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The discovery of a remarkable alien technology light years from Earth could have devastating consequences for humanity in this science fiction classic by the author of the Hugo and Nebula Award–winning novel *The Forever War*

In the far future, the accidental scientific breakthrough known as the Levant-Meyer Translation changes everything. Suddenly people can leap instantaneously across the universe, albeit temporarily, enabling teams of Tamers to explore far-flung worlds and prepare them for possible human habitation. But one expedition doesn't make it back alive.

Jacque Lefavre achieves his lifelong dream of becoming a Tamer when he joins the Agency for Extraterrestrial Development. On his first exploratory mission to a planet known as Groombridge, Lefavre and his team encounter something truly extraordinary: a small, nonsentient creature that, when joined with another of its kind, creates a telepathic "bridge." But exploiting this psychic link could bring unanticipated perils, for it is about to bring Lefavre and his team into dangerously close contact with the L'vrai, an ancient, advanced, and hostile race of star travelers—an encounter that could prove to be the first step in humankind's salvation . . . or its doom.

Mindbridge Details

Date : Published by Gollancz (first published August 1st 1976)

ISBN : 9780575071148

Author : Joe Haldeman

Format : Paperback 186 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Adventure, Science, Technology, Space, Paranormal, Esp, Biology, Evolution, Childrens, Juvenile, Science Fiction Fantasy, Aliens

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From Reader Review Mindbridge for online ebook

Grace says

Probably the most sexist science fiction novel I've ever read. I can't believe what's expected from the female space travelers. It's total abuse of the female body. What's expected from the men isn't so good, either, except that the main character doesn't seem to realize it. No civilized society would treat its people like this.

Douglas Prince says

I was never a huge reader of science fiction when I was growing up, so I never got to grips with the tropes of the genre in the same way that I did with, say, horror and fantasy. Reading all these old paperbacks I've picked up in one form or another from various charity and second hand shops is an education in itself.

I find MINDBRIDGE of particular interest because of its pacing and its delivery, rather than the story itself. It's not that the story is bad, but it's a well-worn notion, even by the standards of someone relatively new to the world of SF literature. It concerns mankind developing a revolutionary method of space travel, and encountering an alien species who could snuff them out with a wink, should they so desire. We then get humanity trying to learn about these new aliens (the L'vrai), what they want, how to kill them, and if they can co-exist (mankind being what it is, killing always comes before co-existing).

Standard fare, as I say, and not even a particularly original or exciting conclusion when you reach the end of it, but the journey is such fun and so well-crafted, that I'll even forgive it its entirely logical, and complete (if emotionally unsatisfying) ending.

It's part novel, part epistolary, with much of the world-building work being done through excerpts from official documents, studies and biographies written after the events of the narrative, and contemporary newspaper clippings. Some of it is heavy technical stuff, designed to explain the new transport method and its limitations that form part of the plot twist later on. Ironically, this engineering data reads much more naturally being crammed in as a page or two from a tech-spec manual, or a committee report, than if it Haldeman had tried to weave it in as character dialogue.

The pacing is similarly a bit different to what I'm used to. The first half of the book seems to bear no relation to the second, and yet the second stands squarely on the shoulders of the first. What starts slowly as a first-contact style planetary exploration tale, complete with reams of technical data and theoretical SF physics, becomes a life-and-death of humanity thriller over the course of a couple of pages, and gives the second half a tauter, more tense feel than the first, but one which could only be achieved by all the world-building that had taken place before.

As mentioned above, the denouement itself is a little underwhelming, but the construction of the book and the build very nearly enough to make up for it.

Recommended for people who appreciate craftsmanship in their fiction.

Metaphorosis says

reviews.metaphorosis.com

2.5 stars

Jacque Lefavre is a bit of a wild man, but he manages to hold himself together long enough to be accepted as a Tamer - a matter transmission scout. He makes close connections with other Tamers, and when one team makes a startling discovery, Jacque and his crew are pushed into a central role.

Joe Haldeman is deservedly famous for *The Forever War*. Until recently, that and its sequels were most of what I knew about him. Unfortunately, the limits on that fame may also be deserved. Reading my second new-to-me Haldeman novel in a few months, I again found myself underimpressed.

Haldeman's writing style itself is fine. He quickly establishes his lead character, and his prose is simple but effective. The book, despite its nominal structure as a collection of historical documents, is eminently readable, and moves quickly and surely most of the time.

