



Orphan's Journey

Robert Buettner

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In the years since the last Slug War, Jason's command style hasn't made him any friends in the Army. Now, in an effort to keep him out of trouble, the Army has sent Jason to the vast, Earth-orbiting resort called New Moon. At the core of this enormous space station is a starship, a relic from the last war.

When a test run of the ship goes wrong, Jason, along with a handful of others, will be torn from orbit and thrust into space. Now, stranded on an alien planet, Jason realizes that not only are his friends looking to him for rescue, but an entire planet sees him as their only hope.

Orphan's Journey Details

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Bob says

It's funny that I read this just a couple weeks after reading the old sci-fi classic "Princess of Mars", because this is what pulp sci-fi of that vein looks like today. I have liked the others in the Jason Wander series, but this one stretched my credulity too far: the circumstances that led our 3 main characters to be stranded in another galaxy, the convenient way that they are allowed to work their way up to where they can do what everyone (repeatedly, ad nauseum) says is impossible, and how easy the "impossible" ends up being. It had some mildly interesting ideas, but I just didn't feel that it was up to the standard of Orphanage or Orphan's Destiny.

Bryan457 says

This is the 3rd book about Jason Wander. A test flight of the alien slug vessel goes horribly wrong ending with them crash landing on a planet that is very much like Edgar Rice Burroughs' Pellucidar.

Jason has grown up, so the whiny teenage voice has gone away. This book explores the loneliness and burden of command. Jason must send his troops into harms way, and watch as his godson goes into the front lines of battle.

This book was a quick read and very hard to put down. That might be because Buettner puts a mini cliffhanger at the end of each chapter. Here are some samples of the last sentence of some of the chapters. I screamed all the way down.

But, though I might have my idiot moments, history can't blame what happened next on me.

The chamber went black.

Fourteen days later, we found out that a map was the least of our worries.

Behind me, something clamped my arm.

I said, "Uh-oh."

Anyway, you get the idea.

A good addition to the series.

anil singh says

Exciting

A great read and well written. I loved the first book and haven't looked back since. Can't wait for more on this series.

Carrie says

I'm a big Orphan's fan and I was not disappointed by this third book in the series. Once I started reading, it was hard to put down. Although parts of the plot are a bit predictable, I'm ok with that. The story is fast-paced, exciting and entertaining. Parts reminded me of the movie "The Magnificent Seven", which I really like.

Jason has grown up and now struggles with the burdens of command and the guilt he feels when his actions result in the death of others. Ord keeps him balanced and helps him see the big picture, but it's nice to know Jason still sees his soldiers as people, not just tools of war.

Parts of the book are very funny and clever. Jason's method of keeping the Tassini headmen from using the torturous Box to punish women is a prime example. If you've read the book, you know what I'm talking about. If you haven't read the book yet, I'm not going to spoil it for you by saying any more.

The author gives us characters, some familiar, some new, that are easy to care about. He even has a way of making you care about what happens to very minor characters. And I like the bad guys who become good guys thing. I also learned some things from the bits of military history sprinkled throughout the book.

The author is a really great storyteller and I'm on the next book in the series.

Andy Phillips says

This is the third book in the series, following "Orphanage" and "Orphan's Destiny". Although I personally thought that the first book was the best, and the most hard core military sci-fi, this instalment takes the series somewhere new and is a great story.

Jason Wander, the hero from the previous two stories, has found himself to be a general without an army. His superiors don't really know what to do with him, so he ends up being posted to a space station in Earth's orbit, along with Drill Sergeant Ord, his trusted advisor. There they meet up with Howard, Munchkin and her son Jude, all also previous characters in the series. Howard is leading a study of the 'Troll', the Slug spacecraft captured in "Orphan's Destiny".

During a routine test of the Troll's controls, it breaks free from the attached space station taking several of the main characters with it as it travels through the universe on autopilot. It ultimately takes them to a planet occupied by humans in a medieval type community, dinosaurs and the Slugs. The following battle between the humans and Slugs is a great story and an interesting slant on the usual sci-fi stories. If you can imagine "Lord of the Rings" with assault rifles then you're somewhere close. It sounds a bit daft, but it's well worth the read if you enjoyed the first two books. If you haven't read those then I suggest you start with "Orphanage" instead.

