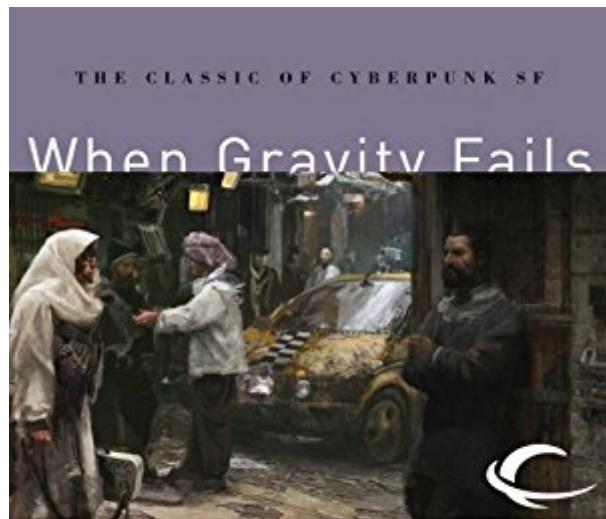


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When Gravity Fails: Marid Audran Trilogy, Book 1



GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER



Synopsis

In a decadent world of cheap pleasures and easy death, Marid Audran has kept his independence the hard way. Still, like everything else in the Budayeen, he's available for a price. For a new kind of killer roams the streets of the Arab ghetto, a madman whose bootlegged personality cartridges range from a sinister James Bond to a sadistic disemboweler named Khan. And Marid Audran has been made an offer he can't refuse. The 200-year-old godfather of the Budayeen's underworld has enlisted Marid as his instrument of vengeance. But first Marid must undergo the most sophisticated of surgical implants before he dares to confront a killer who carries the power of every psychopath since the beginning of time. Wry, savage, and unignorable, *When Gravity Fails* was hailed as a classic by Effinger's fellow SF writers on its original publication in 1987, and the sequence of Marid Audran novels it begins were the culmination of his career.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

George Alec Effinger wrote three books about Marid Audran, a private investigator living in the Budayeen, the red light district of an unnamed Arab country in the 23rd century (but in actuality modeled on the French quarter in New Orleans, where Effinger lived). *When Gravity Fails* is the first of the three books, which introduce us to Marid, who was raised in Algeria by his mother, an Algerian prostitute, and who never knew his French father. Considered a barbarian north african by the Arabs in his city, Marid lives on the fringes among the drug dealers and users, and the strippers, prostitutes, sex changes and outcasts that live just outside the law, working as a private detective

when he can find a client. Marid prides himself on being unwired, that is, unlike most residents of the Budayeen, Marid has not adapted his brain to accept personality modules, or Moddies, or add-ons, better known as Daddies. Nor does Marid work or live under the largesse or protection of Friedlander Bey, better known as Papa, who controls most the business, legitimate or otherwise, in the Budayeen. When a client is killed in front of Marid's eyes and Marid's acquaintances start dying horrible deaths, Marid is drawn into an uneasy alliance with both the police, whom he does not trust, and Papa, to whom he does not want to be beholden. Effinger has created a world that is unlike most science fiction books, keeping the actual science light, and letting us believe that this is how the Arab world might be in the 23rd century, with not much changed except a bit of technology. Effinger offers both an interesting who and why-dunnit, while examining the issues of faith and identity.

George Alec Effinger's science-fiction whodunit "When Gravity Fails" (1987), transports us to the year 2172, dropping us into the Budayeen, a walled in, rough-and-tumble tourist trap near the forbidding Sahara Desert, featuring bars, clubs, street thieves, prostitutes, and predators, all rather casually policed, with a well-populated cemetery. In this future world, medical procedures and pharmacology exist for physical re-engineering and sexual transformation. Men can readily become women and vice versa. Direct modifications of the human brain are now commonplace through surgical implants that permit those suitably "wired" to become anyone or anything commercially available in "moddies". By "chipping in" a small circuit board, one can become any character from literature or history from James Bond to Genghis Khan, with true identity submerged. "Daddies" are also on hand - temporary data transfer chips that lend instant knowledge of any language, skill, or corpus of facts, however esoteric, for as long as the chip is in place. To navigate this world with integrity intact, one must be "the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world." Our narrator, Marid Audran, is such a man. He is an easy-going hustler from the Mahgreb, an impoverished region of Algeria. He has found a home in the Budayeen, pulling himself up by his bootstraps from nothing to next-to-nothing. He has an uneasy relationship with the police, welcome acceptance by nightclub proprietors, a trio of friends, and the love of Yasmin, born a boy, now a voluptuous club dancer with the knockout looks that only surgery could provide. A Muslim by birth, Marid is well versed in his creed, but knows how to take it or leave it.

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