



Through Alien Eyes

Amy Thomson

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Bound to the human race by a lifesaving link and a sacred pledge of honor, two members of the alien Tendu species leave the safety of their homeland and board a spacecraft headed toward Earth. Isolated from humans because of their alien bodies, customs, and language, the Tendu must learn the ways of Earth in order to survive. But if their attempts at human convention are not enough to overcome the suspicions they have aroused, their voyage to Earth could cause more than a gap between the two worlds - it could bring about their ultimate downfall...

Through Alien Eyes Details

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Margaret says

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Read this quite a while ago (before I joined BC) & thought it was pretty good.

Luca De Rosa says

This second part was veeeery different. It really did not have the same feel as before. There were good parts, sure, and we get to see humas under a different light. Tendu as well.

But in the end it really feels like the book is 3 times longer than it should have been. What an unfortunate turn of events. The first chapter captivated me so much, this on the other hand much less.

Am I really not seeing the tendu again? I'm so sad already damn it

Misha says

Even though the aliens reminded me a lot of Octavia Butler's in *Lilith's Brood*, I still enjoyed the ethical dilemmas explored and presented in this first contact novel. Plus, it's by a Seattle author, and I didn't know I had met her until I saw the dedication page; my hair stylist suggested it to me ages ago!

Corbie Jamieson says

I brilliant follow on from the *Color of Distance*. Wonderfully captures the ongoing struggle of one in an alien world. I absolutely adore this world - I just wish there was more! Highly recommended for young adults & up and rainy day readers.

Kressel Housman says

This is the sequel to *The Color of Distance*, and though it's not as good, it's still interesting. Juna, the earthling in the first book, returns and brings two Tendu with her. One of these is Ukatonen, my favorite character. Some scenes are real gems, but it lacks the discovery element of the first novel since you already know what is so unique about the Tendu.

Asha says

So I haven't really used goodreads before, but this book has actually motivated me to jump on the goodreads wagon. I actually only finished the book so I could make sure that I could give it a fair appraisal. It's horrible.

The girl heroine/protagonist cries through half the book and makes a series of dumb decisions that prohibits me from connecting or empathizing with her at all. In addition, the book is full of assimilationist propaganda and where really interesting character development could happen, the author always stops short.

It was an extremely frustrating read, especially since it was recommended to me by someone who supposedly knows good scifi and knew that I look strong female characters. This was not good scifi, unimaginative at best, and Juna is no hero.

I hope Ms. Thomson's other books are better. This one is a waste of time.

Loopy says

Although I really liked the first book, reading the reviews of this one has made me think that's it's best to stop on a winning streak. It sounds as though some of the things in the first book that I found a bit off are exponentially worse in this one - another sci-fi author on a clunky soapbox, no thanks.

Parmacendar says

Not as interesting as the first book. Too little conflict; too much easy resolution of conflict through magic alien pixie dust. This was also a problem in the first book, but the first book had other things to recommend it, like the worldbuilding. There's nothing much new or interesting in this one that the first book didn't already cover.

Joel Nichols says

interesting sequel to a novel that didn't really need one. It's hugely optimistic about human (and alien?) nature in a way that's sweet and enjoyable but doesn't seem workable. I like reading Thomson's books--they are open and friendly and engaging. But the other ones have asked much harder questions and not given easy answers. This one shouldn't have had such a happy (if bittersweet) ending.

Raella says

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Jennet Sechrist says

One of my favorite alien contact stories. I love how even today it rings with truth.

Jennifer Butler says

I had to read this book as I loved the Color of Distance. Its just one of those books I'll never forget. Never before have I read a book where the "aliens" were an amphibious species. Through Alien ... Wasn't quite as good, but, as I said, a must read!

Althea Ann says

In The Color of Distance, Survey biologist Juna Saari is left for dead on an alien planet after her team's flyer crashes into the jungle. She is rescued by the previously unknown sentient aliens known as Tendu, but only through their extreme medical intervention. Although she contacts her spaceship through radio, they will not be able to return for her for five years - for the meantime, she's stranded, and must learn to adapt and survive in an alien culture.

