



# A Soldier's Duty

*Jean Johnson*

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Ia is a precog, tormented by visions of the future where her home galaxy has been devastated. To prevent this vision from coming true, Ia enlists in the Terran United Planets military with a plan to become a soldier who will inspire generations for the next three hundred years-a soldier history will call Bloody Mary.

## A Soldier's Duty Details

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Author : Jean Johnson

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# From Reader Review A Soldier's Duty for online ebook

Dirk Grobbelaar says

*“No. I am not Death. I am merely Her herald.”*

After a prophetic vision of the destruction of our galaxy, a young girl decides to set events into motion that will have far reaching effects, with the hope of averting the future disaster. This is book 1 in a series.

*All I have left are the nightmares, and the slim chance I can help save the universe.*

As derivative as this premise sounds, don't shoot it down *just* yet. For one thing, despite the rather suspicious cover art, this is an actual bona fide **Military Science Fiction** story, and not something else *posing* as such. For another, even though the opening paragraph of this review clearly invokes echoes of Hari Seldon (Foundation), this isn't quite the same thing at all.

*Dead bodies. Seared bodies. Scorched, frozen, bloated, stripped, mutilated bodies. Eyes wide, she saw nothing but bodies and barren, lifeless dirt.*

As the story progresses, several layers are peeled away, revealing all kinds of fascinating tidbits, such as how Ia came by her precog abilities. It is not the best paced story I have read, considering that it is a Mil-SF novel, but stick with it: it **is** rather rewarding.

A curious amount of detail is, at times, expended on mundane events, such as, for example, getting dressed or going to the bathroom. This is not a criticism as much as an observation; I seem to recall L.E. Modesitt Jr. doing the same thing.

*“Space is not the place for ammunition mistakes.”*

I appreciated the level of detail as soon as the depictions of the firearms started. There is a great amount of interchangeability and flexibility introduced in both energy and projectile weapons, and it's somewhat important to understand just **how** these things work. Remember: this **is** Military Sci-Fi, so things will get blown to smithereens at some point.

*Caught off guard, Ia and her fellow recruits scrambled to get into position.*

One of the more interesting aspects of the novel, for me, was how unfolding events sometimes differed from Ia's foreseen future. This makes for a fascinating dilemma, if you read between the lines. Is Ia for real, or just a delusional girl (with a gift) suffering from a messiah complex?

*“Where are all the crewmembers?” [He] asked quietly after a few minutes of searching.*

**A Soldier's Duty** boasts an interesting array of extra-terrestrial critters, but this is one area where details are sparse. I'm guessing some exposition can be expected going forward, since some of these will no doubt feature in future instalments – notably the energy based *Feyori* who seem to take their kicks from meddling in the affairs of other species, and the sinister *Salik*.

*And you can bet as sure as hellfire and damnation that they wouldn't be nice to us while they're*

*interrogating us, one tasty slice at a time!*

Sometimes Ia's precognitive omnipotence and psionic skills can be a bit annoying, but it is also the very thing that distinguishes **A Soldier's Duty** from the crowd (unless you've been mistaking her for a Jedi). The novel goes to great lengths to foreshadow future series events, so it's clear that this story could turn into a long(ish) one. I'm hoping I will be able to remember everything when I get to the end.

*Ia nodded. She knew what was coming.*

*An easy 3.5*

***Read as part of the annual must-read agreement with my wife - 2014***

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## **Gail Carriger says**

First in the *Theirs Not to Reason Why* series. This is high-end far-future space opera featuring a main character who is a psi future seer heavy worlder, best at everything physical and mental. Ia is a pompous Cassandra prophetic figure orchestrating the future of the galaxy. Despite Mary Sue components, repetitive language, info dumping, and various other concerns and issues I found this whole series utterly addicting and hypnotic. (Insert ARGH of frustration here.) I could not put them down and I can't wait until the next book (which I hope will be the last).

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## **Karl says**

Well, if copying is truly the most sincere form of flattery, Jean Johnson is a very adept flatterer. But as much as I enjoy the genre, this book is the cafeteria lunch of military sci-fi.

