



## Trouble Magnet

*Alan Dean Foster*

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## **Trouble Magnet** Alan Dean Foster

From science fiction icon Alan Dean Foster comes a blazing new Pip & Flinx adventure for fans of the green-eyed redhead with awesome mental powers and his miniature flying dragon. In this dazzling new novel, Flinx confirms his status as the galaxy's greatest magnet for big trouble.

Wandering out there in some remote region of the galaxy is a gargantuan sentient Tar-Aiym weapons' system. All Flinx has to do—while his pals look after his injured love Clarity Held—is find the hefty object and persuade it to knock out the monstrous evil that is hurtling through space to waste the entire Commonwealth.

A no-brainer, really, especially for Flinx, who is never without his loyal entourage of official snoops, crazed zealots, assorted goons, and the occasional assassin. Indeed, the boy wonder and his mini-drag, Pip, are eager to commence their heroic task . . . just as soon as Flinx visits Visaria—a dangerously depraved planet—to convince himself that humans are indeed worth saving.

The chances of stumbling across high moral values and utopian ideals don't look promising—what with Flinx playing a lawless Pied Piper to a gang of lying, thieving juvenile delinquents. But prospects really go south when Flinx runs afoul of the corrupt planet's ruthless crime king.

Still, life is full of surprises, and Flinx is about to get smacked by a passel of them—by turns devastating, heartening, and positively jaw-dropping. For although Flinx came to Visaria to plumb the enigma of humankind, there's another mystery waiting here, a shocking clue about his own shadowy past.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Trouble Magnet Details**

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Author : Alan Dean Foster

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## From Reader Review Trouble Magnet for online ebook

### Lara says

At the start of this book Flinx is feeling down from being alone and having to save the universe, including nasty characters like the master criminal he faced in Bloodhype. So, he decides to visit a new world and let humanity prove its worth to him. In order to do so, he chooses a world that is considered particularly dangerous and corrupt, of course. And while there, runs into some youths who remind him of himself. There is also a cameo from some old friends, and a hint about his search. While I found myself feeling a bit frustrated by Flinx's determination to seek out the worst in and of people, there were a few moments that made me smile.

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### Brent Ecenbarger says

The twelfth book in the Pip and Flinx series finds Flinx stalling rather than continuing on his quest of saving the galaxy. Rather than risk his life to possibly complete his task of repulsing the massive evil force set to arrive in our Galaxy in somewhere from a hundred to a thousand years, Flinx decides to take a pit stop to the planet of Visaria. Visaria is a planet ripe with crime. Law enforcement is corrupt. Knowing this, Flinx decides to stop to put some thought into the question of whether humanity is worth sacrificing his own future and possibly even his life to save?

Shortly after arriving on the planet, Flinx becomes involved with a young criminal named Subar who reminds Flinx of himself. Subar has a gang of cohorts who end up stealing several priceless artifacts of the ancestral home world and getting one of the most dangerous crime lords on the planet seeking revenge. (This ancestral home world is Earth, and the artifacts are things like books, plants, and fast food restaurant disposable cups. I liked how a lot of the stuff referenced were artifacts for the characters in the book but would still be from the future of the reader.) When Subar's friends start getting captured or killed, he turns to Flinx to seek help or protection.

In many ways, *Trouble Magnet* reminded me of the better books in Terry Goodkind's *Legend of the Seeker* series. Like those books, by this point in the series we have a protagonist who has powers that can get him out of any situation, however the abilities are unreliable and tend to leave him at the worst times. When they do reappear, it is in so late and spectacular a fashion that it can feel like a cheat code. As the story builds, Foster has also relied on deus ex machina a few times in the series now, and that continued here in *Trouble Magnet*. Even with those complaints, this was the rare book in the Pip & Flinx series where the supporting characters were more interesting than the stars.

More than anything other aspect of the book, I enjoyed reading about Subar's crew. Everything from plotting their heist, to executing it, to celebrating and having everything go south afterwards kept my interest. The dynamics between the characters were fun too, particularly with Subar's best girlfriend and the sexy criminal Subar was always pining for. Unlike the characters Pip & Flinx, the group of young criminals are subject to things like death or turning into villains over the course of a random book in the middle of the series.

