



Into the Dark

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At fifteen, Alexis Carew has to face an age old problem - she's a girl, and only a boy can inherit the family's vast holdings. Her options are few. She must marry and watch a stranger run the lands, or become a penniless tenant and see the lands she so dearly loves sold off. Yet there may be another option, one that involves becoming a midshipman on a shorthanded spaceship with no other women.

Into the Dark Details

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From Reader Review Into the Dark for online ebook

Marijan says

Ukratko, space opera za mlade. U ovom SF-u nema puno S-a, borodvi lete kroz svemir tranzitom u misteriozni Mračni Prostor, što je ekvivalent warpa ili "egave" u drugim pričama. ali je pisano zanimljivo, dinamično, zabavno. Glavnoj se junakinji može zamjeriti što je malo premudra za svoje godine, ali i to se dijelom može objasniti njenom životnom pričom. U svakom slučaju zabavna i zanimljiva knjiga i svakako ju preporučiti nastavak ako ga se dočepam.

Per Gunnar says

This is one of these books which I really find difficult to rate. I found the book blurb interesting enough to have a go at it and the cover picture with sails in space enough of a put-off to wonder if I should really buy this book. I think that pretty much sums up my opinion of this book as well. Very split.

The story is a good one and it is fairly well written and implemented. Unfortunately this is really science fiction without the science. Now I could live with that if it was not so that the concepts introduced are so ludicrous. Sails in space? Okay, sailing on the solar winds is still a half plausible idea but then the author goes to great lengths to make everything feel like some old sailing ship in space. They have people running up and down masts putting up and down sails because it saves weight compared to doing it with machinery. Seriously? I was not impressed by these parts of the story. It borders more towards fantasy than science.

The core story is a good one though and one that I would probably have liked a lot more if the background setting would not have been so ludicrous. I really liked following Alexis Carew through her initiation into the Royal Navy and her adventures. I was afraid that there would be an enormous focus on the gender bit and it is of course quite present but in reasonable doses. Alexis earns the respect of her fellow crewmates rather quickly.

On the whole a quite well done book which unfortunately loses a star due to the science part as far as I am concerned. I am still quite split whether or not I will pick up the next one. I could probably live with the absence of any form of reasonable science. However, what I believe will be one of the main characters in the next book is briefly introduced towards the end of this one and I have to say that I disliked the character tremendously. From the last parts of this book and the blurb of the next one I get the feeling that the next book will play the gender card as well as the ass-hole-high-ranking-officer card a lot and I do not really fancy those kind of stories. On one hand I would quite like to see where Alexis adventures leads her but on the other hand I am a bit put off by the direction things seem to be going.

Dan says

Quite a nice read.

AncsaT says

Nem egy szokványos sci-fi, sőt igazából a sci része nincs is túlerőltetve (az égimechanika Lagrange-pontjai mibenlétének érthető leírása azért megmelengette a szívemet), inkább sima YA ez, abból is a kellemesebb fajta. Az űrhajók a "darkspace"-nek nevezett hiperűrben közlekednek, amit én a magam részéről inkább a "retrospace" névvel illetnék, mivel itt a hagyományos hajtóművek helyett, a sötét anyag áramlatait kihasználva lehet hajózni. Oszlopokra kifeszített, elektromosan töltött fémhálók segítségével, amiket az egyszerűség kedvéért árbócokra felhúzott vitorláknak neveznek. És ami nincs bevonva galleniummal, az hajlamos beleragadni a hiperűrbe, ahol a lézerfegyverek nem működnek, ezért gallenium bevonatú ágyugolyókkal lövik egymást a hajók, a tengerészek meg karddal párbajoznak és harcolnak a kalózkodók ellen. Főszereplőnk, a 15 éves Alexis Carew pedig egy retro bolygón lakik, ahol az elsőszülött fiúk lesz minden vagyon, a lányok ki vannak zárva az öröklésből. Erre való tekintettel, hűsünk beáll a haditengerészethez, kadétnak. Ott viszont teljes a nemek közti egyenjogúság, olyannyira, hogy a tengerészkadét is MISTER Carew-nak szólítják. De ezen kívül is van egy csomó furcsa dolog, a szintek neve fedélzet, a hajó eleje és vége orr meg tat, a szerelő az hajóács, a szoba kabin, az ágy priccs, a délután fél három pedig második űrség ötödik harang.

