



## Second Chances

*Susan Shwartz*

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In a departure for this very well-reviewed fantasist, Susan Shwartz has returned to her science fiction roots with a riveting novel of honor and its loss, love and its betrayal, and the exploration of what it means to be a true hero.

What Susan Shwartz has done is to take a well-loved tale and set it in an unconventional setting. *Second Chances* is nothing less than an homage to Joseph Conrad—think of *Lord Jim* in space. Just as Conrad explored in great depth the perplexing, ambiguous problem of lost honor and guilt, expiation and heroism, Shwartz has created in her *Jim* a man haunted by guilt over an act of supposed cowardice and his lifelong efforts to somehow atone for that action—whether or not he merited the disgrace.

As Conrad's *Jim* was a tragic and ultimately noble hero, so too is Shwartz's *Jim*. A professional soldier whose time has passed, *Jim* is stationed aboard the corporate BioShip *Irian Jaya* security for a commercial venture critical to humanity's continued survival. The war that sundered whole worlds is over and now he's just another "tin soldier," a prop for the military to look good to war-weary civilians. But he's never stopped caring about those who scorn him and the ideals that he still clings to. That caring is tested, however, when he is thrust into a scandal not of his making. He chooses to carry the burden of guilt, no matter what. Because of his pride . . . and maybe because that's the one thing he has left. Out of this madness will come the biggest battle for his honor and his soul.

And perhaps, a promise of a second chance.

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