



## Into the Fire

*Elizabeth Moon*

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**Into the Fire** Elizabeth Moon

**In this new military sci-fi thriller from the author of *Cold Welcome*, space fleet commander Kylara Vatta uncovers deadly secrets on her latest mission--shedding light on her own family's past.**

As Admiral Kylara Vatta learned after she and a shipfull of strangers were marooned on an inhospitable arctic island, the secrets she and her makeshift crew uncovered were ones someone was ready to kill to keep hidden. Now, the existence of the mysterious arctic base has been uncovered, but much of the organization behind it still lurks in the shadows. And it is up to the intrepid Ky to force the perpetrators into the light, and finally uncover decades worth of secrets--some of which lie at the very heart of her biggest family tragedy.

## Into the Fire Details

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Author : Elizabeth Moon

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# From Reader Review Into the Fire for online ebook

## Barb in Maryland says

Great space opera, except that all the action takes place on land!

Ky Vatta's return to her home planet of Slotter's Key goes from bad (see 'Cold Welcome') to worse when 3 women who were in the group of survivors show up on her doorstep with the Military Police hot on their heels. They bring news that the survivors have been kept drugged and confined in various military facilities under the guise of 'quarantine'. Our three escaped with the goal of finding Ky and unloading their anger at her failure to release them from this detention. Ky, of course, knew nothing and becomes determined to rescue all of 'her people'.

As the story progresses we learn just how vast this conspiracy is. It involves a major political threat to the planetary government, with various military and business concerns deeply involved. Ky's main goal is to rescue the survivors before they can be killed, but who can she trust?

The story moves along at a great clip, with action on several fronts. Lots of twists, turns as it races towards the dramatic conclusion. I found it almost impossible to put down.

The way the story ends, with no threads left dangling, makes me fear that this is the last we will see of Ky and company. I sure hope not. I would gladly read more books featuring her if the author chooses to write them.

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## Mogsy (MMOGC) says

2.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/02/22/...>

Believe me, no one is more surprised and disappointed than I am in my rating. I loved the first book in the series, Cold Welcome. When I found out that Into the Fire was supposed to be a direct sequel, exploring the aftermath of Ky Vatta's extraordinary tale of survival on an icy inhospitable island and her subsequent discovery of secret arctic facility, I was excited. However, it turned out to be very different; rather than carrying on with the adventure narrative, the story turned towards politics, history, and more family drama instead.

Following the events of Cold Welcome, Ky has returned to her home planet of Slotter Key, hoping to bring all her findings to light, including the truth of the assassination attempt on her life and the secret base she found on that remote island. But those who want to keep her quiet also have a long reach, and before long, Ky finds herself embroiled in a vast conspiracy against her family. All her carefully gathered evidence disappears, and the survivors she fought alongside with are captured, drugged, or silenced. Someone with immense power in her own government is hell bent on stopping her, even if it means going after those she cares about. Though the odds are not on her side, Ky must use all her remaining resources to outwit the plotters and expose the shadowy forces aligned against her.

While I doubt not having read Vatta's War (Moon's other series set in the same universe) impacted my enjoyment of Cold Welcome, something tells me the same cannot be said for Into the Fire. This sequel delves deeply into the Vatta family history, especially when it comes to the checkered past of Grace Vatta, Slotter Key's Rector of Defense. There is clearly a bigger story here behind her relationship with Ky, which is only lightly covered here because the narrative seems to assume the reader is aware of all the details already. That said, I'm not holding this against the book for something I should have been prepared for, but

for me it was still a disappointing change of pace following the action-oriented and suspenseful survival adventure that was the first book.

I was also left feeling a bit dissatisfied with the smaller role Ky had in this book. Not only do we shift the focus from a survival adventure to a more political and bureaucratic drama, our protagonist also relinquishes much of her page time so that the story could explore a few other characters like Grace and Stella instead. Though I enjoyed Moon's characterizations for the most part, especially her strong and independent women, the plot's themes of domestic matters and government conspiracies were still a far cry from the heart-stopping excitement I felt from reading *Cold Welcome*. In truth, I spent most of the book trying to stay focused, an effort made harder by the fact I found some of the plot threads confusing and difficult to follow.

