



Vick's Vultures

Scott Warren

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In the far future, alien technology captured by the Union Earth Privateers has fueled Earth's tenuous expansion from a single planet to a handful of systems across the Orion Spur.

Victoria Marin, captain of the U.E. Condor, and her crew of Vultures have been running dry for months. In danger of losing her command and her credibility if she can't locate fresh salvage, she locks onto the distress signal of an alien ship in hopes of valuable cargo. What she finds instead is First Prince Tavram, the heir apparent to one of the largest empires in known space. Tavram's ship has been crippled after narrowly escaping an ambush and his would-be assassin is coming to finish the job.

The Vultures launch a high risk mission to rescue the prince and recover every last scrap of xenotech they can before the hunter catches up to his prey. But there are more dangers than notorious interstellar assassins when it comes to ferrying an alien prince across the stars, and Victoria must contend with dangerous alliances, old grudges, and even her own government if she means to bring her crew home alive. Whether she succeeds or fails, the consequences of her choices will affect the path of all humanity.

Vick's Vultures Details

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Author : Scott Warren

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From Reader Review Vick's Vultures for online ebook

Ian says

A good story about humans as scavengers because we are late to the space race game. I enjoyed the story arc, characters, and the outcome. Ill look for more in this series.

Evan Currie says

A neat twist on Earth's entry into a larger universe.

Cloak88 says

Innovative space opera.

Humans have reached the stars, but it seems we were never all that alone. With 1500 other alien races about humanity isn't just the underdog, we're the bug you accidentally swatt in passing. Thus Victoria Martin and her ship The Vulture are on a scavenging mission for earth. Searching and scavenging for any peace of Xenotech they can find to make some money and reduce the enormous technology gap between us and all the rest.

Things are just a bit complicated when a distress signal brings them to a crippled ship carrying the crown prince of one of the most powerful races about. And now they have to get him back home, with a his would be assassins in hot pursuit.

On the whole this was a very enjoyable book. Though the story and the world look familiar at first glance, it soon becomes obvious that this isn't quite true. This novel twists the common tropes just enough to have some fun with it, without ever becoming obvious until after you're looking back at it all. The characters are perfect for what they need to be and the story just pulpy to pull of the story.

In short: An interesting twist on common 'humanity as underdog' ending in an satisfying sci-fi novel.

Nissanmama says

I had some high expectations for Vick's Vultures after reading the blurb. It seemed like the scope promised was just too big for 223 pages. I'm happy to report that relative newcomer Scott Warren rose to the hype. This is a really good sci-fi read in a market flooded with the paranormal. It embraces the traditional space opera, but brings fresh ideas to the future Warren has imagined. The writing is not only tight, it is consistent and approachable. Warren assumes an intelligent reader, not bothering to identify common sci-fi nomenclature like FTL (faster than light) upfront, but writes in such a way that everything makes sense eventually. He is good at showing us the story rather than telling it. Blessedly, he stays away from information dumps and like flaws of other sci-fi writers. Most significantly, it's plausible—a desperately important factor if you're going to make Earthlings your heroes.

We love an underdog and Warren plays to that by making Earth the unlikely victors in a galaxy of far

superior aliens with empires that span thousands of worlds. Those aliens have been in space for millennia and developed technology we can't even dream about—which is why Captain Victoria Marin is trying to steal, or “salvage,” as much alien tech as she can and bring it back to Earth for reverse engineering.

Even though Warren is a male author, he's made his captain a woman. Kudos. She is also old enough to wear her authority well without playing into stereotypes of age. Double kudos. Warren mixes races and genders in the seamless style of Star Trek. It's just not a thing. Thank you for that. All that authority and experience are called upon when Vick responds to a distress signal, hoping to salvage new tech. She gets way more than she bargained for in the rescue of First Prince Tavram. She's now thrown in the political landscape of the “big three” alien races who consider the “lesser empires” to be beneath their notice. Before the end of the book, at least one of these races will acknowledge the lesser human race.