Overall this was one of the better books in the series except for a few things that made me groan. The climactic encounter between good and bad guys would have been more satisfying with literally any other ending than the one Foster utilizes. Even having read all the other books, and even being very familiar with the last minute entrants into the fray, their timing and capabilities still seemed way too fortuitous and convenient to provide a satisfying resolution. Likewise, the minuscule chance that in all of the

Commonwealth that Flinx would land in the one city in the one planet that had somebody reviewing video that would provide the key clue to his ancestry was another coincidence too far.

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### **Robert Scott says**

+++Pip & Flinx are out to save the Commonwealth. Looking for a huge sentient Tar-Aiym weapons system, Flinx (Philip Lynx) has diverted to a depraved, developing planet called Visaria to find some reason to not return to his love Charity and let humanity shift for itself. Circumstances put him in contact with a group of teenage thieves and of course he can not avoid giving them aid against greater evil.+++

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### **Cami says**

I really enjoy the Pip & Flinx series but this particular book was a disappointment. There were a couple things that really bothered me about this one.

One, Flinx is obviously mired in depression and not very interested in helping people as he has been in the past. There's enough depression in life, I really don't need to be reading about it. His visit to this planet to figure out if humanity is worth saving annoys me, and just doesn't seem like him. And choosing this particular planet to do it? Really???

Two, this story is less about Flinx and more about the kids on the planet he's visiting. I wanted to see more action with Flinx and Pip. I just wasn't very interested in this one.

I feel like I may have read this book before, but it obviously didn't make much of an impression. Just not a good installment of the series.

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### **Thomas Hunter says**

Been reading pip and flinx for years never been disappointed

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### **Mary JL says**

This is the 12th book in the Pip and Flinx series. Alan Dean Foster has been writing this series sporadically for over 20 years.

It follows a familiar pattern. Flinx lands on a new planet. As usually, he get into trouble. In this case, he stops a youth gang from mugging the alien Thranx. But Flinx has had run-ins with the police as a youngman, so he permits one young man, Subar, to escape and even goes with him.

The juvenile delinquents don't learn from mistake one, and are soon way out of their league against one of the biggest crime bosses on the planet. Once again, Flinx gets pulled in.

The ending is very contrived. One weakness of this series--of any series actually--is we know that Flinx is

not going to be killed. I already have volume #13 in the series to prove it. So there is no really intense suspense--just a puzzle story--how is he going to get out of this?

For fans of the Pip and Flinx series, this is an average entry. If you have never read the series, the first three books are much, much better written. Light, escapist fiction in a long running series.

I do think that this series is a good starting series for teens, however.

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### **Bradley says**

This still remains a light and easy space opera, focusing more on Flinx's boredom and curiosity to propel the tale than focusing on ... you know ... galaxy eating darkness going a LOT faster than physics might imply.

The poor boy is upset, after all. He's got a weird brain tumor and growing powers and a deep desire to figure out WHY he wants to save the universe, let alone how. Fortunately or unfortunately, he winds up in the bad part of a bad (if rich) town/planet, and meets kids that very well may have been him as he grew up. Thieves and sneaks and all around abandoned. It kinda pulls at the heartstrings.

Adventure time.

Add a big crime boss who's coming up against something WAY out of his league, (namely Flinx), a bunch of hijinx and theft and consequence and a nice battle at the end, and we've got a pretty standard and easy tale. Not mind-blowing, but definitely fast and fun and perfect for an afternoon of SF.

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### **Kevin says**

For me, this is the least enjoyable so far of this series -- closer to a refrigerator magnet. Not horrible, but not typical Foster, featuring no outré settings and not much in the way of quirky characters. I am so close to the end of the series, I'll trudge onward. One can hope it has an epic wrap up.

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### **Paul E. Morph says**

Flinx goes off on another tangent in this one, whilst trying to decide if the Milky Way is even worth saving. It's a solid, action-packed, rollercoaster ride of a book, no doubt. The only trouble is, reading this series back-to-back as I am, Flinx's little side-missions are starting to become a bit frustrating... even one like this that drops a rather important plot point for the series as whole at the end of the book. I think I'm ready for Flinx to stop pissing about and save the bloody galaxy already!

