



Seas of Venus

David Drake

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In a huge effort, humans terraformed Venus, increasing its reflectivity to reduce its heat absorption, introducing life, and finally introducing people. Just in time because human war created the galaxy's newest star and Venus was all that was left of humanity. The lessons of Earth weren't completely missed. Venus's domed cities (the land areas were considered too dangerous to settle) made plenty of war, but their warfare was limited, civilized, and conducted by professional mercenary companies. Cities who stepped outside of the rules of war could be quickly nuked — a strong incentive toward cooperation. Of course, even 'civilized' warfare is still warfare and mankind's efforts were largely squandered in an entire world that is overrun with mutating and dangerous descendants of the species brought in by Earth's terraformers.

In two linked novellas, author David Drake explores the mercenaries who carry on the wars. In the first, *Surface Action*, Johnnie Gordon joins his mercenary-uncle Dan Cooke in an attempt to overcome a conspiracy of mercenary companies to preserve their way of life — by preventing Johnnie's father from bringing about a peaceful union of Venus domed cities. With only Dan's mercenary company to protect the young alliance and with multiple opponents lining up, Johnnie's mercenary experience seems doomed. And that's before Dan comes up with a crazy idea involving a cross-country cutting out operation.

In *The Jungle*, two junior officers face their own failings after their boat is damaged. Each perceives the other as embodying all of the characteristics that they know they are missing themselves — and each uses the other's example for inspiration, subtly living up to the other's misconceptions. But survival is only a part of the requirement. Because the Venus domed cities have themselves reached a critical situation. Somehow, men must reclaim the land while they still have the chance.

In *Seas of Venus*, David Drake sees the romance of war, but he doesn't let it seduce him. Even distant warfare conducted by professional mercenaries has its costs — including the creation of a self-perpetuating and self-dooming system. The first story, *Surface Action*, is straightforward, with a twist ending. *The Jungle* is a continual twist as Drake gives us a deeper insight into the characters and into the world and society which spawned them. The non-linear time flow is occasionally confusing, but the storytelling works.

Seas of Venus, especially *The Jungle*, is military SF at its best. And Drake's story of a true-life voyage to the jungle of Belize is a nice bonus.

Seas of Venus Details

Date : Published March 1st 2004 by Baen (first published October 2002)

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From Reader Review Seas of Venus for online ebook

Charles van Buren says

Seas of Venus

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This review is from: Seas of Venus (Kindle Edition)

Vintage David Drake. The second part (The Jungle), is as fine a depiction of how truly good officers & men function despite fear & their own self perceived inadequacies as I have ever read, heard or experienced.

Al Lock says

This is actually 2 books, both set in a Venus that is covered in seas and islands with very virulent lifeforms that have evolved from the original attempt of Earth to terraform the planet. Most of the population lives below the seas, while the mercenary Navies fight the wars of the various cities and deal with the surface. The characters of the two books aren't related, but the stories clearly are. The first is written much like a Hammer's Slammers or one of the Dorsai books. The second is written from multiple character positions and with multiple timelines being bounced back and forth - if you don't pay attention, it can get confusing.

Clayton says

Action-packed space opera with a retro feel. Well-written stories, but not so engaging at the head level.
(Note that this book contains two novellas set in the same environment.)

Update: this book, for reasons I do not understand, is something that comes back to mind every now and then. Upgrade from three to four stars.

Chrystal Roe says

Excellent

I really enjoyed this book although it isn't the genre I normally read. It has a lot excitement and adventure. The world Mr Drake created is described in terrifying detail. It's an awe inspiring place. I would hate be stranded there.

Adam Windsor says

I generally enjoy Drake's work but these two novellas are among his weaker offerings. The characters in "Surface Action" are more or less cyphers, existing for no other reason than to progress the plot. Those in "The Jungle" are stronger, and the main narrative there is also more compelling, making it a better read, except for two factors. One is the limp hand-waved ending where massive social change occurs more or less overnight. The other is the 'flashback' sequences. These alternate with the main plot, and they're one part nihilistic and one part voyeuristic. When it comes to the story's female characters - who are only present in these sections, as the main cast is all male - the extent of their 'characterization' is the color of their nipples and pubic hair.

Durval Menezes says

I do not remember anything about this book, so it must have been unremarkable (therefore the 2 stars rating).

Howard says

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Steven Vaughan-Nichols says

Simple, excellent straightforward David Drake military adventure set in a 40s "Golden Age of SF" style Venus.

Eric Johnson says

After Clash by Night David Drake did do a real good job in expanding the "universe" that "Henry Kuttner" had laid out. And given Drake's penchant style with Hammer's Slammers overall I can say that this two novella book reminds me (at least The Jungle novella) of Halo: Nightfall, where there's the alien or human element you're fighting, but the characters also fight the flora and fauna, as well as generally mutated lifeforms that we have here on Earth. Both stories are very good and I wholeheartedly recommend this book with 5 out of 5 stars, as he keeps the pressure on with the universe that Clash By Night created (and a well created one at that) and truly showed that the limited scale that combat brings, can seem like the Only World you truly live in.

Liam says

A great companion piece(s) to a book that inspired the author as a young man. Drake is one of the foremost military sf writers of our time. These are great adventure stories with believable political intrigue.

Rodney Moorhead says

A good retro style scifi tale with lots of action.

thecryptile says

Drake revisits the Venus of Henry Kuttner & CL Moore's Clash by Night (1943) in this military-SF thriller.

Ricky Kimsey says

Terraformed Venus

Terraforming is an hypothetical means of making the planets in our solar system habitable for our kind. This novel takes that idea and applies it to Venus the second closest planet to the sun. Give the author's military background it focuses on the military on the planet.

Michelle Thiel says

Why isn't this a SyFy Channel miniseries? There are so many good stories here, action, adventure, giant sea creatures...!

Jim says

In a huge effort, humans terraformed Venus, increasing its reflectivity to reduce its heat absorption, introducing life, and finally introducing people. Just in time because human war created the galaxy's newest star and Venus was all that was left of humanity. The lessons of Earth weren't completely missed. Venus's domed cities (the land areas were considered too dangerous to settle) made plenty of war, but their warfare was limited, civilized, and conducted by professional mercenary companies. Cities who stepped outside of the rules of war could be quickly nuked--a strong incentive toward cooperation. Of course, even 'civilized' warfare is still warfare and mankind's efforts were largely squandered in an entire world that is overrun with mutating and dangerous descendants of the species brought in by Earth's terraformers.

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