Arra gondoltam, ezt lefordítani egy rémálom lenne, de aztán kezdtek eszembe jutni olyan kifejezések, hogy korvettkapitány, sorhajóhadnagy, és orrmány-kül-sudár-vitorla meg elő-derék-szárny-szél-szarv-kötelek. És lassacskán Alexis is belejön a dolgokba, kezd egész jól elbodogolni, izgalmas kalandokban lesz része, megtanul pár dolgot, megismeri az embereket, és saját magát is. Kezdetben sem volt az a tipikus nyafogós kislány, a végére pedig kimondottan kemény csaj lesz. Szerelmi szál nincs, még csak 15 éves a lány, de van még hátra minimum 2 kötet és két novella, így sejtésem szerint a későbbiekben lesz részünk minden jóban, amire csak vágyhatunk egy kalandregényben. Tippem szerint a 14+ korosztályban a fiúk és a lányok is szeretik. Van benne tudomány, de nem fejfájdító mennyiségben, vannak benne érzelmek, de nem csöpögős, a karakterek érdekesek, de nem mászunk beléjük túlságosan, a tempó kellemes, a szöveg igényes, de nem túlcizellált, sikerült jól eltalálni az arányokat és a célközönség ízlését.

Dino-Jess ★ The Book Eating Dinosaur ★ says

I love it when I am surprised by books.

Something about this book tickled my fancy and I requested it from Netgalley. I was a little wary going into it, because I didn't really know what to expect at all, but what a breath of fresh air this turned out to be.

Into The Dark is the story of Alexis Carew, a young, fifteen year old girl who is being forced to marry, because although she is perfectly able and willing, her planet does not allow women to hold lands. Alexis is not the timid, ideal housewife that many suitors are expecting her to be, and as a result she is having little luck obtaining the perfect suitor. But then, a ship from Her Majesty's Navy touches down in her town looking for recruits and with nothing keeping her on her home planet, Alexis decides to volunteer her services to the Navy. What she experiences on *Merlin* will change her view of the world, and she will experience what few women have before her.

The first thing that really got me **on board** with this book, was the fact that Alexis is not your usual timid, whingy teenage protagonist. Within the first few chapters, she has insulted the son of one of the founding families of her planet, offered her services to The Navy and put the nasty Navy supplier in his place. Seriously, she has bigger balls than some male protagonists I have read. She is great. She just gets better and

better as the book progresses!

The banter in this book, between the characters, is fantastic. Yes, there are parts that are a little hard to read, due to the written accents, but if you can get past that, there are some real gems to be found here. This also goes for the technological lingo. I haven't the faintest idea about ships/boats/navigating the skies, and yet, this book kept me interested and turning pages, regardless of my lack of navy knowledge.

I think another thing that was so refreshing about this book, was that there was barely any romantic story line at all. And the fact that I noticed that, and still enjoyed it is a huge deal, as I am the romance queen! There was an inkling of romance, but this book is all about the action, the ships, the pirates and the adventure that Alexis is on.

This is a well written, adventure packed YA book that I am eagerly awaiting the sequel of.

3.5 Stars

I received a copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

S.J. Higbee says

This is essentially Hornblower in space – and very well done, too. Sutherland has taken the idea of solar sails and provides some vivid space battles that are reminiscent of the 17th and 18th century man o'war tactics. To be honest, some suspension of disbelief is required – I happily believed that the solar sails were useful and that they needed human crews rather than robot labour, but there were a few touches that stretched my credulity.

However, the plight Alexis faces if she stays on the planet is inescapable – she will be forced to marry someone she hates and despises. She is a tough energetic girl, caught up with the day to day running of the holding and takes to the rigour of life in the Navy like a space duckling takes to zero gravity. I like her straightforward character and the fact that Sutherland is mindful not to make her too much of a Mary Sue – she struggles badly with navigation.

What she has in spades is plenty of physical energy, the ability to think quickly on her feet and a fundamentally nice disposition without it becoming sickly, which is harder to do than Sutherland makes it look. Did I believe in her ability to handle the situations that she is confronted with? Yes – she is raised in a tough, colonial environment. As a historian, I have read accounts of what young men and women achieved when homesteading in the States, or working on a small farm in the UK and their physical fortitude and strength puts us all to shame. Nothing to say that can't happen again...