Also, the more often Flinx's fat is pulled out of the fire by the timely arrival of allies, the more it starts to feel like deus ex machina. He even says so himself in the book!

Sorry for the short review; still ill. Yuck.

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## **Bryan457 says**

Flinx starts out to find a weapon to use against the hungry evil accelerating toward the galaxy, only to be diverted to... Wait didn't we do this in "Running From the Deity?" Actually, Flinx decides to go to some scummy crime ridden planet to evaluate humanity and see if it is worth his time to bother trying to save the galaxy.

Flinx spends his time trying to salvage a young gang member from the streets. He annoys the local crime lords, and gets himself in mortal peril whereupon his mental talents fail him utterly, and deus ex machina, er, I mean a totally unforeseen, plot twist.

This book is heavy on mental angst and inner dialogue, and light on action. The main storylines involving Flinx learning to control his power and save the galaxy don't go anywhere. It does add a tiny piece to the overall storyline. I'll tell you what it is so you don't have to read this book if you don't want to. It is really not much of a plot spoiler since the next is called Patrimony after all.

Very very mild plot spoiler

Flinx finds the last living member of the Meliorare Society who reveals the name of the place where he can find his father--"Gestalt."

I wanted for Flinx to develop and use his psionic talents. The series is now something like 13 books and his mental talents are still unreliable and pretty much useless; this was a very, very, very big disappointment to me for the series as a whole.

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## **Craig says**

This latest entry in Foster's long running chronicles of Flinx & Pip is heavier on reflection and shorter on action than most of the previous volumes. It's a good story nonetheless, all about Flinx trying to decide if the universe is -worth- saving or not. I was a little let down by the resolution because it came in completely out of left field and there's no way it could have been foreseen. Up to that point, though, it was a good read.

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## **Daniel says**

Okay, I am of the opinion some times an ending can make or break a story. For example, Snowcrash great novel, ruined by one of the worst, tacked on, endings ever. Trouble Magnet, was a book that actually was tedious, I had to read through the book as if I was trapped in a mud pit. It was slow, the flow was tedious. Why am I giving it 4 stars, then? Well, it had a great ending that answered a lot of questions while propelling the story forward. Sometimes in life the reward outweighs the journey. And this one made the journey worthwhile.

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## **Thomas says**

A depressed Flinx lands on a frontier planet to see if the galaxy is really worth saving, he's looking for a good hearted human on a dog eat dog crime ridden planet. Naturally he and Pip get drawn into mayhem. And

he finds a clue to his origin. Book 12 is solid, looking forward to 13. Check it out.

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## **Jeanette says**

I have loved Pip and Flinx since I first read them as a kid. However, the series is going downhill. It seemed like for at least a week Flinx was leaving in the next day or 2..... constantly..... throughout the entire book. It got a bit annoying. His decision making also seems to be getting worse, not better. Really? Going to a world you know is going to be rife with crime to see if you can find "one good person" to decide whether to save the human race? What about the good people you already know? Don't they prove the human race is worth it?

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## **Edward McKeown says**

Trouble Magnet by Alan Dean Foster (2006)

The Flinx and Pip duo is a long standing team in SF. The boy and his "dog," in this case an Alaspinian flying snake, whose venom makes the Giger's Alien's blood look like orange juice. Trouble Magnet is billed as yet another adventure of this pair and in a way that tells you what to expect from this book. Magnet delivers an amiable, mildly adventurous story showcasing the Phillip Lynx aka Flinx (an esper from a eugenics program) and the deadly Pip. They will meet and defeat dastardly villains and Pip will spit acid into the eyes of people threatening her master. At the end of the story these characters will not be significantly changed. It's like hearing music that like playing in another room. You've heard it before, it's a piece you like but the sound is kind of muffled, no longer fresh. This is an amiable Twinkie as opposed to a meal. If you are fond of Flinx and Pip you will enjoy traveling with them again. If you did not know them before I'm not sure this book would make you a fan.

