



## Perihelion

*Tami Veldura*

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## **Perihelion** Tami Veldura

Kato Ozark, crown prince and soldier, has just been chosen to pilot his family's queenship. He's trained his entire life for this honor, but it comes with a catch. It seems that First Engineer Mas'ud Tavana has also been chosen as the queen's pilot. Mas'ud has no formal training, and they both believe a mistake has been made. But when an attack on a distant Ozark queen forces them to work together, it's clear their minds are better as one than apart.

They might even go on a proper date. Through mission briefings and politically required offspring, the mental link their queenship forges between them only grows stronger. Within this bond they find strength in each other. Then a rogue AI attacks their ship, ripping the queen open to the core. The two pilots feel it all; the assault destroys their connection and tears them adrift into open space.

Kato and Mas'ud wake up in the medical bay of a rival family with no memory of their queenship or each other. Hailed as a war hero, Kato retrains as a kingship pilot, preparing to defend Earth against the AI. Mas'ud, dismissed as permanently broken, struggles to rediscover his own truth.

Their queenship is out there, waiting for her pilots to come home. The future of their family depends on it.

## **Perihelion Details**

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## From Reader Review Perihelion for online ebook

### Chris, the Dalek King says

Boy, how to sum up this book...

So this book is set many many years in the future. Humans have expanded their reach out into our solar system and beyond. They managed to do this with the help and use of Queenships. A Queenship is basically a living space ship. It is completely sentient, and is able to change its shape and purpose to fit its pilot's needs. The pilots are chosen by the Queenship and are linked psychically with the ship till basically the pilot dies. The ship will then select a new pilot and the cycle begins again. All Queenships (and by extension the pilots) are owned and operated by a ruling family. Ozark is one of the largest families. Dhar is another.

This is where one of our MCs, Kato, comes in. He is the grandson of one of the main Ozark pilots, and so is up for selection on the new Ozark Queenship, Selvans. He never expected to be selected as pilot, though. Selvans has other ideas about that. Kato is her pilot and she will have him. But in a wholly unprecedented move, she will also have another: Mas'ud Tavana. Mas'ud is from none of the ruling families. He is a lead mechanic and able to manipulate ships like no-other, but in this world that is not much. Being chosen as pilot is unthinkable. But Selvans has spoken and she will have Mas'ud and Kato, and no others.

However, not long into their piloting of Selvans they run across an anomaly. A Queenship unlike any other. An AI that has been constructed, not born, and that can vastly outmaneuver and out-power all the ships she comes across, but who seems to lack the soul (and sanity) of normal Queenships. With a rogue ship terrorizing space, and two new and untried pilots in her path, destruction is all but assured.

Kato and Mas'ud must be kept safe, though, for Selvans will have it no other way.

This book was first written for Goodreads M/M Romance Group's annual writing event. I never got to read it then, but when I was trolling thru amazon one day for upcoming releases I saw this book and was intrigued. When it was offered to Love Bytes for review, and I saw that one of the characters was in fact a trans man, I was all over it. It has been a while since I read anything properly scifi, and this was looking better and better.

What I found inside was beyond my expectations in many ways. The construction of this scifi universe and its Queenships were complex and unique from anything I had read previously. The characters were from a wide array of racial backgrounds. In fact Kato is African-American, and Mas'ud is Persian. The fact that this was a human-populated scifi that did not relegate the people of color to secondary-character status was refreshing to see. The way that they were just *there* and it was normal and not worth commenting on, was one of the things I loved about this story.

Mas'ud being a trans man was also a big selling point. For obvious reasons. But I liked how Mas'ud was not *just* a trans man. That wasn't his role. He was a mechanic, a pilot, a man...the fact he was born biologically a woman just was something that happened, not who he was. This has been something I (and other transgender people) have been asking for for a while. A character that is trans...and so much more. I might now understand Mas'ud desire to have kids (I honestly don't understand anyone's desire to procreate) but it was also nice to see his reaction to the possibility.