I don't think I can count the tropes that are borrowed. It's literally impossible. And they're not even very well mixed -- it's like they were plunked into a bowl and barely stirred, much less baked down. There are lightsabers that return laser bolts. There's precognition that gives the protagonist superhero powers, but she doesn't use them half the time without any real good plot reason for such an omission. The heroine rarely does anything wrong, and everything is supposedly to a 'master plan' that she can see on a probability-based mental visualization. Even though it's extremely obvious, no one picks up on her psionic powers. There are Tarantino-esque bloodbaths complete with swordplay straight out of "Kill Bill". It feels like the author started out from the same basic universe or premise as McCaffrey/Moon's "Sassinak" and then just threw other ingredients in until she ended up with this dog's breakfast.

The only positive thing that I can say is that the action scenes (and there are a lot of them ... almost to the exclusion of plot) are vivid and well-imaged. That's enough to bring it from one star to two; A for effort. F for everything else. The book requires so much suspension of disbelief that it's not even good as an airplane or beach read.

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## Jack +Books & Bourbon+ says

Well, that was unexpected. I honestly can't remember the last time a book gave me such divisive opinions. Starting at about the halfway point, I truly thought something was wrong with me. That I was maybe a little off (or more off than usual), and just wasn't reading the book with a clear head. Or wasn't in the mood for a this genre of book. Upon finishing it and reading other Goodreads reviews, however, I realize that other people had the same issues as myself. Sanity validated...yay.

First and foremost, there's a lot going on in this first book. We obviously need to be introduced to our main character and the universe in which our tale will take place. On the world-building and tech side, this is where Jean Johnson really excels. Technology is well thought out and practical, and the world has that "lived in" feel that makes it that much more real. The ships, weapons, and other military gear is handled well, as are the various skirmishes and conflicts that arise. Military training isn't easy, and that is conveyed well. The various factions, forces, and political entities make sense, and are given their proper dues.

But...all the world building and fancy tech won't get you very far without a well-written main character, or characters, to wrap the tale around. And that's where *A Soldier's Duty* suffers some missteps. The first issue is that there's only one person (in this first book at least) carrying the burden of a universe sized dilemma. With so much at stake, I was hoping for more characters to help try and help to make things right. A tale this size really needs more viewpoints to help flesh out the details and give us more investment into the struggles. Not that Ia isn't a capable person, because she is. Extremely capable. But that leads directly to issue number two...

Which is Ia herself. She is a precog, and aside from a few places in her timeline, can pretty much see the different "futures" that could happen, depending on how things are handled in the present. However, by having her "see" nearly everything in advance, she doesn't have that traditional character arc of growth and learning by trial and error (and mistakes). Instead we get a character who learns through visions and then just has to carry out the most optimal response, almost like accomplishing by copying. It's hard to invest in that. And she has other powerful abilities that seem to crop up "just at the very moment they are needed", leaving us to wonder why we hadn't heard of these powers before. It's a little exasperating to have a main character who, without any kind of explanation or preamble, just happens to have new powers, immunities, and super powerful allies, right when they are needed most. Where did these allies come from, and how does she know them? Why can she do this super powerful thing, but also the opposite super powerful thing that she shouldn't be able to do? And some of the physical skills she has, which crop up out of the blue having NEVER been mentioned before and that would take years and years of constant practice to pull off, are explained away with a little throwaway sentence like "which she had been practicing on her own every night for the past year". Ummmm...when was she doing this? It wasn't mentioned with her other practices earlier in the book. In fact, it was never even hinted at until just this very moment. And between being in the military and all other stuff she has to deal with, when does she have time to practice ALL this stuff, let alone master it? I liken her character to how my son likes to imagine himself as a superhero, one who "has every other superhero's powers, cuz that would be cool!". Yeah...ok...so he would basically be God, but as a superhero. Which totally kills any sense of danger or any buildup of suspense, and that's essentially what happens here. Oh...and she has a voice like a cross between Fergie and Jesus. But of course she does. I honestly kept expecting her to also be a classically trained violinist and an award winning pastry chef too, because why not? "Would you like me to play you some Mozart while you enjoy your freshly prepared linzer torte, Commander?"