That said, *Into the Fire* is not a bad book; it was simply not at all what I expected, though this is through no fault of the novel or the author. There's still plenty of suspense to be had, but rather than your hectic space battles and harrowing tales of survival, we're dealing with action and drama set in a completely different arena. Those who have read *Vatta's War* will probably appreciate this deeper look into the family history and relationships between Ky and those close to her, but if you enjoyed *Cold Welcome* and were expecting this sequel to be similar, then you'll be disappointed.

At the end of the day, I still want to read more by Elizabeth Moon because I think she's a great writer with exceptional talent in characterization and story craft, but I confess that I was perhaps a bit too hasty in jumping into this book. For the next one I'll probably wait to find out more about the story's themes and topics before picking it up, or wait until I've gone back to read the first five books in *Vatta's War* before continuing.

Audiobook Comments: Brittany Pressley reprises her role as narrator for the audio edition of this second installment of *Vatta's Peace*, once again delivering a solid performance. While I did not enjoy the story of *Into the Fire* as much as I did *Cold Welcome*, Pressley's narration itself was exemplary. In fact, this dialogue-heavy novel probably presented an even greater challenge than the first book, but she pulled it off flawlessly.

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## Lexxi Kitty says

*Book received from both Netgalley and Random House/Del Rey for an honest review*

Two things to be noted immediately: 1) this is the second book in the *Vatta Peace* series, which follows the *Vatta War* series (with about a 5 year chronological gap between the last book in *War*, and first in *Peace*) – and yes, at the very least, book one in the *Peace* series needs to be read before reading this book here, and, preferably the *War* series; 2) only the action that started to build up near mid-point, well, more around 70% plus, kept this book from receiving a lower rating than it did.

Another thing to be noted slightly less immediately: people's personalities change over time, that's reasonable and expected, and several characters in this specific book showed personality changes from the prior series. One, though, seemed to have changed more than time would allow. To explain what I mean would be too spoiler-y; I'll attempt to give a hint without spoiling stuff – there's a scene during which Stella Vetta very reluctantly puts on body armor, she's quite prissy about it and thinks it's stupid to do so, then is all panic-y and oddly confused about guns (momentarily) – the problem? You know the first time Stella was met? It probably wasn't then, but the first time Stella and Rafe shared a scene together in this multiple

series thing had Stella wearing body armor and being quite masterful with a gun and showing a weird lack of panic in a dangerous situation ((view spoiler)).

Right, so, after all these ‘immediately’s are out of the way, what can I say about the book? \*thinks\*

I do not wish to give a recap of the book or anything like that, especially as this book is the second book in one series, and the . . . 8th, I think, in the extended Vatta series (combining War and Peace). So I won’t.

There are books that start strong, edge of the seat type stuff, kind of fumble around in the middle, then either have a great ending or stumble trying to find an ending. This book? Started slowly, and was somewhat tough to get into. Middle was frustrating legal and political stuff; while the end (well before the end, the end of the middle) turned up the action (which literally just means that Ky finally left the house she was in, that kind of action), and built up to an exciting near climax. Then we, the readers, had to get to Rafe and Ky stuff to close off the book. So I guess the book ended somewhat annoyingly there as well (okay, I never liked the Rafe & Ky stuff at any point in this multiple series situation and so that probably helps increase my negative feelings about this book here).

So long and short: once I got past a certain odd reluctance to dive into this book brought on by how the prior book ended (there was a glimpse of how the series might turn from there, an exploration, adventure type of glimpse, which was immediately shut down by weird legal and political stuff – picked up by the beginning of this book here), the book turned out decent, then got quite interesting and even, pardon the phrase, ‘not-put-down-able’.

Rating: 3.68

February 5 2018

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## Beth Cato says

I received this book through the publisher via Netgalley.

This second book in the Vatta's Peace duology builds on the original Vatta space opera series, much in the way that Moon recently expanded her Paks books. While *Into the Fire* is ultimately satisfying, I didn't enjoy it quite as much as the original books or the preceding one in the new set. That said, it's still a strong, enjoyable sci-fi read.

In *Cold Welcome*, Ky Vatta experiences a brutal return to her homeworld. Her shuttle is sabotaged, the officers poisoned, and Ky must keep the remaining crew alive at sea and on a barren continent at the edge of winter. They soon find the continent isn't so barren, but hosts a hidden military base. Clues point toward a growing rebellion within the military and broader government. At the end of the book, everyone is rescued after months of struggle. All's well, right?