The plot is a different matter. The plot feels constructed of disparate materials, stuck together only thanks to Haldeman's engaging style. That style falls through at the end, which is essentially infodump-ex-machina, with a small coda to wrap up. Overall, the effect is of a really thoroughly written set of authorial background documents wrapped into a synopsis - as if Haldeman sent a concept package to his agent, who said "Looks great! Listen, why don't you work on something else, and I'll try to sell this as is." It's disappointing, because the story could and should have been quite a strong one. What we have, however, feels very half-baked, with no great effort put into the resolution. If you really like Haldeman, go to it. Otherwise, there are better uses for limited reading time.

Ann says

I wish you could do half stars.. I'd give this a 3 1/2.

This book is written in a way I'd never seen a book written before. Some chapters are presented as a play, with just dialogue. There are also complicated charts that have information that pertain to the story (and a lot of info that is extra just for color), tangential stories about side characters such as the man who operates the LMT chamber crystal, several interviews with the characters presented as though it were the actual official document, and interesting passages where the characters are actually communicating psychically through the Groombridge mind bridge.

Mindbridge follows the main character through his whole life, from early childhood back story, to his enlisting to be a planet "tamer", and all the way through to his death. This book has aliens, terraforming, psychic slugs, cool space suits, and yes, even some sex. I was entertained thoroughly while reading it, and thought the author's way of playing with the presentation of each chapter was interesting, if a bit distracting at times. Doesn't it seem like something that would be an exercise in a creative writing workshop?

Florin Purluca says

Cartea asta s-a vrut a fi un soi de experiment. Din p?cate, unul nereu?it. Cea mai bun? carte a lui Haldeman r?mâne R?zboiul Etern, iar Conexiunea PSI e departe de valoarea R?zboiului. Exist? aruncate în C-PSI ni?te

rânduri care se vor a fi tehnice - sau ceva de genul ?sta - îns? mie mi-au p?rut mai mult un fel de umplere inutil? de spa?iu cu litere. Firul narativ e interesant, nu-i chiar un dezastru, dar mie unul mi-a l?sat impresia unui roman scris pe fug?. Sau în sil?. Sau cu for?a. Finalul e telegrafic. ?la a mai tr?it atât, altul a mai f?cut asta, plus o scrisoare de adio a personajului principal. Antagonistul pare o bucat? de carton, mi?cat? pe tot parcursul nara?iunii de un individ pl?tit cu juma de norm?.

Cam atât de data asta. Mi-a? dori s? scriu mai mult despre cartea asta, dar ar însemna s? continuu s? m? vait. ?i nu cred c? mai e cazul. A?i prins ideea. Înc? mai a?tept s? descop?r o carte la fel de bun? cum e R?zboiul Etern.

Bondama says

Excellent, vintage Haldeman - this man is becoming a "go-to" writer -- I read anything he writes, as soon as I find it. I did come late to reading him, for some reason... my sci-fi reading was primarily done at least 20-30 yrs ago - so I'm now going back, trying to catch up on books I've missed!

Terence says

Mindbridge reads much like a retread of Haldeman's seminal *The Forever War*:

1. The plot revolves around the miscommunication between humans and another intelligent species, the L'vrai (*le vrai* = "the truth"?), who bear a strong resemblance to the Taurans of TFW.
2. The quasi-military organization, the AED, that coordinates human space exploration protects its people with a remarkable suit that's a cousin to the suits that protected William and Marygay in TFW.
3. The hero's name, Jacque Lafavre, is also an idiosyncratic spelling - "Jacque" instead of "Jacques"; "Mandella" instead of "Mandala".
4. Carol Wachal is a clone of Marygay Potter, as is her relationship to Jacque.

In 186 pages (my edition), Haldeman brings up a number of ideas - FTL travel, the nature of intelligence and consciousness, and life after death, among others - and a *deus ex machina* in the form of the titular "mindbridge" without ever exploring or justifying them in a satisfying way.

And the disjointed structure of the novel is a gimmick rather than an interesting way of telling the story.

Haldeman also fails to create a believable relationship between Jacque and Carol. Actually, it's not that I can't believe they fall in love but I don't *feel* it. The author isn't an empathic writer (apparently a genetic disease common to many hard SF writers).

I would list *The Forever War* among the top 10 SF novels I've ever read but Haldeman's subsequent writing has been consistently disappointing - *Forever Peace* and *Forever Free*, for example - so I can't recommend this novel unless you have a higher opinion of Haldeman's abilities than do I.

Kevin says

(I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review)

I had high hopes for this book when I was getting started, but was ultimately disappointed.

