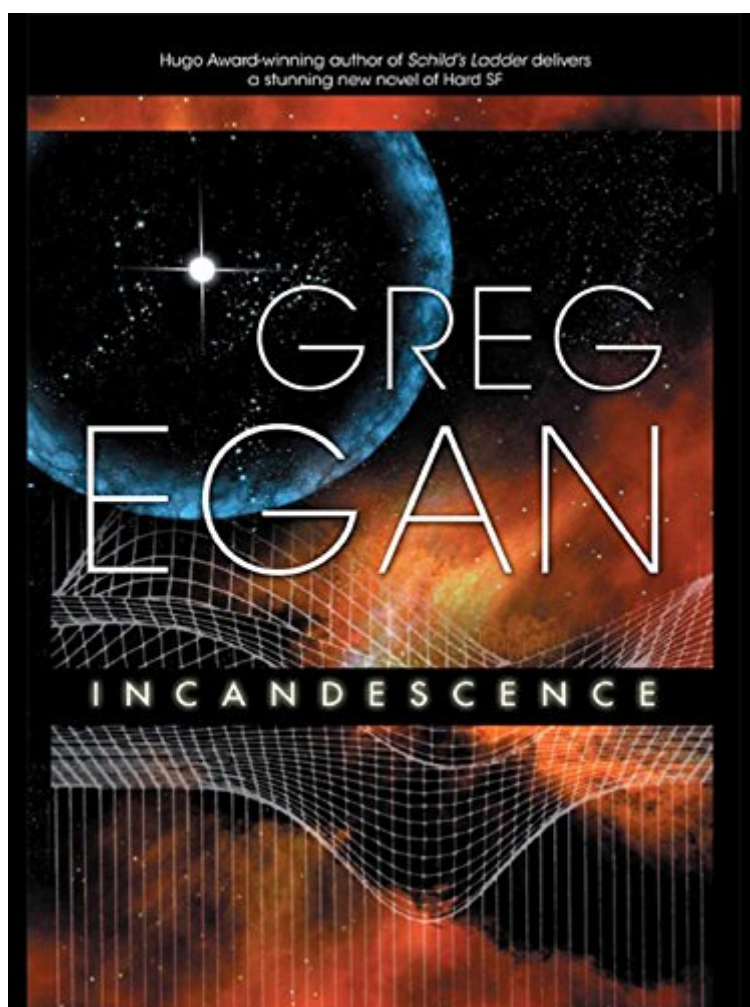


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Incandescence



Synopsis

The long-awaited new novel from Greg Egan! Hugo Award-winning author Egan returns to the field with *Incandescence*, a new novel of hard SF. The Amalgam spans nearly the entire galaxy, and is composed of innumerable beings from a wild variety of races, some human or near it, some entirely other. The one place that they cannot go is the bulge, the bright, hot center of the galaxy. There dwell the Aloof, who for millions of years have deflected any and all attempts to communicate with or visit them. So when Rakesh is offered an opportunity to travel within their sphere, in search of a lost race, he cannot turn it down. Roi is a member of that lost race, which is not only lost to the Amalgam, but lost to itself. In their world, there is but toil, and history and science are luxuries that they can ill afford. Rakesh's journey will take him across millennia and light years. Roi's will take her across vistas of learning and discovery just as vast.

Book Information

File Size: 835 KB

Print Length: 257 pages

Publisher: Night Shade Books (May 1, 2008)

Publication Date: May 1, 2008

Language: English

ASIN: B0070YQOHW

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #68,319 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #109

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Customer Reviews

Greg Egan is one of my favorite science fiction authors, but he seems to be nearly unknown in the U.S. I have been waiting for this book to arrive for some time, so I wound up ordering a British edition from UK. This review assumes the text is the same. Egan's story is set in the galactic core, inhabited by a race known as the Aloof, because they seem almost indifferent to any attempts at

communication from the Amalgam, the loose network of civilizations that inhabit the rest of the galaxy. However, they do allow thrill-seeking members of the Amalgam to enter their transportation network, digitizing themselves for transmission at the speed of light across the galactic core, instead of the long way around it. A chunk of rock containing DNA leads a couple to commit their efforts to tracking down the mystery of a lost alien race inside the Aloof-controlled core. That's the setup, but the real fascination of this book is the weird physics and civilization of the surviving aliens, who live on a fragment of rock in the gravity well of a neutron star. By a process of deduction and scientific measurement using primitive tools the inhabitants are able to deduce their true situation in the universe and also to come to understand the perils they face. Much of the book consists of the scientific inquiries of the aliens, rendered in great detail, in particular the way they deduce their orbital mechanics by measuring the forces at work inside their world. It reminds me of Robert L. Forward's fantastic hard SF novel *Dragon's Egg*, which describes a race living on the surface of a neutron star, their bodies made out of degenerate matter, and also of Hal Clement's *Mission of Gravity*.

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