Wrong. Ky finds herself embroiled in more intrigues. Her legal status is challenged and she becomes a captive in a family home. Even worse, she discovers the people who survived the ordeal with her haven't been returned to their families, but are locked up and drugged, as a faction proclaims they have a deadly contagion. Meanwhile, Ky's family is under repeated attack both physically and bureaucratically.

The first half of the book was more of a struggle for me, as Ky and many other characters were couldn't leave the house. Mind you, there was still tension, but it was more along the lines of a legal thriller with heavy sci-fi elements than the space opera/derring-do I love about the Vatta books. Once the immigration debacle is worked through, the real action of the book began and it became a faster read. The end has quite a few big surprises--which I won't reveal--but I will say that the book circles around to the very beginning of Ky Vatta's adventures in a wonderful way. She ends up where she belongs.

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## **Judy Lesley says**

Many thanks to NetGalley and Random House Publishing - Del Rey for the digital galley of this novel.

Woo-hoo! Five stars because this book was just so much fun to read. If you like space opera, this will probably be the book for you. Second in the Vatta's Peace series - after Cold Welcome - this one takes up right where that one left off except now Ky and Rafe have had a little bit of downtime from the startling events around Ky being stranded on a supposedly uninhabited continent for six months. She and Rafe are having to make alternate plans for their future because their bank accounts have been frozen. That's pretty bad, but now the bad guys have managed to bring their citizen status to the attention of the Immigration officials and they can't even leave Stella Vatta's house without risking arrest. On top of those problems Ky discovers that the military personnel stranded with her were not sent home on leave; the others are being held in appalling conditions with their survival hanging by a thread. Those are Ky's people, naturally she has to rescue them.

It is entirely possible to consider this a standalone novel, but I think you would enjoy it even more if you read Cold Comfort first. I also think I may have some sad/bad news for readers who like this series. Judging by the fact that every single loose end was tied up with a bow on it at the close of this book, plus the main characters making statements about "Vatta's Peace" as if it is an accomplished thing, this might be the last of this series. The door is always open for more, but this sure does feel \*done\*. I hope not. For me, this series isn't Elizabeth Moon's best work, but that's just my personal notion and it sure is enjoyable and fun to read. Here's a thought: the character of Stella Vatta made great strides in her personal growth during this book so how about a series featuring Stella? Or Grace? Or the twins?

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## **S.J. Higbee says**

If you haven't yet had the pleasure of reading Cold Welcome, then I suggest you put this one on hold and track it down, because the story carries on almost seamlessly from that first adventure featuring Ky Vatta and the other hapless passengers who crashed into the sea with her. However, this story also includes a lot of the characters who featured in Moon's previous series, Vatta's War. As I have read all the books in this space opera adventure series, I was delighted to meet up with characters whom I regarded as old friends. Himself, who only read the first book, found he was floundering at bit at the start.

I found this story to be gripping and tension-filled as Ky finds herself once more in the middle of a mess of trouble. This time though, she is back home where she should feel safe. I really liked the fact that she was once more confronted with a situation where she didn't know who to trust. Moon is very good at building the tension and providing an atmosphere of suspicion. It seems particularly hard on the poor souls who endured all sorts of hardships, while struggling to survive in desperate conditions, only also to face imprisonment

where they are drugged into drooling helplessness.

One aspect I appreciated is that now she is back home, Ky finds she has to deal with her cousin, Stella. The two don't particularly get on, mostly because they clashed a lot during their teens. The cliché would be that because they are Family and under threat, the two young women would suddenly pull together – and it was refreshing that Moon sidesteps that wornout trope and provides us with a more interesting and believable dynamic. The other main character who faces a crisis is Grace, who in theory, as Rector of the planet, should be well guarded and entirely capable of coping with any threat to her leadership. Events prove otherwise.

The story is fast-moving, with plenty going on. And unlike *Cold Welcome*, the viewpoint swings between a larger cast of main characters, both protagonists and villains. Moon is deft at quickly establishing sympathetic characters and making me care about what happens to them and I found myself caught up in the plot, reluctant to put the book down until I knew what happens next. Of course, with such a steady build-up in tension, the climax of the book has to really matter and Moon succeeds in producing plenty of action as both sides make their move. I thoroughly enjoyed this one and will be eagerly looking out for the next book in this engaging series. This is recommended for fans of science fiction thrillers – though ideally, you should first read the Vatta's War series and *Cold Welcome*.

