



Land of the Dead

Thomas Harlan

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It's a small change in our history: imagine that the Japanese made contact with the Aztec Empire. Instead of small-pox and Christianity, they brought an Imperial alliance, samurai ethics, and technology. By the time of these books, the Emperor in Mexico City rules not just the entire planet Earth, but a growing interplanetary Empire. But the Galaxy is not a hospitable place, and there are other powers, both new and very very old, who would stop the spread of the power in Anahuac.

A weapon of the Old Ones, from the time of the First Sun, has been found in a region of space. It must be investigated, then tamed or destroyed to keep it from the hands of opposing powers. Gretchen Anderssen, freelance archeologist and specialist in First Sun artifacts, has been hired by her old mentor Green Hummingbird, agent of the Mirror Service, to join him in the study. They will be joined by old friends, and some old enemies as well.

Land of the Dead Details

Date : Published August 4th 2009 by Tor Books
ISBN : 9780765312044
Author : Thomas Harlan
Format : Hardcover 416 pages
Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Alternate History

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From Reader Review Land of the Dead for online ebook

Liviu says

The third book in his Mexica/Japanese human empire in space and the first of the heavy-hitter core-sf (ie dealing with the mysteries of the universe in a way or another) novels to be published in the second part of 2009. It can be read as a standalone from earlier novels representing a crucial turn in the series, the back-story is presented and it actually makes a great novel to start this superb series...

Twists, turns, lots of Mexica folklore complemented by snippets from Musashi' story in this alt-Earth and his struggle to overthrow the Mongol dynasty in Japan (that is the branch point, no Taifun, Japan conquered, refugee Japanese fleet washes out in Central America, allies with the incipient Mexica empire in the late 1200's) that fit perfectly in the "struggle against barbarians" theme that is part of the story. Has anything you want in large scale sf...

Ria Loader says

Great alternate history series

The time of the sixth Sun series is fresh and original both as alternate history and as space opera. The characters and settings are reminiscent of Andre Norton at her best.

Alex says

Not the last book.

And thank goodness too because I thought Harlan was going to leave us with another terrible ending like he did with the oath of empire books.

Apparently there are three or four more books planned for this series, that's good news.

Any way this installment was pretty epic, there as an enormous full scale space battle that is probably one of the best I have ever read. Even if this was the last book I would still love it just for the awesome space battle.

However it doesn't really tie all that well into the previous books, and while you do get a glimpse of some of the bigger things happening in the universe, the subplots connecting the story to that are pretty confusing.

Despite all of that it's still a great read and definitely worth the time.

Lindig says

This is #3 in the series and I hadn't read either of the others, but this held up well and wasn't too confusing.

The blending of the Aztec and the Japanese cultures was pretty well done, though some of the gorier aspects of Aztec history were glossed over and some aspects of samurai culture were stressed pretty heavily. All in all, not bad.

Jean Corbel says

You take the universe of the 2 previous books. Add one alien species, and a ghost of one. Add add another one with a armada, which never used armadas. Add...

Oh, forget it.

Characters are even less consistent and interesting than Book2.

This "last" book of the trilogy is not closing any story, generally very confused, with quite a lot of grammar and story approximations. Not on par with Books 1 and 2, a very disappointing read for one who liked the previous ones.

3 stars as it is a benevolent time of year!

Adrian says

This is book three in a series, a sci fi alternate universe where a Mexican empire has reached out to the stars with their Japanese allies. There are all sorts of machinations going on between factions, allies, defeated enemies, and aliens, but the characters that thread through the story are that keeps me reading - they are as complicated as the story they are embroiled in. Two of the characters are naval officers, and this part of the story might seemed cliché (given the number of scifi novels about spacefaring navies), except that it is really well done (if you like that sort of thing). The characters never land lightly on their feet but are often bruised and battered.

Clyde says

This is the third book in Thomas Harlan's *In the Time of the Sixth Sun* series. It can be read alone, but you will get more out of it if you read the preceding two books first (*Wasteland of Flint* and *House of Reeds*). The stories take place in an Aztec/Japanese dominated human star empire in the far future of an alternate history line. (All three books are good stories.)

I really like Harlan's writing style. He doesn't go in for info-dumps, but rather lets the details of things such as the back story and the political situation come out naturally through the characters actions, observations, decisions, and memories. (Reminds me somewhat of Vonda N. McIntyre in that respect.)