J.C. says

The Hero We Deserve and the Hero We Need

Brief Synopsis:

The hero of Robert Buettner's military science fiction series returns in the fourth installment of the Jason

Wander series. ORPHAN'S JOURNEY begins right where ORPHAN'S DESTINY ended: with the capture of a slug vessel. Jason Wander's godson appears to be the only human that might have the reflexes to pilot the alien craft. In a test run, everything goes wrong and Jason is once again thrust into a situation that is beyond his control; but not beyond his command. The vessel essentially goes on autopilot and crash lands on an alien planet that seems analogous to our own earth. As Jason and his small crew learn about the cultures and battles occurring on this planet, the slugs make yet another appearance and Jason must once again rally the troops in a battle that seems unlikely to be won.

Overall Impressions:

Out of all the Jason Wander books so far, ORPHAN'S JOURNEY is the weakest; however, it is still a worthwhile read and creates a beautiful story arc as to where the series is going. There is less internal struggle portrayed in the mind of Jason Wander, now that he lacks a Commanding Officer. Some of the best and most classic moments of the first couple of books were the commentary about the nature of command, and ORPHAN'S JOURNEY lacks this aspect. However, there are several comparisons drawn and examples from our history. Eisenhower is mentioned several times, and I view this as Jason Wander growing and maturing. The coming of age story is really starting to become much more prevalent. At the conclusion of the book it becomes obvious where the series is going and the impending war between man and slug.

Jason Wander is a hero in every sense of the word; and, one of the most thought provoking themes in this series is the price of heroism and the nature of being a hero. Jason often appears to despise his acts of heroism and almost attributes them to sheer luck or to the units he commands.

ORPHAN'S JOURNEY is an authentic work of human compassion and it triumphs in the glimpse portrayed of the fundamental necessity to survive.

It is also impossible to deny the cover art by Calvin Chu.

Good reading,

Plants and Books

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Dantegideon says

Rounded up to four stars, because the last part of the book was somehow much less exciting than it should have been.

John says

This was good-old-fashioned sci fi.

Steven Allen says

This was a decent book in the Jason Wander series, and a good point for me to quit this series. Nothing made me care for Wander anymore and the other characters are not interesting enough either to continue this series. I've always wanted to check this series out, and I am glad that I got them from Paperback Swap rather than buy them. The Wander series for me has been a solid "meh" and I have other books by other authors to read.

Paul says

Lock up your lettuce ladies, 'cos it's invasion of the Slugs From Outer Space.

3 and 1/2 stars

Many SciFi authors have a nostalgic connection to past battle techniques. Heinlein did it in Starship Troopers so why shouldn't Buettner do it in this book? Even now, we are almost at the stage where battles can be fought remotely. If an alien race had the technology to reach earth in giant space ships, they wouldn't need to indulge in land battles at all. They'd have other methods of disposing of us pesky humans. You know - giant cans of human bug spray or something. But it sure makes for better reading to smoke those aliens mano-a-mano doesn't it?

This is basically a retelling of the 1944 D Day invasion, and a few other WW2 battles. Even Blood and Guts Patton rates a mention. Just the characters and location has been changed. Buettner's writing style carries the book enough to make for interesting reading.

I came in right in the middle of this "Orphan" series of books, but not to worry; each book is a standalone story in itself. I think the first two books in the series might be better.

Mark says

Orphan's Journey is the third book in the Jason Wander series from Robert Buettner, preceded by Orphanage and Orphan's Destiny. I've enjoyed the first two books in the series very much and this one has been steadily making its way up my to-read pile over the past few months, although why I never got around to it sooner is beyond me (I'll be saying that about the sequels too). So was it as enjoyable as those first two? Damn right it was, plus it opens up the universe of Jason Wander more than I could have hoped!

With years gone by since the last slug attack on Earth and mankind has recovered from the last invasion. With the old slug ship at the centre of a new orbital station mankind is slowly stretching away from the confines of Earth, although interstellar travel is still not within reach. Jason, his godson Jude, Ord and Howard are part of the crew that are testing the old slug ship and with Jude's exceptionally quick reflexes due to his space-born heritage, progress is made - a little too quickly. What follows is a journey farther than they could imagine to an alien planet where the past has some interesting revelations.

