

Explorations

December 2000/January 2001

The Best in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Graphic Fiction.

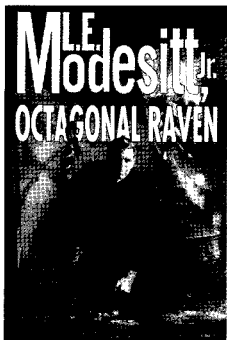
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Octagonal Raven

L.E. Modesitt, Jr.

Tor Books

\$27.95; January

The premise of this story begins with a falling meteor. Speculation runs rampant that traces of life were found on these rocks that entered Earth's atmosphere. What would happen if these traces were not exactly benign, but programmed octagonal nanites that have an agenda as old as their forgotten masters?

The following events take place several centuries into the Earth's future. By that time, humankind has discovered nanotechnology, but the scientific breakthrough devastates the worldwide economy and civilization falls into ruin. The remaining remnants of humanity eventually come to a peaceful coexistence with the technology. Now, humans are categorized not by race or creed, but by genetic code—there are "normal" humans and "pre-selects."

Pre-selects have attributes chosen by their parents—who are usually rich—or by those few generous folks who are willing to live in poverty so that their children can be faster, stronger and smarter than normal humans.

Our hero Daryn is a rebel as well as a pre-select, the second-born male child of the most powerful man on Earth. Daryn decides to forsake working for his father's media conglomerate Unicom and joins the Federal Service, where he excels as a spaceship pilot. His pre-select abilities help him to become one of the best pilots in the whole Service. But during a routine trip, Daryn comes face to face with an alien gateway device with a strangely familiar octagonal shape.

Octagonal Raven is a great science fiction story, and an excellent mystery to boot. Read it and enjoy a sneak peek into the not-too-far-off future. —Jason C.