9/10

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### **Lucy says**

I think I have to give up on Elizabeth Moon. Yet again a book of Ky being blatantly a bitch to Stella and other people and always being made out to be in the right even though she never, ever gives anyone not in her command the consideration she is so insistent they give to her.

The plot was just as awkwardly paced, boring, and riddled with holes as the first book in the renewed Vatta series.

Honestly one of the biggest disappointments of 2018. I genuinely expected more of Moon, and something actually readable, but this is not that. Kylara Vatta is honestly one of the least likeable protagonists I've ever had the displeasure of reading. I'm tapping out because it can only get worse from here.

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### **eyes.2c says**

Hero downgraded!

Things are not right! Having returned to Slotter Key a hero, Kyla Vatta has survivors from Miksland turning up as escapees on her doorstep, and Ky's suddenly trapped in her house having been declared a non citizen and wanted for questioning. The whereabouts of the other personnel who escaped from Milksland is unknown and alarming and Aunt Grace is coming under legal, personal attack. Facts surrounding Grace's past are brought to light that threaten her freedom. Stella is forced to dig deep and finds herself more capable than she thought.

At times I found events in *Into the Fire* somewhat disjointed. Stella's self pitying stance becomes dangerous for all. On the other hand she is being kept in the dark by Ky. Even though we have seen Stella come into her own as a highly talented woman, here we see her face unforeseen danger and grow from that testing.

Ages old mysteries are brought to light and Ky finds the past rushing up to capture the present. Danger looms and the enemy is faceless. Whom to trust is moot as the very fabric of Slotter Key is threatened. Politics and legalities threaten Kyla and Rafe and the plans they'd been making are put on hold as survival becomes prime. These are times of surprises, shocks, and danger to the existence of Slotter Key. Overall, another Elizabeth Moon gift from the Slotter Key menagerie.

A NetGalley ARC

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## **Susan says**

I pre-ordered this book last week because I have been looking forward to it since I finished *Cold Welcome* last year. *Into the Fire* takes place immediately after Ky and the other survivors of the shuttle crash were rescued from Miksland, but all has not gone well. Ky discovers that since she has been off the planet for so many years there are questions as to whether or not she is still a citizen of Slotter Key even though she was born there and has never claimed to be a citizen of any other world. Her funds have also been frozen because of the death of her former aid who was a Cascadian citizen. So overall, Ky's life is a mess. And the other survivors of the shuttle crash have disappeared.

Even though Elizabeth Moon is classified as a science fiction writer, there is very little that is science fiction in this latest episode. The story is more about relationships between family members, coping with an intransigent government and the intrigue involved in figuring out who and why Miksland has been kept secret for so many years.

Moon spent 3 years in the Marine Corp and I believe it lends a great deal of realism to her military science fiction. And as always, the characters and their interactions are a joy to read. Reading this latest book really makes me want to go back and re-read the series from the beginning to see what I missed the first time through.

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## **Karen says**

Elizabeth Moon did it again in her 2nd book in the Vatta's Peace series. She once again delivered the goods and created another book that kept me glued to the pages far past my bedtime! In *Line of Fire*, Ky Vatta once again proves why she's such a kick ass heroine in this sci-fi military space opera!

I've been reading Elizabeth Moon's books since the 90's when I discovered the Serrano series. I apparently have a love for military sci-fi set in space and/or other planets.

In *Line of Fire*, Ky discovers that the rest of the survivors of the shipwreck from *Cold Welcome* (1st book of Vatta's Peace) are being held prisoner. With the aid of her fiancé Rafe, her cousin Stella, and her Great Aunt Grace, Ky does anything and everything to plan to rescue her fellow survivors. And who was responsible and why?

I thoroughly enjoyed this book (and series) and I hope there's another waiting in the wings! Everything seems to be tied up pretty neatly by the end so I'm crossing my fingers that Ky and her family are needed again to save the day.



