



Earthclan

David Brin

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David Brin's Uplift Universe portrays humanity's desperate struggle for survival in a dangerous universe... and how we may cope by taking wise partners with us on this journey. Artificial intelligence is one way that we may add diversity to our civilization. But in this series we've done it by giving a boost in intelligence to some of our fellow creatures on Planet Earth. Dolphins and apes -- especially -- seem trapped under a "glass ceiling" that limits their ability to speak, to argue, to create, to use tools, to invent and take part in Terran culture. But what if we, the first species on Earth to cross the wide gulf of sapience, were to turn around and offer a hand to others? To pass on the gift (that sometimes threatens to be a curse) of fully empowered mind?

This omnibus volume includes Startide Rising and The Uplift War. (Does *not* include Sundiver)

Earthclan Details

Date : Published 1986 by Nelson Doubleday

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Author : David Brin

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From Reader Review Earthclan for online ebook

M. J. says

This is another book which I read sometime in the past few years and put on the shelf, and then recently I found myself mentioning details from it, so I decided to read it again.

There are a lot of things about Brin's universe that feel strange to me. It is apparently filled with intelligent aliens in a massive interconnected society held together by a few "institutes", such as the "Institute for Civilized Warfare", which function to determine and enforce the rules for interspecies interactions. The greatest of these institutes is "The Library", a repository of all knowledge collected since the first starfaring race, somewhat reverently known as "The Progenitors", established the rules of for The Five Galaxies. Among those rules is the treatment of "presentient" creatures, those who have not quite developed what it takes to be starfaring members of galactic society, but generally those with limited language, tool use, and other marks of intelligence--creatures like our modern chimpanzees, dolphins, and gorillas. Under the rules, intelligent species seek and find these "presentients" and then by teaching and gene manipulation bring them to the level of "sentient clients" in return for a brief indenture as servants to their "patrons". To give you a notion of how long this has been happening, such indentures last fifty thousand years, the current senior patrons can trace their patron lineage back through multiple species most of whom have vanished from the universe, and the "progenitors" themselves have been lost so long that there are religious factions built on the expectation of their return. It is a standard belief of the "Galactics" that sentience is not possible by evolution, only by the aid of a patron. The problem that the progenitors themselves must have attained sentience independently is never raised; instead, many Galactics insist that humans must have been found by one of their own kind and the process begun then abandoned (illegal under the laws of the Institute for Uplift, so no one who had done so would have admitted it).

Into this mix, humans make their first interstellar journeys, and they upset the system because not only do they have no patrons of their own, they have already, by a combination of training and genetic meddling, elevated chimpanzees and dolphins to levels where these are completing college degrees and participating in modern technological society (the former for three centuries, the latter for one). That means that not only do these "wolflings" have no patrons, they are themselves patrons, and with only a few thousand years of history have to be treated (much to the annoyance of billion year old competitors) with respect.

This book contains two novels. In the first, we join the crew of first dolphin-crewed starship, with its half dozen human observers and one chimpanzee scientist, somewhere in the middle of an adventure. It seems that before this book began they had wandered into a little-visited section of space and discovered a vast fleet of dormant moon-sized spaceships. They lost some crew, including the first officer, when they accidentally triggered some automatic defense system, and when they broadcast their findings back to earth they upset the entire galaxy, particularly the fanatics who all think they have found the returning progenitors and want to know where. As the book opens, the ship has escaped a massive ambush and hidden at the bottom of an ocean on a planet called Kithrup. The story is wonderfully complicated, far more than just how they manage to escape the net of a dozen much more powerful alien fleets fighting over them, to head for earth with their data, their one physical treasure, and a group of presentients they discovered on Kithrup, while internal crew politics are tearing apart the effort.

The second novel is dependent on the first, in that the planet Garth is a human/chimpanzee colony leased to humanity in large part because it suffered an ecological catastrophe and no one else wants it. However, the Gubru--bird-like aliens with a complex reproductive pattern somewhat akin to bees in that only the queen

lays eggs, but has two mates both of whom are necessary for reproduction, and the vast number of others neuter--have decided that they can blockade and conquer Garth, and hold the population hostage so that earth will negotiate, giving them the information about the dolphin starship's discovery. With biological weapons they incapacitate and capture almost the entire human population, and then attempt to make the chimpanzees their own clients. (The oceans of Garth contain minerals which are poisonous to dolphins.) They have vastly underrated the chimps, who with the help of a couple of aliens and a couple of humans, along with the gorillas someone has been hiding in the mountains and "uplifting" toward sentience, mount a formidable and intelligent resistance against the invaders, who themselves are struggling with internal tensions and rivalries.

I must commend the author for the use of multiple staging, the technique of establishing driving action in several places with different characters, so that while I am reading about Toshio I am wondering what is happening with Creidiki or Tom, or while Fiben takes center stage I want to know what Robert or Gaiet is doing. It is a good way to keep a reader engaged, as long as it keeps everyone straight and doesn't go too long before connecting the lines. Brin does that well.

On the down side, I really felt as if there were a series here I was missing, but there is nothing in the edition I have to suggest either prequels or sequels despite indications that both novels were previously published separately. I am curious about the earlier discovery of the fleet, and about what happens when the starship gets home. These feel like pieces of an epic, but I don't see the rest of it even hinted. I certainly understand it when my sequels don't go to print, given low interest in the earlier books. One of these is an award-winning novel, and I don't understand why there is no list in the cover of other books in the series. Not that I have money to spend on books at present, but at least I'd like to know if they are out there. Maybe someday I will be able to read them, if I know to seek them.

