



A Call to Arms

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For eons, the Amplitur had searched space for intelligent species, each of which was joyously welcomed to take part in the fulfillment of the Amplitur Purpose. Whether it wanted to or not. When the Amplitur and their allies stumbled upon the races called the Weave, the Purpose seemed poised for a great leap forward. But the Weave's surprising unity also gave it the ability to fight the Amplitur and their cause. And fight it did, for thousands of years.

Will Dulac was a New Orleans composer who thought the tiny reef off Belize would be the perfect spot to drop anchor and finish his latest symphony in solitude. What he found instead was a group of alien visitors, a scouting party for the Weave, looking for allies among what they believed to be a uniquely warlike race, Humans.

Will tried to convince the aliens that Man was fundamentally peaceful, for he understood that Human involvement would destroy the race. But all too soon, it didn't matter. The Amplitur had discovered Earth...

A Call to Arms Details

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From Reader Review A Call to Arms for online ebook

Mook says

I liked many things about this novel, but I despised the main character Will Dulac. He was arrogant, classist, stubborn in the worst way, and all around miserable to read about.

Will is the first contact a group of advanced aliens have with mankind on Earth. In summary, the aliens are part of an alliance called the Weave, that are fighting a separate group of aliens controlled by the Amplitur. There were a lot of things to like about this plot, like the aliens' confusion with multiple land masses, and the variety of language and culture on our planet. Also the unique way different characters reacted to other species, those they had known for long and those they had just met.

But dealing with Will's point of view was the worst. He is told the aliens are looking for allies and immediately tries to convince them that his species is far too peace loving for such a thing. This is written as though Will actually believes what he is saying, but honestly I think even a pacifist would disagree - not that people aren't capable of peace, but war is something that has been continuous for the entirety of humanity and to pretend it hasn't just makes Will come across as extremely idiotic.

Nothing was more irritating than Will deciding that the 'drunks, idiots, and poor people' he recruited for the aliens at first were doomed to fail at fighting, and then afterwards that the only reason they were good at it was because they weren't good at anything else; and that educated, civilised people would react differently. At several points he (and the aliens!) seem to think that poor people fighting for money is just so abhorrent, as though trying to keep yourself and your family fed and financially secure is the worst possible reason to join an army.

Despite ripping on it, I did like the storyline, I just wish it could be rewritten with a main character who isn't an obnoxious troll.

Roger says

This book was okay, the parts from the alien viewpoints were really good, but good god did Will get on my nerves. Are you even from this planet? Did you not think humans would instinctively rebel against gene manipulation into "The Purpose". Half the book is him railing about how peaceful humans are as a species....on what planet????

I also found it really hard to believe that out of the hundreds of species in the Weave/Ampilur humans are some of the fastest/strongest and most willing to get violent. We aren't even the fastest or strongest being on our own planet, what are the odds that all other species are physically inferior to us.

Don't plan on finishing the series though a TLDR would be nice :)

Jack says

Great idea, fantastic world, terrible protagonist.

I'd give this book a solid four stars if it wasn't for the character of Will Dulac. He doesn't act like any human I've ever known and continually denies human history. He's technically a hippie, but I live in a neighborhood full of hippies and not one of them would continually try to convince an alien race that humans were anything but violent. Sure, we're trying to overcome it, but our history is undeniable -- as the aliens keep insisting to him.

That said, I love this idea that humans are uniquely designed in the universe to fight and kill better than anything else. We only seem sane because it's what we're used to.

Cezara says

First, let me say I enjoy the premise of the book of humans being special and unusual among galactic intelligent species, and that's why this book doesn't get one star.

Now that the redeeming stuff is out of the way, on to the bad stuff: heaps and heaps of endless exposition. Characters monologue on and oon and **oooooon** about this and that, and I get that some of it is unavoidable when setting up the world and discussing ideas, but holy crap. Every other scene is a couple of characters sitting somewhere taking turns monologing for pages on end. More show, less tell. Much less tell. Does anyone know if Mr. Foster has a book about a couple of species of mute aliens going on adventures? I'd read that. And *only* that.

Derek Wade says

Will Dulac needs to be punched in the mouth, repeatedly. His petulant insistence that "Humans are peaceful. We don't want war any more, and we certainly don't want any part of an interstellar conflict!" can be boiled down rather simply to: "I am a music professor from New Orleans who is suffering from writer's block. Somehow I was lucky enough for advanced alien species to contact ME, and therefore I am going to interject my personal prejudices and bias into their perception of humanity, and potentially GET MY WHOLE FRIGGIN' PLANET DESTROYED BY THE AMPLITUR BECAUSE *I* DON'T LIKE VIOLENCE SO OBVIOUSLY NO ONE ELSE DOES, EITHER!"