## **Marlene says**

Originally published at Reading Reality

There's a saying about war being the continuation of diplomacy by other means. So, also, is politics, particularly the politics of Slotter Key in this second book in the Vatta's Peace series. And in the case of this series, it's that politics are the continuation of diplomacy by other means, diplomacy is the continuation of politics by other means, and even, finally, that war is the continuation of politics by other means, which was not what von Clausewitz originally meant.

But it all makes for compelling reading.

Into the Fire is the second volume in the series, after last year's marvelous Cold Welcome. And it is a direct sequel to the first. All of the action in Into the Fire is a result of the mess that was uncovered in Cold Welcome, as well as the culmination of strikes against the Vatta family that have been going on since all the way back in the first book in the Vatta's War series, Trading in Danger. And it turns out that some of that mess relates to events far, far back in the past of the Vatta family, particularly back into the past of Ky's Great-Aunt Grace, currently the Rector for Defense (think Secretary of Defense in the US Cabinet). The skeletons in Graciela Vatta's closet have burst out of hiding, and with a vengeance. Or certainly with vengeance in mind.

The first half of Into the Fire is almost completely political. There are forces moving against Grace, Ky, Ky's fiancé Rafe Dunbarger, and all of the soldiers that she found herself in command of in the snafu that occurred in Cold Welcome. In that first book, Ky and her shipmates crashed on what was supposed to be the barren continent of Miksland on Slotter Key, only to discover that Miksland was far from barren, rich in mineral wealth, and that someone had been conducting military exercises on its supposedly empty landscape. And that whatever may be happening on Miksland now, someone, or rather a whole succession of someones, has been successfully hiding the truth about Miksland not just for years, but for centuries.

There's a lot rotten somewhere in the military, and it's up to Ky to ferret it out. Particularly after whoever is rotten systematically whisks all of the soldiers who were part of Ky's discovery into quarantine, where they can be abused, drugged and eventually murdered without ever being able to reveal what they saw.

At first, Ky is both kept hopping and stuck in her own version of purgatory. At the same time that she discovers that her crew is imprisoned, she finds herself under house arrest and Grace is poisoned. Someone very high up in the government is questioning Ky's Slotter Key citizenship, with an eye to having her arrested by Customs and Immigration, and then whisked away to the same drugged confinement as her crewmates.

But Ky is wiler than that, and she has the vast resources of Vatta Enterprises behind her, even if she is no longer a shareholder in the company. She's still a Vatta. And someone is clearly out to get the Vattas. Still. Again.

And someone has upped their timetable on whatever it was they were planning and plotting out in desolate Miksland. Whether those are the same someones, and what Ky can manage to do about them, take the story

from politics straight into war.

But if there's one thing that Admiral Kylara Vatta is good at, it's war. She and her allies just have to hope that she is better at it than her well-entrenched enemies. And that the butcher's bill won't be too high.

Escape Rating A: This was a "just sit there and read" kind of book. It sucked me in from the very first page, and didn't let go until the end. Actually, I'm not sure it's let go even yet.

That being said, this is a book that will make no sense to someone who has not read *Cold Welcome*. I think that the background from the further past is explained enough that you don't have to read all of Vatta's War to get into Vatta's Peace or at least you certainly don't have to have read it recently. But if you like mercantile/military SF I highly recommend it.

I initially read Vatta's War in roughly the same time period that I read the Honor Harrington series and Tanya Huff's *Valor* (Confederation) series. All three series feature kick-ass military heroines who we meet roughly at the beginning of their careers and who face bigger enemies and greater dangers as they advance. They also pick up great friends, a cohort of companions, and soldiers that will do sacrifice anything for them, and sometimes pay the ultimate price. In the end I gave up on Honor as she seemed to become her very own *deus ex machina*, but I've stuck with both Ky Vatta and Gunnery Sergeant Torin Kerr of the *Valor* series, and still enjoy their adventures. All of this to say if you like one, you'll probably like the other. And I'd love to be a fly on the wall if Ky and Torin ever go out for drinks together.

*Into the Fire* is a densely political book. The entire first half is primarily the set up, as Ky and company find themselves stuck in various places, trying to find ways around the corrupt and/or clueless branches of officialdom that are trying to keep the truth about Mikslan under wraps for as long as possible.