And that's where the divisive feeling comes from. I feel bad. I wanted to enjoy this book more than I did.

And I must give credit where credit is due. Writing a novel AND having it published is no easy feat. Plus, you can tell this was a labor of love for Jean Johnson, who truly possesses talent and a neverending supply of good ideas. But...in the end, a "too perfect" main character, and the significant lack of engaging supporting characters, really dampened my enjoyment of the book. Some deus ex machina is acceptable, a whole book's worth is simply too much. Ia, you white-haired minx you. You are stonger than an ox, more graceful than an Olympic figure skater, more humble than Ghandi, and are a better shot than Chris Kyle, but I just don't know if I can see you anymore. But you probably saw that coming...didn't you?

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### **Gwen (The Gwendolyn Reading Method) says**

First of all, this is not a romance novel. Unless you count the entire chapter long ode to the specs of military guns of the far future as a love poem, there is not a spec of romance in this book. It is straight up sci-fi. But because it's written by a woman, with a female main character and was given a, granted, kinda misleading cover, some people on Goodreads classify it as a romance. I repeat, not a romance.

With that out of the way, this book is WAY more fascinating than a book that can often get caught up in the minutiae of how the military of the future operates (when you get to the chapter all about gun specs, I recommend you skip over until story starts again). The story is about a pre cog who can see all probable futures and she sees that in almost all of them the universe will be destroyed unless she can manage to navigate her future down the few paths where she can prevent it. IT IS SO GOOD. You can't put it down because you want to know what she does next, and how that will alter the possible futures, and see her surprised when a possible future event with a low probability of occurrence catches her off guard and makes her re-evaluate and scramble to course-correct towards that one last hope for the universe. SIGH.

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### **The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✿\*♥? says**

Have I told how descriptive this book was? If so, let me reiterate: it is extremely rich in descriptions of the minute details!

A future world. Space marines, huh-huh.

A lot of Time and its rivers. And of course, our paranormal gal, a marine and a priestess, who is a self-appointed superhero. Aaand her 2 mothers.

Q:

This will take more than a lifetime to make happen (c)

Q:

You may struggle to turn your Fate into your Destiny, but the Future is inescapable; it will drag you forward kicking and screaming.” (c)

Q:

“Name?”“Ia.” Back straight, hands clasped in her lap, she waited for him to comment. She pronounced it EE-yah, not the EYE-ah most people assumed. “Just like it says on my ident.”

...

“So. What is your full legal name, meioa?” he asked.“My full legal name is Ia. Capital I, lowercase a. Ia,” she repeated. “Nothing more, and nothing less.”

The corner of his mouth quirked up for a moment. “With a name that short, I don’t see how you could have

anything less.” (c)

Q:

“Sanctuary’s Charter was actually sponsored by I.C. Eiaven,” she clarified. “That cuts the paperwork down to almost nothing.”

“That doesn’t make sense. Eiaven is almost the exact opposite direction from here,” he pointed out, lowering his brows in a doubtful frown. “Most sponsoring worlds are next to each other, not hundreds of light-years apart.”

Ia didn’t let his skepticism faze her. Rather, she welcomed it as a positive sign that she was doing the right thing at the right time.

“That’s true for most worlds, but most heavyworlds are sponsored by Eiaven. Sanctuary is merely the latest to prove itself viable. Article VII, Section B, Paragraph 14, subparagraphs c, g, h, and j of the Sanctuary Charter—duly registered with the Alliance—state that, as a Sanctuarian citizen, all I have to do to join either the Terran or the V’Dan military is to take the Oath of Service as a recruit, and my citizenship will automatically transfer to the appropriate government. We’re not so much an independent colonyworld as an interdependent one. Life on a heavyworld is tough enough without adding political troubles, and both Human governments recognized this long ago. Eiaven and its sponsored colonies are legally considered joint neutral territory.

