



## Time's Last Gift

*Philip José Farmer*

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**Time's Last Gift** Philip José Farmer  
**12,000 B.C.**

They were four trained scientists, each of them skilled in several disciplines - because this was an opportunity that would never occur again. There would never be another chance for men from the world of 2070 A.D. to examine in person the world of 12,000 B.C. What they learned and taped would be the only record ever made of this dim, enigmatic period of prehistory. But absolutely no one in the world of 2070 or in the borrowed time of 12,000 B.C. could have imagined what the tapes would reveal...

**A superb novel of adventure and intrigue in a vanished era**

Cover illustration: Geoff Cummings

## Time's Last Gift Details

Date : Published March 1st 1985 by Tor Books (first published 1972)

ISBN : 9780812537642

Author : Philip José Farmer

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Time Travel, Science Fiction Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Time's Last Gift for online ebook

### Kay Smillie says

First read this decades ago and recall thinking it was okay. Having just reread it, I can confirm it is definitely better than okay. Not quite up there with *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* but still a very good sci-fi novel involving time travel. The main character is a bit of an enigma but, as you will discover, he has good reason to be so. Old school enjoyable science fiction.

Ray Smillie

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### Wol-vriey says

This is literally the PJF novel I hate the most :-)

This book combines two themes/treatments that piss me off:

Firstly, Farmer's 'Tarzan Fixation.' The man liked Tarzan, period. He wrote several books featuring him in different guises. Nothing at all wrong with that. I just can't stand this particular Tarzan book.

And second, ze romance . . . Now there's nothing wrong with romance, absolutely nothing at all. It's just that IMHO, Philip Jose Farmer (though a definite Sci-Fi genius) was exceptionally bad at writing anything even vaguely smelling of roses and throbbing hearts.

Of course, being a writer myself, I may be viewed as being doubly biased in this light, but . . . I actually formed this opinion ages before I ever began writing. I think it was while reading PJF's 'A Private Cosmos' . . . I don't remember too clearly. I'm sure it was ages ago anyway . . .

Ah, so I just utterly, really dislike, as in **TOTALLY HATE**, this damn book . . . I'm certain of that too.

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### Yawtm says

Not enough twists. Any longer and i would have stopped reading. The explanation provided by John at the end is just too convenient. Mulling if I should continue reading the other books in the series.

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### Charles says

Very good book. Usually, I don't like the "low-tech SF" stuff. But, I really like the way Farmer writes. His books are FUN. I've loved his stuff since HS. Part of it just seems like I can feel the fun psychically transferred from the writer.

His characters were not developed that greatly. Even the main character.

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Nothing really original as far as SF went, either.

The back and front cover were inaccurate, though. And, the story confused me because of that. The main characters were from 2080AD. They went back to 12,000BC. That was pretty straightforward. The cover said 2780AD, though. So, I kept expecting them to make some kind of accidental trip to 2780 or to have another time traveler from that time. Until the very end of the book, I expected 2780 to factor in somehow. Obviously, 2780 was just a misprint.

Some of the low-tech stuff from 2080 was a little funny. Like the lack of computers-relying on books from the future for research.

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### **Lindsay (Santafefan) says**

Interesting, though almost in the same way I find reading Burrough's Tarzan "interesting".

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### **Random Jordan says**

Time travel is one of those long sought-after pieces of science fiction that most everyone loves. Some of the most famous science fiction pieces have time travel in them or is central to them, like Doctor Who or Star Trek. So it really shouldn't be any surprise that I'd eventually dig my nails in to a time-travel centric piece like an oldie but a renewie - Time's Last Gift by Philip Jose Farmer.

This book had originally been published well before I was ever born, but was re-released with Titan Publishing lately. It tells the tale of John Gribardsun (Don't even ask me how to pronounce that) and a bunch of his little peons as they travel back in time from the 21st century to 12,000 BCE. There's a lot I could honestly say about this short novel, but I'd rather keep most of that to myself as they are largely my personal opinions on what could have been done better with this re-release.

The truth is, I was actually rather disappointed with this book, especially considering this comes from the same writer who had done the Riverworld series, which many people might recognize from SyFy a while back. The book itself was filled with errors that although minor and jarring from the story was rather strange to see for a re-release. But the story itself was rather well done, if anything I could get behind the story being told, once I managed to get past the first forty pages or so. That's something to be expected though, and generally why I have a much harder time reading books before the 1990s since most books before then never actually really get into the functioning and world creating story until forty pages into a book. So I won't hold that against Farmer.

