



## The Quiet Invasion

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## **The Quiet Invasion** Sarah Zettel

At eighty-three, Dr. Helen Failia is nearing middle age but has lost none of her fighting spirit. The founder of Earth's first fully functioning colony on Venus, she will do anything to ensure that the home she's built and nurtured not only survives, but thrives. Despite her constant work, funding for the colony is running out, and she's dreading telling the ten thousand colonists they must move to Earth, a world some of them have never even seen. When one of her probes returns with the unprecedented proof of an ancient alien artifact on the surface of Venus she cannot believe her luck. This is the first evidence that humanity is not alone, and the discovery will surely secure the research colony's future.

As Helen and her team investigate the strange new find, they learn that humanity is not the only species with its eye on the planet. A dying race of spacefaring aliens needs a new home, and Venus is perfect for the people and their massive, living cities. But these newcomers consider the human presence on Venus a very small problem, one that can be swept aside if it dares get in the way.

## **The Quiet Invasion Details**

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Author : Sarah Zettel

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## From Reader Review The Quiet Invasion for online ebook

### Jaspal says

Good to see a well formed alien perspective and characters that made sense.  
In the end though it just felt a bit, well, flat. On the whole though a decent read.

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### mark monday says

a quiet book featuring quiet characters, human and alien, and the quiet settling of Venus: The Quiet Invasion.

good book! this is one of those science fiction novels that is all about the characterization. there is science and politics and a wonderfully detailed alien civilization and the deaths of majestic beings and the potential birth of a lifeless planet... but first and foremost, the novel is (quietly) character-driven. Zettel operates with an even hand. although there are two murderous villains - one human, one alien - even that villainy is delivered in understandable although perhaps not relatable shades of gray. humans are portrayed as being driven by higher goals to explore and analyze and improve, to create a new society... but are often dragged down for petty, short-sighted reasons. the aliens who call themselves "The People" are a fascinating and vibrant avian culture that sees the aiding of life as intrinsic to the nature of all living things (and to think otherwise is to be considered insane)... and yet this beautiful society is one that includes indenture to the point of slavery.

this is one of the most female-focused books I've read in years. that's one of the main things I loved about it (the other is its portrait of an alien civilization). ideally, having a novel where female characters dominate the plot shouldn't have felt all that unusual - but of course science fiction is often a boy's world in terms of both authors and characters, so just the basic centralization of women felt fresh and bold. and all of these women - and the occasional male as well - are richly and carefully characterized. the depth of the characterization means that narrative thrills and twists & turns are kept to a minimum and even then slowly parsed out; but when they do occur, they are often jaw-dropping.

unfortunately, I found the ending to be distinctly underwhelming, even disappointing. I'm the sort of reader who likes ambiguity and who doesn't need every plot line to be explicitly resolved to be satisfied, but in this case there were too many important threads left dangling, which was particularly frustrating because this is a standalone novel (usually my preference).

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### Norman Howe says

Desperate aliens plan to colonize Venus", but are worried about Human designs on the planet. Told from alternating Human and People viewpoints", this is an extremely suspenseful novel. "Decision at Doona" for adults. The characterization of the aliens reminded me a lot of Hal Clement's work.

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## **Kathi says**

What an amazing and complex story! The characters from the People, the Terrans, and the Venerans were varied and, for the most part, three-dimensional. The plot held plenty of surprises and scenes to savor. This thought-provoking book reminded me why I so enjoy reading well-written science fiction. I see more Zettel in my future.

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## **Ron says**

Excellent. Best first contact story I've read since Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky*. Well conceived and subtle.

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## **aPriL does feral sometimes says**

'The Quiet Invasion' is a terrific science-fiction story as far as I am concerned, but I can easily see that political junkies would be most drawn to the novel.

