



## Extinction Game

*Gary Gibson*

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## **Extinction Game** Gary Gibson

When your life is based on lies, how do you hunt down the truth?

Jerry Beche should be dead. Instead, he's rescued from a desolate Earth where he was the last man alive. He's then trained for the toughest conditions imaginable and placed with a crack team of specialists. Every one of them is a survivor, as each withstood the violent ending of their own alternate Earth. And their new specialism? To retrieve weapons and data in missions to other apocalyptic worlds.

But what is 'the Authority', the shadowy organization that rescued Beche and his fellow survivors? How does it access other timelines? And why does it need these instruments of death?

As Jerry struggles to obey his new masters, he begins to distrust his new companions. A strange bunch, their motivations are less than clear, and accidents start plaguing their missions. Jerry suspects the Authority is feeding them lies, and team members are spying on him. As a dangerous situation spirals into catastrophe, is there anybody he can trust?

A riveting, action-packed post-apocalyptic survival story from master of SF, Gary Gibson.

## **Extinction Game Details**

Date : Published September 11th 2014 by Tor (first published January 1st 2014)

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Author : Gary Gibson

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## From Reader Review Extinction Game for online ebook

### Denise says

Jerry Beche is the last man alive in the desolate landscape of post-apocalyptic Earth - until he's rescued by a bunch of trained specialists, each of whom come with an origin story much like his own: They survived the end of the world, whichever form it came in in their reality, and now an organization calling itself "the Authority" is collecting these people from the alternate worlds they once inhabited, forms them into teams and sends them out into other apocalyptic worlds to gather data, technology, and more survivors. Their true aims, however, remain a mystery, and Jerry soon finds out that there's a lot more going on here than he's been told. He may have survived the end of the world, but he's nowhere near a happy ending.

This was a deeply intriguing concept that got its hooks in me right from the start. Lots of action and a slowly unravelling mystery with a bunch of twists - a very entertaining read. Looking forward to discovering what the second part has in store!

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### Nathan Chattaway says

2 and a half stars from me. The concept is interesting, but I have done it to death reading all the comic books I did as a youth. Multiple parallel universes is common fodder in the superhero genre. With the central theme out of the way, I found the plot rather predictable, honestly. The characters were believable and the book was competently written, though a bit workmanlike. According to that bastion of Pommy leftishness, The Guardian, Extinction Game is Gibson's finest novel to date. I'm not sure yet if I'll be back for the sequel. Though I do appreciate my friend going to the trouble of buying me a copy of this book to read! Props Nick!

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### Kate says

Very different from Gary Gibson's usual fayre, this is an intriguing post-apocalyptic mystery in which anything could lie around the corner, and does. 3.5 stars.

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### Michael Cummings says

As a fan of Gary Gibson's previous series, the Shoal Sequence, I was excited to get a chance to read this first volume in his new universe. Or multiverse, I guess. Jerry Beche, hero and protagonist, is the last man alive on Earth. A devastating man made plague has wiped out the rest of the human race, or so Jerry thinks until he comes across footprints near his snow bound cottage. While he may be the last human on Earth, he isn't alone. Rescued and taken to an Earth not quite like his own, he is recruited into the Pathfinders. The Pathfinders, a group of explorers from other destroyed Earth, work for the Authority to help explore the parallel worlds. There is some hint to the bigger picture of the multiverse, of braids and strands of possibility.

If this is beginning to sound like an episode of Sliders, I'd agree. Using jump platforms and timed returns, our crew of Pathfinders slips from world to world. When Gibson shines in this novel, he shimmers. The

imagined worlds - and their destruction - are each glimpses into Earths that we ourselves might face. Each apocalypse we face in Extinction Game is well thought out and described.

Unfortunately, I found the secondary characters to be somewhat lacking in development. The antagonist and supporting cast were hollow sketches for the most part. The result was a somewhat uneven experience. Between well thought out extinction events and the sometimes cardboard characters that catalog them, there was just enough story to keep moving forward. Recommended as a mashup of Sliders and Doomsday B movies, it just needed a little more than it delivered to wow me.

Special thanks to Netgalley and Pan Macmillan for making this ARC available to me prior to US publication.

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### **Alex says**

At first, I was quite excited by this book. I love post-apocalyptic entertainment (Nothing too depressing, though), and this seemed right up my alley. The story started out all right, but the lack of information puts yourself into the character's shoes a bit too much (As is the case with many first-person books with these situations), and reading feels a bit like a fever dream for the first quarter or so of the book. The main character is nicely developed, with his own personality and such, but most of the other characters are only briefly introduced and the either temporarily vanish, or are thrown into the action with the reader. In other words, character development is a bit lacking (Especially for the villains), and will leave some characters blending into each other. The plot is somewhat basic- a group of ragtag survivors complete missions to further some unknown goal, with hints of deception in the background, and stays that way for the entire book. The whole thing is written quite well, though, and manages to stay interesting after the halfway point.