This part of the story reads very much like a spy thriller, with the villains trying to flush out the heroes and the heroes trying to get information without tipping off the villains. Meanwhile the disinformation campaign fomented by the villains just confuses the civilians and makes the job of the heroes that much harder. A lot goes wrong in the first half of the book, leaving Ky, Grace and the reader all frustrated at just how difficult it is to fix this mess.

The second half of the book is all action. Once Ky and company find enough trustworthy people to work with on both the military and the civilian sides, the official logjam gets broken and Ky and her friends are on the move – rooting out the corruption, investigating the conspiracy and most importantly, rescuing Ky's people before they can be wiped out. It's a wild and compelling rollercoaster ride from that point on. The reader just can't turn the pages fast enough. Or at least this reader certainly couldn't.

This isn't a story that delves a lot into personalities. It's all about the action. And that's non-stop from the moment Ky gets out of house arrest until the book's breath-stealing conclusion.

The comment at the end of the book is absolutely marvelous, and so completely true. "Vatta's peace may not be perfect, but it could have been worse." The book, on the other hand, could not have been better.

*Into the Fire* does end in a proper closure, as *Cold Welcome* did not. However, there are enough small loose ends that the series could continue if the author wished. This reader certain wishes very, very hard.

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## Deborah Ross says

I pick up a new Elizabeth Moon novel with anticipatory delight. In its pages (or phosphors, for the ebook version), I will find fascinating characters with skills and intelligence, subtle conflicts of culture, superbly handled tension and plot twists, and insights into people who are different from me. Unlike the heroine of *Into the Fire* (and Moon herself), I have no military experience whatsoever (30 years of Chinese martial arts notwithstanding). I was a long-haired, sign-waving war protester. Most military fiction leaves me looking around for those love beads. But not Moon's, and a big part of that (aside from her sheer story-telling skill) is the intelligence and compassion of her military characters.

In the previous novel, *Cold Welcome*, Ky Vatta and an assortment of people under her command and not-under-her-command manage to survive a shuttle crash into icy waters and make their way to an abandoned base in a frigid, barren landscape. Their survival depends not only working together and making the best decisions but a huge measure of luck. Ky's training and experience give her a structure to establish leadership and discern what must be done, and by whom, and in what order, how to best use the skills of the others, how to resolve conflicts without squelching initiative. Most of the book centers on how leadership, delegation protocols, the balance between negotiation and creativity and obedience, and the skills to construct and carry out strategic planning can save lives. In fact, there's very little shoot-'em-up and a great deal of wow, these people have thought carefully about how to manage desperate situations. *Into the Fire* continues that story.

After the grand finale and rescue, Ky might think her ordeal is over. Ha! Her meticulously collected records of the sabotage go missing and her people mysteriously disappear, drugged and kept incommunicado by forces inimical to her family. The focus shifts from physical to political survival. Sabotage, betrayal, immigration raids, poisoning, and a rescue executed in typical Ky Vatta style build and sustain tension. Again I was impressed by the skillfulness with which Ky and her companions make and execute plans, whether it's marshalling an academy full of unseasoned cadets to defend the planetary president or nab the drugged prisoners from several different locations. Ky didn't just jump into action, as characters in many other military novels so often do. She didn't say, "Trust me, just do what I say" to her subordinates. She conferred with those with expertise, made plans, revised them, revised them again, made backup plans and backups to the backups, made sure everyone had the information they needed to do the best, smartest job. Things went wrong, as of course they must in fiction. And that's half the fun of the adventure.

Moon provides enough backstory for *Into the Fire* to stand on its own, but I recommend reading it together with *Cold Welcome*. And I do recommend it!

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## MadProfessah says

Roughly 3.5 Stars.

INTO THE FIRE is the second book in the series called "Vatta's Peace" by Elizabeth Moon.

Moon is known for her military sci-fi and space opera series called Vatta's War. I had assumed this new series would be in a similar vein but the space opera components appear to be increasingly minimal as the series proceeds. I have not read the previous series, just the new one.

In the first book, *COLD WELCOME*, Kylara Vatta returns to her home planet of Slotter Key after acquitting herself admirably in various military operations in space. However her space shuttle is sabotaged and she manages to survive a crash landing in the sea and make it to a wintry, barren continent with a couple dozen troops. That book was centered around Ky's fight for survival for herself and the troops she commands. I thought the setting was odd for a military sci-fi space opera but the suspense of will-they-it won't they survive was compelling. And before they leave the remote continent Ky and company discover an abandoned secret military base which holds important secrets (alien artifacts).