Every character in the book, whether alien or human, has a strong personal political ideology and narrow nationalist tribal viewpoint which is leading all of them into war and death, no matter whether they are a Venarian (a human citizen of a failing research space station and colony orbiting Venus) or if they represent the Earth or the Moon or Mars governments or if they are a political faction of the aliens who are colonizing Venus secretly. The leaders, whether human or of the aliens calling themselves 'The People', cannot expand their thinking beyond the safety and interests of their own group, and are highly suspicious of the motives of the other groups. There are a minimum of six different human political organizations working against each other on Venara as spies or terrorists or representatives of the different planetary authorities, each striving for a vision of personal power and a version of political freedom. The colonies want to break away from what they feel is an authoritarian Earth.

The aliens, who are fighting an extremely life-threatening disease decimating their civilization on their home planet, need to find a new planet to which to move their race. Their technology is superior to that of the humans, but not their politics. They did not know about the human race, and their culture is quite different philosophically; however, the disease killing their cities has brought out a panicky xenophobia among some of them when they discover and spy on the humans living on the space station. Sigh. Is everybody doomed? Maybe.

However this story turns out (I'm not telling), the aliens are marvelous! The aliens personally have wings and can fly, gentle reader! I also love their amazing science, technology and living cities! Somehow, they have used a kind of genetic manipulation which has given what I think were their world's lower life forms sentience and/or mechanical properties which they use instead of machines or engines. Because everything they use is alive, their philosophy is 'life helps life'. Unfortunately, this technology has inadvertently built in a monoculture of life forms, leaving them susceptible to diseases capable of killing an entire species.

Is Home/Family an exclusive tribal unit of only a particular class, city or race or religious group or country or only related family members? While we each have the power to define a Home and Family unit in our own mind for just ourselves, ordinary politicians have the power to define a Home/Family unit for everyone under their authority. Great Politicians can define a moment of an inclusive Home/Family unit which saves

(or harms) people beyond their normal limits of power, such as the American President Roosevelt, who on his own authority, defied the majority of American people and most of the country's politicians to find a way to give weapons and money to support Europe during World War II through the Lend-Lease program (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lend-...>). Roosevelt also defied the Supreme Court and other politicians and states' rights advocates to give all of the American poor a type of universal pension benefit. Today, history has judged Roosevelt a Great Politician of all time (most historians). Almost everyone agrees Roosevelt certainly sacrificed his health, and his life, in going beyond the expectations and 'personal capital' of his political office and class as well as beyond the boundaries of his country, in order to save most of the people in the world, regardless of nationality or class. Roosevelt's definition of his Home/Family clan was the planet Earth and the entire human race.

Author Sarah Zettel, I think, is making such points I mentioned above and about the difference between inclusive and exclusive Politics in 'The Quiet Invasion'. (view spoiler) I enjoyed the story very much as a fascinating wonder of science-fiction culture-building and future technology, as well as a detailed look at a life form evolved to live on planets such as Venus. But Zettel also leads the reader into an inside look at how political ideology and nationalist snobbery can cause politicians to find themselves going to war, basically underwritten by a combination of tribal instincts, xenophobia and greed.

Who we exclude and include as members of our Family hearth can mean the difference of a Greater Civilization for all or some or none. We control those Family definitions through Politics because only Politics can bestow the power to change the perceptions and natural instincts of societies and civilizations.

I must confess I am a bit of political junkie, so, I really enjoyed this novel. It felt gloriously authentic and true.

(view spoiler)

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### **Kelly H. (Maybedog) says**

Sarah Zettel is brilliant at envisioning and describing alien races and she is in top form here. The aliens, their culture and their environment is interesting, believable and well-described. I felt immersed in their world. But as with all things Zettel, brilliance mixes with drivel. The purpose of thing that the whole plot is based on in the beginning is revealed at the end and it makes no sense. It's just dumb. Plus, from the beginning you know that the alien's cities are dying from some disease and they have no reason why. They are moving to a new planet because they think it will sustain life. But there is never any consideration that they will likely bring the disease with them. She tries to work on several levels of intrigue and political machinations but it just comes across as forced and too simple. I also hate the fact that everyone wears veils. Still, by the second half the plot sucks you in and it's hard to put down. The ending left me unsatisfied but it wasn't bad.