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### **Sheila says**

Gary Gibson's the Extinction Game starts with a wonderfully imagined frozen world where one man fights for survival. Dogs have become feral. Ice has covered the land. And it's the winter of mankind's existence. Then everything, including the story, changes.

Extinction, it seems, could come from multiple directions, perhaps even simultaneously, and the brave lone survivor becomes one of many in a team of extinction explorers. Characters, mystery and plot take on a computer game-like feel, as the team is compelled to collect ancient artifacts without ever knowing quite way. Politics lurks behind the scenes with hints of terror and questions that shouldn't be asked. And then the story begins to take shape again as threats become real.

Questions of identity, selfhood and self-determination; issues of terrorism and plot; the value or negation of freedom or free will -- there are serious undercurrents in this tale, bound together with nicely different survivalists, complex situations, well-drawn worlds, and a pleasing sense of personal solutions mattering more than the global. It's an intriguing, thought-provoking tale that would convert beautifully into a computer game.

Disclosure: I read the first few pages in the store and I was hooked.

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## Paige says

Jerry Beche is rescued from his own extinct universe by a group of people known only as 'The Authority', he soon discovers that he is in a parallel universe, and has been recruited as a pathfinder. The pathfinders are a group of people who explore apocalyptic parallel universes, however there is something about the Authority that isn't quite right.

This book throws you into the action, and left me reeling at the first chapter, I struggled to initially get my head around what was happening, but as information is given to the reader things became clearer. This meant I was able to actually get into the book. After that I was unable to put it down. Extinction Game takes the overworked dystopian genre and gives it an exciting twist. There are many apocalyptic parallel universes, all with imaginative reasons for their demise. The characters are well fleshed out and interesting.

The only negative point I have about this novel is that perhaps it ended too quickly. The last quarter of the book is a race to get information and move the plot along, and everything is resolved pretty quickly. But then, it didn't leave the reader wanting more, as the main plot lines were resolved, and the story is explained thoroughly.

I would recommend this book to others, as it is such an interesting take on such a popular genre at the moment.

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## Tudor Ciocarlie says

I wanted more apocalyptic scenarios and less good human vs. bad human scenes.

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## Raj says

Jerry Beche is, he believes, the last person left alive, after a doomsday cult engineered a virus which wiped out humanity. So he's, to say the least, surprised, when a group appears out of nowhere and plucks him away to an island paradise where he joins other end of the world survivors in the hunt for more people and technology. The snag: they're not people from his world, but other last (or almost last) survivors of their own parallel worlds, all brought together by the mysterious Authority for an equally mysterious purpose.

Although Jerry seems like your out and out survivalist type to start with, we also see his fragility and the (failing) coping mechanisms that he used to keep going in a world where he believed he was utterly alone. His fellow "pathfinders" don't get as much in-depth treatment, but are still fleshed out fairly well. I wasn't entirely convinced by Chloe, (view spoiler) but that's a reasonably minor gripe.

The mystery of the Authority, and the trustworthiness of the other pathfinders is intriguing and kept me going through the book, and Jerry is a likeable first person narrator with just enough unreliability to keep things interesting, without being frustrating. The ending was self-contained so you don't need to run away and read the second book in the series, and, to be honest, I'm happy with the way it ended, so I probably won't.

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## Bob Pitman says

I took a long time to read this book... that says something about how the book engaged me, but its also the sort of book you can put down and pick up again without worrying too much about losing track of the plot. I thought the basic idea of alternative Earths that have suffered cataclysmic extinction events was intriguing and that there was a great opportunity to not only explore alternative endings for humanity but also maybe alternative futures where maybe it hadnt all gone to hell in a handbasket. Ultimately the book concentrates almost exclusively on dead worlds.

The deus ex machina is the Alternative Earth co-ordinates system, its explained that the Authority have a limited set of "live" alternates but theres another group of coordinates that are "null". The Null coordinate sets are a one way trip as they probably lead nowhere, but how do you expand on that set of viable alternate co-ordinates? Its never really explained, someone must have gone through and failed to come back but how do they know its a null set of co-ordinates for a bit of space time that failed to exists properly rather than co-ordinates that open above an active volcano for example. Its an irritating issue that lays at the heart of the storys credibility for me. I want someone to step through in a space suit to Null space then have the hime stage open the link again a few moments later so they can pull the explorer back to tell the tale... bit like the MALP in Stargate. It seems that that sort of robotic exploration is beyond the wit of the storys powers.

The characters are OK, they arent massively developed for the most part. Jerry Beche is good, the Pathfinders as a whole are sketched just enough but some of the supporting characters are left as cardboard cutouts with little work done on them, Greenbrook and the Patriots, Bramnick and Mayer are all left largely unexplored.