“If I choose to serve in the Terran military, I automatically become a Terran citizen, with all the rights, responsibilities, and privileges thereof, and disavowing all rights to V’Dan citizenship, should I choose to do so. Which I do, which is why I am here,” she said.

“And you came all the way to Earth, almost seven hundred light-years from home, just to do so?” he repeated, still skeptical. “Exactly on your eighteenth birthday?”

“Yes, meioa,” Ia admitted, reminding herself to be patient. “Provided I am a full, legal adult—which I now am—I can join up at any Recruitment Center anywhere across the Terran United Planets. I just happened to pick Melbourne, Australia Province, Earth. I’d also like to join the TUPSF-Marine Corps in specific, which is why I’m sitting here in front of you, meioa-o, instead of one of the other officers at this facility,” Ia stated patiently. “You are the local recruitment officer for the TUPSF-MC,” she reminded him, pronouncing the acronym tup-siff -mick. “Now, may I please do so?”

“And your name is just . . . Ia?” the lieutenant major asked dubiously. “The military needs more than that to be able to identify you, meioa-e.” (c)

Q:

“It says here you’re an ordained priestess with some subset of the Witan Order. If you’re ordained, why aren’t you aiming at the Special Forces for a chaplaincy?”

Ia shook her head. There was a reason why she had listed her priestess status on her application form, but not for that one. “I’m a priestess for personal reasons, not professional ones, sir. I’ll be better used in fighting to save lives, not souls.” (c)

Q:

If I didn’t have to go to a specific Camp at a specific point in time, I would’ve picked a more congenial recruiter . . . but this one needs to fill his recruitment quota. If I can antagonize him just enough, prick his pride, push the right buttons, he’ll not try to push me into a different path, based on my testing. The last thing I need is to be thrown into an officers’ academy right now. ...

A more congenial soul would be eager to help me, ruining everything I have planned. I cannot let him get in my way. (c)

Q:

Sinking cross-legged onto the cushion, she didn’t look up at the rotating stars of the spiral galaxy overhead. Instead, she propped her elbows on her knees and slouched her chin into her hands. Thinking of home, I should take a look at how things are going back there.

Closing her eyes, Ia turned her thoughts inward, then out, like a gymnast flipping around a bar. She had always been able to see glimpses of the future, and sometimes even peek into the past, but as a young child,

the ability had been sporadic and rarely under her control. But once she had understood that she was seeing the future, her younger self had struggled to control her psychic abilities. She had even sought instruction, what little there was of it on her far-flung, backwater, recently settled homeworld. (c)

Q:

“Are you falling asleep already? I thought you Marines were tough!” (c)

Q:

“Missionary trip?” The question came from the short, balding man on the other side of the aisle. He gave the woman, Amanda, a derogatory look, snorting, “Great. Another godless heathen,” before returning his attention to the book pad in his hands.

“Excuse me?” Amanda asked, her tone and her expression both taken aback. “I am not a godless heathen, I am a Christian!”

The man gave her a look somewhere between disdain and pity. “Even worse, then. A deluded polytheist.”

The woman started to protest. Ia quickly reached over and touched her sleeve. “Don’t.”

“But he—”

“Just don’t,” Ia murmured again, cutting her off. “See the corona pin on his jacket lapel? He’s a member of the Church of the One True God.”

“I . . . don’t understand,” Amanda muttered. She glanced back and forth between Ia and the man, finally settling on Ia. “Aren’t they Christians, too? I thought their worship was based on the same general beliefs. One loving God, Abrahamic teachings . . .”

“So are Muslims and Jews, if you measure it by that method . . . but no, they are not Christians, they are not Muslims, they are not Jews,” Ia told her, flicking up one finger per listing. “In fact, if you must get technical, their dogma actually began as an offshoot of The Witan: The Book of the Wise.”

