



How Dark the World Becomes

Frank Chadwick

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Original Trade Paperback. The exciting debut of a nonstop noir SF from legendary game creator Frank Chadwick. With one single act of kindness, a tough-as-nails hood with a heart of gold saves two alien children from assassination—and resets the balance of galactic power in the process.

Sasha Naradnyo is a gangster. He's a gangster with heart, sure, but Sasha sticks his neck out for no man. That's how you stay alive in Crack City, a colony stuffed deep into the crust of the otherwise unlivable planet Peezgtaan. Alive only—because if you're human, you don't prosper, at least not for long. Sasha is a second generation City native. His parents came to this rock figuring to make it big, only to find that they'd been recruited as an indentured labor force for alien overlords known as the Varoki.

Now a pair of rich young Varoki under the care of a beautiful human nanny are fleeing Peezgtaan, and Sasha is recruited to help. All things considered, he'd rather leave the little alien lordlings to their fate, but certain considerations—such as Sasha's own imminent demise if he remains—make it beneficial for him to take on the job.

But Sasha discovers his simple choice has thrust him into the midst of a political battle that could remake the galactic balance of power and save humanity from slow death by servitude. Now all he has to do is survive and keep his charges alive on a hostile planet undergoing its own revolution.

But it's the galaxy that had better watch out. For now the toughest thug in Crack City has gotten his first taste of real freedom. He likes it, and wants more.

The stunning debut of a nonstop science fiction noir thriller from legendary game creator Frank Chadwick.

About *How Dark the World Becomes*:

"*How Dark the World Becomes* is a crackling debut novel that speaks of great things to come! It's whip-smart, lightning-fast and character-driven—in short it has everything required to be totally satisfying. Highly recommended." —Jonathan Maberry, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Assassin's Code*

". . . [a] far off, hard scramble intergalactic underworld . . . fast-paced intergalactic adventure full of far-flung alien intrigue."—*Astroguys*

" . . . thrilling space adventure . . . I was reminded of Jack McDevitt's Alex Benedict novels and Mark L Van Name's Jon & Lobo adventures."—*SFCrowsnest*

How Dark the World Becomes Details

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From Reader Review How Dark the World Becomes for online ebook

Gregoire says

J'ai véritablement apprécié cette plongée dans cet univers futuriste dominé par les Varoki , où l'homme n'est pas l'espèce dominante, où il tente de survivre et traîne ,comme boulet, avec lui, son lot de misères, de corruptions, de crimes mais aussi de dévouements et de sacrifices...

Le récit à la première personne permet de suivre sans ennui les réflexions de Sasha et de mieux comprendre ses actions et réactions

Le style, enlevé mais pas que (certains passages méritent que le lecteur que je suis s'y arrête pour cogiter tant au point de vue psychologique que scientifique ou socio-économique ...) est aussi ponctué d'humour, d'auto dérision qui passent très bien sans rien ôter à l'action ou au suspense et permet de bien différencier, pour le lecteur, l'ensemble des personnages, même les moins importants

Bien entendu, il reste que tout s'enchaîne à la perfection et que Sasha est le seul à voir clair et à prendre les bonnes décisions mais mais mais ... s'il semble lucide et dur -en surface- il est surtout tellement "sincère" qu'il en devient attachant.

Un petit regret : n'avoir pas la perception des événements par les deux enfants Varoki : Barraki et Tweesaa qui bien que décrits par Sasha me sont apparus comme des "bagages prétextes"

Par contre, j'ai apprécié le voyage, les différents environnements décrits, les aliens, les tentatives d'assassinats etc etc qui m'ont tenu en haleine jusqu'au mot fin

nota : je ne suis pas certain d'avoir saisi toutes les subtilités des manigances politico-économiques des VAROKI qui sont certes évoqués mais trop brièvement à mon goût J'envisage une deuxième lecture plus attentive aux détails et moins aux péripéties

Je suppose que cela laisse beaucoup de places également pour un prochain épisode que je lirai avec grand plaisir