I'm sure we can all agree that one pacifistic music professor-- currently not teaching and on sabbatical-- speaks for each of the six billion humans on earth, right?

Will Dulac has no right to make decisions for us as a species. Anyone without the monstrous ego of a college professor would consider the decision whether or not to get humanity involved in an interstellar war would be a LITTLE above their pay grade.

Not Will: "After all, he was a professor, an educated, sophisticated man. The so-called recruiters the aliens intended to use consisted of an old drunk, an ignorant fisherman, and some poor boys literally taken off the streets. The rest were little better. Whose influence was most likely to persuade, theirs or his?" (Chapter 15, electronic version)

Well, Willie, considering that the people in question actually went interstellar and participated in the conflict while you sat safely on earth writing music, I'd have to argue that they are a lot more likely to persuade people like me than you ivory-tower morons living in the theoretical.

While the book is well-written, particularly when it shifts to the point of view of the Amplitur, who really believe they are doing the right thing, Dulac's insufferable arrogance made wading through the rest of the book a chore. I found myself setting the book down for long stretches to avoid yelling at it, "Mankind has been fighting for the entirety of recorded history, you jacka\$\$!" or "Good grief, have you never seen a boxing match or watched a football game? Humanity LOVES violence! That's why action movies make ten times the money as art flicks! (or symphonies-- a fact of which you might expect a music professor writing one to be cogent.)

Does Will take his blinders off? Does humanity join the fight? Do we get wiped out because one college professor (who doesn't even friggin' TEACH!) can't keep his mouth shut when he's in over his head?

I recommend that you read it and discover for yourself.

Oh, and the Weave, if you're out there and need my help. I'll sign.

Jed says

This book is amazing as an absolutely unique take on violence and war in humanity. It was never the most popular or successful, but the underlying theme, combined with a truly stunning reveal at the end, make it quite memorable. Definitely worth the time.

Mike (the Paladin) says

Reviewed this a good while back...just correcting a typo.

This book combines an interesting take on "alien invasion", human nature, and the nature of war itself while telling a perfectly readable and accessible story. The book isn't a deep literary read, but it does what it does very well. I liked it and couldn't wait till the next one was available.

The "invaders" you see aren't invaders, noooooo. They just want to "offer" everyone the "opportunity" to be part of their "plan". Of course all races have freedom of choice. You can choose to join up...or be conquered. Of course, it usually isn't too much of a problem if the Amplitur can meet with the planet's top "ruler-types" as they not only came up with (had the vision of) the "plan", but have the power to "suggest"(which amounts to a mental command)things directly into the mind of new species they meet. They had been able to "suggest" to each new species they had come in contact with...till they met humans.

One of my few 5 star reads...based blatantly on personal enjoyment. I was in the mood for a book like this when I came across it.

Tina says

If you're into world building, first contact, and novels told from the perspective of aliens, you will likely enjoy this novel. It's not the most exciting novel in terms of action, it's a great foray into alien cultures discovering us (as opposed to the other way around) and is accompanied by Foster's wonderful ability to provide nuance and specificity to alien cultures in a way that feels unique and believable. If you're also partial to the Tumblr threads about how humans are the "space orcs" of the universe, this novel is basically just that. I enjoyed the novel greatly, especially regarding how the aliens are confused by our geology, languages, and culture. What would our world have been like if we had one continent?

Yet, as many reviewers have noted, the main human character is an insufferable, whiny, pretentious, pedantic asshole. You basically want to punch him in the face repeatedly. No wonder he's single (no seriously, he mentions it at one point and I laughed out loud because there are many many obvious reasons why). I wonder what Foster's motive was for creating such a character as a protagonist. Perhaps he was trying to show that sometimes war is necessary for self-defense and trying to prevent it causes more harm than good? Perhaps he didn't realize how annoying Will was? Anyway, Will is a douche.

But, luckily, there are other characters and if you try to ignore Will like you do that uncle you just can't stand at family parties, it's not so bad. In fact, I'd argue that the real main character is the Massood guy (ok, so I read this book a couple weeks ago and can't remember his name), but he was likeable, relatable, and while he wasn't entirely deep, I cared about him (view spoiler). While Foster never seems to have a female main character (except in Diuturnity's Dawn) in his novels, women are featured as capable and intelligent, which I appreciated.