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### **Vicki says**

Sarah Zettel is a prolific author who has successful books in several genres. In fact when I got this book, *The Quiet Invasion*, I didn't realize I had already read a book of hers...it was several years ago and a YA title I had read in 2013. It is fiction based on 18th century British history and is called *Palace of Spies*, a title I recognized in the list of her previous works. I enjoyed that book, and I enjoyed this sci fi book as well.

*The Quiet Invasion* takes place in a future time when the One World government is a reality on Earth; civilization and technology have advanced to the extent that there are colonies of people from Earth on Mars, the moon, and even orbiting Venus since the atmosphere of the planet is so hot and unwelcoming to the people from Earth. The story begins with Helen Failia, the woman who first envisions a colony on Venus and convinces a few key people, some in the UN, to back her efforts with money and research grants. But now, some 50 years later, some at the UN feel enough is enough and threaten to close the channels of funding that the Venera colony must have to survive. But Helen is not ready to give up so easily.

Unbeknownst to Helen, the people of Earth, specifically the Venerans, are not the only beings interested in colonizing Venus. The reader is introduced to the civilization of very unusual creatures in alternating chapters. They are bird-like people with wings, the ability to fly, and incredibly, have mastered rapid travel between planets far beyond what earth's technology is capable of. They have a strong moral code, loyalty to family and to their home towns. In fact another distinctive aspect of their culture is that their cities are actual living, with the capacity to think and feel. Talk about world building...Ms. Zettel has got it down.

The reader comes to know many of the Venerans, several characters from Earth (called Terrans), and the complex people of the alien civilization. All represent competing viewpoints. The humans tend to be more selfish and manipulative in their thinking, whereas the aliens, who call themselves The People, have as their moral imperative, to support life wherever they find it. Yet "The People," do not all think alike and neither do the human beings. In the end, it is ironic that "The People," though more advanced scientifically and morally, are fooled by some of the humans into acts of aggression toward another group of humans.

So it seems that all the possibilities of being mutually enriched by other beings when humans from Earth meet non-Earth beings is summarily quashed by selfish short-sighted lies from selfish, short sighted human beings. This was published originally in 2001, but I am holding out hope that a sequel will show me I was wrong in my interpretation of the conclusion.

Over all, a thoroughly enjoyable read! So read away and interpret that ending on your own!

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### **Dare Talvitie says**

*The Quiet Invasion* had all the elements of a great sci-fi story, but they never quite cohered into one. Still, it was an interesting story about first contact with a reasonably strange culture. It was also set on Venus with at

least a reasonably hard take on the science, and the backdrop was definitely great.

The plot was, at times, a mess, the politics alternated between silly, tired and interesting, the characters were mostly excellent even if many of them grabbed the Idiot Ball more often than I'd have liked, the dialogue was surprisingly clunky ... the book kept alternating between being really good and interesting, and being just overly simple. Also, the ending was very abrupt; I'd have liked to have seen more.

I can still recommend *Quiet Invasion*, because I was never bored or annoyed by it, except for the feel that it could have been so much better if it had got one more round of editing.

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### **Richard says**

I think the highest compliment you can pay a writer is to say that the last book you read of hers was better than the one before, even more so if you liked the book before!

In *The Quiet Invasion*, Sarah Zettel once again takes us to a new world and introduces us to new aliens. This time the new world is right next door - Venus.

I have criticized Zettel for not being "hard science" enough for my tastes. In *The Quiet Invasion* she has clearly done her homework as well as consulted with experts so that much more "real science" about Venus, lasers, climates, etc. is in this book. I would still not classify *The Quiet Invasion* as a "hard science, science fiction" read but it is far better than books which ignore laws of space and time.

