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The scariest aliens in the galaxy follow a simple rule: destroy all opposition.

The brilliant, xenophobic Pak are fleeing the chain reaction of supernovae at the galaxy's core. Nothing and no one is going to impede their migration. Devastated worlds -- any civilization that could possibly have interfered -- lie shattered in their wake. And now the Fleet of Worlds is in their sights.

The trillion Puppeteers who inhabit the Fleet might have the resources to confront the threat -- but Puppeteers are philosophical cowards. They don't confront anyone. They need allies to investigate the situation and then take action. Who better than the Puppeteers' newly independent one-time slave world, New Terra?

Sigmund Ausfaller, former Earth intelligence agent and current paranoid, finds himself leading the war against the Pak. With his own allies, the enigmatic, aquatic Gw'oth, Sigmund prepares to face everyone's mutual enemy. And neither humans nor Gw'oth have any intention of becoming cannon fodder.

Destroyer of Worlds Details

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From Reader Review Destroyer of Worlds for online ebook

Gendou says

Protectors and the Gw'oth make for an intellectually stimulating story!
This one is much better than the previous book, *Juggler of Worlds*.

Bradley says

Maybe I'm just falling into a wonderful trap that was made by a Pak protector, but I loved being thrown into that particular worldview again. It gave me many months of delicious dreams in my college years, extrapolating and dreaming up new ways I might outsmart one. I know, hella unlikely, but still, what a rush. I am beginning to like this later collaboration better than the previous two, but maybe I'm just prejudiced in favor of the subject matter. Perhaps I'm just a huge Pak fiend. Who knows?

Heath Lesjak says

This feels like the book the entire series was leading up to. Sooooo gooood! The Pak truly are a terrifying enemy, and almost feel like a plague upon the other species in the galaxy. I enjoyed the action, the characters, all of the wonderful twisting suspicion and paranoia and tricks that happen between all of the races (including the 'allied' ones). The ending kind of petered out strangely, with a series of diminishing climaxes, but I still enjoyed the whole deal.

Andres says

Niven is just getting better and better, and Known Space is his most entertaining playground. In this new series, co-written by Lerner, he not only revisits Known Space, but also ties together subplots from all the prior Known Space novels in a seamless fashion. He builds the whole plot of these new books out of snippets and side stories from his prior work, to the point where one is almost convinced that he had planned these later books before even starting the Known Space tales from 20 and more years back. Niven is so good at conspiracy and plans within plans that if there was an Illuminati he should probably lead them, not that there is an Illuminati, and not that I would ever reveal anything about them. ;)

Becky says

Well, this was just what I needed after reading something emotionally challenging. Reliably delivered the Niven cocktail of fast-moving plot, great alien species, plausible science, and 3D-enough characters.

I don't read a whole lot of science fiction anymore, and when I do, I have very little patience for flat characters, stiff writing, cheap plot devices, etc. Fortunately, *Destroyer of Worlds* is well-crafted. It doesn't

say a whole lot of deep things about human nature or the state of the universe, but it doesn't say trite things about them either. Better than mere space opera. Plus, who wouldn't love the Gw'oth?

Kathleen says

Wow, how long has it been since I read a Larry Niven book? I think I might have stopped after *The Ringworld Throne*, which would mean 1996? Long time. Anyway, this is a cracking good hard sci-fi read, with familiar races such as the Puppeteers, the Pak Protectors, and a species new to me, the Gw'oth all concerned with fleeing an explosion at the core of the galaxy. Since I've been away from Niven's work for so long, none of the little story holes that others mention in their reviews really bothered me. It was just fun to get back to the world of crash couches, auto docs, stepping disks, and paranoid three-legged ponies again. And I generally stay away from books by more than one author, having learned the hard way that they always disappoint. But Lerner's contribution seems to be a tightening of Niven's writing style, and a very coherent, suspenseful storyline. I'll probably go back and fill in with *Fleet of Worlds* and *Juggler of Worlds* now if I can find them.

