



# Confluence

*S.K. Dunstall*

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**Confluence** S.K. Dunstall

**From the national bestselling author of *Alliance*, linesman Ean Lambert finds himself caught in a dangerous fight for political power...**

*The lines. Mysterious yet familiar: the key to controlling every ship in the galaxy. Once they were thought of as tools, but since linesman Ean Lambert discovered strange new lines in an alien vessel, they have become so much more—symbols of a power too great to ignore.*

While the Crown Princess of Lancia seeks to share the new technology, her father, the Emperor, has other plans. His latest political maneuverings seem to be tilting the balance of control to Lancia's favor—a move that not all members of the New Alliance are looking upon favorably.

As tensions mount, Ean's former shipmates must unite to avert a disastrous conflict: the princess working within the tumultuous Alliance, Ean seeking the help of the impatient alien ships, and Ean's close friend and bodyguard, Radko, embarking on a mysterious and perilous mission.

But the biggest threat comes from an unexpected source. Someone is trying to take down the New Alliance from within—and will use anything, even the lines themselves, to ensure its destruction...

## Confluence Details

Date : Published November 29th 2016 by Ace Books

ISBN : 9780425279540

Author : S.K. Dunstall

Format : Paperback 387 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Space, Space Opera

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# From Reader Review Confluence for online ebook

## Ben Babcock says

Spoilers for the first two books but not this one, except maybe a minor not-quite spoiler at the very end.

Hey, SyFy executives who totally spend their time reading some rando's reviews on Goodreads when they should be doing Important Executive Things™: you need to option the *Linesman* series and develop it for TV like you did with *The Expanse*. You did a really good job with *The Expanse*, by the way; I'm back on board the SyFy train after those few rocky years. I think you'd do *Linesman* justice, and this is a series that needs to be adapted.

I'm not saying that because I think good books must inevitably be televised or turned into a movie in order to reach their zenith. No, this is purely selfish: I really need something to tide me over until the next *Linesman* book comes out. A TV series will do it.

*Confluence* is the third book in this series, and S.K. Dunstall is back in fine form. Whereas the previous book, *Alliance*, focused on fighting an external power play, this book's politics turn inwards. Emperor Yu thinks Lancia got a raw deal when his daughter, Crown Princess Michelle, orchestrated its founding role in the New Alliance. So it's a daddy vs daughter dynastic struggle, with Ean and friends caught in the middle. Fight!

Meanwhile, hold the phone, because **we get a Radko POV**.

Yeah, it's everything it sounds like. And more. Radko gets sent off on a covert ops mission to Redmond. Everything goes horribly wrong (obviously), and she has to improvise big time. Although she does end up in a bit of a damsel-in-distress situation where Ean has to "rescue" her, I'd argue it's forgivable because he wouldn't even know how to find her if it weren't for her quick thinking, nor would they be aware of the traitor in their midst. But ... I promised no spoilers! Suffice it to say, Radko and her actions are pivotal to the plot of *Confluence*.

As I mentioned in my review of *Alliance*, Dunstall has a great knack for sowing the seeds of potential conflict throughout their characters. They show us multiple perspectives so we have an idea of the different plots afoot, yet you're never 100 per cent certain who is on any given character's side. It's both maddening and exciting, and for people who have now grown up and grown used to epic storylines à la *Game of Thrones*, this series is going to hit that sweet spot. There isn't as much senseless brutality as something like *Game of Thrones*, but the high-stakes politicking is there.

I've previously compared this series to the *Vorkosigan* saga and stand by it. If you're missing Miles, then you should check out these books. There isn't a single analogous character, but rather an ensemble cast—Ean, Radko, Abram, and Michelle all have aspects of Miles to them. This series also feels like a worthy spiritual successor to *Dune*. It emulates a lot of the feudal structures that both Bujold and Herbert brought into their space opera, allowing for the kind of romantic power struggles that are so difficult to replicate among parliamentary or congressional type governments. And, as with *Dune*'s novum of the spice, the lines in this series make for such an intriguing technology that humans only barely control and continue to explore.

