

Author sees dire conditions in these dystopian short stories

From severe droughts, political upheaval, widening poverty gap, and weather ravaged earth, a bumpy road ahead predicts author.

CARVER, MA, UNITED STATES, February 8, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pessimistic author, [Douglas C. Atkins](#), has dim view of future

“

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Kirkus Reviews

Douglas C. Atkins a writer from Cape Cod, MA, has always felt that the Earth and humanity is in for a bumpy ride ahead, and it shows in his new short story collection [Diminishing Horizons](#).

Out planet's most pressing predicament, he will tell you, is the evolving global water shortage.

“As we speak,” he said, “there are nations in Africa where it's the woman's duty to walk for hours in the sweltering, unrelenting sun in order to buy water that will only last a few days at best. Then she will do it again. And such a life as this goes on year in and out.

“It's not only happening in Africa, but places in California are stricken by such a lack of water, and they are using massive desalination plants to convert sea-water to consumable drinking water,” he said.

His first novel – The Deadly Prophecy of Enoch – paints a picture of a world where water is only available near coastlines. Thus in the US, Middle America has been abandoned and our citizenries' have all migrated to the Atlantic and Pacific.

Saudi Arabia primarily use desalination for their fresh water, and Israel gets 70% of their fresh water that way. Some countries, such as the Bahamas and Malta, are left with the only option of manufactured drinking water.

Atkins also warned of a coming mass extinction.

“A quick Google search for the Sixth Extinction will turn up nearly 16 million results,” Atkins said. “Animal species are disappearing 100 times faster than they were just fifty years ago. No one

doubts the escalating political violence and strife both in the US and abroad.”

Atkins’ reaction to the problems permeates in his newest book, titled *Diminishing Horizons*, which is a collection of short, dystopian stories. The critique below, written by Kirkus Reviews, highlights Atkins’ world view and many of the dangers that lay ahead for humanity if things are left unattended.

A collection of SF stories explores human connection in the near and unpleasant future. Most of Atkins’ 10 tales in this volume are quite lengthy, leading off with two novelettes: *Here We Go Again*, in which a “Human Engineered Intelligence” is placed on trial for murder, and *Ascensor Physics*, in which a death row inmate is paired with a genetically engineered, “mostly human” woman in a space exploration tale redolent of SF’s golden age.

The collection also includes four stories of near-novelette length that feature characters yearning for intimacy in futures turned bad. While none of the tales feels padded, they sometimes exhibit an exuberant laxness of prose (“It was unending, seeming to go on for a long time. He had nothing to tell time”).

But such is Atkins’ vigor, readers will likely sweep past such awkward phrasings. The stories’ lengthiness, meanwhile, allows for worldbuilding that encompasses several themes in any given tale. Climate disaster is one motif, seen most prominently in “Lessons From the Breadbasket,” in which an agronomist leaves heat-ravaged Earth to work on an alien planet whose native inhabitants are in danger of repeating humanity’s errors. Climate disaster is also evident in “The Plunge,” in which drastic attempts to counter rising temperatures have sent the planet spiraling toward a new ice age, and “[Mirage](#),” in which a widower and climate refugee must trek for water along with all the women. Atkins writes in the past tense through male characters. “The Plunge” and “Mirage” are narrated by misogynistic protagonists and portray women as the more virtuous, silent partner in humanity’s misfortunes.

“Mirage” also depicts rampant wealth disparity, which is explored further in “Squeezing Lemons” and in “Richland,” in which two malcontents attempt to sabotage a town’s digital currency and topple its wealthy elite.

Atkins’ arrangement of stories is astute, and the themes tend to flow from one tale to the next. The only extraneous inclusions are the short palate cleansers “That’s Natural” and “The Alien Con” and perhaps the murder mystery “Phobos Phobia,” though these offerings do contribute to a recurrent sense of a dog-eat-dog future. While few of the stories have happy endings, several wrap up with modest twists and small victories.

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When asked what he hopes to gain in predicting such hopeless futures for humanity, Atkins had

this to say. "It's best described in the review. It's a sobering view of the future. The potential for humanity no longer having and natural fresh drinking is a very real threat. I foretell these conditions first in my book *The Deadly Prophecy of Enoch*, and more recently in my story, *Mirage*, out of *Diminishing Horizons*. It's also available as a stand-alone story available on Amazon," Atkins said. "Right now is the season to nominate stories for the celebrated Hugo Awards. I'm hopeful that along with the publicity this press release will bring, I am optimistic that the dire nature of the story will ignite desire to put a vote for *Mirage*."

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