Michael says

There is a lot to like in this third of four in a recent prequel series to *Ringworld*, which was published in 1970. We get a rich story of different alien species working their way toward effective cooperation despite mutual fears over motives. They all feel the threat of another psychotically aggressive species, the Pak, whose massive fleet of ships are headed their way while wreaking a path of destruction. The result is a lot of fun with alternative minds, their interesting strengths and technologies, and quite a lot of thrills surrounding the common mission to saving all their asses.

The humans raised by the Puppeteers have become respected by their former masters and work to scout out alien cultures in the path of the Fleet of Worlds. The set of worlds populated by the thee-legged, two-headed Puppeteers are under acceleration away from the cataclysmic chain reaction at the center of the galaxy. The worlds have artificial suns and are vulnerable to attack. Sigmund Ausfaller, a former interstellar security agent for the United Nations appropriated from old earth, helps mentor the naïve humans in a proper level of paranoid outlook and strategies. An ocean dwelling species with a hive mind live near the Fleet path, the Gw'oth, whose technology is advancing so fast that they could pose a threat. Getting to know the Gw'oth is a lot of fun in this story. The humans want to trust them, but the Puppeteers, chickens at heart, fear them too much.

Other scouting work turns up a lone Pak who has been in cold sleep. The goal to learn as much about this species as possible is challenged by their extreme danger and craft. The narration spends time in the mind of this Pak, where we learn how their drive to sustain and protect their clan is simply all that counts. A female pilot revived from a point in human past over a thousand years ago helps based on experience then with another Pak. This colors in nicely some of unresolved aspects of the ending to Niven's 1973 novel "Protector", an oldie favorite of mine.

There is more character development in this tale than in much of Niven's past work, perhaps under the influence of his co-author Lerner. Schaffer is growing more likable, now married with children, and his friendship with the Puppeteer Baedeker, a former enemy, is satisfying to experience. I enjoyed this one more

than the first two in the series, but I am doubtful over how well a reading of this as a freestanding novel would work. At least I can say to those considering the series that I think the set has sufficient depth and diversity to make it worth the commitment. I look forward to the last in the series so I can learn the ultimate solutions to the Pak threat, whether the Gw'oth become true friends or enemies, and, of course, the links to the multi-species mission to Ringworld.

Eddie D. Moore says

What can I say, I'm a life long Niven fan. I enjoyed the book, and I'm ready for the next one in the series, as soon as I work up the nerve to toss an Audible credit at a 10 hour book.

Jakub says

This was quite enjoyable. Granted, I'm rather invested in Known Space universe, Ringworld specifically - and this novel was promising some answers in that area. There are few answers, but a lot of setup towards eventual answers. It's well written, and at times it was quite gripping - I couldn't put it down easily. If I were to nitpick on anything, short chapters would be the main thing. Sometimes it felt a little bit like an adventure movie, with frequent cuts and non-stop action. I bet this is Lerner's doing.

All in all, definitely worth reading if you are familiar with and like Known Space. As a stand-alone book it probably isn't strong enough to keep reader's interest, too many outside references.

Eric Stodolnik says

DISCLAIMER!: If you're about to read this book... STOP!... Read Larry Niven's "Protector" before continuing and reading this novel.

*** While this is officially the sequel to "Juggler of Worlds" and third in the "Fleet of Worlds" Pentalogy, it is also VERY MUCH a sequel and successor to his 1973 novel "Protector" which he uses VERY MUCH as a jumping-off-point and an inspiration to this novel which was written 36 years AFTER "Protector"... gotta freakin' LOVE Larry Niven's Known Space work!!! :D ***

Just wanted to put that up top of this review so people might actually see it first and take the suggestion to heart before reading this novel...