A recurring theme in this and the other two Zettel books that I have read is that all species lie and deceive to gain power, status, etc. and that governments do this even better than their citizens. While we know this to be a problem for our race, it is a bit disappointing to see it in worlds and species far removed from Earth. If you subscribe to the theory that all life in the universe is related in chemical makeup and form, it isn't a leap to suppose we are connected by our deceitfulness as well. Hopefully this theory will be proven wrong.

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### **Alain says**

This is one of those rare books where I'm not sure if I failed it as a reader or if the author failed me as a story teller. For me the problem was with the over abundance of characters and the way they more or less fell in as the plot went on. Would I have been less confused if I'd read it in one sitting or, say in three consecutive days or so? I don't know.

One thing I know for sure is that the ending rushed everything in the last chapters. This is where something was definitively lacking in Zettel's effort. Was it because of lack of story telling skills at the very end? Was it because she lacked time to finely craft the ending, as a writer? All I know is that she's done better in the only other book of hers I've read till now, the more recent "The usurper's crown" in her Isvalta series.

Despite its faults "*The Quiet Invasion*" remains full of convincing characters and it's not their fault if they seem disconnected in the grand scheme of things, at times. Blame the author! The alien characters seem less disconnected from the story than the humans. Also everything moves along at a better pace with them around.

More importantly "The Quiet Invasion" offers a true, complete, perfect science fiction novel in the sense of being solidly grounded in science and technology. This is so for physics as well as biological sciences. Too many SF novels present themselves as being "hard" SF, true to science, while they fail in biology. This is not the case with Zettel. She worked and worked at it to ensure consistency, and a marvellous illusion of reality, integrating everything in the ongoing story without having to bore us with boring exposition.

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## **Tim Martin says**

It has been a while since I have read a hard science fiction book, with lots of discussion about how things work, be they of a biological or a technological nature (or both). It has also been a while since I read a book set in I don't know if the word is a "space opera" setting, but set in an environment depicting adventures and politics among different planets and colonies. This book was good in both areas.

This novel follows two plot threads that intertwine more and more as the books progresses. The dominant book thread follows the trial and tribulations of Venera, a colony that floats in the clouds of Venus. Set up as a research colony, it has struggled for years to find funding to maintain operations, in part hampered by the fact that the United Nations Colonial Affairs Committee, after a rebellion on Mars a few years back, maintains a very tight control over all the colonies, severely restricting what industries can and cannot exist on the various colonies of the solar system (in this novel Mars, which we never really get to see, Earth's moon, which we do a few times, some asteroid colonies, just mentioned in passing, and of course the sole Venus colony, Venera).

Though we get the follow the story of a number of humans in the book (maybe too many at times, as some characters didn't get quite enough page count to really make them completely memorable or at least form enough of an impression that I didn't occasionally wonder who they were until I was into their chapters), there were five main ones. The first one we get is Dr. Helen Failia, the eighty-three-year-old driving force and founder of Venera. Nothing is unknown on the station to this woman, who is involved in all aspects of not only running the colony but also its scientific discoveries. Passionate about continuing her dream of maintaining Venera, it seems that there almost isn't anything ruled out as to what she will do to keep the station both in the black financially and free from direct U.N. control.

We follow to a greater or lesser extent three of her staff members. The main one is Michael Lum, an individual who while the right-hand man of Dr. Failia, is a skilled investigator and maintains a strong moral compass. Michael serves on the governing board with Bennet Godwin (Ben throughout the book). Though Michael is a straight-shooter, Ben has a dark past, one that comes to play later in the book when Venera faces first a crisis of finances and later when it faces political takeover by the U.N. The third staffer, though she doesn't get a lot of "screen time," is Dr. Grace Meyer, a woman who greatly dislikes Dr. Failia (the feeling is mutual) and who is even more ruthless in her pet cause (which in this case is not so much keeping Venera operating but proving that there is life on Venus).