That being said, don't get the impression that this series is derivative. It's a descendent, but it is its own story. You see this most clearly around the fringes of the narrative, which is to say, where the seams start to

become more visible. For three books now, Dunstall has tantalized us with the promise of aliens. They are out there—they built the *Confluence* and the *Eleven*, and we have stasis-locked corpses of them now. But where are the living ones? How pissed off will they be when they discover that humanity has jacked their fleet? Again, no spoilers about what we learn in this book.

Suffice it to say, Ean continues his experimentation with the lines. We learn less about them than we have in previous books. Instead, the subplot here is more about the ethics around Ean's experiments. Various figures voice differing degrees of concern, from Rossi's conviction that Ean is an amoral madman to Helmo's nervousness regarding cold jumps. It's so interesting to see how Dunstall balances these moments. Even in situations when the plot would be more efficiently served by some handwaving and letting Ean get away with, say, monumental cold jumps, Dunstall often chooses the slower path. I was quite frustrated, sometimes, by the narrative's unwillingness to just give the New Alliance the ability and comfort with cold jumping—but then again, that would make for a different book. I really applaud the way Dunstall doesn't go for the low-hanging fruit but instead lays the groundwork for even better twists.

I love the way the characters disagree, confront each other, but reluctantly work together when necessary. We see this in Ean and Rossi, such polar opposites in so many ways. Rossi never misses a chance to get a dig in at Ean, who is becoming a little better at returning those serves; additionally, Rossi is quite vehement, even violent at times, in voicing his disapproval of how Ean is experimenting with the lines. Nevertheless, there are moments when Rossi backs up Ean or even gives him advice! Similarly, Radko finds help from unexpected quarters (no spoilers, but someone we know from *Alliance*!). Each character has their own strengths and flaws. Ean is a sublime level twelve linesman, but he is hopeless at politics and statecraft and knows it. So he can't Mary Sue his way through the narrative; he can't always get what he wants. (But he hopefully will get what he needs.)

The action scenes in this one are even stronger than the previous two. There's so much happening here; the stories are so busy, but I was never confused about what was happening, where, or when. I don't know how else to say this is except that I literally could not stop reading, could not wait to pick it up again when Real Life intervened (I intentionally waited until the weekend to read this so I could basically spend all of Saturday afternoon on it, stopping only to make dinner). There was one point where I literally **leaned forward in my chair** because I needed to read a scene faster lest it somehow escape from me.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: books are my drug. And when I find a good one, I mainline it until my supply runs dry. After discovering and devouring *Linesman* and *Alliance* in quick succession, I waited months for the release of *Confluence*. It met, maybe even exceeded, my expectations. Dunstall writes fun space opera with high stakes and awesome characters. I don't really know what else to say. It sounds like they have more *Linesman* books planned but are writing a different space opera next. I'm down with that; I wish for more *Linesman* sooner rather than later, but I'm excited to see what they do next.

Now for the minor not-quite spoiler: as much as I shipped Ean and Rossi as frenemies, I totally ship Ean and Radko. They are so cute together.

**My reviews of the *Linesman* series:**

← *Alliance*

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## **Melody says**

### **Best one yet**

So there I was on a Monday night, snuggling into my blankets, congratulating myself on being in bed by midnight when lo, my phone lights up with a Kindle notification.

What's this?

The new Linesman book came out?

.... Oh look, it's 04:00 and that was a gloriously satisfying book.

Dunstall is one of my favorite sci-fi authors and I adore them with all my heart.

Ean is so naive and earnest it is physically painful.

The book had my heart in my throat.

I am so glad about everything.

Rossi is still an ass.

Sale is perfect.

Radko is tied with Asami for my affections right now.

This was exactly what I needed today. I'm going to sleep for two hours before work now. I regret nothing.

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## **Jacque says**

I'm not rehashing what the story is about except to say, if you are picking Confluence before reading any other books in the series, stop. Don't. Put it down now. This is NOT a series that can be read out of order. Each book builds on each other and there is no nice neat prologue to bring you up to speed. You either start the series from the beginning, or take your chances with being lost. For now I'm just going to hit on what I really enjoyed.

Ean, oh boy. He had me worried there for a moment. I thought all he did was live and breathe the lines and could not wait to try them out, to see how far he could take them. In as much as he is progressing with the lines, throwing in a bit of an ethical dilemma really caught my attention. Is it considered a spoiler if I mention the Eleven goes into battle and destroys an enemy ship? Oopsie if it is but I really enjoyed how Ean struggles with the loss of the lines. Okay no more giving away plots but there is certainly more adventure in-store for him.