“We are not an ‘offshoot’ of anything. We are on the true path,” the man across the aisle corrected tartly. His eyes were on the text of his book pad, but his ears were clearly listening to his neighbors. “Not my fault if the rest of you have been misled by the sweet-sounding poison of the Devil’s books. The Bible, the Koran, the Torah . . .”

“Well, I never!” Amanda gasped, visibly upset.

“Meioas.”

...

“I am on Leave from two years’ worth of fighting on the far side of the known galaxy.” That was a slight exaggeration, but she wasn’t going to bother with the full truth. “It has taken me three weeks of travel to get this far. I have exactly three weeks, one day, and four hours from the moment we land, precious, precious days and hours to spend with my family, before I have to go back. I would therefore like to finish this last, tedious leg of my journey in peace and quiet.”

“You’d be better off spending those three weeks on your knees in Our Blessed Cathedral, confessing the sins of spilling blood on some godless heathen’s orders,” the balding believer retorted.

Ia gave him a not-smile. “And I say unto you in reply, from Book Nine, The Righteous War, Chapter Three, verses four and five: ‘Succor the weary and wounded soldiers who claim Sanctuary and take shelter among you. Give them rest and peace, and honor them for the sacrifices they make for the betterment of all.’ ”

He reddened a bit, having his own holy words flung in his face.

“I am a weary soldier of Sanctuary,” Ia reminded him, speaking softly, but with enough point to cut to the bone, “and I am here to take shelter among my people. Give me my rest and peace, and honor me for the sacrifices I make . . . or spend your weeks on your knees, for failing to follow through on God’s Own True Words.” (c) I’m wondering, was this inspired a bit by Voltaire’s well-known scene in *Zadig*?

Q:

“Will She spare your soul another year?” (c)

Q:

Tense, they waited for the future to once again drag them under. (c)

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## **Tamora Pierce says**

I was all jacked up--a female science fiction soldier hero!--but found this book flawed. One of my greatest complaints about men's science fiction is the plague of "info dumps"--great chunks of science/engineering/military tech/space tech/time explanation dumped into and getting in the way of the story. Even Robert Heinlein's juveniles have their share of info dumps. I expect women writers to be more sensible and, generally, they are, but this book makes Tom Clancy's use of info dumps seem sparing. I ended up skimming it in search of the actual story. It's also too easy that Ia's ability to slip into and out of time always produces just the right piece of knowledge or the right relationship at the right moment to make things easier for her. She's just too good at everything, so that rarely she fakes being bad.

The basic story: Ia is a pre- and post-cognitive (as well as telekinetic) who sees the destruction of her part of the universe unless she dedicates her entire life to becoming a soldier, rising in the ranks, and becoming a great hero who in a couple of centuries can guide the course of her multi-world society. At a very young age she begins to study, so that when she reports to Marine boot camp in Australia she quickly shows a mastery of what she needs to know to be a marine. The first book covers her rise through the early ranks in an episodic style. Each section is prefaced by her writings about how she did what she did, or rather, her motives for doing so. Driving her always are her visions of billions dying in the rubble.

If the flaws I mention were not there, I'd happily get the next book, because this is the kind of story I like, but not as it stands. I don't understand how the writer's editor didn't help her more.

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## **Libby says**

I rarely read military sci-fi because it tends to glorify the things I find least admirable about humanity and there are rarely well-developed female characters. That's why I found the premise of "A Soldier's Duty," the first in a new series, to be so refreshing. It features a smart, strong female protagonist who enters the military in an attempt to stave off the cataclysmic war that she has foreseen with her precognitive abilities. She must hide her gifts and tread the narrow, precipitous path to the future that has a tendency to be clouded when the most decisions need to be made. It's a powerful idea that's largely well-realized, though there are some new series hiccups. There is a lot of exposition, though it tends to be fairly well integrated with training sequences and introductions to new characters. I think my biggest problem with the book is that the protagonist is a bit too perfect- naturally white hair, high-gravity-induced super strength paired with unusual tallness, the ability to tell stories in rhyme, and of course, unprecedented precognitive abilities without any appreciable faults. I am hopeful that the lack of faults is because these early steps toward realizing a better future are so precarious and that any missteps would be fatal. So hopefully, in the future we'll get to see Ia make mistakes and perhaps chafe a bit under the yoke she chose. The excerpt of the second book hints at this, when we see Ia not on her own but with her family. It was a wonderfully tantalizing taste of a more human Ia and suggestions of what happens when she has to depend on other people to help her bring about a the best of all possible futures and not just herself and her prophecies. I'm definitely looking forward to more!