Henry Lazarus says

Frank Chadwick knows How Dark the World Becomes (trade from Baen) when on the edge of a major war. Sasha Naradnyo is a loan shark on Crack City whose parents had been lured across the galaxy with the promise of good jobs. They died when he was seven and survival meant becoming a gangster. Unfortunately

his boss, Koyla, who grew up on the streets with him, has decided that Sasha is extra baggage. That's when his girl friend sells him out and he has to kill the man sent to murder him. Then a woman comes to him to arrange transportation for her and two aliens (there are seven special in the galactic Cottohaz) The Varoki turn out to be children, the only heirs of an extremely rich family. They had survived the assassination of their parents and other Varoki are after them. Good time to leave Crack City and acting as security for the kids seem a good idea. What Sasha doesn't know is that ancient hatreds are causing the Cottohaz to crack apart. Not only are killers after him, but they are willing to blow up passenger liners to stop him and that part of his trip sends him across a war zone. Very exciting. I suspect sequels are coming. Review printed in the Philadelphia Weekly Press

John Davies says

Well, this was a surprising, and enjoyable read. While the book started out how I expected, instead of it progressing how I thought it would from the blurb on the back, it turned out to be a tale of redemption and how a good bad man can become a good good man. Along the way, it has space battles, ground battles, assassination attempts, and heroine rescuing. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in the series.

Linda says

What a good read this is! Though I'm not a regular reader of SF, I found this novel worked for me because of the very clever mix of genres. SF, Noir, Hollywood gangster, and even a little romance thrown in! What brings them all together? The wonderful voice of Sasha, the main character--a man who is honest about the brutality his life requires for survival but who when he says "a heartless thug like me" you don't quite buy it. And you're right! By the end he's risked all for the life of two children he's only just met and used his hard won knowledge of the "streets" to help evade inter/intra planetary catastrophic events! And did I mention it's funny? It sometimes feels a bit like a Bogart or a Cagney with Mark Twain's clever detached wit! Enjoy!

Rachel says

Sasha is a drug dealer, a killer, and a criminal. He's got a heart, sure, but he's no angel.

Then the family of a high-profile alien businessman is attacked on his planet. The Varoki equivalent of a Fortune 500 CEO is killed, and his children have vanished.

Less than a week later, Sasha is approached by a woman looking for passage off-planet for herself and two Varoki. At first he thinks they're the killers...but then they turn out to be the kids. Sasha's boss is gunning for him, there are people after the children, and the best thing for all of them is to get off-world and to a central Varoki planet.

If only things were that simple...

Notes:

* I really like the main character here. Sasha is smart, with an entertaining voice and an interesting way of

telling the story.

* I felt like the kids didn't get a lot of screen time. I really liked Barraki, and I felt like he should have gotten more interaction with Sasha. Tweezaa I get, she didn't speak English, but I feel like the kids should have been in the story more.

* The pacing is excellent. It never slows down too much, and it isn't very slow to get started either. It's interesting from the first page to the last. (I thought the most boring part was a side-stop on a planet with a civil war happening on it, if that tells you anything.)

* All in all, this is quite a good story, and well worth picking up.

Kelly says

Sasha is mid-level gangster involved in the usual smattering of criminal activities: drug dealing, protection and numbers. He seems like a nice guy, so far as thugs go. He funds a clinic, is good to his girlfriend and is apparently respected by his peers, except for the one who'd like to see him dead. To complicate matters, he has been asked to smuggle two high value targets off-planet. There is a thread of connection between matters, but everything in the squashed and squalid depths of Crack City seems related. That's how slums operate. Simplest solution to all current problems seems to be to accompany his alien cargo off-planet. Trouble does what trouble does and follows.

There are two plots here, the one involving Sasha and the one involving the two alien children he is trying to protect. They're somewhat related, in that the galaxy isn't as big as it thinks it is sort of way. But it seems that the more Sasha tries to convince everyone he's just a thug, the more he has to stand up and do the right thing, to save his own neck, the children, their minder — a woman who seems less objectionable as time wears on, various hangers-on, an entire platoon of marines, a planet and, just maybe, the fate of the human race. The bigger his problems get, the more determined Sasha becomes.

How Dark The World Becomes fits neatly into one of my favourite Science Fiction sub-sets: the thrilling adventure in space. Take a hero who doesn't really want to be a hero, strip away the things he cares about and then set him an impossible task. He'll either fail miserably or succeed against all odds. In the best stories, he does a bit of both. While reading Frank Chadwick's book, I was reminded of Jack McDevitt's 'Alex Benedict' novels and Mark L Van Name's 'Jon & Lobo' adventures. Sasha, as a character, had the same self-deprecating attitude and the tenacity to get things done, even as events messed with his carefully ordered life.