As much as there are quite a few characters in this series to follow alone, my favorite has always been Radko. Let me tell you how happy I was to find she was getting her on POV plot. Possible forced, excuse me, arranged marriage issued by the Emperor. Looks like Michelle isn't the only one in that loveless political

marriage boat. I always felt Radko and Ean would hook up. Anyhow, Vega sent her off on a secret covert mission behind enemy lines. I loved her point of view so much it was all I could do to not skip ahead to just read her chapters.

Not by any stretch is Linesman series an easy series to read. There's a lot that goes on all while absorbing what lines really are. On top of all that, there are quite a few characters, I'm lumping the ships into this category, that not only were easy to like but they certainly kept me on my toes. There's quite a bit of politicking to be had, which at times was equally fascinating and dull as well. All those veiled threats kept me from losing interest. Who is good? Who is bad? Is New Alliance actually working for the greater good?

I had many questions going in after reading Alliance and while most got answered In Confluence, I was still left wondering. I took a quick gander at author S.K. Dunstall page to see if more in the series was planned. Looks like Ean will be getting another trilogy. And...it looks like my linger questions are going to be the subject of the next trilogy. Yay me! For now I'll just have to bide my time until they come out.

I received this book from the JeepDiva for the express purposes of an honest review. The opinions and rating of this review are solely mine.

Stars - 4

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### **Lata says**

4.5 stars. I love this series and its protagonist Ean and the sentient ships. And this time we get to see Radko off on a covert mission, and now we get to see why Michelle and Abrams had her guarding Ean, and interpreting him to others. She's highly skilled and pretty dangerous. I liked her team, with their individual strengths and issues.

The politicking continues in this third book of this trilogy, and you really have to understand the delicate situation between Lancia, the New Alliance and Gate Union, as introduced in book one, to follow all the action. I've come to really like Sale and Vega, and Ean figuring out how to interact with them, and others on the Lancian side. I like the place Ean and Helmo's relationship has matured to, and honestly, every time someone slaps Rossi, I grin. (I'm glad that each book has a scene when that happens.)

It's also been interesting to watch how Ean, Michelle and Abrams have grown their working relationship. And Ean has come so far since he was maintaining lines for House Rigel. He's no longer running from his human interactions to hide in his shower.

This book does resolve some of the political situation amongst the various humans, but there are still large questions about the originators of the alien tech and what happens with the war. I hope there's more to come in this universe from the authors.

And Radko! What a great character!

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### **XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

**Nefarious grey cells status:** on strike (both of them).

**Creativity level:** abysmal.

**Ability to stare at the blinking cursor on my screen:** unlimited.

*Just so you know, it took me more than half an hour to come up with these ↑↑ three miserable, pathetic lines. Fun, moderately erratic times ahead and stuff.*

*Just spent another half hour looking for an “Insert brain to continue” gif but couldn’t find one. At this rate, my great great great grandshrimps will have great great grandshrimps by the time I finish non-writing this crappy non-review non-thingie. Yay and stuff.*

**Okay.** You Little Clueless Barnacles and I **need to talk** (view spoiler). You are still NOT reading this series. Amusing I find this NOT and **itching to unleash** the murderous crustaceans on you post haste I am indeed. Ergo, either pick up Linesman within the next five seconds or **die deadly dead**. But hey, **no pressure** and stuff.

**Sentient** spaceships and political **shenanigans** and **Shrimptastic New Girlfriend Mine™**, oh my!

**The End.**

**Oh please**, you didn’t really think I was going to let you off **so easy**, did you? Don’t you know me at all? I mean, it’s not because I have **zero none absolutely no inspiration whatsoever** that I can’t ~~not~~ talk about this book for the next 10 hours and stuff.