I very much liked the story development and overall the worldbuilding – though I do find it difficult to believe that flogging would still be a thing in a futuristic setting, given that we know the faultlines that ran through the Royal Navy of the time and why they needed to use such extreme brutality. It was a reflection of the harsh social situation for most people at the time – I'm not sure I'm so convinced that prevails to the same extent in this particular future world.

It doesn't stop me being keen to pick up the second book in this entertaining series as I want to know what happens next to Alexis, given there is a real twist right at the end of the book.

William Kulhanek says

Well written space opera with a twist

Happily, Not exactly what I expected,
not a poor little girl against the world story,
more Hornblower goes to space.
Excellent and highly recommended

Carol Ann says

So you don't care much for Science Fiction, eh? This series will change your mind.

Yes, that's me. I don't care much for Science Fiction. The robots, the metal, the darkness, the emptiness — it all leaves me cold. Until now. A friend so persistently encouraged me to read this book that I was curious to discover what his enthusiasm for it was all about.

Picture this:

Ships, captains, shipmates, sailing, naval adventures, pirates, enemies, New London, loved ones, action, drama, suspense, and a heroine - ALL SET IN DEEP SPACE.

It's brilliant, it's unique, it's entertaining, and will have you rooting for Alexis in no time as she faces enemies from without and surprisingly from within.

Sutherland's writing is smooth and adeptly blends the nostalgia of sailing ships with an imaginary yet occasionally familiar universe. The story grabs you from the start and holds you to the end. Elizabeth Klett's audio book narration is nothing short of spectacular and brings warmth and personality to the characters in such a way that you feel you know them personally. If you enjoy action, drama, suspense, and characters you can connect with, you'll want to read this series.

Patrick Barnes says

Not as strong as I hoped

This book was like reading Horatio Hornblower in space. I have always been a fan of the Age of Sail and this book gives both the Honor Harrington and "Leary" series very pleasant company.

I couldn't even guess the difference between a mizzen mast and a top main gallant but this book made me

envious of those who do know. It made me feel the way Hornblower did long ago. It's not just a story but a world to believe (with darkness, brutality, loyalty, kindnesses, greed and purpose).

The writing is well done in the Hornblower, Rifleman Harris style and no thin, shoddy character writing here. The dialogue drips reality and the plot is tense and has a few surprises.

Well thought out book and we'll written. Looking forward to the rest.

I'm embarrassed that I wrote the above, as well as reading more of the series. I've amended each review to reflect what I should have written. I really wanted to like this series and refused to look too closely at the background universe.

The justification presented by the writer for the main character choosing to join the navy, is that she can't inherit property. It's explained by her kindly grandfather that the law was passed to prevent women from dying in childbirth? That justification gets repeated and built upon until by book five, it's demonstrated that women just don't have the mind for owning a massive estate. They can build it, manage the properties ranging from forests to fisheries, have children and raise them, oversee thousands of slaves but owning property can cause miscarriages and the death of the mother (?).

Part of each Shareholder's property includes the indentured workers belonging to each estate. They are grateful and happy that they have an owner who is much nicer than some of the others. The writer pushes that narrative in your face until it becomes too much. Slaves may be compliant but historically have never been happy. Historically, all slave owners have described their slaves as happy with the exception of the few insane head that must be put down. The writer can imagine this world but don't make the barbarity palatable and claim you have no political perspective.

I grew more and more uncomfortable with the series, until I admitted how wrong so much of this universe is. This series is nothing like Honor Harrington or Kris Longknife.

It's a literal translation of a style of sea story from sea to space with an apologia for the social horror of the Age of Sail. I harmed myself by looking the other way. I hope to never do that again.

