



Lightwing

Tara K. Harper

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Kiondili Wae considered herself lucky to land a job as a research assistant on Corson Station. And not just any job, but the project of her dreams: the development of a faster-than-light ship drive. Her special talents -- powerful telepathy and an uncanny flair for manipulating electromagnetic fields -- were particularly suited to the work at hand. And if the goal was reached, the federation of alien races that peopled the greater galaxy would finally accept humanity as a full member.

But false accusations and misunderstandings plagued Kiondili from the moment of her arrival. Even the mental talents that had won her the job seemed to work against her, alienating her co-workers. Somehow she would have to show them -- that she could rise above it all, that she could fit in with the group, and most of all, that only she could make the FTL effort a success!

Lightwing Details

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From Reader Review Lightwing for online ebook

J.L. Dobias says

Lightwing by Tara K. Harper

This is my second read of this old classic. Old now because it's over twenty years and it still reads well. This reminded me of many of my favorite classics from back in the sixties and seventies and many of those are Robert Heinlein books. This one though had the flavor of a Marion Zimmer Bradley and in particular the Color's of Space. The protagonist is female and a somewhat modified human variant.

Kiondili Wae has some considerable Esper talent that will do her well down the road, but she doesn't yet realize how strong her talent is. She's the underdog fighting her way up alone, because her parents were mistakenly blacklisted and then murdered; although the guild called it a regrettable accident. It left her with minor citizenship with fewer privileges than her peers and having to work hard to earn her education. She has little hope of moving rapidly up the ladder to fair employment, but she's not discouraged because she has confidence in her abilities. She just seems to need better focus.

Kiondili has an Esper ability that has been measured lower than actual and she's treading thin ice because if they find out they might become suspicious that she has excelled in her lessons by stripping the answers from other peoples heads. But that becomes a double edge sword when some job recruiters find this out and offer her a job and wave the normal testing fee she would have to pay. The tester is a Ruvian and they are high in Esper abilities and this is one of many aliens the reader will be introduced to.

If I had one quibble with this book it might be that there are almost too many interesting aliens peopling the story. Still Tara Harper does a great job of keeping them sorted for this reader and she gets high marks for that. The science sometimes almost seems a bit inexplicable, but what is of greater interest is that it is consistent science within the story and it seems well thought out though this reader got a bit lost in it sometimes.

When Kiondili reaches her posting at Corson she discovers it won't be an easy fit right from the start with a handful of alien species, some predatory; and the few species she should be comfortable with end up being the worst to deal with. She'll be Dr. Stillman's assistant and the doctor seems quite nice, but manages to put her right in the middle of an ongoing practical joke battle between the doctor and an alien race, the Dhirnu, who love to engage in practical jokes. But that's just a mild part of her start at the facility since she's already made the acquaintance of an Ixia who would just as easily make her its lunch, as to take her to lunch.

When her higher Esper abilities are discovered Kiondili finds herself accused of stealing ideas from the mind of a human researcher and she undergoes a close examination from a Ruvian who digs deep into her mind to uncover the truth. Though she comes out exonerated she does not come out unscathed and I thought that Tara Harper did a splendid job of describing what could only be understood to be a mind rape and its affects on Kiondili.

The science of the story though is about this consortium of aliens and humans who are trying to uncover the secrets to faster than light travel and how Kiondili contributes despite all the stumbling blocks thrown before her.

Even after twenty years this is a solidly good read with fine characterization and a story that grips the reader

from front to back. It's a must read for lovers of SF and SFF.

J.L. Dobias

Scott Holstad says

I was really trying to make a go of this book, but something kept bothering me and I couldn't quite put my finger on it. Until a couple of days ago, when I came to the necessary realization and put the book aside, unfinished. As I read about 90 pages or so, I got quite a way through it before giving up but by the time I did, I was so sick of the book, or more accurately, the characters, that I just wanted to throw the book through my front window.

In this book, Kiondili Wae, an entity with high Esper ability (to read and manipulate minds and things with her mind, i.e., telepathy), lands a seemingly good research job at Corson Station, where she will hopefully be researching FTL technology and theory and where her boss is perhaps the most famous and respected researcher there, Dr. Stillman.

However, things start to go bad from nearly the beginning, with people getting in her face and starting crap with her on day one to meeting her flighty boss, who immediately sends her on a bizarre errand to find an alien researcher elsewhere on station (a Dhirnu) and give him some information, info that will enrage the alien and make him Kiondili's permanent enemy. Gee, nice damn boss. Thanks for doing that to me, boss, especially during my first 30 minutes of working for you. Asshole!

I quit reading this book because I have never read a book with so much latent and blatant hostility between characters in it before in my life! I don't know what the author was trying to accomplish, but whatever it was, they went overboard. Big time. Everyone pretty much hates everyone else. People, including Kiondili, idiot that she is, plays vicious practical jokes on everyone else and some of these people are aliens with killer instincts. Kiondili can basically read minds, for all intents and purposes, she gets bombarded with hostility at all times, flooding out at her from all sides, but especially from certain characters who hate her from the moment she arrives, all for no good reason. It's like they're emotionally arrested high school students who never matured. And these are the leading researchers in the galaxy, treating her like jealous, juvenile asswipes. It's bizarre! It makes no sense.

Kiondili gets put on a backup crew for a new test ship, so she's excited, but there's so much bickering amongst the crew and one of them hates her so much that he tries to sabotage her career by accusing her of stealing someone else's research through her mental abilities – it's just too much. If I want that much tension in a book, I want some pressure relieved by seeing some people or ships blown away! This nonstop building of tension page by page is murder. It's also not overly realistic, in my opinion. Yes, some work situations are extremely difficult. I've had horrible jobs. Yes, co-workers can make your life hell. But this is fucking ridiculous!

So, basically I hated this book. I kept waiting for it to improve, for the hostility to dissipate. It just continued to get worse. Great. I could go on and on, but why bother? I got a third of the way through and quit. I had better books to read. This one was aggravating me too much and wasn't worth it. I don't want to come away from a book with higher blood pressure and feeling stressed out. One star and not recommended.

