



The Dark Wing

Walter H. Hunt

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The zor is just one of the alien races that humanity encounters when it travels to the stars, and from the very first meeting it has been all-out war. For many years the conflicts have been sporadic, usually ending with an Earth concession and a treaty. But the zor does not respect mankind and has no any intention of honoring the agreements. When the zor decide to mount a surprise attack against human colonies, the normally self-absorbed government of Earth realizes that something must be done before it is too late.

A controversial scholar by the name of Marais is brought in. A nonmilitary man, he has spent his entire life studying the zor and claims to have a plan to deal with them once and for all. With so few options remaining, Marais is put in charge of the battlefleet.

Earth just wants the threat neutralized and would be happy with a stalemate, but Marais has other ideas. He believes himself to be the mythic Dark Wing, destined to exterminate the zor. . . .

The Dark Wing Details

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From Reader Review The Dark Wing for online ebook

Ron says

Great book!

Bob says

Space Opera Humans against aliens in a never ending war until a new commander is tasked to ending the conflict. He does it an his own way which succeeds but earns him the censure of the human side and exile. Just so so on this one.

Chris Light says

Interesting concept of a race that discovers intelligent life (human) outside their own species (Zor) and begins a program of extermination because their origin myths and faith claim that there is no other intelligent species but themselves.

steven says

The book started off promising, about a man and his dreams for total xenocidal warfare, with all the ethical and political problems thereof. Things were going along swimmingly and then, suddenly, about halfway through, the book changes tracks. Xenocide is no longer an option, and a whole bunch of other elements begin cropping up that weren't even hinted at before. Now there's a secret shadow darkity-dark conspiracy afoot that's been manipulating everything behind the scenes that made sure everything pointed the way towards xenocide, and they're pissed off that the book switched plotlines, too. Um, what?

It turns out the whole thing (the second thing, not the first thing) is just a ploy for the author to write a sequel. I think the book stands well enough on its own, but while it's an interesting universe, I don't see ever visiting it again. The author must have a history in serials; he continually goes over the same information again and again and again -- surely, the book could have been a good hundred pages shorter if all of that had been excised.

Nevertheless, it was an entertaining read, full of enough space battles and scientific explanation to satisfy all but the most die-hard of sf readers.

Robert says

A spectacular fusion of military science fiction and cultural/spiritual considerations. Whose ethics do you use to judge a war with an alien culture?

For a plot-oriented action book, it has strong characters who grow and change.

I'm glad to see Baen issue ebooks of this series.

Mike Maurer says

I grab books from the shelves of used book stores without too much input. i.e. the Internet didn't tell me. Just the cover and back. Sometimes I find great stuff and sometimes I find rubbish. This book falls about in the middle.

I knew going in it's a Space Opera. I wanted capital ships in big fights, governments that don't understand, aliens that are alien, wheels within wheels. That sort of thing. I didn't get that here.

The opening Prologue does have a big starship battle, complete with details of how things work in this universe. But after that, anything to do with the Navy is regulated as a background note. "Ships went here and were successful at pushing out the enemy." That's it.

The human characters in the Imperial Navy or government are not that interesting. The main Admiral guy has a little bit of depth, mainly due to the fact he learned about his enemy, the bird-like zor. The zor characters mainly spout out lines from their myths.

I will give the author credit in creating depth in the myths of the zor. It feels Japanese in style, though none of the human characters is aware of the similarities.

About half way through I was getting bored. Lots of talking, not much doing. Then wham! Something hits that makes it interesting, so I continued to mainly see what was behind it. The last third was better, mainly due to the mystery that hits at that point. Plus the twists in the zor/human conflict. (The author sets up sequels about half way through the first book, too).

Its strengths are in the zor. The rest of it stretches out the slow bits and glosses over the faster, potentially more interesting bits. It only makes 3 stars because of the last third.

William Richards says

The more you read it, the more you *want* to read it! As I was reaching the last chapters of *The Dark Wing*, I made sure I had the next book, *The Dark Path* on hand so I could just keep on reading without stopping when I reached the end of the first book.

One of the key elements I found most unique in Hunt's story was how much the protagonists had to delve into the psychology and mythology of the enemy to find a way to overcome them. Many science fiction stories deal with the development of some technological advancement to win the day, so this approach made for a tale driven strongly by the personalities of the characters instead of the technical depth.

I would strongly recommend this book (and its sequels) to any fan of science fiction.

John says

Another good book that could have been a great book. I could have done without the alien POV sections, but my real issues have to do with how Hunt dealt with the moral issues. He centered the book around the topics of genocide and rules of war, but barely explored them. There were great parallels available in African tribal warfare and terrorism that could have been tapped for inspiration but weren't. There were also a number of places where the war could have been a lot more interesting and exciting, but Hunt went a different way. About halfway through the book I anticipated reading through the rest of the series in relatively short order; now I'm not sure if or when I'll pick it up again.

Fatbaldguy60 says

I actually tried to read this once around 5 years ago and could not finish it. Of course, I did not remember that a year or so ago when I bought it again. I realized after a few chapters that I had read this before, but this time I finished it. A bit unusual, but enjoyable.

Charles says

Overly verbose riff on the Royal Space Navy troupe.

This is a quick read and has some interesting culture clash points to make, but depends too much on tedious soliloquies to keep the plot moving. The tech and battle scenes seemed to have been borrowed from the "Lensman-series" of EE Doc Smith. Along the way, the author sets himself up a franchise.