**Anyway.**

**Confluence** is might perhaps possibly be the **bestest scrumptiouest** instalment in this series so far. **Maybe.**

*Erratic interruption: oh, by the way, some people seem to think this is a trilogy, and that this book is its final instalment. Hahahahahaha. No it isn’t. Because I will not allow it and stuff. Bye now.*

**So.** This is kinda sorta the **mostest awesomest** instalment in this series so far (view spoiler).

**First of all**, we have my somewhat socially awkward, moderately nerdish yet oddly **yummy boyfriend** Ean Lambert serenading **impatient spaceships**, ?singing? his **lovely derriere** off to the Lines, and ~~trying to train~~ training new, **Ever So Slightly Arrogant and Kinda Reluctant Linesmen** (ESSAaKRL™) to do the same ← if you have no idea what I’m talking about it means that you are **STILL NOT READING** this series and should **DIE DEADLY DEAD** right about now. **RIP and stuff.**

**Second of all**, we have a delicious **My New Girlfriend Radko is Mine Mine Mine POV** (MNGRiMMMPOV™). And that is quite delicious indeed. Because Radko is **cool** and Radko is **awesome** and Radko is **super astutely clever** and Radko is **deliciously deadly** and Radko **kicks gluteus maximus** and Radko is **MINE**. Okay, so there’s a slight chance Radko might perhaps think she may possibly be **developing feelings** for my boyfriend Ean Lambert. But that’s only because she hasn’t met me in the ~~flesh~~ exoskeleton yet and has yet to realize she needs a **Certain Nefarious Being Who Shall Not Be Named** (CNBWSNBN™) in her life and stuff.

**Third of all**, we have **war** and political **machinations** and **espionage** and **covert operations** and **liars** and **traitors** everywhere (view spoiler) and stuff. **YUM**.

**Fourth of all**, we have a slightly **luscious cast** of secondary and not-so-secondary **characters**. (If **Aggravating Rossi** keeps his aggravating act up he's going to get himself **snatched up** and locked away in my High Security Harem in less time it takes to **chop off a puny human head**.)

**Fifth of all**, we have a **fast-paced** story and great **sub-plots** and cool **action** and humorous **humor** and **dun dun dun** stuff and mysterious **alien technology** stuff and lots of **questions** left unanswered ergo this **CANNOT be a trilogy** no no no absolutely not it cannot nope nope nope S.K. Dunstall **the crustaceans are watching you** so you might perhaps possibly want to start working on the next instalment **bloody shrimping NOW** or else...

► And the moral of this **Hey Looks Like the Whisky Coffee IV Drip I Got Myself Hooked Up to Did Have a Reasonably Inconsequential Effect on my Ever Deficient Lazy as Fish Grey Cells Yay Go Laphroaig Lavazza and Stuff Crappy Non Review** (HLLtWCIVDIGMHUtdHaRIEomEDLaFGCYGLLaSCNR™) is:

(view spoiler)

- **Book 1: Linesman** ★★★★★
- **Book 2: Alliance** ★★★★★

[Pre-review nonsense]

I want to be a **linesman** when I grow up. Wait. No. Make that a **lineswoman**. Wait. No. Better make that a **murderous linescrustacean** instead. Because decapods in space are the deadliest, smartest, cunningest (yes, that is a word), and **sexiest thing** that ever was and ever will be.

*See what I mean?*

► Full **Ean Lambert Might Be a Pretty Hot Line Twelve But It's His Ass-Kicking Paramour Radko I'm Locking Up in the High Security Harem and Stuff Crappy Non Review** (ELMBaPHLTBIHAKPRILUiTtSHaSCNR™) to come.

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**Amanda says**

4.5 stars.

I really hope there are more books to come in this world. Such a good series.

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## Beth says

This is a much better way to round out my reading year and a fabulous finish to a trilogy I love. I still can't believe my luck, stumbling across the first book in a used book store because it's one of my favorite sci-fi/space opera universes.

A warning: if you're already invested in these books, don't start this one until you're ready to read to completion because holy cow, what a ride. I had trouble putting it down, even for things like sleeping or work. I was thrilled to find the book told from Ean and Radko's viewpoints so that we not only have lots of line singing, but also learn more about Ean's #1 bodyguard.

What I loved about the book:

- How the romance is handled. There have been hints of it in earlier books but I liked how it gelled here, a culmination of a slow and sweet build that had me grinning like a fool.
- The ships are growing and we see more interaction with them.
- We learn a little more about the lines and what they can do, but nothing is ever flat-out explained in a way that erases the mystery.
- Ean. He's still mostly the Ean I was charmed by in the first book, but he's trying to grow into his new role more. To me, his youngness (despite being thirty) suits the fact that he's (view spoiler)
- Radko. I really grew to like her over the course of the first two books but she kicks so much ass here, I'm completely in love.
- Lots of little things that made me fall in love with this universe all over again.