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## **Kara-karina says**

Guys, gals, this book is AWESOME. The scope, the sheer complexity of it all is on par with Dune.

I have to admit straight away, this is not a book for everyone and my 10 out of 10 is highly subjective because I personally grew up with reading and rereading Dune, and gobbling up extremely popular military sci-fi in Russia for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

This is like a blast from the past.

A Soldier's Duty has been on my shelves for about 7-8 months, and then this Sunday I suddenly fancied some sci-fi and picked it up. Next thing I know it's 1.30 in the morning and I'm 3/4 of the way through the book and have to force myself to stop.

I finished it the next day and ordered book #2 straight away. Now I have a bookish hangover which happens when the book was so good you are not quite ready to turn your attention to some other read. You probably know exactly what I mean! ;)

Ia is such a complex, interesting, intense and incredibly driven character. There is always a barrier, an inner detachment in her which comes from seeing everyone's future all the time, the numerous probabilities in time currents. The things this woman has to keep in her head would drive an average person mad, but she perseveres because failure is not an option. Failure means the annihilation of her galaxy.

Ia as a recruit and then as a Marine is always at the front of all action because it's the only way she can control the outcome. Because she knows how to drive the events for the desirable outcome, her actions become incredible, even legendary feats of bravery, and the whole book is one total non-stop fest of action, fights and battles while each of the event serves as another chess piece in Ia's Game.

It's really hard to describe this book, and I don't really want to give any spoilers to those who think they would appreciate the genre. However, what I can say is that Jean Johnson as a paranormal romance author only got a DNF from me, I just couldn't read the book. Jean Johnson as a sci-fi author is a pure evil genius. I couldn't stop reading. Weird, huh?

Highly recommended, but not for sci-fi beginners I think :)

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## **Bryan Schmidt says**

I so wanted to love this. It was nominated for a Philip K. Dick Award and I like the writer and her style a lot, but there were three flaws that kept me from enjoying it. One, pacing. The first half of the book is boot camp and it's pretty cliché and dragged out. It's nothing we haven't seen in Full Metal Jacket, etc. It even includes Clancy-esque expositional sequences like six pages describing 13 different kinds of bullets in detail. Yes, the author is clever to have thought of it in detail and researched ammo enough to make it convincing, but we only need to know it when the ammo is used. Many of the kinds never come into the story, plus, by the time the ones that do show up, it's far enough past we won't remember most of these descriptions. This is one example of a few such expositional drains that just slow down the pace, make you want to skip pages, and delay the story.

But these two are minor compared to the bigger issue: the protagonist is incapable of failure. She is never in jeopardy because Johnson gifts her with the gifts she needs to conquer any obstacle. Whenever a problem arises, Johnson just gifts Ia with a psi ability or precog revelation that gives her a solution. So there's never really any doubt about the outcome. She can read the future and thus predict it and be prepared for anything.

It makes is hard to maintain suspense when you know she won't die and that she'll win. For me, that just ruined the story. And she's basically invulnerable, so she never meets her match.

It's unfortunate, because Johnson's writing is strong and her character building is not just well done but her characters are interesting. So is the delimma/premise and the world. It's future Earth, basically, with marines out amongst the stars. And while the action packed second have is much better paced and keeps you turning pages, the character flaw issue becomes more bothersome here and really gets in the way. At least it did for me. There are good supporting characters, Ia herself is interesting but her lack of vulnerability derailed it for me.

Good for military scifi fans and part of an expected 4 book series with duology follow up.