Foster gives new readers a bit of Flinx's history though sometimes too much of the same parts of it and a new reader may be a bit bewildered by who and what Flinx is. While not completely covered by this book, the short version is that he's the creation of the discredited Meliorare society. The eugenics experiments go bad and the surviving children are scattered among the stars as foundlings. Flinx grew up in the care of Mother Mastiff as a street urchin. He wangled his way on board a starship bound for deep space on an expedition. There he encounters the Krang a device of the ancient, powerful and long-gone race of the Tar-Ayim. The planet-sized weapon, a combination of church organ and Deathstar, awakens latent powers in Flinx. In other adventures he acquires, knowledge, wealth and influence and some dangerous friends as he journeys among the stars in his continuing quest to find out more about his origins and most particularly, his father.

Flinx is cast in the role of a modern Diogenes, disillusioned by his species, he is voyaging on his private starship in search, once again, of the Krang to combat a deadly alien menace called the Vom. This is not well-developed in this book as it is something to occur perhaps in the far future. This puzzled me as I remember the Vom being destroyed in an earlier book, Bloodhype, by Flinx and a resurrected Tar Ayim. So I do not know if this is more Vom, a Super Vom, or Vom Release II for Windows. It doesn't matter in that we do not meet it and all we know is it is big, bad and heading for us, eventually.

Our hero is despondent over the wounding of his recently found love, Clarity Held, in a prior book. We learn little about her other than that she is recovering under the care of some powerful friends of Flinx. We are told he loves her, which is good because we will not find it out otherwise. Flinx's emotions seem remote and muted

to me and I never got the sense of an agony of separation or the longing of love. While he debates if he should abandon the search for the Krang to return and live out his life with her, there is no passion in it. In consequence while I am told there is a love I am not shown it and do not believe it.

Flinx decides to turn away from the search for the weapon to ward off our annihilation to again walk among humans and see if we are worthy of being saved. He picks the frontier world of Visaria( a wretched hive of scum and villainy –oh wait- that’s Tatoonne) for his hiatus. Once there he meets a street urchin named Subar and the gang of Faganesque characters that Subar runs with, caught in the act of mugging some aliens. Flinx stops the robbery of the thranx aliens, driving off the toughs but saving Subar from the local authorities. The boy reminds him of himself.

Having intervened he becomes involved in the struggle to save the “pod” of youths from the merciless crime lord, Shaeb. In the process, Flinx comes into contact with a sole surviving member of the Meliorare Association, who gives him a clue as to where to continue his other quest to find his father, setting up the next book.

The Pros: Pip and Flinx, two engaging characters that we have followed for years. The piece only moves when they are on stage.

The Cons: Are we really to believe that Flinx needs to find his “good man” on Visaria or he will abandon his species and maybe all life to its fate? Does he really need some reminder that the same species that spawned Adolf Hitler, and Pol Pot gave us Mother Theresa, St. Francis and Sophia Loren? (Ok for all your people under 30, Milla Jovovich.) Again I am told of his existential dilemma but it seems melodramatic, even childish.

Similarly, Flinx’s near god-like powers mean that at no point, even when his powers slip, do I believe he is ever in any real danger of dying or even losing anyone significant in this “episode.” On the two occasions where it appears our hero faces imminent demise, deus ex machinas intervene and in one instance the author even says so. So how am I to feel more than mild interest in how Flinx will solve this one? As with Sherlock Holmes, the answer is more one of intellectual curiosity then emotional impact. “My, that was clever” as opposed to “Ohmigod.”

I found the new characters of Subar and Ashile of little interest and skimmed over them, their pod, their dialect (shades of Clockwork Orange) and petty crime machinations to get back to the main action with Flinx and Pip.

Point of view was somewhat unsettling in this book. Lately it seems more authors are wandering “head-to-head” without breaking chapters or even using the traditional three line-break. For me this breaks down my identification with the main characters. I no longer feel like I am in someone’s head but sort of floating around the action, disconnected and immune to it. This weak and wandering POV seems to be indulged in for little purpose, to gather information that could be achieved other ways. If we do need to hop into other heads, it seems to me that we should be there longer and for more of a purpose. This could just be my more traditional approach to writing, like I say I see more and more of it but I can’t say I care for it. It has a lazy feel to me.

If you are looking to kick back and just enjoy a Twinkie, this is for you. If you want more meat look for Fosters much earlier work.

By Edward McKeown