What I didn't like:

- Rossi. I thought he was getting better but he seems more like his usual self in this book, which was a disappointment. (Get that stick out of your butt, dude!)
- The agony of seeing the trap close while your characters are helpless to stop it.
- That it ended and there may be a long wait for more *Linesman* stories. (In this interview, the authors said they have more Linesman stories to tell but will be writing something different next.)

One last note, with SPOILERS (is something that didn't happen a spoiler?): (view spoiler)

I would highly recommend this series (starting with Linesman) for lovers of space opera, sentient ships, intriguing new technologies, and a great blend of action and political intrigue.

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## Veronique says

2018 re-read > I've really enjoyed re-reading this trilogy! As engrossing as the first time!

Original review>

Another brilliant book!

We follow once more our favourite Line Twelve Ean, sharing his time interacting with the alien ships, who

are becoming more and more impatient to have their own crew, training arrogant linesmen, and dealing with way too much politics for his liking. Add to this the Emperor Yu, Michelle's father, sticking his unwanted oars in the pot, and it becomes truly a mess.

In this instalment, Radko is sent on her own mission too, and I absolutely loved her POV. And this is where the authors shine. Yes, we have great plot threads, world building and action scenes, with good doses of humour, but they create memorable protagonists that are irresistible.

I hope the sisters keep doing whatever they 'do' because the result is something fast-paced and utterly compelling! I shall be reading anything they bring out :O)

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## **Martha says**

This kept me up late for two nights wanting to finish – but knowing I would be sorry when it ended!

The Emperor of Lancia, Michelle's father, is putting pressure on her to strengthen the position of Lancia over the New Alliance. Trying to force compliance, Emperor Yu has announced the betrothal of Michelle to further his own goals. His manipulations are cause for consternation to Michelle and Abram who are trying to maintain the fragile balance in the New Alliance. Yu has also told Ean's usual bodyguard, (and the Emperor's niece), Radko, that she must marry a high-ranking official chosen by Yu. The goal there is to allow the official to meet and have access to Ean.

Michelle's new security officer determines it will be best to get Radko away from the fleet for a time. She assigns Radko a team and sends them on an undercover assignment to a hostile planet. Radko comes face to face with a previous attacker and the tensions ratchet up as she uncovers secrets. But will she get the chance to get the news back to her commander?

Meanwhile Ean is continuing to train new linesmen, even single linesmen who have previously been rejected by the line cartels. Ean is juggling the Confluence and other ships who are seeking to select their own crew if they aren't assigned crew soon. The fleet has unwelcome Lancastrian visitors who are being a bit too pushy. Ean manages to block the theft of one of the ships but steps up the possibility of war by the ship movements. Then he has to protect his linesmen and protection team from another unexpected attack.

I thoroughly enjoyed the action, political intrigue and humor. I like the relationship between Ean and the lines although Ean sometimes loses focus on the human side of his world. There are a couple of slow building romances which add a nice touch. It is fine with me that there is no foul language and no sexual content. Although there is violence and death, it is not gory and graphic.

This is the third in the series – I strongly hope it won't be the last. This series has wonderful world building, good plots with action and likable primary characters – even some of the testier ones. There were new characters introduced in this book and I hope they will appear in future installments. I was a little sorry that the two linesmen characters who played a part in book 2 were barely mentioned in this book. I highly recommend the series and suggest you read them in order for best enjoyment.

Audio Notes: Brian Hutchison does a great job with the character voices and the intensities and nuances. I turned this on every chance I could, eager to hear more. This was great listening enjoyment for me.

I picked this up with my Audible Selections because I liked the entire series so much. My rating on this one is 4.75.

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### **Justine says**

My favourite SF series this year. No question.

There are so many things I love about this series, and *Confluence* does not disappoint. The usual political maneuvers continue as the war between Gate Union and the New Alliance heats up, and the level of action remains high. This book continues with Ean as a POV character (and honestly, he is so darn likeable I just never tire of him), and gives the second POV to Radko (FINALLY!). In the previous two books the other POV characters have been interesting, but always felt secondary to Ean. Not so with Radko, who leads her own team on a covert mission, and in the process proves that she is just as smart and badass as I suspected.