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### **Lyndi W. says**

I did it again. This time, I had a little difficulty - I kept remembering moments from books 2-5 and getting choked up.

I've read this 7 times now, so we're quickly catching up to Harry Potter. There's no greater compliment I could give this book, so this is my entire review.

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Well crap....

Will I follow this book up? Probably.

BUT early on, through about the first 2/3 of the book I'd have said definitely. So, let's discuss the up and down, good and bad...plus and minus of the novel.

First the book opens well. The writer reports she hasn't been in the military but on the whole the "military feel" of the book is okay. There are some things that don't ring true and people who've been in the military will note a few problems. They aren't bad however and my thought was that it could have been accounted for simply in "science fiction license" (okay...many Marines hate to be called "soldiers" but...there you are).

We follow our protagonist through her "planned" getting into the "right service", her training and then into service. The book doesn't flag much. The time "we" spend on leave or whatever doesn't really bog down the book. The story holds up (sort of) and the author knows where she wants to go. All in all plot is okay and characters "aren't bad".

Okay that was the molasses...now for the sulfur.

First...the plot of this book is sort of a "story within a story". Our hero (and this isn't a spoiler as you find it out in the synopsis and going into the novel) is a psychic. The world/universe the story takes place in knows of psychics. Psychics end up in "Special Forces" Ia (our hero's name..by the way it's pronounced "I-E" rather than "I-A")....Ia must not end up in Special Forces. If she is to save our galaxy and the human species (and

other species) then she must work out her life in a specific way to set up even a narrow chance....

The problem here is that occasionally that part of the story and the "currently happening" part of the story trip over each other. This is a minor problem and only shows up when we have to put up with Ia having a vision at strange times or doing things that would seem so badly off.

But then as the story goes on and Ia begins to more overtly work toward her goal she also begins to exhibit new "powers"...I mean lots of new powers. She could probably take on the Avengers and the JLA single handed by the time we tie things in this novel. (view spoiler).

There came a point when I had to double check just to be sure her name was Ia and not Mary Sue...

Oh well. This was as noted about the last third of the book and I wonder what went down there. I think I'll go ahead and buy the second paperback...hope springs eternal. I do hope the character works a little better in the next book. Or I should say I hope the character is as good in the next book as she was in the first two thirds of this one.

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## **Katie Michaels says**

I have read some fantastic sci-fi romance is lately and I am always on the hunt for another one. This book was one recommended to me by Goodreads because of the Linnea Sinclair books I've read. With its four star average and library availability, I did not hesitate to snatch it up. But while it is futuristic and science fiction-y, be warned, there is no romance here. Not even a little. None.

This is military science fiction. The heroine is precognitive and knows the world is on a devastating trajectory. The only way she can save it is to become a marine and affect the course of events.

The first half of the book follows her training. It is pretty much like the basic training you would find in any modern day movie. Her body is pushed to its physical limits. There is the whole thing about breaking her down and building her back up again. There's even a hell week. The second half of the book follows her through two years of service on a ship and the missions she undertakes.

It wasn't a bad book. If you dig marine stuff or you're really into sci-fi action sequences, this book will be golden for you. For me, I'm not sure if I will continue with the series. Yes, I would have loved a romantic interest, but it's more than that. Ia, the heroine, essentially can't fail. With her ability to see the future, she knows almost every outcome to every decision. As a result, almost the entire book reads like a grocery list. Ia recognizes she has to do something, fight someone, or be in a particular place at a particular time, in order to create the future she wants. We see it play out. Nothing ever really goes awry and I get the impression that it can't. Because she's psychic. Sure, she might get a little beat up from time to time, but think about the implications in the heroine knowing everything that is going to happen and just executing her plan to perfection over and over and over again. It's hard to drum up any fear or concern or really any feeling for her at all.

Another problem I had was the fact there was way too much detail. I remember at one point the author spent several pages detailing different types of ammunition and their abilities. I don't really care that much about that. I don't care what 1000 different metals are for. And sadly, I didn't care about the dozens of characters that came in and out of Ia's life with no emotional connections. I'm not just talking about romance, I'm

talking about interpersonal stuff even among friends. Ia has to view everyone as a chess piece. And they come and go from her life with very little fanfare.