As I said before, I really enjoyed the previous entries in this series but one thing that I was always hoping was that Buettner would break away from the military sci-fi confines of the original story. While this aspect is ever present from start through to conclusion, the break away is clearly something he knows must be done, and boy does he do it well. To be fair, the first part of the story in Earth orbit on New Moon is fairly predictable and proceeds to give a nice recap on events and the history since the last book. Once the old slug ship is powered up and sent on its run out of the solar system the story kicks up a gear and takes us into a new and exciting area.

It's when Jason and co. find themselves on this new planet that Buettner is able to flex his story-telling muscles and deliver a wider scope of story. We have a first contact-type situation and find out a little more about the inhabitants of the planet and their cultural diversity, the way history has shaped them to be what they are. Howard is in his element with all the various creatures he discovers and while he suspects what has happened on this planet, we don't find out until much later in the story. This is both good and bad, because the moment we meet the people of this new planet questions instantly come about and it sometimes feels that these aren't going to be answered - it certainly isn't something that Jason is particularly bothered about, or at least he rarely shows it (and when he does his attention is quickly drawn away).

The big plot device for Orphan's Journey is Cavorite. It's a substance that allows the slugs to travel between stars but has the rather unfortunate side effect that it is deadly to them. However, it has no effect at all on humans. With the planet Jason is on a rich resource of the substance, a slug presence is inevitable. This is where the core of the story lies and allows Buettner to tell a very interesting and quickly paced story - so much so that the 400 pages flew by. How so much was crammed in there I just don't know, but it was thoroughly enjoyable.

Of course, what would the story be without its main characters? Once again we see everything through Jason's eyes, but this time it is a more mature slant on the world and it feels like a better experience. Howard, Ord and Jude are all well suited and fit in very easily, the newcomer Jude being a refreshing change from the military viewpoint. The inhabitants of this new planet are also unique and interesting, their ways allowing us another perspective on the story.

All in all Orphan's Journey was certainly that - a journey beyond the foundations set in the first two books. It took an interesting story and gave it new direction which felt fresh, allowing the future novels to expand nicely once again. While the military sf aspect is as present as always, the change in direction helped enormously and has easily made this a series that I really looking forward to finishing. Highly recommended.

Keith says

Still chewing through this series and nothing else. Every time one ends I'm straight into the next one in the same sitting (god bless the Kindle store)! That said I did have my first slight slump around the middle of this one. It's still great, but it represents a bit of a change of pace, with Jason wandering (lol) to further reaches of the universe a large chunk of the book is closer to sci-fi fantasy than the military battles of the first 2 books. That act felt a bit less gritty and grounded to me (and I'm aware how ridiculous it is to refer to a series that revolves around a space war with man-sized slugs as being grounded, but Buettner does a great job of doing just that).

It's a change of pace that's necessary at this stage of a series though, and it's clearly setting the stage for bigger things to come. The slower, scene-setting mid-section could also be why the action climax to this

instalment felt a little muted to me in comparison to the epic thrills that the previous books culminated in. After all the pre-amble it felt like it was over a bit quickly.

I'd still rate it very highly though, it's even possible my slight dip in interest this time round was more attributable to a bit of burnout. Certainly, after putting it down for a while midway through and returning I was sucked right back in again (and am already getting stuck into the next book).

James Ellis says

In moving the action off-world to another planet of humans facing the Slug menace (not really a spoiler, as this is evident in the first few pages), Buettner loses a lot of the verisimilitude and immediacy of the threat, whilst changing the genre to emphasize more strongly the science fictional aspects of the work. In conjunction with the shallow manner in which we learn only superficial details about the societies that make up the Clans (not to mention some of the particular credibility-straining details about that world itself) and the few representatives of these groups that we meet, I found this book to be a lot less gripping than the preceding volumes, although still a decent enough read in the vein of Heinlein and Elizabeth Moon.

Chris says

Genre-bending. I liked it.

Wendy says

tldr: wHaT

1. I liked this book. Really, I did. I forgot how much I love Jason. He tries his best and I just want him to be happy. Also made me feel old. I read Orphanage back when I was a teenager so when Jason thinks about how far he's come since then I'm just like wow me too buddy.
2. It's a pretty smooth read like the previous two books but oh boy I had no idea where we were going. It's a wild ride but an enjoyable one. I had to suspend even more disbelief than usual but I'm okay with that.