I really enjoyed the world building, too. Crack City, as a concept, both amused and horrified. Humanity rests at the bottom of the pecking order, their labour supporting the rest of the galaxy. I loved how fascinated aliens were with human culture and the way they imitated imperfectly certain aspects. These scenes only served to highlight some of our own more absurd behaviour in a sometimes darkly humorous manner. I got the sense Chadwick has a lot to say about some of our more oddball quirks as a species.

I think Frank Chadwick's universe and characters have a lot of potential. Given he is a multiple-award-winning game designer, I'm not surprised. I'm looking forward to reading more!

Written for and originally posted at SFCrowsnest.

Clyde says

Wow! I haven't enjoyed a book so much in quite a while. *How Dark The World Becomes* was not what I was expecting. I thought I was going to read space opera. (It is published by Baen, after all.) What I got was a rip-snorting noir crime story, nicely spiced with spies, and gunfights, and dirty dealing, and desperate situations, and a bit of romance. Oh ... and there are also aliens and spaceships.

Very good book; I'll be looking for more from Frank Chadwick.

Barbara says

3 1/2 stars rounded up to 4 since it is a debut novel.

Beau says

If you haven't read Frank Chadwick, here's why you might want to.

"Lightning hardly ever strikes the same place twice, but when it does- well, the second time you get hit, you feel like an idiot."

"Watching the emotions fighting for control on the faces of the kids in the crew - I thought of them as kids anyway - was like watching a sack full of cats: you knew there was a lot going on inside, but it was hard to make out exactly what."

These pearls and proverbs are scattered throughout the first person narration, and I enjoyed them as much as the plot.

This book felt like *The Perils of Pauline*. Serial danger. The good guys kept going from frying pan to fire to another frying pan to another fire. There was no shortage of bad guys and Duke Nukem would have had trouble finding the ammo to fight them all.

Through it all, Sasha Naradnyo, former orphan, gangster, and dope dealer tries to keep two alien children and their human guardian alive, while the Bad Guys keep popping up, dependably if not predictably.

They go from planet to space station to shuttles to big ships and little ships and more planets and more stations and more ships. The publisher's blurb implies that Sasha has an existential conflict for his soul, but as I read it I never sense that. His loyalty to those he's protecting never wavers, while the chance of being shot, sliced, shocked, drawn, quartered, feathered, and flayed is maxed out all along.

It would just be another mystery / suspense book, except that the alien cultures make the world bigger. There are six species, counting the Humans. We are the new kids on the block, and the metaphor for us and the indians and africans in this universe is obvious. We're the ones who get treated as if we aren't people, and there is gonna be a book someday where the Humans will treat the other groups badly in retaliation, as is our nature.

Meanwhile, Sasha and the Refugees will try to find a way to avoid getting caught up in fights between species, and between factions of the same species. The rest, you'll just have to read it.

It's a fun ride, a gas.

EDITS:

predictably, not predicatably

alien, not alient

My spelling is better than my typing, or my proofreading.

Gallandro_83 says

4-4.5 stars

Purchaed this book from Baen's eARC program.

I have never read any of Frank Chadwick's works before this story but the summary and sample chapters showed that it was almost exactly the type of sci-fi books I enjoy reading. you can find the preview [here](#). The story was very character driven with the information about the universe spread throughout the story and never weighed down with too much technical jargon.

The lead character is very well thought out and has a two-part depth that I haven't seen much of before. I know that most of the stories I read are as much driven by being a bibliophile as anything else. That said the story reminded me of the Dresden files, the main character takes on a small job and by doing what he feels he needs too changes everything.

Sasha would benefit from having a bit more of the true comedian in him but otherwise I did enjoy how much I seemed to slip into his mind throughout the story.

I will say that I thought one of the main twists wasn't very well concealed. It could be that it might be different if I was more fully immersed in the tale instead of bringing my own thoughts to the process.

The *Cottohazz* in general is a great setup and the thought that went into its make-up really sells some of the story for me. I also liked how the author didn't weigh us down with technical or unfamiliar works and the ones he did use were almost always either explained in context or easily recognizable.

This story was very much a guilty pleasure read and will not make the history books for anything. However Chadwick has given us a great new universe and ended the story with a great point for future works. In fact I think that if the rest of the series is as good it will become a must buy.

gallandro

Walter Zirbes III says

As a 71 year young, retired Navy Chief, NRA member, photographer, shooter, book collector and voracious

reader, I thank Frank Chadwick for this story.