In *INTO THE FIRE*, Ky has returned to her family (her cousin Stella Vatta is the CEO of the huge Vatta corporation which focuses on planetary and interplanetary shipping of goods and services and her aunt Grace is the Rector, basically the equivalent of planetary Secretary of Defense) to discover that there's a vast conspiracy formed to do the Vattas (and her specifically) extreme harm. So she's "home" (well really it's Stella's home) but she is definitely not safe and sound.

Ky has to deal with some bizarre fallout for being missing for more than half a year due to the events in the first book. She was presumed dead and the Commandant of the Military Academy was killed (murdered) in the original crash. But what is Ky's biggest problem? IMMIGRATION! Because she had been returning to Slotter Key after more than a decade away (as something of a military hero) she was unaware citizenship laws had changed and the administration considers her an illegal undocumented immigrant warranting arrest and confinement. This provides a deep insight into the administrative fussiness of Slotter Key society.

Another one of the cultural norms of the world Moon is building in the Vatta books is that assassination and violent death are considered common place (among wealthy families like the Vatta's). Ky (and Stella and Grace) are subject to attacks of various kinds multiple times (poison attack, home invasion, direct military assault and mercenary double agents). This element of the book does add some suspense even though it's really hard to believe any of the main characters will come to substantive harm (even though we do know that another assassination attempt successfully killed Ky's parents and other members of her family in events that happened before this series began). Moon is at her best when she is describing the action scenes involved in these attacks and other military episodes. She also provides some intrigue by depicting the complicated nature of the relationship between Ky and Stella, who could be described as "frenemies." This dynamic is interesting but it's not entirely motivated in the text.

One of the key weaknesses in the book, IMHO, is Moon's curious penchant for including the most mundane details of her character's lives and activities. There are LOTS of examples of information being provided of things I don't believe the reader needs to know (like the fact Ky eats ham sandwiches when she needed a quick snack after working too hard or the specifics of how meals are going to be prepared at Stella's house when Ky and her fiancé Rafe are staying there). Maybe this is intended to communicate verisimilitude but I found it mostly tedious and distracting.

Overall, I am still interested in Ky's character and I want to see what happens to her in the future so I will continue to read the Vatta's Peace series but *INTO THE FIRE* convinced me I don't need to seek out Moon's other books I presume they will suffer from this and other flaws in the writing. That's probably too bad because I suspect that having read the multiple books in the Vatta's War series that preceded this one would provide more context of the reasons for why another prominent Slotter Key family is going through such machinations to exterminate the Vattas.

As I reflect on my reactions to the book another flaw in Moon's writing which I didn't think consciously about as I read the book but becomes more evident as I prepare and write this review is that Moon doesn't spend much time on depicting or discussing the diversity in her world-building, so my assumption is that

most people are alike. She does mention a few times that Ky's skin is light-brown in color but I don't have a good sense of what Stella looks like (although her beauty and poise are remarked on several times). Ky's boyfriend Rafe is described as "a shortish man, black haired, dark-eyed, well-dressed." What image is that supposed to provide the reader of his "race" or "ethnicity"? I suppose that's fine in a typical fiction book but there are a lot more SFF writers these days who are trying to be more explicit and direct in addressing issues of representation but Moon doesn't appear to be one of them.

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## **Mitchell says**

Good followup and a solid ending. This one had some wavery bits especially early on in which the author's handling of some of the characters, especially the relationships with Stella just seemed off. But it evened out and didn't get in the way of the story. Basically a military space intrigue though this one is set almost completely on the planet. Strong female characters but all with flaws. Perhaps bits of it are a little more obvious and pat than I'd like. And perhaps more actual history would make the whole thing more believable. So other of the author's books are better - but I'm glad she put out another one. 3.5 of 5.

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## **Maddalena says**

### **3 & 1/2 stars**

In the previous book of this new series featuring Kylara Vatta, we saw the character returning home after her successful campaign against the pirates that were wreaking havoc on the interstellar shipping lines: instead of receiving the deserved hero's welcome though, Ky found herself, and the crew of the shuttle ferrying her on-planet, battling for their survival on an isolated, barren continent. The discovery of a hidden base on that continent, and of the conspiracy to keep its existence hidden from general knowledge, confirmed the presence of a number of corrupted elements in Slotter Key's government and military, a discovery that should have brought on a massive cleanup.