Awesome entry into the Fleet of Worlds series. It may just be my favorite so far! I really love how Niven is using this series to really tie in, and tie together all sorts of stories of Known Space, from short stories that are mere fun little tales, to series-spanning, over-arching (across decades of his real life, and across centuries of the Known Space timeline) themes, motifs, and cosmic events that has faithfully served Niven throughout the constant gestation and birthing of amazing stories in the strange literature even known as "Known Space" (Something that, as I read more and more of it, is honestly, in my opinion one of, if not perhaps the greatest, author-created universes in all of Sci-Fi. I can't say definitively, since I haven't really read THAT much Sci-Fi in the whole grand scope of the genre, I mean, I haven't even started on DUNE, to be honest... but I can

honestly feel comfortable in saying that it most definitely deserves to be in that conversation!... Abs-friggin-lutely!)

So our hero, Sigmund Ausfaller, is definitely his most likeable, so far, in this novel. Our favorite paranoid has let a little looser in his more advanced age, and what with him resigning to acceptance and making the most of his situation (and most specifically because he fell in love and created a family, bringing more light and love into his world than he ever had before when he was still living in human space) of being kidnapped and forced to live on an unfamiliar world, far, far away from human Known Space, and even having his memory involving anything to do with the location of Earth and how to get back home erased, he's definitely found a way to see the silver lining in even the most dire of situations. (I guess having died 3 times will do that to a person.)

But in this novel, he's able to keep his tough-as-nails ARM personality, as well as his more-than-paid-for-itself natural paranoia that New Terra doesn't even yet know they're being blessed with, and be more likeable while doing it. (I think this is mostly because he's no longer tracking, following, and distrusting some of our other favorite characters, like Beowulf Shaeffer and Gregory Pelton, Carlos Wu, and even Nessus... even though he's not only still in this story, but he is the one who kidnapped him and brought him to the Fleet of Worlds (although doing so after saving his life, so hey, you win some, you lose some! lol) But with his making the best out of the situations, he's found a new lease in life, and i think that is purposefully written into his character in this book masterfully. Subtly, yet noticeably...

Niven is surely a master at his craft... he deserves to be included in the conversations of "the greatest Sci-Fi authors of all time" much more than he is. The more I read his work, the more he becomes one of my all-time favorites... up there with Clarke, Heinlein, and Dick. Definitely is going to be one of the first on the tip of my tongue when offering recommendations to anyone who is either a Sci-Fi fan or has passing interest. Because while it's still hardcore Sci-Fi, it has this fun, funny, flair to his writing that I think would do well to bridge the gap for many readers who may not have yet delved very deep into Sci-Fi.

Also, I must say that if you happen to be reading this before reading the novel, and have it in your que for reading, and you haven't read Larry Niven's novel "Protector"... ABSOLUTELY read it before reading this novel. I was lucky enough to have seen a little sliver of a video interview with Niven on YouTube, where he happens to be mentioning this novel because he is in the middle of writing it at the time of the interview... anyway, he at some point mentions that this novel is a successor to "Protector" as well as the Fleet of Worlds series... And I just happened to have already bought the book "Protector" from Half-Price Books, and it was buried in some unknown slot of my reading que, so I pulled the book out of my tower of books, and I read it first, before reading this book... and I must say, I am REALLY, REALLY glad I did... it is DIRECTLY related to that book... almost even more-so than Juggler of Worlds! And it is awesome how he used that book, as a starting-off point to this entry in the Fleet of Worlds series, some 36 years AFTER! How awesome is that?! That is the pure beauty and unfathomable awesomeness of the Known Space universe of which Niven is God.

Anyway, yeah... you GOTTA read Protector first before reading this book... if you're reading this book anyway, it means that you're at LEAST 2 books into Larry Niven's body of work, but even more likely you've at LEAST read the Ringworld series, so you're most likely at LEAST 6 books into Niven's body of work... so you're already at least a little bit of a fan of Known Space, so you'll probably take my advise... but seriously... you gotta read it first... in fact, I'm going to make a nice big disclaimer at the beginning of this Review in case I can catch at least one other person and let them know to read Protector first.