--M. J. Young

Austin Wright says

Two Hugo Winners in one book!

I am going through the Legendary era of "1980's Hard SciFi". This is completely out of my comfort zone, as the 1950's in my favorite decade of SciFi literature, and I do not consider myself technical enough to be fully able to appreciate Hard-Scifi. I had to consult the Wiki several times to understand the nuances and overall-direction the novel was taking me.

Three-stars. This book was more a retelling of Startide Rising. The Gubru were my favorite characters. And this was a very memorable read, though not necessarily a fun read.

Fredrick Danysh says

Contains the novels Startide rising and the Uplift War. Humanity discovers that it is not alone but must struggle to meet the requirements of membership into the stellar community of worlds and races.

Rodzilla says

What's not to love? Two Nebula winners in the same Omnibus volume (the less good Sundiver is not included).

I won't get into plot points here. Rather, I will point out that nobody has ever done diverse aliens as well as Brin in these two books. They are astonishing. They are wildly diverse. They are intriguing. They are baffling. Most importantly, they are a celebration of the wonderful diversity of life. I come to this as a Biology professor, and I think finally somebody gets it right: life could progress millions of different ways. The common thread is sapience and survival, and everything else could be changed. Others have done well: who can forget Larry Niven's *Puppeteers*? But Brin's aliens are scientifically practical.

Intriguingly, Brin also explores what intelligence would be like if extrapolated from our own sibling and cousins: chimps and dolphins (the central allies in "Uplift War" and "Startide Rising," the two books in this omnibus). (Oh, and there's a surprise guest appearance in the *Uplift War*.) These books represent a fascinating exploration of how different intelligences from our own genetic ancestry would be. As such, they contrast charmingly with the true aliens, and explore commonalities and unbridgeable differences between intelligent species among the stars. Nobody has ever done it better.

Overlaid on this is the fascinating concept of Uplift and Patronage, which Brin first developed in *Sundiver* (absent from this volume), but which does not require a reading of the somewhat weaker *Sundiver* to understand. The central tension, laid on top of the individual characters' struggles and the fascinating aliens, is the mystery of humans. Most intelligent species were "discovered" as sub-sapient species but an already advanced species, then nurtured forward to sapience. Whole "family" lineages of uplifter and upliftee comprise the political structure of the galaxy, with different factions pushing different views of the galaxy and the phenomenon of sapience. Into this milieu jump the humans, which appear to be "wolflings" who arose to sapience by themselves. The mere existence of humanity nearly precipitates a holy war among galactic civilizations that go back over a billion years. Where does humanity fit into the established order, when all intelligent, starfaring species were uplifted by a previous intelligent species, back into the mists of time?

These complex but utterly stimulating ideas are woven together into sophisticated stories in these two novels. They rightly won the Nebula for their respective years. Together, these two books reach a vision that was only exceeded by Frank Herbert's *Dune* and Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead* (though all three are very different). This was Brin's peak, but he reached as high as one can go as an SF writer. Not for the faint of heart, or faint of intellect: these are books written for very intelligent readers, and not seekers for pulp fiction. But for the intellectually restless, Brin lays out a buffet of xenobiological creativity, overlaid on strong political and plot driven narrative. And all that said, they are good yarns that can carry you through to keep turning the pages.

The main complaint among certain readers may be the relative weakness of character development. It is pretty good in these books, but not great (I'd say *Startide Rising* is the stronger of the two vis-a-vis character development.) But that is frequently a criticism of SF and Fantasy in general, and is an argument frequently leveled at, say, *Dune*. As a more modern writer, Brin treats female characters with respect, and develops them to be as complicated and talented (or more so) than men. Besides, in these novels the question is: females vs. males of which species? And is the species limited to two sexes? Hey, don't get hung up on your

preconceptions.

A delightful journey through the mind of a creative scientist and writer!

Kelly Flanagan says

sooo hard to get into....

Brian Rast says

Wow! As good as Dune!

Matt says

Two great space operas! At first it took me a couple of chapters to get into the mindset of a dolphin or a chimp, but once I got on board, I couldn't stop. Definitely a lot more action than some of the other Hugo books I've read, but it's all there for a reason. David Brin teases you with a mystery in both books and the payoff is usually not what you expect. I would definitely recommend.

Stephanie says

My copy from SFBC doesn't seem to contain Sundiver

Bill says

Excellent sci fi. Some of my all time favourite characters and fascinating concept.

Roxanne says

Interesting story.

Dmack says

3 in one

Spike Anderson says

I actually could not get through this book- it reads like a Russian novel with more characters than I can keep track of, most of them from races and species not human with names containing lots of unpronounceable names. It is too bad, there was a decent plot developing (I think) but it just did not keep me engaged enough to stick with it. That being said, it clearly is an incredible creative concept and the detail of the different warring species, the galactic 'rules', and the heretical behavior of the human/dolphin/chimp is sort of empowering in an incredibly dorky way.

Legolas says

Great Sci-fi. Compelling characters and story line. It is fantastic, but very believeable.

Ramoths Own says

-I wanted to like this book more than I did. I was very annoyed by the haiku's used by the dolphins, and other things about the book I found a bit annoying. I did like the premise but I won't be reading this book again.

Steven says

The Uplift concept was a good one, as was the ancient space battlefield and some of the other points.