Now the initial series is complete, but hello? There is a seriously major issue still left hanging, which the authors say they intend to pick up when they return to the Linesman universe in the future. I am definitely in for more, I only wish I didn't have to wait.

Highly recommended.

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### **Anne - Books of My Heart says**

Review and author guest post at The Book Nympho:

[http://thebooknympho.com/2016/11/\\_\\_tr...](http://thebooknympho.com/2016/11/__tr...)

I got the first book in this series as part of my first Ace Roc star package and I knew from reading the blurb I would love it. I did and I have continued to love this series. Of course, it is space opera and I'm renewing my love affair with space opera the past two years.

Read the *Linesman series* in order, the story builds with each book. Each of the three books is different in the feel. **Linesman** (my review) introduces this world and our hero, Ean Lambert. *Alliance* (my review) is a broader view of the world and its politics with many more characters involved. Our "team" from Lancia works together to try to solve issues. **Confluence** has our team separated and all our main characters isolated from each other. Ean starts out alone, struggling to build a life, then he is a valued part of a team, and now he is rather alone again but still with some influence and control.

Some key players from the first two books have limited roles. Mostly, Ean and Radko, who are not in the same location, tell us most of this story. The two political factions of Lancia each believe they are doing the right thing. The authors did a fascinating post [here](#); how do you know if you are fighting on the right side in a war.

The politics, the war, the factions all keep things moving and kept me reading in suspense of the outcomes. Angst over the treatment of some people was more than usual, and I worried tremendously for my people's safety. And now, I really HATE Jordan Rossi. He was always an arrogant annoyance, but I am done with him now.

This trilogy brings a story arc to a close, is the end of the contracted books, but I really hope we get more of this series. There is more to know about Ean and how the world changes for the linesman. The alien ships and the ramifications of working with them can have so much more. Each captain of each ship could make other interesting stories, along with their crews. I want more! Highly recommended series.

I'm excited to share an exclusive post from the authors for us. S.K. Dunstall shares with us how music came to be part of this story.

Author Guest post:

*He sang as worked. The deep sonorous song of the void—line nine. The chatter of the mechanics—lines two and three. The fast, rhythmic on-off state of the gravity controller—line four. And the heavy strength of the Bose engines that powered it through the void—line six. He didn't sing line one. That was the crew line, and this was an unhappy ship. —Linesman*

We didn't deliberately set out to include music in the *Linesman* series. We were telling a story about sentient alien 'technology' that humans had discovered by chance, had used for five hundred years now, and thought they knew how it worked, but they didn't. In fact, they didn't even know what it was.

The music was there, right from the first draft. It arrived on page two and it stayed, integral to the story. Far more important than we ever could have imagined when Ean first started to sing.

*"How do my crew communicate?"*

*She knew what the answer would be before he said it. Lambert had sung to the lines.*

*"They sing."*

*This was going to be the noisiest bridge she'd ever been on . —Alliance*

By the time we arrived at book three, it was part of the story arc, and everyone was asking questions about it. Including characters in the books.

*"And the singing, Linesman?" the Factor asked. "What does that signify?"*

*He'd jumped on a single tune very fast. Almost as if he had been waiting for a song so he could ask the question. How much did he know? —Confluence*

Music is awesome. It can lift a mood, set a mood, evoke memories. It can override faulty or damaged brain connections to temporarily restore memory. Or to help people with problems like Alzheimer's disease to remember and even move more easily.

How do we know these last two? A reader sent us an amazing link on how therapists are using music to help people. The link's gone now, or otherwise we'd add it here.

Our readers are wonderful, and many of them know a lot more about music than we do. We are learning so much from their feedback and their questions.

Another reader wanted to know about the musical roots. Whether Ean's singing was based more around Qawwali, Tuvan throat-singing harmonics, Enya, or something else altogether.

Our answer? We both imagine it as a full vocal sound. Something that comes through as more than just a single voice singing. But we couldn't attribute it to a particular person or sound.

While we were writing *Linesman* we listened to a lot of Enya, Lisa Gerrard, and big movie themes (with a strong vocal component), and that probably subconsciously influenced what we imagined the sound to be.