Mike says

I like this book for much the same reasons I like David Drake's RCN series, in that they both take a good stab at translating the wind-powered British Navy to a science-fiction setting. I've not read Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey and Maturin series, but Drake acknowledges that the RCN is a rather direct descendant of it, and this book falls somewhere very close to Drake's on the family tree. Sutherland's use of dark matter and dark energy as an explanation for his particular handwaving at why starships need sails is novel, and he treats it consistently enough that I could go along with it easily. I was a bit annoyed that his given name for this region (*darkspace*) was always italicized. The emphasis seemed needless and contrived. There were some minor editorial lapses (missing quotation marks, poor possessive formations [e.g. Mr. Jeffreys has item X, they refer to "Jeffrey's X"], a ship named the *Grapple* is referred to multiple times as the *Grappel*), but not too many.

This is not, by any means, hard SF. If the premise intrigues you, or you like the Drake (or the O'Brian, I'll hazard a guess) series, give it a try. It's a quick read, and you'll know rather quickly if it's for you.

C.T. Phipps says

I'm a huge fan of David Weber's Honor Harrington series and several other Age of Sail stories which happen to be transplanted into space. I'm also a fan of the original Horatio Hornblower novels. However, my love of the Honorverse has dimmed over the years as the focus became less and less about the titular character. David Weber has become fascinated with the labyrinthine and complex politics of his universe to the detriment of his female protagonist. So, one can imagine my intrigue at the prospect of a Young Adult series about a similar character which would remain firmly rooted around her adventures. Still, it would be an entirely different series and could it be as good as Weber's own? In fact, I daresay J.A. Sutherland has written an even better story.

The premise of novels is a riff on a traditional one of a young woman trying to escape an unwanted marriage. In this case, however, it is due to the fact her colony operates under archaic primogeniture rules which means her landowning family will be rendered destitute if her grandfather dies with no male heir or husband for her. Alexis Carew, seeking some way of escaping her situation, ends up becoming a midshipman on a departing royal navy vessel. Immediately, she finds herself put upon by a crew unaccustomed to women in the Fringe as well as the fact she has almost no experience with dark space sailing vessels. Soon, however, the crew will find itself imperiled by what predators await even Royal Navy ships in the void.

I absolutely love the main character and think of her as one of the best Young Adult protagonists I've read in a very long time. Admittedly, I don't normally read that much Young Adult fiction but she's up there with Katniss and is certainly highly ranked in my fiction protagonists period. A fifteen-year-old-girl who decides that life on her boring, chauvinist world where she fits in like a square peg in a round whole is worth joining Her Majesty's Navy. She's very recognizably a teenage girl even if you see the beginnings of greatness within her.

Into the Dark follows Alexis as she becomes acquainted not only with the naval terminology and space opera science of the setting but also how the world functions. Her relative ignorance as a poor (well, rich on her world) country girl seeing the big universe justifies a lot of the exposition even as we deal with the consequences of her knowledge. Yet, I never felt the many infodumps and explanations were unjustified or ever boring. It's very much a book about exploring and I think that's actually one of the novel's strengths.

The author does an exceptional job dealing with the daily realities of how a hypothetical Age of Sail spaceship would operate. I like the development of all of the crew ranging from her bunkmate to the Captain and the guy who repairs spacesuits. None of them are caricatures and all of them are welcoming even if they're somewhat off-put by Alexis' presence (women not being common on naval vessels in the retrograde Fringe--even if they're everywhere else in the setting).

Unfortunately, I suspect some readers of more traditional sci-fi will be off-put by the deliberate anachronisms. Things like manually loading weapons, that darkspace (hyperspace) works identically to an ocean, hoisting the darkspace sails, and other things which exist entirely for the Rule of Cool™ (if your definition of Cool is Napoleonic Wars ship elements IN SPACCCCE). There's some handwaves, just like there is with the retrograde gender roles, but it doesn't really work too well. You just have to accept them and move on. For me, having played Spelljammer back when it was possible, it was a lot easier for me.

The actual "plot" doesn't really begin until the very end of the book but, again, this didn't bother me in the slightest as it was the journey which was motivating me. I do think there's an interesting set-up for Alexis that she's joining the Navy in part to eventually return to her family home and reclaim it but I don't think that's going to be the sort of place she'll want to spend the rest of her life after she gets a taste of the universe. The fact I'm interested in how it all works out speaks well of the series.

In, conclusion, really--highest marks. Buy it! Buy it now! I also recommend people pick up the audiobook version as Elizabeth Klett does an amazing job with the main character as well as the others' voices.