(view spoiler)

The book's strength is watching humans overcome incredible odds, take advantage of opportunity, and make noble sacrifices. My single criticism is that Warren was too repetitive in stating the fact that they were underdogs outright. We get it. Let us witness it. That part the author did well. He didn't need to continue beating us over the head with his premise. Other than that minor note, I was impressed. I'm very much looking forward to the next book in the series.

My Rating: A- Enjoyed A Lot

Read this and other reviews at That's What I'm Talking About: <http://twimom227.com/2016/10/review-v...>

Michael says

Great start to a new series

I picked this book up on a whim. I had not really heard about the author or book before but it looked interesting. As I got into it, I found the setting, the characters, and the story all interesting and exciting.

Scott Marlowe says

Rating

Review

*** This review originally appeared on Out of this World Reviews. ***

Vick's Vultures by Scott Warren was a book I really wanted to like. The premise sounds great:

Victoria Marin, captain of the U.E. Condor, and her crew of Vultures have been running dry for

months. In danger of losing her command and her credibility if she can't locate fresh salvage, she locks onto the distress signal of an alien ship in hopes of valuable cargo. What she finds instead is First Prince Tavram, the heir apparent to one of the largest empires in known space. Tavram's ship has been crippled after narrowly escaping an ambush and his would-be assassin is coming to finish the job.

Looking back, the story really is as good as it sounds. But where *Vick's Vultures* fails miserably in its execution. The writing is ridiculously confusing. The characters are flat pieces of cardboard with minimal personality and little to no background or motivation whatsoever. The aliens are...odd, which is ok because, hey, they're aliens and should be different from humans. But their personalities are as flat as the crew members of the Vulture. Toss in enough characters with no distinctiveness into a melee of confusing writing and you've got a recipe for a very quick DNF. I considered dropping this one at several points, but, for reasons unknown, I slogged through it. This is the kind of book that really drains you as a reader, and that's just kind of sad.

Vick's Vultures is the first in the Union Earth Privateers series. It is followed by *To Fall Among Vultures*, which I have already attempted to read at the time of this review. Stay tuned for my thoughts on that one. As for *Vick's Vultures*, I just don't have a lot of good things to say about it. It's somewhat enjoyable, but you really aren't missing anything by skipping it.

Maddalena says

I received this book from Parvus Press, in exchange for an honest review.

Just a few days ago I was reading a fellow blogger's reasons for not accepting submissions from indie authors any longer, and I could sympathize with those reasons: more often than not, the writing and editing quality of these books is not exactly stellar, or the premise and promise of the stories don't hold up against closer scrutiny. And that not even taking into account personal reading preferences and biases. My own experience is that only one book in ten doesn't end in the DNF pile, if I'm lucky, so I appreciate why some would choose to concentrate on more tested and tried offerings – I've held that thought myself several times, especially after a particularly disheartening encounter.

Then I "meet" books like this one, and I understand the reason why I have not given up yet: because otherwise I would miss out on exciting discoveries. *Vick's Vultures* is precisely the example of the kind of potential that could get lost in the huge crowd of emerging authors struggling for recognition, if it couldn't get under a helpful spotlight: it's a good, solid, entertaining story, and even if it's not a world-changing reading experience, it's an enormously enjoyable book, and sometimes that's all we look for.

The best feature of *Vick's Vultures* is its premise: once humanity ventures beyond the Solar System it discovers that the Galaxy is peopled by a great number of alien races, all of them far more advanced and far more belligerent and dangerous than Earthers. Starting out with such a handicap, humanity chooses to keep a low profile, forging alliances with lesser civilizations, while trying to acquire technological improvements in the most unobtrusive way. This is the origin of the privateers, to all intents and purposes scavenger crews who gather scraps of alien tech in the wake of the endless conflicts between the major races: retro-engineering this alien technology, Earth is able to further its own advancement while staying out of sight of the big guys – and out of harm's way - as much as possible.