The book follows the fortunes of four main characters: Susan Kosho, an Imperial Mexica Navy captain; Gretchen Anderssen, a Danish archeologist; Mitshharu Hadeishi, a former Navy captain who has lost his ship; and Green Hummingbird, a very devious and dangerous Imperial agent. Things can get very dangerous out on the rim of the empire, and humans aren't necessarily the toughest species out there. The Imperial scout service has found an ancient and enormous artifact that might date back to the time of the First or Second Sun. It promises enormous power but is also enormously dangerous. Naturally, the empire dispatches an expedition. The two alien races that decide to get in on the game complicate things, as do the (at least) four human factions with their own agendas. Things get very complicated and very violent with lots of naval combat. I don't think it is a spoiler to say that not everyone makes it back.

If you like Jack McDevitt's books, you will probably like this one.

John says

This is one of my favorite series. The first book takes a long time to grab you but grab you it does.

Fantastic world building across all three books, and an interesting mix of characters, a feline race, and some very imaginative plots.

I do hope the author will add more books to this series, and expand on the events of the third novel.

David Finch says

A damn fine bit of hard sci-fi. A lot of technobabble and military jargon, which would be off-putting if it wasn't for an interesting universe and engaging characters. Really interesting alternate history in which the Aztecs and Japanese came to dominate Earth, with Europeans as minorities --- vaguely reminiscent of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt* with a goodly dose of Asimov.

Scott says

Later that month: 4 stars because it has Aztecs and good space opera components.

The whole function of *The Artifact* was a bit hazy: kept it from being a 5 star book. I enjoy Harlan's SF series, look forward to reading more.

Clay Kallam says

I wasn't excited when I realized that Thomas Harlan's "Land of the Dead" (Tor, \$25.95, 416 pages) was the third book in a series, but since the first two ("Wasteland of Flint" and "House of Reeds") came out in 2003 and 2004, even if I had read them, I probably would have forgotten pretty much everything. That said, "Land of the Dead" can basically stand alone, though there are assumptions about the characters that the author takes for granted that newbies will have to painstakingly figure out.

And there's a lot to figure out, as this is a futuristic space opera (with small freighters, huge warships, alien races, etc.) based on an alternate history that has the Japanese discovering America, and the Aztecs now the ruling empire back on Earth. On top of that, there's a mysterious artifact of dazzling dimensions, strange occurrences in deep space and plenty of plot twists, betrayals and wheels within wheels.

In the end, it was a little too much, with a few too many hairbreadth escapes, and a lot of late exposition, but overall it was a fun ride. Presumably, it would have been better if I had read the first two books of the series, and that's probably a good plan if "Land of the Dead" sounds interesting. The local libraries are always an option in situations like these, and we might as well enjoy them before the budget crunch makes them as hard to access as the health care system.

JW says

This is the third book in a loose series. In theory a standalone, but I'd recommend you start with Wasteland of Flint. And I do recommend it. I'm pretty sure I've reviewed it on here.

Before this book I didn't realize this was a future story with an alternate history. It adds a lot of texture to some well worn tropes.

If you've kept up with the Sixth Sun thus far, by all means read on! This one isn't as action packed but the characters keep developing and Gretchen unspools some awesome here.

Scott Holstad says

Horseshit! That's pretty much all I've got to say about Land of the Dead. Horseshit! I loved the first two books in the In the Time of the Sixth Sun series. Wasteland of Flint was superior and I gave it a five star review. House of Reeds was nearly as good, a little too complicated, and for that I gave it a four star review, but I really enjoyed it and looked forward to the third installment in the series. Then I read it. I wish I hadn't. This book was a horrible disappointment. It was simply stupid. Just stupid. Xenoarcheologist Gretchen Anderssen is back, helping Hummingbird and others look for a First Sun super weapon and in order to do so, she spends the book using computers to build models. Of something. I don't know what, but something. Hummingbird joins her in this for part of the book, but this is what she spends the majority of the book doing. Hadeishi and Susan are back too. Toward the end of the book, Gretchen emerges from ship's cabin and helps lead a party in looking for the weapon. Using her computer. Of course. Cause that's all she does. You would swear she's a computer scientist. Or a hacker. Not a xenoarcheologist. The climax of the book is typical of the series, but by that time, I was so pissed off, I really didn't care. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone. For anyone reading this series, I would stop with the second book cause this will probably be a major disappointment. One star.

Pam says

This is the 3rd book in the series, and it progressed to mostly military-style space opera. Even so, I enjoyed it. The three main characters excelled with each book. The science-fiction part of it, while incredible, was understandable by the talent of the author to describe it all so well. A good read.

