

BOOK NOOK

■ Book Review: 'Scorched Earth' sets fire to the Halo Trilogy

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The Halo Trilogy penned by Clark Hays and Kathleen McFall began with "The Gates of Mars," a dystopian view of what could be in store for us if climate change, rampant greed, and the rise of artificial intelligence progress further down an already familiar road.

Crucial Larsen, a cop on the trash heap of what is left of

scorching desert world of what was the Southwest United States, where genetic mutants hold the key to something most in the Families don't know they need, but a few will do anything to get.

The technology critical to the rebellion resides in only two people, but the Larsen siblings aren't the only ones able to hoodwink

Halo, and time is running out for Crucial to unravel plots within plots and somehow escape intact. And the plan to co-opt Halo for the common good is the least of his worries.

Crucial's personal brand of humanity is the driving force behind the success of the Halo Trilogy. In a bleak future dominated by everything that is bad about our society, Crucial Larsen clings to decency and loyalty in a world that could care less with a stubbornness that is as irritating as it is endearing.

And as he blunders through life armed only with his wits and a love/hate relationship with everything he holds dear, the future of Earth's existence hangs in the balance.

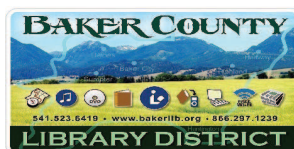
Of all the characters brought to life by Hays and McFall, cybernetic sidekick Sanders flies under the radar as central to the overall plot. Originally tasked with keeping Crucial within bounds on a planet where he is barely welcome, and constantly bearing the brunt of lethal attacks aimed at (and by) his charge, Sanders finds himself with divided loyalties and questioning what, truly, being human means.

"Scorched Earth" was released Feb. 14 by Pumpjack Press (www.pumpjackpress.com).



Earth, is just trying to make it through a bleak existence as best he can when his sister Essential disappears from Mars, now a gated planet for the ultra-rich Five Families. His search for her embroils him unwillingly in a rebellion against Halo, the planet AI that controls everything at the behest of the Families and enforces the divide between the haves and have-nots.

The second book of the trilogy, "Scorched Earth," plunks Crucial into the dilemma of saving the life of his ex-lover's current fiancée, who has been framed for the murder of a Family headman. The investigation leads him to the



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