What instead happens here is the attempt at a massive cover up: the soldiers rescued together with Ky from Miksland are bundled off on the pretense of medical checks and completely isolated from the rest of the world, their families being told that they are all incapacitated due to a pathogen infection, while Ky, unaware of their fate, is hounded on very trumped up charges of expiration of her citizen rights, just as Rafe and his right-hand man Teague's visitor visas are called off. For her own part, Ky would not be aware of the fate of her fellow survivors if not for the successful escape of three of them, who seek shelter at her home and reveal the existence of the devious plot.

Into the Fire, unlike its predecessors, becomes then more of a political thriller than a space opera story, as Ky and her friends and family try to stay abreast of the attempts to silence and possibly kill them – not just in relation to the cover up involving Miksland and the secret base, but also because that purpose becomes entangled with some other individuals' desire for revenge against Vattas, all of them. This last is probably the weaker thread in the narrative, because the long-held grudge looks all out of proportion when compared with the intended retribution, and the opponents little more than cardboard nasties.

On the other hand, the conspiracy involving Miksland, tied as it is to the possible financial gain from the continent's rich resources and to a play for independence whose roots go back several decades, makes for a

very compelling narrative, especially when Ky's adversaries move from bureaucracy to outright slaughter as they try to remove her from the playing field. This deeper look into Slotter Key's society is quite unsettling when one stops to consider that home assault and assassination seem to be part and parcel of this culture and that the need for an escort, bodyguards and a fortified home are normal facts of life where prominent figures are concerned. More than once, as I read along, I found myself wondering at this future version of mankind, one where the finer points of bureaucracy, whose pedantry can outgun plain good sense at every turn, exist side by side with home invasions by trained commandoes or murder by poison gas: it's a bizarre dichotomy indeed, and certainly one more suited to a Game-of-Thrones-like society rather than an advanced civilization that colonized space.

It makes however for a very engaging read, and if this new installment of Kylara Vatta's adventures does not offer much in the way of expanded characterization, it more than makes up for it by sheer suspense, especially in the latter part of the book, when the rescue operation to free the remaining prisoners is carried out with the same military precision that Ky used to combat the pirates in space. We are also afforded a deeper look into some characters' back story, especially Ky's formidable aunt Grace, whose mysterious past, that was hinted at several times in previous books, is revealed in all its unsettling details.

And here lies what for some readers might be a problem with this story: for those who started following Ky's adventures only from Cold Welcome, as it happened with fellow blogger Mogsy at Bibliosanctum, the connection to the various hints scattered over the course of the five books of Vatta's War might look somewhat uninteresting, even distracting, while for me it finally shed some light in several dark corners that had me wondering at past goings-on. What's more, the perceived brusque turn from the journey of survival in Cold Welcome to the more... mundane developments here might feel like a slowing of the rhythm, while in the original series the author often made her readers privy to the financial and political side of the Vattas, and to their complicated family dynamics, so that here these details don't look like they came out of the blue.

That said, this novel is not completely problem-free: my main point of contention with it comes from the author's habit of repeating known facts several times during the course of the narrative, which in the end becomes quite annoying. It's one thing to briefly mention past happenings to remind old readers, or to inform new ones about them, but it's quite another to rehash information they already possess, over and over again. When we are told, for example, that Ky's citizenship has been revoked because she was away from Slotter Key for a certain number of years, we don't need to have this information repeated – in all its minute detail – every time the narrative requires another character to be apprised of the fact. It's a pattern that I noticed in the other books as well, but here at times it reaches embarrassing proportions, and this kind of... redundancy only manages to slow down the pace of the novel, feeling at times more like padding than anything else, where this story should be about more than a simple word count, in my opinion.

Still, I did enjoy Into the Fire because I am by now invested in Kylara Vatta's journey and look forward to learning more about it, especially now that the bulk of past issues seems resolved, so that I'm curious to see where the story will head next. I'm sorry that, for the reason I expressed above, I'm unable to give it a higher rating, but I trust this author to do better in the next installments, and I will wait for them with great anticipation.

Originally posted at SPACE and SORCERY BLOG

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