10/10

Laz the Sailor says

If you are going to write a YA on a naval spaceship, why not go full on British Empire? What started out as an annoying transfer of olde square-rigger sailing terms quickly became endearing, and the sci-fi FTL physics were very interesting. (Note that I'm a sailor.)

As a YA, this is on the same level as Nathan Howell's Quarter Share series, but in a military context.

I'm interested to see how young Alex grows up.

Jon Abbott says

This is a coming of age story in the 'coming of age *in the military*' tradition of Mr. Midshipman Hornblower . While I haven't gone back and reread C. S. Forester's first volume of the Hornblower series, each of the significant events in Ms. Midshipman Carew's first star voyage parallels (as I remember them) a scene from *Hornblower*.

That said, there have been lots of *Hornblower*-like stories. Such as David Weber's Honor Harrington novels. **Into the Dark** held my interest, it was well written and it contained blessedly few typos. [There is a funny one, however, where 'sails' is misspelled 'sales'.]

This is basically a story set in space ("space-fiction"), rather than "science-fiction." As another review has pointed out, wandering around the galaxy using sails (top gallant, top main, etc) on multiple masts and navigating by throwing a metal container off the aft end of the space ship (like a log on an old clipper ship) is ... bizarre.

I've no dog in the fight; I don't know the author.

Daniel says

Najbolji na?in da se opiše ova knjiga je Hornblower in space (insert a pigs in space reference :)).

Glavna stvar koja me je privukla ovoj knjizi jeste ?injenica da za let svemirom koriste unapre?enu verziju

starih jedrenjaka, sve sa jedrima i posadom koja se vere po njima da bi ih dizali i spuštali. Nadao sam se nekom baš cool objašnjenju kako to sve funkcioniše ali na žalost objašnjenja nema. Stvari su takve zbog "mra?nog svemira" i niko ne zna zašto stvari funkcionišu ali one funkcionišu.

Isto tako veliki problem mi predstavlja savršenstvo glavnog lika, koja ima samo 15 godina a rezonuje kao neko sa barem 10 godina više iskustva, koja je puna razumevanja, i za par meseci skapira i nau?i kako da bude odli?an pomorski (svemirski oficir). Lik koju cela posada na po?etku gleda sa podzrenjem na na kraju samo što joj ne dižu spomenik. Odnosno ako je uporedim sa Horacijom ispada da je daleko talentovanija, pametnija i itd pošto je njemu za sli?no znanje i sposobnosti ipak trebala koja godina.

I pored svega knjiga je dobila u suštini ve?u ocenu nego što zaslu?uje jednostavno zbog faktora zabave i odli?nog tempa koji te prosto vu?e da je ?itaš i ne dozvoljava da ti bude dosadno niti ti daje vremena da razmišljaš o silnim nelogi?nostima. Možda ?u kasnije skinuti jednu zvezdicu al za sada ostaje pa da vidimo kakav ?e utisak ostale knjige da naprave.

Steve Caldwell says

I wasn't sure what to make of this book when I got the credit from the author in return for an honest review. Well, what I got was a great adventure story set in space, but set like a wind and sail Royal Navy adventure. Alexis Carew is a 15 year old girl on a colony planet that has inheritance rules based on Male Primogeniture, meaning she can't inherit her grandfathers land or property, but has to be married so her husband can. After an especially bad meeting with a spoiled potential suitor, she decides to try and join the Royal Navy, which happens to have a recruiting party on the planet at the time. She is refused as an able spacer, since she is too young, but the ship's Captain decides to use his discretion and takes her on as a Midshipman. So starts her adventures and education on board an otherwise all male ship, with the many different challenges this entails, such as lack of privacy, not having uniforms made in her size, some resentful crew members and no background for naval training. She overcomes these challenges, and grows into her role as an officer in training as the ship deals with patrolling, combating pirates, and at the end of the book, preparing for a war. The book is well written, and while set in space, it reads as a sort of homage to books like Horatio Hornblower and Master and Commander. It has interesting technology, without getting too bogged down in the details. It is well paced, and I really enjoyed it. Elizabeth Klett did an exceptional job as narrator, keeping the action moving with a variety of different voices, tones and accents that kept me wanting to hear more. I would recommend this book for any fans of Master and Commander, as well as fans of Jack Campbell and H. Paul Honsinger.
