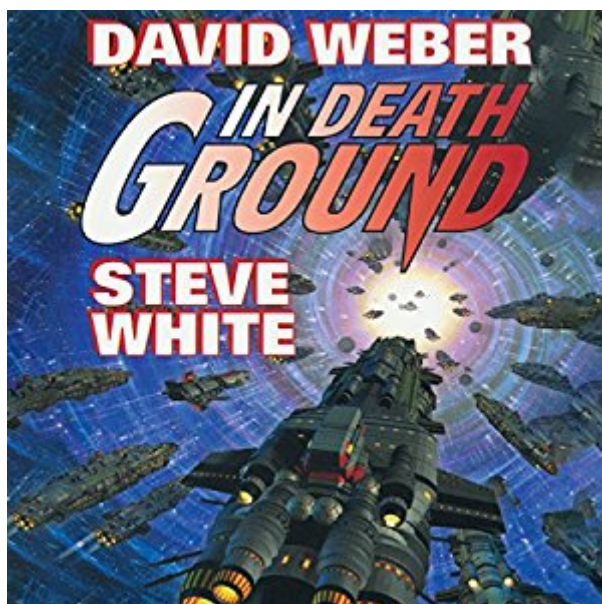


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In Death Ground: Starfire, Book 2



Synopsis

Five thousand years after Sun Tzu writes *The Art of War*, his advice is followed during the Fourth Interstellar War between the terrible Bugs and the humans, who are aided by their catlike Orion allies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In Death Ground" is the third book to come out in a series which also includes "Insurrection" and "Crusade." "Insurrection" takes place many years after the other two books, however. "In Death Ground" is, chronologically, the sequel to "Crusade"; moreover, it reuses many of the characters from "Crusade," as well as relying on background information provided by that book. So "Crusade" should be read prior to "In Death Ground." That being said, "In Death Ground" is a book which is superior in many ways to "Crusade." At heart, both books are really nothing but space opera, in which space battles play a major role. But whereas the characters in "Crusade" were flat and there was little change in them from one end of the book to the other, this is no longer the case for "In Death Ground." Finally, what Weber has learned elsewhere gets a chance to shine here. His hand is clearly present at the description of space battles, but some of that great character insight he has shown (in the Honor Harrington series) he is capable of finally makes an appearance in this book. The plot is straightforward, pitting again the Orion-Earth Federation Alliance against a new foe. Battle after battle follows, but this time we get insight the head of a few of the captains and admirals commanding this battle (something sorely missing from the previous book). As opposed to both "Insurrection" and "In Death Ground", the issues are NOT resolved in this book; clearly a sequel is

planned, and I hope not too far away. In summary, this book is pure fun space opera, but with some actual three-dimensional, evolving characters thrown in.

"In Death Ground," like the rest Weber's and White's Starfire series, is one of those science fiction novels and can and probably should be intellectually rejected. However, when I started reading it I had a hard time putting it down. The story is really quite simple: in the twenty-fourth century Humankind has stumbled upon a particularly nasty breed of aliens bent on systemically inesting (literally) every known being in the entire galaxy. Essentially these beings are ants in space, and they have little regard for their own life in pursuit of ultimate victory and, henceforth, the survival of their species. There are other aliens, but as a whole the aliens are slightly and uniformly [weak]. It seems as if the author simply thought of various earth animals and made them aliens, from the cat-like (and therefore predatorial) Khanate of Orion to the bird-like (and therefore fragile and agile) Ophiuchi Association. But the aliens are not really the focus of the novel, and neither are the relatively wooden characters. Instead the battles, strategies, and tactics of the opposing navies are really the most interesting part of this story. The reason is that this is novel based on a wargame, called Starfire, that includes a lot of novel ideas about space combat, namely warp points (points in space that allow for instantaneous travel between star systems) and reactionless drives (engines that allow spacecraft to behave like naval vessels.) In fact David Weber, the primary author, is the principal designer of the game, so undoubtedly all of these campaigns were actually playtested, and as a result are incredibly consistent. In short, if you are looking for a story with compelling drama and complex characters, look elsewhere.

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