Overall, if you like Foster's novels, this seems like the place where he's put a lot of concepts he probably wanted to include in the Thranx/Flinx concept, but likely couldn't fit in (or thought of later), but it also doesn't just feel like a cheap spin-off of his main universe. I'll definitely read the other two in the series (hopefully Will learns some humility).

Erinn says

This is one of those books I'd like to read again, and then read the other books in the series. I wasn't crazy about it the first time, but I find myself thinking about it and some of the characters that were in it. Any book that makes me think about it years and years after I read it, should definitely get a second read.

Stephen says

3.0 to 3.5 stars. Good, light hearted SCF-FI story with the novel concept that humans (usually portrayed as physically weak in the face of monstrous aliens) are shown to be significantly stronger and more durable than the other races in the galaxy and are recruited as "super soldiers" to help fight an interstellar war. A fun fast read that was very enjoyable.

Alan Islas Cital says

I friend from work recommended this book and even got it for me. When I saw it I was very worried with this cover, quite tacky, very 80s, and a bit gay in a funny way.

But once I went beyond that I was hooked by the idea of the Amplitur, this species, so consumed by their "Purpose" that they have to make sure every being embraces it, even when their "gentle suggestions" don't work and they have to resort to force.

The ancient war between the Amplitur and their slaves (pardon, they are equal within the Purpose) and the Weave, a loose alliance of species which resist them still rages, and the fanatic certainty of the Amplitur is slowly gaining ground.

Is in this context were Humanity is found, and, it turns out, we are supreme, vicious, semi-civilized warriors who can change the course of the interstellar conflict.

So far so good, interesting and well written. However, the human who makes first contact happens to be a pacifist who wants us out of the war, and is willing to lie and try to manipulate the aliens into thinking we are useless and we don't like fighting. This Will Dulac is an annoying, deluded, supremely arrogant musician who thinks he is qualified to decide on the fate of humanity. I found this very irritating.

Also, there is a section about a woman from Mexico City that also annoyed me, since it was full of stereotypes. Must have been the same case with the Rastafarian guy.

A good idea, but with an insufferable main character.

Mathew Anderson says

I would consider this one of the greatest easy-to-read science fiction books about humanity's reason for exploring space ever. There are so many stories about aliens visiting Earth and destroying us, so many more about us overtaking aliens, but in this case it is the aliens that come for our help... to fight other aliens in a massive galactic war - a war where humanity has a unique edge.

Jason says

This book stands out from typical sci-fi in that the human race is not really the focus of the story, which begins and ends with aliens that will encounter humans. It also has a human protagonist who is almost a caricature of a pacifist to the point that I couldn't really enjoy his sections. I understand pacifism as a reasoned approach, but there's a point where it is ridiculous. Or maybe that's me; I sympathized with the willingness to blow away the bad aliens. I believe that's built into us genetically, which is why you don't see all those cousins of homo sapiens around any more. Mission accomplished. Suck on that Bilbo Baggins.

Felix says

I read this book when I was in college and since those days I've re-read this book several times. Each time I read it, the book does not fail to entertain and I always finish the book feeling that it was time well spent.

I own a copy and since it's Christmas break, I found time to re-read this again :-). Just finished it yesterday after reading on and off for 3 days.

Not to give anything away, but lots of sci-Fi fans will like this book. I've always enjoyed reading Alan Dean Foster books, because he writes with such a clear and enjoyable style. His books always features lots of interactions and conversations among the characters that move the story along. There are no stale scenes and there are always events that are memorable and are a joy to read.

I like this book because it's a different take. While aliens have advanced technology they lack something that humans have which is a propensity for violence and war making. While this view is extreme, the idea has merits since even Darwin has stated that human evolution is a result of "survival of the fittest". And presently, humans have evolved to be at the pinnacle of life on Earth.

It's an interesting twist because we always read of stories or watched movies, where aliens are always advanced or out to eat us and we just survive because of luck or some sort of ingenuity on our part. But in this series, humans are at the top of the food chain and other alien races want us in their camp because we are good at warcraft and they're not (why this is so, is explained in the book).

Anyways, I really enjoyed this book and like I said I've read this and re-read several times already and I will probably go on reading it a few more times in the future.

Really recommend this to all sci-Fi fans.

Will says

terrible writing but fun idea
