspense/intrigue is purely idealogical.)

The next problem comes with the characters. The characters themselves don't feel like characters as much as they feel like vehicles for a debate that the author wants to have with himself.

The dialogue sounds way too polished and almost prose-like and there are no significant changes in language from one character to the next as well as no personality quirks exhibited by either Mike or Chris. This leads them to feel as though they are speaking with the same voice and supports the hypothesis that they are just vehicles for debate.

There is an element of cynicism to Chris but I do think that him considering his family dead is too extreme (at least when looking at the information that has been presented in this story). Chris is rather precise when assessing "the new order" and it makes one wonder how it is that an "elderly" man gains all this knowledge about the current social Zeitgeist among the youth. This is not necessarily a bad thing but an explanation is needed for how an old man knows exactly what a vlogger is and it can be profession. (The one part that the video game nerd in me won't let go is the fact that Richard confuses Star Craft and Star Trek - unless that is deliberate, in which case it

would be an nice detail to have Chris slip up on)

The addition of Liam and the implication that Chris has closer relationship to a student than his own children tells the reader something interesting about the relationship that exists with Chris' family. That being said, good dialogue here could go far to making it feels as though this story exists in a larger universe.

In fact, there is a completely missed opportunity for more world-building with the football match (though talking about Richard's representation of football fans and their reactions may be beyond the scope of this review).

As a self-contained story, Indifferent Suns by Richard Dean gets the job done. I quite like the story and the nuances applied to certain elements of the writing but not dialogue and characters.

Again, there is no central hook to draw the reader into this world and the football match is underdeveloped, standing as more metaphor than real representation, but it works.

It checks the boxes for a competent-good written story and has grown on me enough to say: good job. This could be extended to a meditative short story.

Paul Cupido