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Welcome to the Best of Beyond the Stars!

Best of Beyond the Stars: a space opera anthology Details

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Author : Patrice Fitzgerald , Samuel Peralta , Nick Webb , Michael Anderle , Susan Kaye Quinn , G.S. Jennsen , Jennifer Foehner Wells , Jeff Seymour , more... Ann Christy , David Adams ...less

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From Reader Review Best of Beyond the Stars: a space opera anthology for online ebook

Valter says

Appreciation of stories varied (of course - you can't please everybody), but I liked most of them. Some were even great.

All in all, a good compilation of valid (and sometimes great) SF stories.

Robert Newson says

A read.

I liked that the stories were a bit longer which gave enough time to get into the characters and rhythm.

Carol Kean says

“GOOD WORLD-BUILDING” may be a term we vaguely notice in book reviews, but some fictional characters and the worlds they inhabit are just too good for a single short story or novel. We want more more more, and Patrice Fitzgerald’s “Beyond the Stars” anthologies deliver. Already #1 on Amazon’s bestseller lists for science fiction, the latest volume, “Beyond the Stars: Unimagined Realms,” invites us to travel faster than light to galaxies far, far away, all from the safety of our favorite reading nook. With a dozen diverse authors per book, these collections allow us to visit worlds that are developed and still expanding as part of a series each author has already published.

How does an author get curated?

“It’s often difficult to choose,” Pat Fitzgerald writes, given “an abundance of submissions” and “more good stories than we have space for.”

Another perk to the anthologies is the author’s message and bio. “I like writing a new one of these bio things with every story,” J.E. Mac notes in the afterword to his story. It “makes these anthologies a bit of a collector’s item, doesn’t it? What with all the anthology specific, exclusive, bio op-eds written for each specific collection. Gotta catch ‘em all, if you wanna be a completist!”

I’m not a completist, but I do love collecting the Beyond the Stars anthologies along with Samuel Peralta’s Future Chronicles (those must be numbering 20 or more by now).

Mac’s bio is a keeper if only for his defense of politically neutral prose. He observes “something strange going on in SciFi with politics,” when it seems the team you’re on matters more than the quality and enjoyment of the story--which is NOT the case with Beyond the Stars anthologies.

J.E. Mac

Mac’s “Jumps in Consciousness” is literary and enjoyable, told from the point of view of a worker drone who

spends most of his life in cryo and the rest dropping onto new planets to assess their habitability for humans, never mind whether anyone else is already living there. The narrator's memories and inner monologues are compelling and poignant. He left home at age 20 and has lost all sense of the passage of time. "Everyone I knew and loved on Earth has likely passed," he tells us. "Lifetimes ago. Generations ago."

He is indoctrinated with duty and patriotism and programmed to kill, but one day, he wonders if he can make the choice not to finish off a female who survived the invasion. The logical progression of his thoughts--and the dawning, or is it a reawakening, of his humanity--make this story one of my favorites.

That, and the world building. I love this:

"The majority of my life has been spent in slumber, sailing through the stars. Catching only brief glimpses of nebulae that were once distant. Up close and personal views of the beauty and wonder only experienced through telescopes. But those gas clouds of pinks and reds, those blues, greens, and oranges, disappear as you zero in on the target. The difference between dreams and the waking world becomes negligible."

There's a sense of detachment as this hero reflects on what he's done and whether he will continue doing it, and a sense of finality and acceptance, but I'm hoping there will be more. A new mission. An escape from the one he's on now. But this isn't my fictional world; it's the brainchild of J.E. Mac, and if I need something definitively happy, I need only try another author.

Patrice Fitzgerald

offers a happy alternative with "Hooking Up," a clever title with multiple meanings. The story at first looks predictable when a young brother and sister hope an interstellar dating service will get their dad to break out of his seclusion. Surprise twists keep escalating, and the story delivers far more than a reader would expect.