I found the plot here both simple and terribly complex. On the surface, it is a story of two men trying to figure out how they fit together with both themselves and with their new role on Selvans (oh, and also saving

the universe). But this story weaves about thirty different threads together to make this complex tapestry of Families fighting for power, people fighting for the right to move outside of the Families, and the danger of creating things you have no hope of controlling.

And for all the beauty I found in it by the end of the story, it was at times very confusing. We were thrown into scenes with random characters that are not really introduced at all (or seen again) and expected to know who they are, what their allegiances are, and how they are tied into the greater whole. I could see that the author creating something large and detailed, but I still was left floundering more times than I wanted to be. I think the author had a very clear idea about how all of these people connected and why their part of the story needed to be told, but they sometimes didn't do a great job of showing the reader why that was. This, and the fact that I don't really enjoy books where the story is told by so many different characters, is probably why this only came in at 4 stars for me. By the end I could appreciate what had been done, but that doesn't diminish the fact that I spent a lot of time reading it stuck in half-confused mode.

I will say this, if you intend to read this book, there is an index of characters and other information at the end of the book. Read that first. You might not need all the information or even remember most of it, but it can be extremely helpful in helping you orientate yourself in this universe. I didn't know about it till a friend pointed it out to me, and it would have been very handy to have some of that information before I began reading.

Overall this was beautifully written and crafted. I did enjoy reading it, and if the author wishes to grace us with another book set in this world I would gladly read it. I found the action scenes enthralling, and the characters were truly well written. Even with the problems I ran across in regards to storytelling did not make this less of an entertaining scifi story.

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*This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.*

### **Jeanne 'Divinae' says**

Rating: 3.5

This story was hard for me to follow. We are given a whole new world, but there are so many players/characters it's was hard for me to keep them all straight(even with the glossary at the end). Throw in the political families and how Kato, one of our MC's is related to two of them.

This world takes place in space. We still have Earth, but it seems mostly everyone lives on a queenship, which can be as huge as a planet itself(or the moon-- they aren't tiny). They are 'birthed' from another queenship and are intelligent. They possess knowledge! But they need a human pilot. While they have access to many others, they need the human/s to help maintain them and help out(like creating and strategy).

Kato is on a newly awoken queenship, Selvans. He is excited for his friend whom everyone assumes will be chosen as her pilot. She's the best candidate. Selvans in fact picks two. This is unheard of and neither of them are his friend. Never before has there been two pilots for one ship and once they are connected, they are connected for life. Their life span is expanded with their ship. If a pilot dies, the ship has to pick another. But

if they are alive, they wait for them to come back.

Mas'ud is the lead engineer for Selvans. He is also plucked out and thrown through a loop when he is chosen as a pilot also. But unlike Kato (he is good at strategy and familiar with politics-- because of his family) Mas'ud is good at creating and keeping Selvans from overloading him. He has to help Kato 'filter' the noise.

Neither of them were prepared to be chosen and they both think the other is the better suited.

Mas'ud character wasn't written in enough detail for me to 'see' him unlike Kato.

Also, how the ships are set up are a bit confusing for me. Each queenship has kingships (ran by a human crew) and drones (no-man ships). They are all connected and since the pilots are connected to their ships they are also connected to each other (to my understanding).

A family is greedy with power and are willing to 'think' outside the box. It backfires and causes the problem in our story. Everyone has to get together to stop it. I don't want to give it away.

Mas'ud and Kato's relationship for me didn't really develop for me. They had a connection because of Selvans. I am unsure if they would have hit it off if they weren't so familiar with one another. I didn't see a lot of romance (on my end). Though they do seem to care for one another, I don't know if I'd call it love. Friendship yes. But I like them both and want them to be together and work out. I just wished I saw more of their relationship forming more than the outside factors. But I heard this story will be continued so we'll see more of their 'love'.

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### **Roger - president of NBR United - says**

wow I was highly anticipating this story based on my prompt but This was filled with intrigue, political manuvering, covered almost all bases on the spectrum of LGBTQIA. Kato and Mas'ud are both surprised when they are both selected to be the pilots of Selvens, a newly birthed queenship. When a rogue ship nearly destroys Selvena both Kato and Mas'ud have amnesia. Kato is made to believe that he is a Kingship pilot while Mas'ud who was blinded is shunted aside to his engineering. The Rogue ship plans on destroying Earth and All families hurry to save Earth.