Karina says

Interesting. I enjoyed the story. I liked the Gwo'th, and I'm still curious about them, because in the book we sort of don't get to see much from their perspective... There's a bit of ambiguity about them. Are they as dangerous as the Puppeteers think or do they have a sense of loyalty? Are they just looking to gain knowledge about the advanced technology, or are they helping to solve the problem common to all involved? Both.

Nick says

How many literary series have lasted for 40+ years. The 'Known Space' series started in the mid-60s. Niven has maintained it, fresh, with a sub-set of new collaborations with Edward Lerner, focused on the 'Ringworld' subplot. It's classic Niven. For the new reader, you need to minimally read 'Ringworld' and also if possible include 'Tales of Known Space'. Great novels.

Craig says

I enjoyed reading this one very much; the development of the Worlds Fleet and Known Space was fascinating, the interplay of the various races and societies was done very well, and the characters and plot were extremely engaging. However, I was very much let-down by an abrupt ending that I felt left far too many issues unresolved and too many questions unanswered.

Brendan Coster says

There's a lot to these books, a lot of culling and pulling together of Niven's other material, a lot of putting a time and place to things he's done in the past. I respect, I understand it, I'm not sure if I totally like reading it... one of his earlier books, "Protector" is essentially re-written back into this one, as well as a number of other short stories. Again, like in book 2, had I not read all that, this would have just been a long read, but having read it - and assuming I'm probably the target audience... I don't love the repetition.

I think what I like best about Niven is his ability to totally dislodge "good" and "evil" from his beings. Everyone basically does what they think is best - this does not lead to some artificially "grey-space" some novels try and tug on where you don't know where up or down is. It's a variation on reality, decent people trying to do what's right for them, the ones they love, and their countries (worlds, fleets). That's not really easy to do, and often author's even attempting to replicate it tend to fall back on some good/evil/in-between trope - especially in sci-fi/fantasy.

The flip side is the characters are unbelievably single-minded, all of them. I'd understand if some were, but the whole lot? They're given individual personalities but, seemingly set, no more effort is put in to show their development and interest outside the current threat - even when that threat is dozens of years, hundreds of years, and even thousands of years in the making (as is the ur-premise of all that's happening...)

For ideas, attempting to characterize and show aliens that are actually alien, the book is probably 4* to 4.25* - for drawing everything out and rehashing old material 2* - for a deft hand, world building, and working towards tightening up a lifetimes of work 4*+ - still, my enjoyment ground down with poor pacing so I have to average out my final with 3*.

Casey says

Destroyer of Worlds is a nice step up from the disappointing Juggler of Worlds. This book ties in an older book of Niven's, Protector, which I haven't read yet, but there was enough backstory that I didn't feel lost.

The Gw'oth, the aquatic race discovered in the first Fleet of Worlds book, have noted a large disturbance in space. Turns out, it's the Pak, and they are destroying much in their wake. Sigmund, his crew, and the puppeteer Baedeker team up with some Gw'oth to investigate.

As they investigate, they discover a lone Pak that was stranded on an alien world. There's plenty of action and sci-technobabble throughout. Sigmund and co know they need to do something about the Pak, as there isn't going to be time to gather a huge defense force. Plus the Pak are so intelligent, resistance would likely be futile, and an innovative solution needs to be found.

There's an interesting dynamic in the book between the Gw'oth and the other races. The Gw'oth are rapidly developing knowledge, but the others want to prevent them from getting too much information, lest they become too powerful. (view spoiler)

Although Nessus makes a few short appearances, there isn't much of the normal Puppeteer influence on the plot. Baedeker is kind of a rogue Puppeteer and he doesn't factor too much into the narrative.

The ending was a big cliffhanger! (view spoiler)