David Bruns

has broken my heart in various anthologies, including Tails of the Apocalypse, but this time he tortures me with "The Art of Baking Bread on the Moon." It's not that dogs or people will die here, but that a diplomat has the humanity to bake bread, on the moon, in an effort to help reconcile differences between colonists. There is so much richness and history and culture involved in the breaking of bread at table. And so much symbolism. The torture for me is that I'm a bread-oholic who is allergic to bread. Not just gluten, but yeast, sugar, eggs, and all that is good. Bruns made me smell the heavenly aroma of baking bread. I might (might) almost rather see him allow another dog to die.

I decided to be a good sport, in part because **who can resist a David Bruns story**? He delivers more than a diplomat who knows the secret of bringing people together at table in peace. He delivers gems like this (in the afterword): "Across cultures and centuries, baking bread is one of our oldest shared symbols of a home." He digs into social and political issues, like a lunar consortium with Intersellar Mining staffing the place with disabled workers and senior citizens, because the low-g environment of the moon "was less physically demanding than earthbound jobs." Of course, there was a downside for these workers. And that's only one element of the story, one group at the negotiating table.

"The delicate scent of baking bread" will follow you to the next story.

T.R. Cameron

"The Apprentice Space Pirate" is another favorite of mine, with a strong heroine who is also clever, so when a traitor takes her down, she knows how to turn the tables and not just escape, but find the perfect comeuppance as well. Rae is about to star in her own novel, with the first book of a trilogy to be released in

2019. Having met her via "Beyond the Stars," I'm eager for more.

Marion Deeds

"Adagio for Tiamat Station" by Marion Deeds is an especially beautiful tale, including multiple POVs (point of view), as a lowly servant girl on Earth inspires a composer to write a stirring and beautiful song, which gets lost, but over the years it is found by various humans in future locations, and the music's power reaches across time and space.

Mark Sarney

strikes a comic note with "Klevor Barnes and the Stinky Cats." One particular scene haunts me, the torture scene, three captives dangling like chandeliers over... well, let's back up. Our narrator is explaining to an angry pirate queen what happened to her cargo. His ship is "little more than an interstellar dump truck" and he doesn't know what the cargo is. "Our crew--an idiot captain, a scared engineer, and me, with my issues--has no business being out here."

An issue ever-growing in public awareness--animal rescue, animal shelters, and transport to safe, new homes--also plays a pivotal role in this story. With cats hissing and scratching in cages, the crew faces more than the usual challenges of transport, e.g., "Vibrations that humans couldn't sense made cats freak out." Maybe I should warn you these cats "had a tendency to jump into warm machinery with moving parts." I swear upon my honor, I did not laugh at that.

You're sure to laugh when Captain Sao, Larson, and our hero dangle off a balcony over a busy food court, with a crowd jeering up at them. It's brutal, horrible, degrading, humiliating, and, my god, my god, it's funny. I hate myself for laughing. I love Mark Sarney for making me laugh. What a conundrum.

Sean Monaghan

captures the classic sensawunda (sense of wonder) that is the hallmark of the Golden Age of Science Fiction (which, to my mind, never died, despite all claims to the contrary). "The Old Fighting Goose" is damaged in flight when it encounters a debris field, "Thousands of glinting pieces from sand-size right up to pieces as big as a private family vehicle... they shone, gold and emerald, catching the light. It was like a giant flower over him, petals spread wide to attract insects."

That's just one paragraph. Vivid and extraordinary. Read the whole story for more, and don't skip the author notes afterward!

Ditto that for "Fractals" by

G.S. Jennsen,

who came up with the theme for this book - Unimagined Realms. That may sound like an oxymoron, because twelve realms have been imagined here, and fully realized. Jennsen mentions a reader sending her a news item in which "astronomers had just discovered an enormous cold spot in distant space that could be evidence of our universe 'bumping into' another universe." But "Fractals" isn't really about us living unawares in a simulated universe. "It's about two very tenacious, very stubborn people who are determined to find and live their destiny," no matter how many tries it takes. You can read more about Alexis and Caleb in Jennsen's 9-book space opera series, "Aurora Rhapsody."

