



Sir Dominic Flandry: The Last Knight of Terra

Poul Anderson

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Sir Dominic Flandry, Science Fiction's James Bond, and One of the Genre's Most Popular Characters. The Sixth Volume of the Complete Technic Civilization Saga.

Captain Dominic Flandry has been knighted for his many services to the Terran Empire—an Empire which is old, jaded, and corrupt, as Flandry well knows. And while that “Sir” before his name may be an added attraction to comely ladies (not that he has ever lacked for the pleasant company of the same), he expects that it will also bring him less welcome attention from envious “colleagues” within the empire. What it is not likely to do is make him more of an object of interest to the Merseians, whose plots he has repeatedly foiled and who are much too aware of how much simpler their plans to replace the Empire would be if he were the *late* Sir Dominic Flandry.

Flandry himself has come to understand that there may be no more point to all his victories than that a few trillion of his fellow creatures may live out their lives before the inevitable coming of the Long Night of galactic barbarism. At best, he may have postponed its coming and shortened its duration. But if that is the most he can achieve, so be it—he'll keep on fighting, hoping that the barbarians too will pass, followed by a new round of civilization.

Sir Dominic Flandry: The Last Knight of Terra Details

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From Reader Review Sir Dominic Flandry: The Last Knight of Terra for online ebook

Tom says

This book deserves more stars for the writing and the story but his treatment of women, especially in the earlier stuff, is really problematic

Joe Martin says

This book contains three complete Flandry novels. (Books were a lot shorter, in decades past.) Here, collected in one volume for the first time, is *The Plague of Masters* (aka *Earthman, Go Home*), *Hunters of the Sky Cave* and *A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows*.

The Plague of Masters had an enjoyable setup. Flandry lands on a planet where the air itself is deadly and prolonged exposure will lead to a torturous death. The only hope of a survival is to take a specific drug, every 30 days. It's not even enough to flee the planet—without a final dose of the drug, you'll die from the delayed effects of the air. Of course, the planet is under the thumb of a dictatorial group of scientists, who tightly control access to the drug. Anyone whoever stops playing along, stops getting doses. The setup and development of the story is wonderful. The ending is almost confusingly abrupt, lessening what would have otherwise been a very good story.

Hunters of the Sky Cave has Flandry confronting some invaders that he finds personally likable. Unfortunately, in order to complete his mission he has to smash not only their invasion but also their societal structure, just to keep the Terran Empire alive for a few more years. This was a well told story that showed Flandry doing what he does best but also recognizing that his efforts would have limited impact on the larger picture.

A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows is the best story of the bunch. Flandry finds the son he didn't know he had as well as a woman he can actually love. In the end, he completes his mission but at a staggering personal cost. As the story ends, you know the Empire will live on but you wonder if Flandry, personally, sees any point to it anymore.

These stories are uniformly good because they feature an older, wiser Flandry. He still cracks wise, he still dresses well and loves fine women. He's still a staunch defender of the Terran Empire. However, he's increasingly more aware of how decadent, corrupt, and unworthy that Empire is. It's the best thing going, but it's failing fast and not even he can keep it together much longer. He does everything he can to push back the arrival of The Long Night, even knowing that everything he does will ultimately prove futile.

That underlying emotional tension drives the stories and forced me to sympathize with Flandry to a much greater degree than I have previously.

thecryptile says

Includes A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows, one of the strongest Flandry stories.

Jeff Greason says

I seem to be coming to Poul Anderson's great "Technic Civilization" saga from the end rather than from the beginning. I've stumbled on short stories of Dominic Flandry before, but this was my first deep dive. What an evocative author, and for what a setting. I liked the characters and the sweep of the setting; I liked the chess moves between Flandry and his master opponent.

I can't give the book four stars only because of the sweep of our own history. Anderson wrote the saga to run from the heroic beginnings through decadence and the decline of that great interstellar civilization. That warning now cuts a little too close for comfort, a generation on.

Al Lock says

Pournelle just consistently writes fun stuff. Well-written, a bit tongue in cheek and fun!

Karen-Leigh says

I have loved Anderson's Flandry series and reread them often.

Rob says

...I must admit that reading *Captain Flandry*, I had begun to tire of this character. Anderson does use the same basic plot for many of these stories and indeed, this volume contains mostly more of the same. The last novel contained in *Sir Dominic Flandry* has given me hope that the last volume may contain some more interesting work though. There are two more Flandry novels to go in the next volume, both of them written later in Anderson's career. I seem to like the ones Anderson wrote later in life a lot more than the early stuff. Let see how Anderson takes us into the Long Night and beyond in *Flandry's Legacy*.

Full Random Comments review

Jay says

This is the penultimate book in the Technic Civilization series, which is an omnibus reprint, in chronological order, of most of Poul Anderson's epic Nick van Rijn/David Falkayn/Dominic Flandry stories.

