



Project Utopia: A Novella

Pam McElprang

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2075. A world ravaged by war. Originals have been Chosen to function in society as the labor and working force of the One World Order. Dr. Samantha Hargrove's life is a good one. A prominent bioengineer, working on Project Utopia-a biochip destined to alter the very face of humanity. What she doesn't know is that her project has the potential to destroy the...

Project Utopia: A Novella Details

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From Reader Review Project Utopia: A Novella for online ebook

Joshua Macer says

I won this as a GR giveaway.

Pam Mosbrucker is an outstanding author. This veteran creates a vivid world with a great story line. Her writing style will suck you in. Although not very long this book packs one hell of a story. I highly recommend this book! Give it a go.

Michelle says

i won this book as a ARC from goodreads and man was this a good book :) it was a nice read and very enjoyable :) would defently reccomand others to read it ,

Kelly says

What just happened?

(Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book for review through Goodreads's First Reads program. Also, this is not a spoiler-free review.)

Based on previous Goodreads reviews, I had high hopes for this novella. Or moderate expectations, at the very least.

The seed of the idea that forms the root of the story is certainly promising: Some time in the not-so-distant future (2075, to be precise), scientists have developed a biochip that will potentially face of humanity. With a name like "Project Utopia," you'd expect this advancement to be downright revolutionary - curing all disease and eradicating poverty, for example - only not so much. Among its many functions is the ability to store vast amounts of information (thus eliminating the need for passports, drivers licenses, and the like) and dispense medications remotely. Convenient, yes - but hardly utopian. And it's not difficult to see how such tools could easily be misused: for example, medications might be dispensed without the patient's consent, thus enabling the forcible medication of those with mental illnesses, or allowing the government to prevent reproduction in certain "undesirable" citizens via involuntary contraception.

Some of the biochip's controls are downright dystopian: from anywhere in the world, and with just a few keystrokes, a programmer can command a biochip to make its host fall asleep, turn himself in to the nearest police station, enter quarantine - or die. Yup, there's a kill function. I'm sure that the higher-ups at Intelli Inc aren't exactly advertising that last advantage, but still. Common sense, people.

(And yes, I realize that the name is supposed to be ironic - but to the reader, not the general public that Intelli Inc is marketing it to.)

With such a high negative-to-positive ratio for the average Jane, one has to wonder why any citizens would agree to be implanted with the Project Utopia biochip - let alone rally to make it mandatory. One scene even

shows an angry mob lighting a building filled with dissenters ablaze. The answer (a very strong subliminal advertising push) is underwhelming at best.

The protagonist of *Project Utopia* is one Dr. Samantha Hargrove, a scientist living in the research community of Pendelton Hills. Sam was hired to develop the biochip; at the time we meet her, Sam's testing the finished product on live subjects. But not humans: modeled on Originals (who, when Chosen, are cryogenically frozen and their families paid handsomely), these subjects are Clones. Less than nonhuman animals (who have improbably been granted civil rights just 61 years from now; be still, my vegan heart!), Clones are property, things, tools. Items to be used and destroyed. (Though you'd think that the sheer cost involved in cloning would make them less expendable than they are.)

Sam's research on the Clones reveals that the biochip has an unexpected side effect: it either turns the recipient into a mindless drone - or an aggressive cannibal. Either way, it erases the person inside. When Sam attempts to bring this glaring flaw to the Corporation's attention, she's appalled to find that, rather than halt production, they've sped the biochip's timeline up. In fact, Intelli Inc has already run its own trials on Clones, and implanted the chips in thousands of citizens in Idaho and several surrounding states.

Which brings me to another head-scratcher: why is the Corporation still testing the biochip on Clones if it's moved onto the final stage of Project Utopia?

* spoiler alert! *

As much as I wanted to like it, *Project Utopia* is filled with plot holes, subplots that go nowhere, and scenes that seem extraneous to the main plot. For instance, what happened to Dr. Jones's jump drive - what was on it? Did Sam get a chance to look at it before everything went sideways? She just pockets it and that's that. What about Charlie? Was he a clone too? If not, why was he murdered? And Dr. Jones - why would he implant himself with the biochip? If he didn't want to live in a world where humans are happy to act "like sheep" (a speciesist term I don't much care for), isn't the converse also true? If someone were to rise up against Project Utopia, wouldn't he want to live? So why make himself vulnerable to the kill chip in the event of a revolution?

It's just all so disorienting.

While there's not as much gory violence as you might expect to find in a story about a biochip that turns people into bloodthirsty brutes, there is one especially appalling scene involving a murdered prostitute Clone named Martini. One of the johns at a bachelor party (which basically entails gang rape - how can a Clone be said to consent to sex when she has no will of her own?) butchers her, strewing her entrails around the bedroom and taking a nipple as a trophy. Which he later eats.

Since there's no indication that the murderer has been implanted with a biochip, this scene just seems unnecessary: sexual violence against women for entertainment's sake. What's the take-home message here: men hate women in this new future? Women are expendable?

Hello, 2014. The future is now.

* end spoilers! *

Some of the ideas introduced in *Project Utopia* are intriguing - Where do Clones fit in on the human-nonhuman continuum? What are our responsibilities towards nonhuman animals? Do the benefits of such a

chip outweigh the costs? How might we manage privacy issues with such technology? - but ultimately the story doesn't really go anywhere. Or anywhere coherent, anyway.

<http://www.easyvegan.info/2014/02/28/...>

Bohdana Panchyshyn says

I usually like long books but I found this book enjoyable. The book it basically about people who want to make a perfect, easy world with technology and it takes place in the future.