It turns out that the music we listened to is a combination of all those styles of music. If you delve into Lisa Gerrard's singing she cites Greek, Turkish, and Irish influences. And if you listen to Qawwali or Tuvan throat singing you can hear the similarities.

Readers 'get' the lines. They tell us:

"I was spinning, and everything was running so smoothly. I could feel the lines singing to the strands of wool, guiding them."

"I was having a bad day. I asked the lines to guide the flow, and everything settled."

"I can hear the lines singing to me."

We write to music. Soundtracks and voices. A typical mix might include Sarah Brightman, Hans Zimmer (and pretty much everyone from his studio, and lots of Lisa Gerrard here), Era, Ten Tenors, Luciano Pavarotti, Audiomachine, James Newton Howard. Soaring voices, big music.

The words flow especially easy late at night, when there's just you, the lighted room, and the music.

So it is only natural that our books contain music as central to the story.

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## **Lindsay says**

An ending (for now?) of this series. The story reaches an adequate stopping point but there's far more to tell in this universe and with these characters.

The New Alliance and Gate Union are at war. Redmond are acting as a third party in this that neither side really trusts. Actions of Emperor Yu, Crown Princess Michelle's father, bring change to the New Alliance

and split Michelle from her loyal Admiral, and Ean away from Radko who he's come to depend on more and more. The efforts by the New Alliance's enemies to wrest control of the alien ships continues apace as both the *Eleven* and the *Confluence* get opportunities for action.

While this was a lot of fun, and getting Radko's perspective was a welcome addition, I do have a bit of an issue with the opposition in this one, and in particular how intelligent their plans are. (view spoiler) One of the rare instance where the Too Stupid Too Live trope hits an antagonist.

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### **Dan says**

Quite good. The whole series is.

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### **Kathleen says**

**Politics, espionage, mutiny, betrayal, a touch of romance, and several quick battle scenes.**

Good book, and I really love this series, but several people needed to be punished for absurdly mutinous actions during training sessions, including Rossi. That issue needed closure. And no thanks to Sale for her inept management of the incident — Rossi did actually shoot Ean, which is not what Sale reported to the admirals:

“Linesman Rossi reacted by trying to prevent Lambert from moving the ship,” Sale said. “He grabbed a weapon and attempted to shoot him. Lambert’s bodyguards protected him and disarmed Rossi.”

Also, if the lines could instantly tell when Vilhelmson was being evasive, it should have known that other key characters were repeatedly untruthful. And if the lines can't think in future terms, but only in the present, as in "jump now" how could they be on the alert for any future mention of that special someone?

Also, sometimes the lines hear Ean's thoughts. Other times, he must sing. What?

Good series, but surely this isn't where the trilogy ends?? This book provides only slight progress in the overarching storyline. We're left with too many loose ends, and a big alien in the room. I hope there will be a sequel. I hope the audiobook format will also be available, narrated by Brian Hutchison.

Update: The authors are taking a break from Linesman to begin an entirely new series. Huh?? Irritating.

Quote:

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Source: <https://mylifemybooksmyescape.wordpress...>

DJ: Now that Confluence is released, what is next for you?

S.K.: We still have plenty of stories we want to tell in the Linesman universe, including the big one. (Not saying what it is, because, spoilers, but think elephant in the room. The one thing we haven't covered yet. Abram's worried about it, and he's right to be worried.)

But, that's not what we're working on at the moment.

We're writing a new space opera. Different universe, different characters, but still character based, action, and fun.

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But there is hope for another trilogy featuring Ean, and possibly two more books in the Linesman world. Read more at Dunstall's blog: <http://www.skdunstall.com/so-much-to-...>

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## **Minh says**

It wasn't until we were deprived of Radko that I suddenly realised how much love I have for Radko! More action packed than the previous novels, Lancia is stepping up and is forefront in the plotline. Emperor Yu is determined for Lancia to take it's rightful place in the New Alliance by forging engagements for Michelle and Radko to force new allies. As a result, Radko is sent away on covert ops and Ean alone without his normal protection as they continue to learn more and more about the lines.

There's a lot more Line and high level politics in this last(?) installation in the Linesman series, Ean's separation from both Michelle and Radko means he spends much more of the novel stepping up to the plate, but it was the Radko POV chapters that had me hooked.

Sorry to see this series go, but if this was the last one then it had quite a satisfactory ending.

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