My particular amusement with this novel largely came from two aspects. The first of which was a shaman in the story that they met who made the universal rock-on sign, with middle fingers and thumb closed into a fist and pinky and pointer finger extended. I was laughing at that, just for the simple notion of seeing this highly painted man with a bone rattle making the rocker sign, apparently shamans were the first rock stars. It fits, considering all the dancing and singing they would do.

The second amusement came well past the end of the book, with the inclusion of the epilogue and also all the little tales about the main character's adventures from 12,000 BCE to 1982. Oh yes, the main character 'Gribardsun' certainly managed to live that long. It was from this epilogue and the ending that you discover that not only is Gribardsun actually Tarzan originally, which I absolutely love when people extend upon

already established characters like Tarzan who came from the same author to do the John Carter series. But then you discover that apparently Tarzan is all of our ancestors numerous times over from the amount of children he had and was also Terah the father of Abraham (From the old testaments of the Bible).

Normally I hate giving away the endings to a novel, and I haven't actually given away the real ending to the novel, but if I hadn't gone to this particular area, I would have been hard pressed to actually find worth while things to talk about with this book. Many of the characters, even the main one Gribardsun had no real substance to them, other than Gribardsun was a 'mysterious' man with a strange past. The only character I thoroughly enjoyed in this novel was a native of 12,000 BCE, a cave-girl named Laminak. And of course, she was also one of the characters to die in the novel which I hated so much, but because I hated it, it showed how well Farmer had managed to at least tell a story, since I had been largely wanting Laminak to end up with Gribardsun.

I won't deny there was clearly definitely good story in this, but the large majority of the novel felt like filler and that was with also the notion that the writing style was very much like summarizing everything in the same context that I use when I write a short story. There were many areas where conversations were just mentioned rather than actually happening on the pages right before you with quotes. Really, this novel should have either been pulled out more to be a full novel story, or shortened down to a simple short story. Instead it sits somewhere between a novel and a novella with plenty of information not even needed. I got more out of the Afterword notes at the end of the novel than I really did throughout the whole book.

I'd still at the very least recommend this book to people who particularly enjoy time-travel type works, or even historical fiction. I'd more likely call this piece historical fiction than science fiction, but because of the time travel aspect it holds well to science fiction. If you don't like those particular things then this novel is going to be difficult to push through unfortunately. The characters themselves tell a story better than the characters actually showing a story unfold. More story came out of five pages of one character telling another character about the story of Gribardsun than entire chapters of this book.

It seemed a lot like Farmer had been trying to write an epic, accounting the tales of Tarzan much in the same way Greeks used to account the tales of Heracles. And although I think it did a decent job, it could have been so much better. There was so much potential in this book and I always hate to see wasted potential.

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## **Monique Snyman says**

The year is 2070 A.D. when John Gribardsun assembles a team of highly trained scientists who then travels back in time to the year 12,000 B.C. to learn about the Magdalenian culture. It's now or never to travel back to that time and the scientists have a lot riding on their shoulders for this expedition, but the scientists seem more focused on the enigmatic leader... Gribardsun is much more at ease when it comes to adapting to the native's primitive ways and frankly it seems almost as though he belongs in those surroundings. Then again, what they don't know is that John Gribardsun is no stranger to living in harsh conditions.

Time's Last Gift by Philip Jose Farmer is what many will deem the ultimate time travel novel, which is filled with sci-fi, history and an amazing amount of creativity. A whole alternative history is created whilst keeping the historical facts practically sound and still we have a wonderfully written novel that will keep sci-fi readers intrigued from the beginning to the end. Our hero, John Gribardsun is no ordinary human being too, a loveable character nevertheless, he's got a hidden history, which is further explained in Tarzan Alive which is also written by author Philip Jose Farmer and other sources. Titan Books re-released this spectacular piece of literature, which inspired an almost cult following of fans who are all obsessed with the life and times of John Gribardsun. We have an in depth timeline that also gives the reader an indication of

the adventures that Gribardsun faces throughout his travels through the ages, which will help the reader to understand the historical references and the like that is introduced in Time's Last Gift.