Brian says

If you need to have a chapter at the end of the book in order to explain the plot, you're doing something wrong.

Okay, that's not entirely fair, and as with everything context matters. In a mystery book, there's often an

explanation at the end to allow the reader to bring to mind all the clues scattered throughout the text and realize that they too could have figured out the plot if only they had been a bit more discerning. However, most mystery fans would be pretty annoyed if the criminal turned out to be a character with no speaking role that had only showed up once in a crowd scene, and that's pretty much how I felt like *Land of the Dead* went. It doesn't totally come out of left field, but there's a lot of the plot that only makes sense in hindsight.

I'm starting to think that *In the Time of the Sixth Sun* is a bit like *Cthulhutech* for me, in that I loved the first book because of the broad strokes laid out there, but once those broad strokes started getting filled in, the author was making a picture I didn't really like. *Land of the Dead* does get bonus cosmic horror points from me for implying that the México Empire was willing to subject humanity to eternal slavery to psychic vampire energy beings because hey, at least then we don't go extinct, but that's one a minor part of the plot. A lot of it is space battles and more space battles and more space battles and going back to *Wasteland of Flint*, the space battles weren't that interesting to me. I'm much more interested in the xenoarcheology, and that's a minor part of the book.

Also, it's increasingly becoming obvious that even though the website says that the books "will be hard-SF archaeological mystery/space combat stories," there's very little hard-SF here. It's pretty much all space opera, with hyperdrives and ansibles and energy shielding and pseudo-psychic powers and so on. There's no rubber forehead aliens, but that's because they're all animal people. The Hjojadim are tapir people, the Khaid are hyena people, the Jeweled Kings are insect people, the Heshatun are great cat people, the Jehanan are lizard people, the Vay'en...well, it doesn't apply to everyone, I suppose.

I suppose there's an equivalence that could be drawn between how little the reader is told and how most Imperial citizens have very little knowledge of anything outside the empire, to the extent that even the existence of alien empires that could crush humanity without blinking and that the Emperor of the México, Light of Heaven, takes orders from an alien ambassador because otherwise humanity is doomed, is totally censored. And I do like the implications of that, but it only features in the beginning and end of the book, and the rest of it is space combat. I'm here for the Lovecraftian universe, not the space battles.

Also, I just realized...where's the robots? Where's the AI? The lack of transhumanism is another thing that makes this more like space opera than hard SF, since one character has an iPhone in their head and it's treated like some kind of crazy super-advanced tech that it's at least implied they had to buy from one of those alien empires. But none of the ships have robot repair crews, there are no AI hive-brain México Navy ships with robot drone swarms that have reaction speeds thousands of times faster than humans, and worst of all, no explanation. I understand why it's all humans on the bridge giving orders, because "realistic" space battles are all letting the computers handle everything and the crew only knowing whether they won or lost when the computer tells them the enemy ship is destroyed or they suddenly explode from being hit by objects traveling at relativistic speeds, but there needs to be some explanation as to why they don't even have weak AI in the 24th century.

Maybe it's impossible? Maybe the Mirror is worried about its effect on humanity and the chances of the robots rising up to destroy their human masters? Maybe the other alien empires near the México Empire hate AI? Any of those might work, but none of them are offered as an explanation.

Also, the use of Japanese continues to annoy me. There's one point where one character yells *kiken-na*, presumably because she's trying to say something is dangerous and a stupid idea...but no Japanese person would ever say that, they'd say *abunai*! Like I said in the previous review, maybe Japanese is different in the alternate future, but since it's just scattered words here and there, there isn't enough of a sample to tell.

I did like the interludes where Hideishi was remembering the *jidaigeki* he saw as a child about Musashi, where Musashi fought the Iroquois, or how Musashi and Tokugawa teamed up to try to overthrow Japan's Mongol rulers, or the riff on *The Seven Samurai*, and I would actually read that alternate history book set in this universe. But I'm becoming less interested in where Harlan is taking this series. There's supposed to be six books, I think, and it seems to be building up to an existential threat to the México Empire, but we're three books in and we don't even know who the enemy *is*, other than that they have shapeshifting agents and are called the Makers. Maybe.

Not really a fan of this one. I'd have preferred more exploring of the megastructure, less space combat, and explanation sprinkled more through the book instead of being dumped on the reader at the end. Judging by the other reviews I seem to be in the minority, though, so if you liked the direction Harlan was going in *House of Reeds*, you might like this one.

Previous review: [House of Reeds](#).