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### **Kiron says**

DNF 70% - I've been itching to read a good m/m sci-fi for a while now. Unfortunately, this story is not it. The writing is not bad per se, it is the presentation that bothers me. The first pages starts off interesting enough. We meet Kato, Mas'ud and the queenship Selvans, which has chosen both of them as her pilots. The queenships are highly intelligent, sentient spaceships with telepathic abilities; they don't make mistakes picking pilots. Very cool.

After the intro, I failed to follow the story because I was distracted by the constant POV switches and the seemingly unrelated characters introduced at random intervals. I hardly had a chance to connect with the

MCs before I'm tossed into someone else's head (who might not even be in the same star system as the Selvans??) Having to ask myself "Who the heck am I following now?" or "Where am I...?" every few pages was not a good sign. The character list didn't help much. Why so many crammed into 151 pages?

Which brings me to Kato and Mas'ud's relationship. They didn't have much chemistry, and their desires for each other are largely facilitated by the mental connection created by Selvans. I actually did want them to get back together after they lost their memories, but that's only because I couldn't care less about the rogue AI plot or whatever else was happening on the other queenships/kingships. I'm sure if the story would've been more engaging and coherent sticking only to Kato and Mas'ud's views.

Now, the last problem I have is more of a nitpick regarding the terminology and characters lists...Outside of Mas'ud's transition, which happened years ago, I'm failing to understand how the many gender identities and races relate to the story. The main reason why I have trouble caring about the characters is because very little of their personalities were shown. If gender and race are the only things distinguishing them, then that's just silly. There's a point where diversity/inclusiveness becomes checking off a list to make sure you've included every label, so as to not offend the Tumblr SJW crowd.

I apologize to the author for sounding so harsh (I do appreciate the freebie!) I had high hopes for the story from the blurb, and my hopes were utterly crushed. Hopefully the next one, if there is going to be a continuation, will be better.

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### **iam says**

Sentient Spaceships? ✓  
Entangled political machinations? ✓  
LGBTQIA+ SciFi setting? ✓  
FUCK YES!

This was AMAZING!!!

Technically flawed in many ways, but I still loved it.

It's your typical SciFi universe, but with an actual diverse cast - there's a huge range of ethnicities and gender identities, the main characters are African-American and Persian, one of them is trans. The countless side-POV characters include Navajo, Chinese, Lithuanian, genderfluid, nullgender, bigender, to name a few.

What's a bit confusing is said POV-jumping. It's written in relatively short chapters, each written from a different POV, though it keeps returning to the two MCs and choice side-characters, which leads to the characters barely being introduced before the POV switches again.

Another confusing thing is the setting, especially in the beginning. There's barely any explanations about the technologies, the politics or how this future works - there is a glossary, which sadly is full of spoilers.

Which brings me to what bothers me most - the book's blurb is TERRIBLE. It spoils basically the entire plot save for the very end. I enjoyed reading this, but I would have enjoyed it EVEN MORE if I hadn't been spoiled.

So if you're interested in reading this but hate spoilers as I do, DON'T READ THE BLURB. If you still want to know what Perihelion is about:

Thousands of years in the future, humankind has expanded through space. Power lies in the hand of seven

families through military, political or economic means, some of which have a technology called Queenships. Queenships are huge space ships/stations that are part metal, part membrane, part crystal, which are self-aware. Still, a Queenship needs a pilot with whom she (Queenships are female) shares an intimate mental connection that expands the pilot's mind.

When a new Queenship is birthed, she chooses her pilot - and the newborn Selvans chooses not one pilot, but two: Kato, a high ranked official well-versed in politics and military tactics, and Mas'ud, an extremely talented engineer. But as the two of them figure out what it means to share pilotship and their minds not only with their Queenship, but also with each other, other forces - both hostile and not - are completing and forming their own machinations.