Time's Last Gift has a lot of redeeming qualities to it for the reader that is unsure of embarking on a sci-fi novel. We have a lot of creativity and yet Farmer is able to explain in depth about an era that is often only described in archaeological findings (and usually with a lot less entertaining aspects, which scholars often deem unnecessary). However, don't think that you won't find any errors in this novel either. If you're a close reader, you will notice a handful of editorial mistakes that may make the sentences a little unclear, but it won't hinder the strong plot in any way.

Personally, I've found Time's Last Gift fun, dramatic and incredibly entertaining. There's a lot of imagination that went into creating the storyline and even more research that went into keeping the facts accurate. So, from a personal perspective, I will definitely advice anyone to read this novel to get a better feel to history, creativity and the like. Anyone can expect something wonderful from a Nebula Award-winning author and Time's Last Gift won't disappoint.

(Originally posted at <http://www.killeraphrodite.com/2012/0...> )

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### **Jim says**

An excellent read, either as a stand alone time travel story, or as part of PJF's Wold Newton series. Highly recommended.

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### **Riju Ganguly says**

Not exactly a swashbuckling adventure, neither a deeply thought-provoking and wry account of time-travel, this novel is more like a long-drawn attempt to link Wold Newton with Khokarsa, with hints of other things. Good on its own, but if you are looking for a more dynamic read, look for something else. I say, because I know.

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### **Jerry James says**

Pretty poor characters and even worse plot.

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### **Michel Siskoid Albert says**

If you know Philip José Farmer's particular fixations, then one of Time's Last Gift's twists will become obvious long before the end. But it's not really THE twist in the tale, there's more, until at the end, Farmer may have tripped himself up. I won't spoil it, but there's an easy fix to the way time travel works in the story to avoid one particularly confusing paragraph. ANYWAY! This is the story of a group of scientists who go back to 12,000 BC to study the Magdalenian era, with lots of nice extrapolation of what life might have been like for primitive man. This, as much as the intrigue surrounding the expedition's mysterious leader, makes the book a fair page-turner, even if it can feel like an elaborate set-up for the final chapter punchline. Its

actual weakness is character psychology. The dialog is so stiff, it hides emotional content, and makes some of the character development - especially the romance - largely unbelievable. Not one of Farmer's greats, but certainly of interest to SF fans interested in the soft sciences.

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### **John says**

Probably my favorite Phil Farmer novel (followed closely by the Opar novels, "The Peerless Peer," "Escape From Loki" and "The Dark Heart Of Time"). In my humble opinion anyone who reads this one and comes away not caring for it or not understanding it either didn't read it carefully or has lost their sense of wonder.

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### **Alexandra says**

The cover of the copy I bought is far more epic than this.

Basically this is the tale of the worst scientists ever; they bumble around and end up 'integrating' into a tribe with the magic of massive guns and then grumble about giving out antibiotics because of ethics. The improbably named Grimbardsun goes and shoots a bunch of bears just 'cause. You know. Why not? There are fist-fights, gun fights, love triangles, amnesia, mammoth hunts, attempted murders and iffy science. It's basically great if you like the kind of writing that details what time a dude woke up and what he ate for breakfast and that he did push ups for half an hour before putting on his thermal tank top. I've not read much in the way of this kind of paperback sci-fi, but it's entertaining. The characters are either fairly bland or outlandishly awesome. I would have liked Grimbardsun to take more of a backseat, not just so the other characters could be fleshed out, but because it seemed like he was doing all the SCIENCE by himself. But then, ostensibly, this is his story. Whatever- it's a time-travel yarn from 1972. It is what it is.

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### **Peter says**

A team from the late-21st century returns to around 12,000BC and attaches itself to a tribe in the South of present day France in this early-1970s science fiction novel and, like much sci-fi from the pre-1980s era, the age shows particularly in the relationships and attitudes of the protagonists and the primitive nature of the computer equipment. Here the description of the lifestyle and the adventures of the four expeditioners balance out the telegraphed surprise of the nature of one of the characters in a light but entertaining read.

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### **Travis says**

The first working time machine sends a team of four back to when mammoths roamed the world. Dealing with this primitive world as well as tensions within the group, make for a dramatic bit of adventure.

Then Farmer gets cute and throws in a little twist that ties into some of his other books.

One of Farmers more straightforward adventure books.

