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_Tau 4_ by V. J. Waks, AuthorHouse, 2007

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If you're a fan of authors who write in the pulp tradition, you'll thoroughly enjoy Tau 4 -- a fine Bloomington product. The book is a space opera that has so many of the things that make for great popular entertainment: a mad scientist bent on galactic domination, a sexy mutant heroine who often loses her clothes but never her virtue, a pirate planet with a seedy spaceport cantina, and a hero whose internal conflicts mirror the beatings he keeps taking from almost everyone else in the cast. You know that virtue will ultimately triumph, but you keep wondering how. The sex and violence are PG-13, the pirate planet is a cleverly conceived jungle world, and the writing is colorful and fluent. Best of all, we’re promised a sequel.

- George Geib is a professor of history at Butler University.