Rounding out the five main human protagonists is Veronica Hatch, part of a team of investigators sent by the U.N. (with as much input on their selection as Dr. Failia could manage) to investigate the Discovery, an apparent series of artifacts left on the surface of Venus by unknown alien intelligences. Though I liked the fiery determination of Dr. Failia with her (rather deeply buried) moral compass, the dogged investigator that was Michael Lum, I think Veronica was my favorite character, a bit of a jack (jill?) of all trades, with skills

in the hard sciences, arts, politics, and great people skills. Originally chosen as a fluffy media personality that wouldn't be too hard for Venera to handle (but still satisfy her U.N. employers), she finds a series of deep, dark secrets at Venera that she wasn't meant to discover.

The other plot thread deals with the actual aliens on Venus, immigrants from another world. Calling themselves the People (and humans are therefore the New People), they live in the atmosphere of their homeworld and resemble essentially a type of floating jellyfish with a distinct head, eyes, mouth with teeth, a crest, and large wings. The reader is immediately immersed in their complex society, only much later getting a human view of what they look like (though there are many descriptions prior to this encounter). I really liked their complex largely biological technology, with many sentient or semi-sentient living tools, even huge floating, living, intelligent cities. Their society and culture was also nicely alien but not incomprehensible, with dominants concepts being life serves life and that to not serve life is insane (and if one is insane, one can be reduced to their raw materials by others who are sane). Yes, that definitely sets the stage for some conflict!

We find that the People are not just explorers, but seek a new world to settle because their cities are being ravaged by a series of devastating, incurable, cancerous diseases, rendering many homeless or condemned to involuntary servitude, and also devastating their planet's ecology.

The reader follows essentially two of the People, an engineer by the name of D'seun, who is ruthless in making Venus a colony world for the People, and ambassador T'sha, who like Michael (and Victoria) has a strong moral compass, so strong that it is followed even if it is directly against one's interests.

I think the book's pace was a bit slow but definitely readable until around the 180 or 200-page mark but at that point really picked up as conspiracies are discovered both among the aliens by the aliens and various humans on Venera. I thought the intrigue was good and interesting and it really added good wrinkles to what could have been a straight forward first contact story.

The background of past rebellions (chiefly the Bradbury Rebellion on Mars) was good and useful to understand how Venera might act and how others might view its potential actions. I think at times a little too much time was devoted to some of its history and some tangential aspects of it but it certainly made understanding Venera and U.N. motives a lot easier.

There wasn't a lot of action per se in the book – no real fights or chase scenes – though a disaster on the surface of Venus exploring the Discovery was gripping, as was the drama leading up to the arrival of the U.N. near the end of the novel.

I think characterization was generally good but could have been a little deeper with some of the characters. Some of the secondary and tertiary female characters really blended together, though some of this confusion I think came from how they all adhered to more or less the same fashion tropes of this era; namely everyone wears headscarves or sometimes veils (or if men, at least a baseball cap if not some sort of other hat). Especially early in the book, a lot of time (to my eyes) was spent on describing the colors and patterns of these head coverings. I was a little confused at times, as they didn't always seem to completely cover a woman's hair (descriptions of a woman by another often noted both the head covering and then the hair color and sometimes how it was done up) and in one case a woman didn't have any head covering at all (apparently cosplaying a 20th century woman at a party; her lack of hair covering was briefly remarked on but not scandalous).

I have seen other reviewers raise a question I had throughout the book, namely that there was no guarantee

that the diseases ravaging the People's homeworld wouldn't also join them on Venus. It wasn't a huge issue but I think it could have been better handled.

All in all a good book. I really like anything set on Venus, a book not used a lot in science fiction. The descriptions of the world really rang true for me and clearly the author did her research, mentioning at the beginning Dr. David Grinspoon's excellent *Venus*, which I have read and highly recommend.

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### **Pancha says**

I have conflicting feelings about this book. On the one hand, it tells an interesting story. On the other hand, I didn't really like any of the characters (although there were definitely characters who were more sympathetic than others). Plus, the ending felt pretty unsatisfying and the middle dragged a bit.

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### **Lata says**

3.5 stars.

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### **Jon says**

4 stars

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