I have always been a fan of a Good Ending and he does a fine job in the one.

A lot of what he put in this story seems to me to apply to our Country and the world right now.

The crusty old sailor hopes for a "another good beginning" for the U S of A.

This is the GREATEST COUNTRY and has done more for individual liberty, by being an example for the whole world to look up toward.

People need to stop putting down the U S of A. We may not be the best we can be, however, we are way ahead of whatever is in second place.

We need a strong military to follow the mottoes of the SAS and the Special Forces. "Who Dares Wins" & "To Free The Oppressed".

Something was stated a few years back by a Leader of this country; If you assist or harbor terrorists, we will bring them to justice, because by doing so you become the enemies of freedom loving people, so beware and don't complain when that occurs.

At this age I am still an Idealist. At least that gives me something to strive for, moving forward, rather than tearing down this county and just hoping something better will come about.

Ha, at age 71 I still have the courage.

The Paras' Prayer

Give me, God, what you still have,

Give me what no one asks for;

I do not ask for wealth

Nor for success, nor even health --

People ask you so often, God, for all that

That you cannot have any left.

Give me, God, what you still have;

Give me what people refuse to accept from you.

I want insecurity and disquietude,

I want turmoil and brawl,

And if you should give them to me, my God,

Once and for all

Let me be sure to have them always,

For I will not always have the courage

To ask you for them.

--Zirnheld

Stephen says

Part science fiction, part old style detective story (except he's a gangster, but it feels like those), all worth reading. It's early in the year, I know, but this is currently top of my list for next year's Hugo nominations.

Cheryl Brandt says

Picked this up from Baen's eARC program because it sounded interesting.

I very much enjoyed the book, both the world building and the characterization. You become very wrapped up in the main characters, but I also felt the side characters were well drawn, and became real to me.

Very good read, and I'm looking forward too re from this author.

Jeff says

Ok..... mini rant time (two fold). If you want to ignore the rants, just go buy the book and enjoy.

Rant #1: Baen - Baen has gone from being one of my favourite publishers to one that I am very cautious about. Yes, it still has Weber, Drake, Flint and other great authors that publish under its auspices. Yet, it also publishes a number of misogynistic, xenophobic novels as well as a number of right-wing screeds that I would be embarrassed to have on my bookshelves. So, now-a-days, instead of being one of my go-to publisher's, I now look very carefully at any book under that imprint.... and more often than not, I decide to spend my money elsewhere.

Rant #2: Violence-Porn - I was at a convention a couple weeks ago and heard David Weber and Steven Erikson amongst others, talking about war in genre. I was very impressed by both authors, but especially by their emphasis that violence has consequences and if you are not willing to acknowledge the consequences, than all you are doing is writing violence-porn (a la A-Team where they used to fire hundreds of rounds of ammunition and no one got hurt).

Now, my review of this book. In some ways, this is almost the Anti-Baen book. Yes, its a space adventure with military elements. However, the author clearly has some opinions that he had to express and used this book to do so... most notably on the fact that most people completely misunderstand Adam Smith and the culture of fear mongering that some people create for political gain. Messages clearly contrary to the Tea Party ideology which I tend to equate with Baen. So, kudos to Baen for publishing this book. He also really emphasizes the consequences of violence in this book. In fact, he is almost too ham-fisted in his commentary.

Again, since most of his comments are agreeable to me, it was an easy read for me. However, it is also an easy read for other reasons. It was a fun adventure with an interesting protagonist. In many ways, it reminded me of the space adventures that were more common in the 1980's and the 1990's. I enjoyed it.

Not a perfect novel however; I found the secondary characters to be very thin (and I'm not talking about their physical appearances).

After reading the book, I checked Mr. Chadwick's previous works and discovered that he came to genre writing after designing some of my favourite RPGs of the 80's and 90s. The plotting experience he gained there is clearly evident in the smooth plotting of this book. I have to say that this book is definitely an auspicious debut for him as a writer. I will be watching for further books by him.

Jenny Chase says

This was unexpectedly delightful; a thoughtful story of a main character with a distinctive voice, and some realistic worldbuilding of a universe where humans are an economically exploited minority. Good biology (compatible protein food chains are a major plot point), good aliens of the "subtly different from human" variety. Perhaps a bit saccharine at the end.
