



The Judas Solution

Timothy Zahn

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Damon Lathe, Allen Caine, and the Blackcollar drug-enhanced combat team want to infiltrate a Ryqril-conquered colony, a tactical center where the whole sector's military data flows through against the Chryselli. But Ryqril Prefect Jamus Galway of Plinry has a clone duplicate of Allen ready.

The Judas Solution Details

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Jason says

A satisfying end to the series but not Zahn's best work. The heroes always win, the aliens are kind of stereotyped, and the fight scenes get a little repetitive. Not a bad book but again not the best he's done.

Junius Johnson says

A great finish to a great trilogy. By this point in the story, you've come to expect that the Blackcollars will come out on top, and prove to have been ahead of the curve in unexpected ways all the time. The question is just: "how will that look specifically?" I found myself pleased and surprised at the particular turn this one took, and there were some good laugh-out-loud moments as well. A solid hit for Zahn.

John Loyd says

Blackcollar the Judas Solution (2006) 462 pages by Timothy Zahn

The Plinry blackcollars go on two concurrent missions, Lathe, Mordecai, Spadafora and Caine go to Khala to try to infiltrate a Ryq base there. Meanwhile Skyler and his group come to Earth. Jensen and Flynn get separated from Skyler when Flynn's parachute fails to deploy.

Thirty years ago the Ryqril invaded the TDE (Terran Empire) and pretty much conquered it. They have a process called loyalty conditioning that they used on the leaders of all the TDE planets. In the previous novel they discovered whiplash, a drug that breaks the Ryqril loyalty conditioning.

The plot is sort of a chess match, with the blackcollars using one trick and the loyalty conditioned security officers countering them. Then the security laying traps that the blackcollars walk into, but manage to use their wits and enhanced fighting skills to escape.

Fast paced, classic Zahn. I loved it.

Xane says

Twenty years after "The Backlash Mission", publishing rights and the stars aligned, and Zahn was finally able to finish the story of the Blackcollars. This is an interesting book, as the first two in the now-trilogy were written before the words "Star Wars" had ever graced a book of his ("Blackcollar" itself was in fact his first ever full length published novel). Naturally, this uncommon situation leaves some room for worry -will the series feel the same? -will there be a drastic change in style? -what about the quality of the writing? The answers -a resounding yes, definitely no, and "it's quintessentially Zahn"- mean that this book slides in perfectly next to the original two. He's partially hamstrung by the weak characters he has to bring twenty

years forward, but like most of his books, the character arcs aren't the true highlight. Rather, it's his ability to immerse you in a world and the exciting events, situations, and action that happens there. Full of exciting action and plot twists, "The Judas Solution" is an excellent (if flawed) trilogy finale. Bottom line: if you like Zahn's other work, you will probably enjoy this trilogy as well!

Dorian D-W says

The conclusion of the Blackcollar series does not disappoint!

Fast paced, excellent action from the space ninjas and friends. Plenty of intrigue to keep it interesting. This book follows four different blackcollar operations at the same time, plus the respective counter-operations; for the most part this is handled well, but poor characterization sometimes makes it hard to remember which mission the blackcollars are on when the scene switches.

This is the third novel in the trilogy, and bits have started to feel more and more predictable. This book is still a fun page-turner, but it's probably good that the series ends here.

Candice says

This book series just gets better as it goes along. I previously complained that the first book had no truly surprising twists, and the characters seemed identical. The last two books do a better job delivering the surprises, and while the supporting cast is still difficult to tell apart at times, the major players are much more distinguishable. The action is also more interesting, and the plans (from heroes and villains alike) are more creative and enjoyable to watch unfold.

However, sometimes they're a little TOO creative. Lathe's ability to see through the enemy's plans seems omniscient at times, which takes away from the tension and makes the Blackcollars come across as infallible, which isn't all the fun to read time and again. It also makes the antagonists seem foolish for constantly dancing to his tune, even when they're making intelligent decisions considering the information they have.

Prefect Galway is still the star character in my opinion, because he's intelligent, one of the few people able to even try to keep up with Lathe's bag of tricks, and he has a motivation beyond the loyalty-conditioning that makes him follow Ryqril orders. He is also a genuinely good person, and shows mercy and compassion to the very people he's plotting against.

Sadly, the worst characters are the Ryqril, the true villains. We never get to see events from their point of view, and since they are incapable of making their own tech as well as incompetent strategists I don't understand how they even got to the point where they're the biggest threat in the galaxy. Frankly, they were their own worst enemies by the end of this book, constantly handicapping or overruling their more capable human slaves. Their fighting abilities are also inconsistent throughout the series. Originally portrayed as a match for a Blackcollar -- or at least close to -- they later seem no tougher than the human security the Blackcollars usually wipe the floor with.

All things considered though, the trilogy was a reasonably fun read, and a good example of the kinds of crazy-awesome schemes Zahn is capable of dreaming up.

Jean-Luc says

Having conquered the humans of the Terran Democratic Empire, the Ryquil turned their attention to the Chryselli, an alien race that stayed out of the Ryquil-TDE war because they needed time to prepare their own defenses. They put that time to good use, and they're holding their own. Now the Chryselli want help from the space ninjas: the Ryquil are setting up a brand new tactical coordination center a little too close to Chryselli territory for comfort. They want it taken out!

In the first space ninja book, (view spoiler) Enter Karl Judas, the clone the Ryquil use to impersonate Allen Caine and learn all the space ninjas' secrets! Will the space ninjas figure out there's a traitor in their midst??

In the sequel, (view spoiler) Will the space ninjas rally humans into overthrowing their alien masters??