The story starts fairly strong - a method is discovered that can send humans to the far reaches of the galaxy instantly. Colonization ensues, and the job of tamer (first boots on the ground) is coveted.

The story follows the son of a scientist who says such travel is impossible, only for it to actually happen shortly afterwards, ruining a lifetime of work. His son, then joins up to thumb his nose at his father. Sounds like a great plot point, and we certainly waste enough time on it, except, well.. that's it. If you're looking for something further from that, you're out of luck.

My main problem with the book was the constant jumping of narrative style though, we'd be seeing the story through the main characters eyes, then the next page is a transcript of a mission that reads almost like a play, then it changes to be dry 'scientific paper' used to explain why something works (which is an incredibly lazy way of getting something across instead of finding a way to say it in the story), and then jump to an inventory for a mission, and then back again.

But back to the story..

The premise of the story is solid.. at first, and then it seems to drift off into a different story that the author wanted to tell.

(view spoiler)

All in all - I absolutely wouldn't waste my time reading this book again, and I definitely wouldn't recommend it. However, there was a great deal of promise in the writing style when the author was actually on-point with the story and not rambling - so I'd be willing to read something else of his but - I think I'll read some reviews first.

Mounir says

I loved this book, but I am only a little surprised by the so-so ratings and reviews. It does feel gimmicky at times, almost disjointed. I have read the Forever War as well, and I can tell this book is from the same author. The ideas, imagination behind the plot is fantastic but the characters don't feel fleshed out, and the reasoning behind Jacques ability to communicate with the L'vrai isinteresting.

(By the way, I am wondering if the name of the aliens is a little tongue in cheek joke or not).

Why five stars would you ask? I started reading it early evening, went to bed thinking about the book, then read the rest of the short novel the morning after. Mindbridge is absolutely worth the few hours you are going to put into it, it is like other great (yes I said great) Sci-Fi novels in that Mindbridge is entertaining, uplifting, philosophical, full of sadness, sorrow, anger and rage, full of inventions, but short on character development. It is otherworldly, fun to read from beginning to end after you get past some of the writing issues.

Ron says

Good. Maybe a 3.5, but Haldeman doesn't get the beginner's benefit. Probably would have enjoyed it more thirty years ago. Some SF ages better than others.

Inconsequential geographic mistakes about Colorado Springs--where I lived thirteen years--knocked me out of the story several times. No big deal, but Haldeman shouldn't have made them.

Charles Dee Mitchell says

Thanks to the wonders of Levant-Meyer Translation technology, one of those science fictional devices for FTL travel best taken on the author's terms rather than questioned for its scientific grounds, humans now send teams of Tamers to distant planets to test them for possible terraforming. This is tricky and dangerous work with results that can be bloody and disastrous. On a planet the second out from Groombridge 1618, Jacque Lafavre and his team bring back what appears to be a sluglike alien life form. This unprepossessing creature allows for telepathic communication, but unfortunately kills the first person to touch it. Secondary users survive the experience. This is plot thread # One for *Mindbridge*.

Plot thread # Two involves a first encounter with some very dangerous or possibly just misunderstood aliens known as L'vrai. They provide creepy thrills and some old-fashioned monster movie mayhem for the last third of the novel.

Plot thread # Three is the love affair of Jacque Lafavre and Carol Wachal, which is never very interesting but survives some of the most sexist notions of "Go forth and multiply" to make it into a SF novel.

Haldeman, in his second novel, more or less keeps all this tied together, interspersing chapters with transcripts of telepathic sessions, detailed work orders, progress reports, and charts. This might have been Haldemann dabbling in some postmodernist textual experiments, or a way to bulk up a novella-length story into a manuscript that could be published as a novel. *Mindbridge* is something of a sophomore slump after *The Forever War*, but it is enjoyable and really picks up once the L'vrai make their appearance.

Bill Gusky says

imho some of the last great Sci Fi.

Bar Reads says

Joe haldman is becoming one of my favourite authors!

Autumn Is Azathoth says

REVIEW: MINDBRIDGE by Joe Haldeman

Award-winning author Joe Haldeman's trademark philosophical science fiction is much in evidence in this futuristic tale of universal exploration, made possible by the implications of a new theory of astrophysics. Delineated through the character of "Tamer" Jacques Lefavre (son of the physicist who devoted his lifetime to disproving this theory), MINDBRIDGE explores alien telepathy, and the existence of an ancient species of star explorers.

Florin Pitea says

I read it back in the Nineties. A gripping tale.