It would have been good, if it was 100 pages shorter.

Martin Milhomme says

If you like military sci-fi, then this is an amazing book. Great series with great writing. I loved everything about it.

Kurt Springs says

This review was originally published on Kurt's Frontier.

Synopsis:

It is the 24th Century, and humanity is ruled by a galactic empire. They are currently at war with the birdlike Zor. Since their first meeting, the Zor have found humanity to be an affront to their religious beliefs. Conflict

has been sporadic for sixty years, with many treaties being signed that the Zor have no intention of keeping. The latest incursion has brought a controversial scholar named Ivan Hector Charles Marais out retirement and placed him in charge of the Imperial Fleet.

Admiral Marais has spent his life studying the Zor and feels he knows how to deal with them. He presents himself as the Dark Wing, a figure in Zor mythology, destined to exterminate the Zor. How far must Admiral Marais go to end the threat to humanity. Will his civilized but corrupt government, horrified by his methods, stop him before he goes too far—or before he can go far enough to prevent humanity from being destroyed. Is there more at play than either humanity or the Zor realize.

Review:

In the *The Dark Wing*, Walter H. Hunt presents the reader with an interesting dilemma, one that resonates with the conflicts of the modern world, where the war weary populace must confront an enemy bent on destroying them, and politicians have no stomach for ugly solutions. While his own people call him a butcher, Admiral Marais is a man making decisions that could mean life or death for two civilizations. His one hope at winning his enemies respect is to become The Dark Wing, the mythical destroyer of Zor religion. Walter H. Hunt presents the reader with the humanity of a person making inhumane decisions. The action in the book was exciting while the philosophy is thought provoking. It does get a little preachy toward the end, but the overall experience is enjoyable.

Nate says

It starts with the feel of those stilted world war two Pacific war retrospectives, which mostly worked, but had some awkward backstory inserted. Then it goes from differing world views of alien species to actual alien god figures communicating with their people, and psychic abilities getting thrown in out of the blue. But wait, it is also a secret society managing human actions, and their spy has no social skills, but technology beyond the best that the military has and escapes by breaking the known laws of physics. But wait again, he's actual an independent agent of some metaphysical

I had stopped caring at this point. I finished the book out of stubbornness. Nothing really pays off. The societies are just excuses for set pieces that the writer wanted. The only point that The book seems to make is that societies do not understand and value the efforts of the military in their behalf, but but cardboard political structures populated by cardboard characters not appreciating more heroic designated cardboard is not particularly evocative.

G33z3r says

"The Dark Wing" is a sci-fi military drama set mostly aboard starships of Imperial Earth. The Earth has been at war with the avian Zor race, on and off for several generations. The pattern has become familiar to the military: the Zor launch a surprise attack somewhere on the frontier, engage in brutal tactics on human colony worlds, and then when the tide of battle turns against them, sue for peace, which the civilian government is all too happy to negotiate. And then the cycle repeats, the enigmatic alien religion seemingly calling for them to exterminate the humans at any cost. But this time, the Emperor has mistakenly appointed a new high admiral who plans to change the pattern by pursuing the war to the extinction of the Zor, a

galactic xenocide. Appalled by the scorched-earth tactics, the Earth government far from the battle lines seems helpless to control the military juggernaut it has unleashed.

As the book moves towards conclusion (and taking perhaps a little too much pleasure in the success of its fictional atrocities and war crimes) it becomes clear that there are more players in the conflict than just the Zor and human leaders and a rogue military force. Which sets up the next novel of the series, "The Dark Path" (out-of-print.)

The author's attempt to explain the alien Zor worldview is often clunky, and full of too many unpronounceable words with embedded apostrophes, though to Mr. Hunt's credit, at least his aliens aren't just humans with feathers. Things move a little slowly, and there's a little too much authorial approbation for ruthless tactics against civilians, and despite some briefly-voiced doubts, too much willingness on the part of human military officers to exterminate civilian populations for my taste.

Per Gunnar says

This book started off very good but in the end it became "just" good. It starts off with a known enemy breaking a peace treaty for the umpteenth time and an admiral taking the opportunity to wage war against this enemy in the only way that enemy can understand it even if it means the extermination of the enemy species and despite the opinions of the pea-brained politicians. After having read the first half, maybe a bit more, I was ready to give this book at least four stars, maybe five.

Then the pea-brained politicians decide to pee in their pants and try to recall the human fleet when they are, finally, about to gain a decisive victory. These are the same morons that have agreed to peace treaty after peace treaty with an alien race that have constantly shown that they use these treaties only to rearm and then have another go at exterminating the humans. It really reminds me of the useless UN: *Oh my they didn't stop being bad guys so let's make an even stronger worded resolution.*

At the end of the book there's a totally ridiculous court martial which almost ruins the book. Now, luckily, in the course of the book the admiral in question tells the pea-brained politicians to shove it and successfully completes his task anyway which makes this book being a good read despite the political nonsense. However, the second half of the book, which almost entirely revolves around political bullshit, drags the book down.

In the book we get an insight into the alien and their somewhat strange religious-like way of reasoning which adds an interesting element. As one can imagine, especially from the fact that there are three more books and from the blurb on the second book, the bad guys do not get exterminated although they realize the error of their ways.

The end result is a good book which could have been even better. I won't hesitate to read the second one in the series although I certainly hope that the author doesn't step up the political bullshit in that one.