As thrilling as space ninjas are, a reader may suspend their space ninja appreciation long enough to wonder why the Ryquil seem so stupid. If they'd listen to Prefect Galway just once, if they'd listen to the one human in their employ who knows how space ninjas think, it'd be game over! In this book, one of their plans is revealed close to the end, and it is brilliant: the Ryquil fully expect to fail! (Blackcollars all up in their business, can there be any other outcome??) And by failing, they win. So now the space ninjas have a choice: succeed in attacking the Ryquil and pave the way for a huge Ryquil victory, or fail and risk capture!

You know damn well the space ninjas will find a way out of this no-win scenario, all that's left is for you to pick up this book and find out how.

Mark says

I'm going with five stars here because Zahn really hits his stride with the series in the finale. This time, we witness the clash of two mega plots -- one by Lathe to free the Terran Federation of the Ryquil, at least for a while, and another by Galway, to turn the tables on the Blackcollars once and for all. Who's playing whom? Zahn's at his best in this book.

Tom says

The final book of the Blackcollar trilogy feels rushed and sloppy. If nothing else it could have been shorter. Not to say that it's long. It's just that the conclusion, when we get to it, feels like something that should have been obvious from the last book (spoilers here if you haven't read *The Backlash Mission*):

the existence of a drug that completely undoes the alien loyalty conditioning should effectively be the end of their occupation of human space.

Just the existence of such a drug makes everyone in the loyalist human government a suspect, which would sooner or later bring the whole apparatus grinding to a halt, with or without a bunch of over-complicated Blackcollar scheming. And at that point the aliens would face the choice of pulling in all their forces and running things by hand while trying to win their war against the Chryselli or pulling out completely and

leaving the humans on their own.

The book also highlights a few flaws in the writing:

- a) The Blackcollars always win, even when it looks like they're losing. No matter how harebrained, their schemes always succeed. Once you realize this it kind of kills the tension.
- b) The aliens aren't very compelling as villains. In fact the more we learn about them the more bungling and ineffective they look. How did these guys manage to conquer humanity in the first place?!
- c) The human villains are much more compelling. So compelling that Zahn winds up turning most of them into good guys, eventually. But then who are you left with for bad guys?

Overall this book was kind of a letdown after two fun initial outings. But it was at least a quick read.

Robert Marshall says

This is the last book in Author Zahn's Blackcollar series, as with the previous two it is an excellent read. Since this was written in 2006 I don't expect an addition to the series, but one would be appreciated. Author Zahn's well defined characters and complex plot keep the reader's interest throughout the book.

Craig says

This is a third book in the Blackcollar series, the previous two volumes of which appeared twenty or so years ago. Zahn does a good job of picking up the tone and narrative right where the preceding volume left off. Good adventure sf with political insight. It's unfortunately saddled with one of the worst covers ever.

Brian says

Closes out a solid military-ish sci-fi trilogy about enhanced space ninjas and how they beat the advanced civilization of giant cat-warriors who had taken over the Terran empire, using only their wits, nunchucks, and throwing stars. I sound like I don't like these books, but I actually really really do. You just have to take them for what they are.

Jesse Whitehead says

I find that I cannot provide an honest review of Timothy Zahn's books. I unconditionally love everything he writes. Some of it is better than others but I find even when I start to notice things that would have driven me crazy in other authors I don't mind it so much.

If you haven't read Timothy Zahn's Blackcollar books you are missing out on some great stories. These books don't have the strong, unforgettable characters that his Star Wars books did, nor do they have the moral lessons that the Dragonback book had. What they do have is breakneck pacing and brilliant action scenes that both never stop and never get old.

Earth was conquered 30 years ago by a brutal and powerful race called the Ryqril. They initiated 'loyalty conditioning' which renders humans incapable of thinking anything bad about their conquerors. The Blackcollar are a group of elite commandos trained at the end of the war. They're basically samurai ninjas, and, as if that wasn't cool enough, they are also geniuses. In the first two books they are roused out of retirement when Alan Caine comes looking for them and they instigate a few steps in a plan to overthrow the Ryqril and kick them out.

This book has all of the Zahn trademarks. Brilliant plans that don't always work but frequently do coupled with enemies that are just as brilliant, if not more. I like that the enemy characters are not crippled by stupidity. When something strange happens they know immediately that it's a diversion and they have their own answer to it. This is not a case of a tactical genius and a squad of samurai ninjas wiping the floor with a bunch of idiots. This is the case of a whole team of tactical geniuses that also happen to be samurai ninjas trying to outsmart a whole team of loyalty conditioned tactical geniuses working for insanely fast aliens with superior technology.

It's a constant battle.

I also like that the Blackcollars use primitive weapons – shuriken and nunchaku mostly – because the Ryqril can detect complex circuitry and metal and disable it.

The story twists and turns in usual Zahn fashion. Characters keep things from each other and from themselves and build a web of intricate secrets that give a lot of "oh no you didn't" moments.

There is little to no character development. The people in this book are only different enough that you know which ones are good guys and which ones are bad guys and which ones are in between. But that's enough. This is some of the best fun I've had in a long time.

Kenneth Flusche says

Well finally finished book 3 and it is a five star story except for the try at Alien speech. It slowed down the story and dumbed down the conquerors of earth. Zahn tries to explain why no human translators, but with the mind control they supposedly have I don't believe it. Also I still believe we will have computer speech if nothing else by that time so we should be able to understand the enemy when they talk to us as easily as we understand humans on other planets who have not had communications in over 30 years.

coolguy2k says

Nice cap to the series (I think). Not profound or anything, just fun.