The plot is fun, the mystery at the heart of the story is two-fold (ignoring Haden), the mystery of the Authority and why it does what it does. This is explained well in the end. Secondly the mystery of why every world they visit is dead or dying (in some style), there ought to be worlds that live without a cloud on thier future!

I wanted something that was more substantial in terms of storyline and content, I wanted more reader engagement... overall it left me a bit dissatisfied both on the answers the story gives us to questions (technical and human-level political) and the absence of "good" Earths.

I find Gibsons writing a bit hit and miss, not a Reynolds (the Revelation Space Reynolds but close to the Poseidons Children Reynolds) and long way short of a Banks... but he is a entertaining scifi writer but it always feels like the substance below the surface is either ignored or not particularly well thought out so there is always the deus ex machina reliance.

Theres a third minor story thread that is just dropped into the story and then goes absolutely nowhere (FOLLOWING SPOILER ALERT)... who or what the stage-builders met that caused them to panic and hide thier tracks across the multiverse, or maybe it was something about the Authorities world? Or maybe its a thread that was left as a door to a sequel?

(FOLLOWING SPOILER ALERT) With the exception of the Authorities alternate Earth (whose fate is a major plot reveal) and one alternate that is visited while its still a going concern (but again its a temporary status) all the worlds are dead to humanity, the bee brains word was delicious and more worlds with that level of description and backstory would have helped a lot, the world around Iceland was good with backstory and development of the mystery around the "Authority". Even a glance at the Pathfinders operational base world beyond Easter Island would have been great but we just get a veiled reference to its fate near the end of the book.

The writing also didnt leave much to tantalise the reader beyond the resolution of the major plot lines, for example "Lucky" scenting that there was something wrong on Jerrys first visit to Bee Brain Earth was a huge clue that there is sabotage coming from within the Pathfinders without exposing the conclusion of the

"sabotage" plotline.

Vaguely unsatisfying after offering great promise... a story premise that could be done very well if revisited with a harder edged writer.

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## Sue says

I was lucky enough to receive an advance review copy of Extinction Game.

What if you were the last person alive in the world, and suddenly you get an offer to relocate to alternative reality, where you join a group of other survivors (for yet more alternative realities).

Jerry Beche is the last man alive after a pandemic wipes out the population of earth, so why one day are there other footprints on the ground? Offered an opportunity to join Pathfinder, searching a multitude of alternative realities, he begins working for the mysterious 'Authority', alongside other survivors from alternative earths.

Who are 'the authority'?

What are they searching for in each of the alternative realities?

Dealing daily with apocalyptic scenarios, from meteors wiping out humanity, to new ice ages, Jerry starts to question why.

I really enjoyed the book (although does it seem wrong to enjoy the multitude of ways humanity could be annihilated?), and the pacing of the story, with strong relationship between characters.

My only negative is that some of the 'bad guys' weren't as well developed as the main characters, to a point when I had to check who some were at 3/4 of the way through the book.

I would recommend as a nifty summer poolside read for sci-fi readers.

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## Jasper says

originally posted at: <http://thebookplank.blogspot.com/2014...>

Besides the great name in Science Fiction of Peter F. Hamilton Tor is also publishing the books of Gary Gibson and last year I had the pleasure of reading my first, Angel Stations, which was also Gary Gibson's debut into this genre. Here he showed a great imagination and story telling and the characterization of the characters was just perfect. So when Tor announced that they were publishing a title of him this year I got really excited and when I read the blurb was even more so. I have read some multiversing books recently, those of Ian McDonald and it is just very cool, but when it comes down to Extinction Game, the whole theme of multiversing is upped quite a lot. Especially when you take into account the underlying theme of apocalypse that is ever present in Extinction Game. Only these things made me really eager to pick up this book and just as what I learned from Angel Stations, characterization and world building (or should I say destroying?) is just top stuff.

The story of Extinction Game picked up for me with a direct sense of doom focusing on the main protagonist Jerry Beche. Jerry is the sole remaining survivor on Earth. A terrible virus has destroyed the world that we know (or one of the worlds that we know). He has really gone through hell and back and when you are alone in the world, really alone in the world. He wife died a while back and he has gotten more and more thoughts of her and hallucinations, perhaps it's sometimes better to just put an end to it as there is really not that much going on to look forward to... But Jerry is still persevering and one day when he is out on a run to get foodstuff he all of a sudden crosses a set of footprints and immediately bells start to ring in his mind, Jerry is the sole living person on Earth, how can there be prints? Is he imagining it? So Jerry starts to investigate and he stumbles upon living persons... and they take Jerry along... Now Jerry finds himself on an different

version of that of his Earth and learns that he has been recruited by The Authority, and ominous and largely vague and unknown presence. The people that rescued him are known as Pathfinders, all persons who were the last surviving persons on an alternate version of Earth. Being in the ranks of the Pathfinders, Jerry hops along as the latest recruit to salvage data and equipment from other alternate Earth's to let the power and technological advance of The Authority grow. But the main question remains, can you really trust such a shadowy organization as The Authority? They hardly make their selves known and only send through order. As the story unravels, bit by bit you learn that something much larger is going on and not really in the advantage of Jerry and the new comrades that he found in the ranks of the Pathfinders.