Sometimes slow-moving, the book is more concerned with the rich cultural details of the humanoid but frog-like Tendu than with action-adventure scenes. Based on the author's visits to the rainforests of Costa Rica, the arboreal and community-oriented lifestyle of the aliens really comes alive.

In this sequel, Through Alien Eyes, Survey returns for Juna, accompanied by a horde of politically-motivated researchers and experts excited to make contact with this new species. Returning to human civilization with two Tendu ambassadors, Juna must navigate treacherous waters to maintain her suddenly-precarious position as bridge between two cultures. Not just culture shock, but legal battles ensue.

In both books, Thompson uses the contrast between the Tendu and humanity to discuss the importance of ecology, issues of population control, and the importance of harmony and balance. There are a few preachy moments, but overall the 'message' is not too overt. Although humanity is shown to have problems, there is a hopeful outlook - and the Tendu are not perfect either. Rather, both cultures are shown to have things to learn from the other.

Recommended for fans of Sheri Tepper.

Kelly H. (Maybedog) says

One and a half stars so I gave it a two because I did finish it.

Slow moving and not a whole lot of plot, so I had to force myself to keep going at points. The aliens are interesting and well conceived, but the storyline is so linear and simple it's like reading a story written by a high-schooler. There aren't really any subplots and everything is very black and white. People are either perfect or evil. All the good people immediately like and handle the aliens. The bad people are scared and hate on sight. There are no conflicts between regular people, only with evil people. Sometimes the book felt like a political treatise on overpopulation, environmentalism and native rights. I agree with the author's position on all those things but I hate it being pounded into my head rather than subtly discussed.

Because of the all or nothing way of presenting information, the main protagonist is constantly asking other people to open their minds and think differently but it never occurs to her that she needs to open her mind and challenge her own beliefs. This is particularly evident in the sort of sub plot about the "birth-righters" who don't want anyone to tell them how many children they can have. These people are pure evil and selfish and the way the world works is allegedly completely fair. She never considers the fact that because people can buy the right to have children from the poor, the rich can have more children and the poor must sell their rights to get by. She thinks it's fair which made me shout out loud "no it's not!" It's hardly fair--it's a very classist solution. The way China does it, where it's set in stone, is far more fair than her way which favors the rich. Nor does she consider the fact that people might be averse to having others tell them what they can and can't do with their own bodies. Forced sterilization at puberty is something even nice people might balk at. No arguments to that effect is ever even brought up--the evil people just love kids and selfishly want lots of them.

Another place it is evident is that the protagonist sees the aliens as pretty much perfect yet she works to change cultural norms the aliens exhibit that offend human sensibilities. Humans don't adjust to the alien's culture, although it is evident that she would prefer their view of nature and harmony and that humans need to figure this out. I agree but it's so blatant and black and white that I got disgusted.

There isn't even personal responsibility. When she gets pregnant (obvious within the first couple of chapters) the organization who she works for is considered at fault because they didn't think to check to see if her contraception had failed after some transformations she had undergone. Yet no one really understood what the aliens were capable of. She did, she knew, and it didn't occur to her to check her contraception, yet she is not held accountable at all. The only question is whether it was accidental or intentional. It is assumed to be the corps fault if it were accidental, not hers. Ridiculous.

Jen says

On the whole, I'm going to have to say that this book rates a "meh."

I don't usually *buy* fiction (especially sci-fi) unless I'm familiar with the author and reasonably certain I'll love it (which is part of why I've been reading less and less of it over the years, sadly), but I made an exception for this one since it was a used paperback and in my field of interest. How can I resist anthropological sci-fi?

The answer, apparently, is "by remembering that most science fiction paperbacks are pretty much no different from the zillion other science fiction paperbacks I've already read."

Don't get me wrong - this book had some good points. Strict population control was handled very well, and the Tendu were interestingly different from humans. Characters were handled well. It was just... nothing exciting. Meh.