In this volume Flandry, now a forty-ish Captain of Terran Naval Intelligence, continues his struggle to prop up the failing, decadent Terran Empire while still taking time to delight in the pleasures of that decadence. As usual his adventures take him to exotic worlds described in loving (and technically consistent and accurate) detail by Anderson, one of the most capable writers of picturesque and evocative English ever. In "A Plague of Masters" Flandry is stranded on Unan Besar, a world of swamp cities and mountain tunnel worlds ruled by an insular and repressive regime who want to keep it that way. In "Hunters of the Sky Cave" he's on an artificial crystal moon of Jupiter, then trapped inside the ice on the surface of Jupiter itself, then streaking to the wild world of Vixen, an old human colony whose eccentric orbit causes massive climatic changes every 18 months, to undo an invasion of aliens. While resting up from that exploit he is called upon to rescue a princess (sort of) from the harem of a local warlord with pretensions of taking on the Empire in "The Warriors From Nowhere." Finally, in the full-length novel "A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows," Flandry is able, barely, to prevent a civil war that could fragment the Empire and leave it at the mercy of the aggressive Merseians, but it costs him dearly.

Woven throughout this collection of stories is the rivalry between Flandry and his great nemesis, the enigmatic and telepathic Aycharaych who seems to be orchestrating the maneuvers of whole empires from behind the scenes. The book ends with their final dramatic confrontation; I won't give away the details, but the fact that there's another book of Flandry stories in this series should give you some idea of the outcome.

As I've said with other volumes in the series, these stories are among the finest tales ever composed in the history of science fiction; why Anderson doesn't seem to be included in the pantheon of Asimov, Heinlein, and Clarke is beyond me. Anyone with a pretension to know what **good** sci-fi is, must read these books at least out of Anderson's collected works.

Phoenix says

In Flandry's Field

This is the 3rd volume in Baen Books' republication of Anderson's Flandry series and sixth in the PolysoTechnic Civilization. I read most of these as a teenager and I find that they hold up quite well three decades and a bit later.

In "A Plague of Masters" Flandry uses the latitude granted by his roving commission to take a side trip to the planet Unan Besar, a planet with an environment that is toxic enough that humans need to take a pill every 30 days in order to stay alive. Off the Imperial radar for 300 years, it is now ruled, poorly in Flandry's estimation by an oligarchy of technicians known as Biocontrol which controls the manufacture and distribution of the pills. Sensing that a reengagement with the larger Imperial realm threatens the local power structure, Flandry escapes detention, makes contact with the local underground, uses his skills as a storyteller to raise a stake and attempts to foment an uprising. Good characterization throughout, especially Warouw as Flandry's nemesis from BioControl, Luang, a strong female presence who gradually falls for Flandry's charms, Kemul her protector and an intriguing description of a subculture that has constructed a lifestyle living in the branches of giant trees where Flandry seeks refuge.

Next is "Hunters of the Sky Cave", first published in 1959. The first half of the story is IMV under architected. It introduces the Ymir, a race who's empire intertwines both Terra and Merseia, but are non-competitive with each as their natural environment is that of massive planetary gaseous giants. Flandry's constant smoking is a bit archaic and some of the dialog such as our hero exclaiming "great hopping

electrons!" seems to come out of a B grade space oater. The action moves from an orbiting space station around Jupiter which has been colonized by the Ymr, to Earth and then to Jupiter itself. Unlike most space aliens introduced by the author, the physiology of the Ymir and their back story are not discussed any great detail. If they were it might explain how Flandry's emergency flare on a planet so large and so recently colonized by the Ymr as Jupiter might have been noticed.

Yet when the action picks up considerably in the second half. Flandry is paired with Catherine Kittridge a refugee from the human colony Vixen which has been taken over by the wolf like Ardazirians. They return to Vixen where Flandry allows himself to be captured in order to find out where the planet Ardazirho is and who is actually behind the invasion, only to come face to face with his old telepathic enemy Archaraych. The story also introduces Flandry's Shalmuan butler Chives for the first time.

"The Warriors from Nowhere" is a throwaway tale that lacks most of the twists and turns that we expect in Flandry's universe. SF is about ideas and there aren't many here, however it's fairly short and Anderson makes good use of Flandry's batman Chives for the denouement.

Finally "A Knight of Ghosts And Shadows" is a full novel. Flandry's illegitimate son Hazeltine who has been working his way up through the Imperial Secret Service brings word that a revolution is brewing on Dennitza, a world that is a mix of human, local and Merseian cultures. He suggest that Flandry purchase a captured Dennitza slave, Kossara Vymezal, who also happens to be the niece of the local governor/warlord. Together, along with Chives, they travel back to Dennitza, Kossara wedded to the necessity of throwing off Imperial rule and Flandry committed to preserving it. But of course it turns out that Archarach and the Merseians are again hiding in the shadows and pulling all the strings. Determined to put an end to the Cherionite's meddlings and the advantage his race's alliance has given the Merseians, Flandry leads a fleet to Archyarach's home world, only to uncover the ghost in the machine. The story also brings back Chunderban Dessai from The Day of Their Return as a useful plot device for introducing an interesting speculation on the perceived weaknesses of the Terran Empire. One of the best stories in the series with a superb balance of space opera, romance, satisfying conflicts and cultural introspection.

Space Opera at its best!

S. Townsend says

Not sure if this is the last of the Flandry stories/novels. If so, Anderson chose to leave Flandry as ultimately a tragic figure who loses everything in the service to the Empire. Still a lot of fun . . . until the sad end