When I was just a few pages into Extinction Game I knew that I would thoroughly enjoy the remainder of the book. The story is a combination of science fiction influences like multiversing and the technology used and all combined in the ever presence of dystopian futures. All the planets that Gary Gibson shows in his story have encountered an apocalypse of some kind. If I look back at the Deep Space Opera kind of story that I read and the dystopian kinds I can say that I haven't encountered anything like Extinction Game before. Just the influences to build the story are very provocative and really make you think. Not necessarily the dystopian worlds but for me also some of the actions that took place like take for example the scientists that destroyed the native Earth of Jerry. A man-made virus. with our current advances in technology... you never know. What Gary Gibson shows, and maybe not intentionally, is that the humans in his story are catalysts of their own destruction. How far do we differ from them? But lets not turn this into a debate about that. Anyway I really enjoyed the story of Extinction Game it's a great standalone book but when it comes down to the multiversing aspect it does lend it's hand into the making of a sequel.

The narration that features in Extinction Game focuses on the personal story of Jerry, how he is going through everything. As I always say when it comes to end-of-the-world, doom and apocalyptic kind of scenarios, is that this for me is the best narration that can be used. Everything, from experiencing the world down to the thoughts of the protagonist and how he acts and the how the other characters, reacts only that much more stronger really drawing you as a reader into the story. But is it not only writing a story from this point-of-view that makes it engaging, also the writing style is important and here it did remind me a lot to what I encountered in Angel Stations, Gary Gibson writes with a definite confidence. The descriptions of the surroundings are nicely detailed but not too overly and this allowed the book to keep to it's tight pacing. There are moments wherein Gary Gibson does "pause" his story and let the events be summed up or evaluated, just before throwing the story in a rapid pacing once again. Highly addictive.

Within the story there are also a few critical points where Gary Gibson delves deeper into the history of several characters or world shaping/destroying events. These points weren't mere infodumps but Gary Gibson brought them in the form of conversation, back and forth dynamic conversations, not letting the story stall but helping it only move forward and inspire a bigger feeling.

I really liked how Gary Gibson showed the character of Jerry in Exction Game, as the sole survivor of his Earth he sure knows how everything goes and is part wise in his ways by this but also put into a regime that his vision in the single one possible, right until the moment that he introduced to all the different possibilities by visiting alternate Earth's. The personal struggles in the beginning of the book, with loosing his wife and having a very bleak future, his hallucinations and much more really put an emotional drag on Jerry character and early one made me feel for the poor guy. He isn't a typical hero kind of guy that goes in guns blazing but rather lets the surrounding sink in before taking a step forward. This all combined made Jerry an very enjoyable character to read about, you might think that everything that Jerry does is predictable but your wrong, he might not be a hero but he is far from being a pushover. Next to Jerry, you also get to learn about many of the different pathfinders, since they all have more experience than Jerry in the field it was nice to

see how they related personal events and schooled him in the things that he needed to learn in order to survive and not also put their lives on the line. The secondary cast in the form of the Pathfinders added a great dynamic to the story as not all seem who they be on the first take.

Extinction Game is a solid stand along story that gives a first, for me, new interpretation to both multiversing and a dystopian Science Fiction setting. I think it is safe to say that Gary Gibson just went above what he has written before and really has outdone himself. From the start of the story he managed to put the setting just right and really suck you into the story of Extinction Game. Showing Jerry in a way where he lost it all and gains new hope just to see that there are many more things involved in reality. The whole setting that Gary Gibson inspires feel real and threatening there are some great moments especially on the Earth with the bee kinds where I got a really claustrophobic feeling, this really hit me out of the blue as all of a sudden the story is thrown in a rapid pacing and just when the action was over it ebbed in a more steady calm. By letting the story be told in this kind of way you never really new what was behind portal number 2. Extinction Game is an addictive read and as I also said on twitter I want this on the big screen!

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### **Steven Stennett says**

Good book I enjoyed it. Parallel universes based on earth, a solid idea.

My only reservation the book did not wow me, this seems to be happening a lot to me recently, tainting some of my reviews, hence the 3 stars.

I preferred the beginning of the book more than the later half.

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### **Karl says**

This is the Tor UK version of the book.

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### **Nathan Jaskiewicz says**

It was a very good book and it had a strong plot line. It had a few twists and turns through out the story. I would recommend this to any Sci-Fi book fan. I feel this is one of Gary Gibson's' best books. You should read this story!

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