And finally, there wasn't really a clear story arc. This was essentially a linear progression of her journey to get to become a lieutenant. No big foe was conquered. No master plan revealed. Just Ia doing one thing on her list, then the next thing, then the next thing. And then it was over.

I don't know if this book did enough for me to make me care what happens next. I have to think about whether I want to continue with this series.

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## **James says**

This was an amazing book. Amazing.

What really got me was the uniqueness of it; of having a pre-cognitive protagonist who is aware of everything that will happen except for a few grey spots. Jean Johnson really brought a new set of problems to the table with this characterisation and in my humble opinion, blew me away with them. This could easily have turned into a mary-sue fest of the main character kicking butt from dawn to sunset, and while Ia certainly flourished and succeeded she was still challenged to her very core. And the stakes that were at risk really brought a new flavour to the genre, as while you know it is horrible you are never truly, fully aware of what it is that she is fighting to defeat. Only that it is the worst possible thing ever to happen to man kind. Simply amazing.

### Characters: Five Stars

Everyone in this book was beyond amazing. Everyone. They were all so amazingly developed and deep and real, that they really struck a cord with me. Every single one. I have already talked about how Ia blew me away, and how the challenges that faced her were handled expertly and molded her character not only brilliantly, but accurately. The back up cast, and the hints about their past/future/both mixed in with their characterisitics and the amazing plot line was something to behold. I cannot wait to see how she and the galaxy of amazing people that orbit her progress. Some of the best characters in the genre.

### Plot: Five stars

I'm forcing myself to be as short as I can, because if I let myself have a free reign I will go on and on and on about how great this book was, and in the end the review will simply be too much for you to read. So I will be short. This plot was unique as I have already mentioned, the challenges that it brought for the character, the reader and the author were brilliant and amazingly well met. The aliens were created wonderfully, including the game playing energy creatures, pirate aliens and psuedo-monk leaders. I loved every moment of this. Every moment. One of the best plot lines in the genre ever, and one of the best plot lines I have read in the last five years. Period.

### Writing: Five Stars

Once again. Amazing. It kept me captivated throughout. What I thought was particularly skillful was the way that she tempted us and teased us with hints of the future without giving anything away; her balance was perfect giving you just enough to want more but not enough to spoil it. I was at first confused at the time jumps, but soon they came to fit the storyline and were an integral part in the whole process. Loved every moment of it. I aspire to write this well, she has few equals

### Overview: **Five Stars**

I loved this book. I loved the plot. I loved the characters. I loved the writing. I loved it. If you are in any doubt about my thoughts on this book you are an idiot. You should be reading this now. Right now. Get yourself a copy. It is amazing. One of the best in the genre, right here. I cannot wait for the next installment. I can only hope my own writing - if I ever do anything with it - can reach just a tenth of this quality. Loved it.

Have Fun Reading.

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### **Helen says**

This books was really disapointing. It was well written and put together, but I just didn't find enough in it to keep reading.

The premise was interesting: a precog has a vision of the "end of the world" (so to speak), but sees a way to stop it and save millions (billions?) of lives. So Ia enlists in the marines and hilarity ensues. No, wait. That's the problem: Ia is overpowered. She has such a grip on both the near and long term futures that there is no dramatic tension. She gets into all sorts of scrapes and ponders the ethical implications of it all, but I never felt like she'd fail in her task.

Thinking about it, I also know the chances of David Weber's Honor Harrington snuffing it are slim-to-none, but I felt the sacrifices she had to make. For example; I've recently re-read The Honor of the Queen and I'm thinking of the pain and turmoil she feels at (view spoiler). Ia feels none of this. Her fellow marines are there to be used as tools to be used - and I just didn't like it.

So, yes. Ia, you may be trying to SAVE THE WORLD. But you're such a stand-offish-\*\*\*\*, I really don't care.

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