The plot, setting and cast could have easily given the book three times the pages it has - that, combined with the short chapters and many characters, sadly makes it hard to connect with said characters. It's clearly the first part of a series. The ending is a bit unsatisfying and there are so many open and blossoming plotthreads... I'm looking forward to reading more of this.

Overall probably closer to 4 stars than 5, but I fell so in love with it that I'm gonna give 5 despite the flaws.

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### **Elizabethta says**

#### **4.5 stars**

This is my kinda special connection. Spaceships that bond and communicate with their pilots through a mental bond. Hell yeah. And two young men, space pilots who are put together to figure out the whole mind-meld thing at the same time as all hell breaks out in the universe. Hells to the bells, yeah.

In addition to sentient spaceships, we get experimental ships run amok. And their owners, the powerful families who play at power politics, jostling for an edge in the game. I loved the huge scope of this; the world building is amazing. The romance has its ups and downs with some big roadblocks for the two men from different backgrounds, but the total acceptance, in this world, of gender identification beyond heteronormative meant that this was not an issue for them. Or anyone else inhabiting this universe. Refreshing.

As with her work for last year's DRitC event—Blood In The Water, a high seas treasure hunt with pirates and an evil genie—Veldura takes the reader on a rollicking, out-of-the box adventure, this time in the final frontier. For the thinking reader. Highly recommended.

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### **Ashley says**

An interesting take on different type of science fiction book. I enjoyed each of main characters they each had different things about them that made them great characters. The only negative thing for me was that the book was fairly short so it felt like the book was rushed.

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## Ashley E says

I probably wasn't in the best state of mind to read this, because I'm exhausted this week, and Perihelion has a fairly intricate political plot. If I'm being honest, I'm sure a lot of it went over my head, because I was too tired to be paying that close of attention, but I'm positive I will be re-reading this at some point and can enjoy all those details I missed before. I do wish we could have seen a bit more of Mas'ud and Kato interacting as a romantic couple, but I felt satisfied, and honestly, the ending seemed very open to continuation. (Hopeful puppy eyes?)

And can I just throw out there how much I appreciated the author including, and without trying to justify or explain, all sorts of genders? Bravo, Ms. Veldura. Well done.

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## Borderstar says

This sounds like my kind of story! Looking forward to reading this one :)

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## Aleksandra says

### DNF @ 30%

I am starting new year by implementing the golden rule of “DNF the book you don’t want to read”. I tried, but this book just didn’t work for me. I came back home and I was literally bracing myself to read the book. Why bother?

Exactly. So I’m dropping the book like hot potatoes.

**The book is messy and confusing and convoluted.** The narration introduces all of this world-building elements, dozen of new characters, some kind of political and economic machinations in a span of 30 pages without bothering to pause and explain. **I was confused and annoyed and it’s a very unpleasant reading experience.** The book is also not divided into chapters. There are pov breaks but it feels like a stream of narration.

If you ask me what’s the book is about I would say there are space ships??? So it’s a sci-fi. Sentient space ship and also war(s?) Big corporations fight against each other. What corporations? Who are on the side of the protagonists? So many names were dropped like how am I supposed to remember them? Who are the protagonists?

I believe two guys who became copilots of the ship are protagonists, I think. Both of them are men of color; I believe one of them is trans man, but don’t quote me on it. Also he has a hijabi subordinate, which was cool. But no number of diverse characters was able to save the disaster that was the narration and plot composition.

No rating because it’s a DNF.

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## **Erica says**

This is a little hard to rate, so I'll settle in the middle. It's a good story, I just don't know if it's a good fit for me. I look forward to further installments so I can figure out how I feel about them.

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## **Joyfully Jay says**

*A Joyfully Jay review.*

### **2.75 stars**

Perihelion is a fast paced novel that starts off with a unique idea, but stumbles over too many useless characters and a plot that wanders off the rails about midway through. The concept is wonderfully original and I give the author credit for building a complex and intriguing world that combines chess, limitless imagination, and an almost corporate style familial system. The relationship established between the pilots and their ships is as integral and emotive as bonds between humans and just as substantial. Selvans is never given much on page time, but she exists as a distinct connection between Kato and Mas'ud and you can't imagine one without the other. Kato and Mas'ud are incompletely drawn characters and, while both are likable and somewhat relatable, it's hard to connect with them on a deeper level. Their romance is almost taken for granted, as if their co-existence as pilots has predestined them to be lovers as well. Which means the relationship isn't very interesting and never really seems to go anywhere.