Joseph Robert Lewis

caught my attention with "Entanglement," which opens with a heavily modified woman with fully prosthetic

arms and legs. I immediately thought of Sam Bellotto, Jr, and his "I want to be a cyborg!" essay in *Perihelion*, and his short story about a journalist who had various options for prosthetic legs and other body parts. In this story, Lewis delivers a human heroine who doesn't mind her "flaws" and would just as soon keep her body as is, never mind that a frowning officer reminds her she's "entitled to full medical benefits," prosthetitics, because "There is no need to live with these...deformities."

Will she submit to the improvements?

Not gonna say, but I will tell you that the author bio afterward is as interesting as the story itself. Does anyone else see a pattern here? The science behind the stories always fascinates me. This time, Lewis tells us he was inspired by "the notion that the octopus has 'alien' DNA (a story that made the rounds over the last year." He also wanted to play with the idea of quantum entanglement, "which may allow instantaneous communication across vast distances using 'linked' particles." This is why I am ever drawn to science fiction!

R.A. Rock

"Fierce Fortune" by R.A. Rock opens with a bruised protagonist who keeps trying to get past the nasty guard with her electrified jolt stick and at least 8 more guards to tackle after her, and half the fun is being inside his head, picturing how he'll accomplish this. Then a stranger appears, and once again, the World Building is smooth and compelling: "The sound of hard-soled shoes on the diamond floor alerted me before the force field dropped with a hiss to allow a man to step through." The well dressed stranger... and a proposed game of chess leads to experiments in kinetics... and we get a fantastic study in contrasts as nice-guy Chad partners with tough, smart, sarcastic Yumi. You can read more of Yumi and Chad in the *Forbidden Mind* seeries, "a not-in-the-least-bit-nice space opera," as Rock describes it. Have I mentioned how much I love the author bios?

Craig Martelle

delivers a mystery spiked with romance in "A Galactic Affair." I love the concept of our protagonist seeing a ghostly woman coming to his assistance, yet nobody else can see her. You guessed it, this is no sci-fi tale spinning off into the paranormal. There's a reason for this woman appearing to this man. I'm forever aware of my tendency to drop spoilers, but I can't resist sharing an awesome line. Asked where she came from, the woman tells our hero, "You can't pronounce the name. We're inside a rock, so I can't even point to the sky and show you the star."

Intrigue! I love it! I also love the age-old theme of justice, which is one of the main themes running through all or most of Martelle's stories.

Chelsea Pagan

On first read, my least favorite story was "Fission Fallout" by Chelsea Pagan because the ending had me so frustrated and outraged. Finally, I realized the ending was perhaps the least important aspect of the story. What made this one so riveting was the character arc. A slave goes to great lengths to save the life of her superior on a planet where fire and ash continue to rain down on whoever is left and the slave has nothing to lose, but the superior has everything to lose. A message of compassion for one's fellow humans rises above the old, old story of war and destruction, power and privilege. For the characters to provoke me to such a strong reaction, you know the author has created them vividly and presented them with way more authenticity than some readers can handle.

So, 12 stories, and not one lemon in the bunch! The author comments alone are fun to read, and the stories

are samplers to a wider world that the authors explore in books and other stories set in the same realms. Again, "unimagined" may be a misnomer, because all these worlds are vividly imagined, fully realized, and fun to visit. Ok, scary too. But most of all, fun. And that's what I look for in fiction, more than anything else.

The Mysterious Reader says

I've only started reading the Best of Beyond the Stars anthology. It had contributions by Yeo of my favorite authors and a third who has written several books I've noted. No surprise that their contributions were superb, both the stories by the two "faves", Escape from Push Station 16 by S.M. Bloodying (a space station used as an "escape proof" prison for those who did things not tolerated by the United Systems' corporatist elite - and Domino, a great leading character determined to escape or die trying) and Containment by Susan Kaye Quinn (an AI mining machine in charge of Thebes, programmer so as to have its intelligence limited ... until something goes wrong; this is a great story of awakening and more), and the contribution by the third author, War Stories by Samuel Peralta (a future combat story shows the gory and horror of war rather than glory and honor). I'm going to turn to the other stories now and expect them to also be great, but this anthology is easy to highly recommend just in the basis of these stories.

Moogie says

Boring
