



A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows

Poul Anderson

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Raconteur, bon vivant, troubleshooter for the decaying Terran Empire, Dominic Falndry doesn't crave further danger in the service of galactic unity.

But duty calls, so it's back to the spaceways for the most elegant Special Agent is a hundred star systems--straight into the well-laid plans of his lifelong enemy Aycharaych.

Win or lose, though, the long night of human civilization is coming and Flandry knows it. How many more battles can he stand to win in a losing cause? And how many planets will die meanwhile?

A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows Details

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Author : Poul Anderson

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James Rickett says

The last, so far as I know, Flandry, tying up several loose ends from prior novels.

Anthony Faber says

Another Flandry novel.

Des says

A strong entry in the series, though I wouldn't recommend it as an entry point.

Matt Sears says

I didn't realize this was part of a series. Maybe it'd make a difference if I already like the main character and the world. At any rate, I had a hard time keeping track of the alien planets, the alien governments on those planets, and which alien races lived on which planet and was trying to stir up political discord where. The writing style is a bit flowery or high fantasy or something for my taste. It's a short enough book, but I had to power through the last hundred pages to get to a sort of interesting but not very satisfying ending. Not my cup of tea.

Robin says

A rare misstep in an otherwise solid series. The opening and closing pages are affecting, but every scene in between consists of exposition on exposition. Anderson describes alien scenery in exhausting detail, then has his characters explain the political situation in oblique characterless phrases, and then the scene ends. Scenes stack on scenes and the effect is stupefying.

Character also takes a knock on the head. Two characters have a romance doubly implausible - the characters are unappealing AND untrustworthy - so that the reader balks when they start cozying up. Self-pitying "mature" Flandry loses everything about the character that was appealing in the first place. None of the new characters introduced here are worth remembering. And the shift of focus from alien psychology to human robs the series of one of its greatest strengths.

Anderson is still a good writer, and some of the scenes (particularly the finale) are partly redemptive. But the overall result is so lackluster it's hard to recommend this to anyone but diehard fans of the series.

Charles says

A Dominic Flandry novel.

Ian says

Cool, loved this series my entire life.

Dwagon says

Old-style SF; action-adventure, with not much characterization.

Nicole says

My favorite of this series.

Jon says

The last (for me) Dominic Flandry tale. Pretty good interstellar intrigue.

Chuck says

Awesome space opera. Espionage agents clash in a Cold War on a galactic scale. Poul Anderson's writing is superlative.

Doug Dandridge says

Dominic Flandry rocks.

Part of the Imperial Terra series, which takes place after the Polysotechnic League, Dominic Flandry is an agent of Naval Intelligence during the last days of the Empire. While the rest of humanity enjoy their prosperity, ignoring the catastrophe to come, Flandry schemes and fights across space to hold the dike in place again the coming of the younger, more vital cultures.

Jim says

I originally gave this 3 stars & am revising that upward slightly. It's an excellent story in many ways. Anderson puts it into his larger universe, although that isn't terribly important. I am glad that I'd read *Trader to the Stars* first, but that just meant I recognized a name & could place the story in his universal time a bit better.

There are several Flandry books & stories, I believe. I've read a couple of others here & there over the years, but remembered this as the best. That's about all I remembered, though. I found the story interesting, but not terribly gripping until the last quarter & then I couldn't put it down. Fantastic ending.

It's a twisty mystery & space opera of the finest kind. Excellent characters & full of political intrigue. I definitely recommend it.

David says

The culmination of Dominic Flandry's story.

Let's begin with honesty. I know the limitations and strengths of this genre, and still found this book wonderful. Dominic Flandry was born in pulp magazine short stories, but he turns into as complex a character as Monte Christo (another pivotal hero born in short stories). This is the first Flandry story that I found superb in all regards. Poul Anderson finally moves beyond short story brevity to approach his characters and themes in firm detail. I found some incredible world building, emotionally powerful dialogue, and a great theme of mortality and purpose flit around the shadows of this book.

blake says

Solid Poul Anderson space opera that combines political intrigue with romance, as was his specialty. It's dark, of course, but not nihilistic. Great head fakes—the primary antagonist, barely seen in the actual events—is a telepath (and the eponymous knight, perhaps) so we know he's controlling things behind the scene, but not how much. There are so many ways for a story like this to go wrong, but it mostly works, because Anderson doesn't go for the cheap twist.

The word usage is noteworthy, I thought: Besides making up words for sci-fi purposes, he also derives a lot of words from slavic, since the main human population is derived from Serbia. He's not above just plain making up a word (e.g., "scrittle") and certainly not above using a word in its archaic sense. This works descriptively but sometimes can be a challenge when trying to figure out which of the four situations you're in.

Anyway, very typical Anderson story, so if you like him, you'll probably like this, or if you don't know his style, this is a pretty breezy short book to get to know him.