**Read Sue's review in its entirety here.**

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## **Vivian says**

Sentient ships? Oh, yes please.

I wasn't lured in by the prospect of pilot/ship relations; I dove in.

Maiden voyage of the queenship Selvans, who is awakened and selects her pilot--Kato Ozark. From a long and distinguished line of pilots, even though he's young, it's not a surprise. But... what happens next is. Ma'sud Tavana is First Engineer when the ship demands his presence. Following orders, he proceeds to the bridge where the reality of situation becomes clear immediately. Two pilots. Unheard of.

Strategy, ship design, and allegiances are all big contributors to the story. It's definitely plot or action based than character and romance focused. Katy and Ma'sud face challenges. The battlefield isn't just the traditional one and as the games are played out the costs become apparent as does the abuse of power.

The cast of characters is deep and extraordinarily diverse in sex, gender, and race. There are many and the nuances of the interactions as the story progresses and the various machinations makes it a tad bit intense to follow--no slacking while reading. It's time's like these that I miss paperback books because not being able to access indexes easily in ebooks sucks. Additionally, it is placed at the end so I never know until it's over at

which point I'm always exasperated--Now, I have it. Tip: flip to the end and read it first.

So, there is this overarching play for the galaxy going on, who has what to offer whom and how trades go down. There's collateral damage and trading that seems so emotionally detached, almost diplomatic and unvested even though the players clearly are that rubbed me wrong. The emotional sterility was unsettling for me, as were reactions to it. Not lobotomized unemotional, but if you enjoy the crisper end of the spectrum of expression then this is a good fit.

Needless to say from my rating, I enjoyed this. The end was a bit subdued for me, but it suited the characters. Recommended for science fiction lovers because there is some fun stuff here.

~A copy was provided to me for a No Glitter Blown review~

**~~Reviewed for Hearts On Fire Reviews~~**

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### **Elliot Cooper says**

Really enjoyed this world and story! The political intrigue was well played and kept me invested in the larger plot outside of the personal journeys of the MCs. I loved Kato and Mas'ud. The ships and technology are a perfect blend of the new and fantastical with familiar space epic elements.

Given the scope of the story and the psychic connection the pilots have with their ships, the narrative zooms in tight and out to the grand expanse of space throughout the story. These transitions feel very organic and work well with the story's framing. It was also a very clever way to give an eagle eye view of massive and far-reaching space battles through the characters themselves.

I only have two things I'd list as cons. Firstly, Veldura's succinct, staccato style can sometimes pack so much character blocking into one little sentence that I'd get lost and have to backtrack carefully to figure out where people had moved or where the scene had moved. Secondly, the gender diversity felt tokenish and I was left scratching my head a bit with the way Jai Huan handled their genderfluidity. But then I'm not genderfluid, so I have no basis for understanding that experience outside of internet anecdotes.

A lot of times I felt like I was watching a live-action anime-styled movie in my head, which is awesome. And there were many plot, worldbuilding, and character elements that reminded me, warmly, of both Neon Genesis Evangelion and Dune.

Looking forward to the next installment in this series!

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### **Alexis Woods says**

Hard core sci-fi writers rejoice. Compelling, dramatic, and way over my head, but I loved it. I tend to gloss over the precise scientific stuff and dig into the storyline, characters, setting, etc. Ms. Veldura did some amazingly superb world building. The story moved incredibly quickly and sometimes I got lost, but I kept going and remained on my heading to a fabulous conclusion. This could have been twice as long, the sci-fi aspect explained in more detail, especially the host of characters and how they all interconnect could have

been worked better into the story, but for a free read this was fantastic. I believe a part two is in the works.

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