The Condor, under the command of Captain Victoria Marin, is one of these privateers: as the novel opens, Vick is worried by the lack of valuable finds that has plagued her crew in recent times – she needs a sizable

profit, something truly outstanding, to keep her ship afloat both financially and morale-wise. Fate brings the Condor across the wreck of a Malagath ship, drifting in space after a battle with their arch-enemies the Dirregaunt: the salvaged materials alone could be a dream come true for Vick and her people, but the real bonus comes with the Malagath survivors she finds on board, because one of them is First Prince Tavram, the heir to the throne. Taking him home will be a great coup, and coupled with what the Condor will bring back in alien tech, it will mean a great deal for the Vultures and their captain's future as privateers.

Trouble is, the Dirregaunt – in accordance with their wolf-like appearance and predatory nature – are not ready to give up on their quarry, and this starts a dangerous hunt for the prince and the ship that rescued him, a hide-and-seek chase through interstellar space that will take its toll on the already stressed Condor and its crew, pitting Captain Marin's willpower and cunning against that of a very determined, very savage enemy.

This premise results in a fast-paced, at times breathless story that makes for a compelling reading while laying the background for the author's vision of the future, one that is quite believable in its lack of glamorous technological advancement for Earth, whose people try to carve their own niche in the grander scheme of things, despite the obvious disadvantages they started out with. You will not find exotic and hard-to-believe (or comprehend...) technobabble here: Earth ships all but forge on through makeshift repairs, inventive use of purloined technology and a good dose of human stubborn resourcefulness, which make it quite easy to root for the characters.

Captain Marin is a good example of this: a strong, determined woman who cares deeply about her ship and crew – and shows it through action rather than words, which is a very welcome change. A woman who has learned the hard way how to survive in the doubly hostile milieu of space, where environment and people lie in wait for that single moment of distraction which will mean one's death. Vick knows what she wants, and knows how to take it, be it precious salvage, a tactical opportunity or a moment of passion to make her forget the heavy demands of her position. As far as female characters go in this genre, she's sound and believable, and does not need to be beautiful and alluring, or dark and tormented (or one of the possible permutations...) to stand out: she's a capable, reliable professional, and she has charisma – it's more than enough.

This novel is not immune from a few problems, however, but they are indeed minor and do not detract from the overall experience of the book: the background information, for example, is pared down to the essentials but at times it intrudes on the narrative flow in such a way as to prove mildly distracting. While I understand the need to flesh out the author's vision and to offer useful details on this imagined future, there are times when the didactic nature of this information feels a little too much – at least for me. Then there is the characterization, that is not explored in great depth, although the adventurous nature of the story requires a tighter focus on action, rather than introspection. And again there is a thread about two Earth marines playing infiltrators where the suspension of disbelief is stretched somewhat thinly. Still, these are considerations that did not spoil my enjoyment of the story or took me out of the narrative "bubble", and are quite superseded by some intriguing, unusual details that make a difference: for example the fact that the few colonies Earth managed to establish are largely ignored by alien expansion because the oxygen atmosphere humans need is not in great demand with other species. It's a small thing, but to me it speaks of an active imagination capable of intriguing lateral thinking.

Vick's Vultures will be available from October 4th: if you feel the need for an engaging, adventure-filled story and the beginning to what could turn out to be a good series, you need look no further.

Originally posted at SPACE and SORCERY Blog

Steve says

I received this from Netgalley and Parvus Press in exchange for an honest review.

Outstanding space battle/sci-fi that made my "favorites" shelf.

This one had some definite "Star Trek/Capt Kirk" vibe to it, especially like the old battles with the Klingons and the Romulans. I was reminded a lot of Star Trek VI: Undiscovered Country. Lots of plot twists, surprises (and the expected "surprises", too!).

The writing was very good, and drew me in almost instantly. Very quick read, and very entertaining.

The ending leaves it wide open for a sequel (or sequels). Hope they come quickly!

Rowie Christopher says

What a ride! Engrossing, interesting, funny. I definitely want to know more about all those different galactic empires and cultures, roll on the next installment.

Bregje (B a Reader) says

3.5 stars

I struggled with the beginning of this book, because there were a lot of technological descriptions that took me a while to get through. After a while I got used to it and my reading experience got a lot better. One of the major ideas in this book is that humans are a minor species. In the universe this story is set in, there are many empires that are more powerful than the humans. I loved the fact that humans were the underdogs. It really made me root for them eventhough I did not connect with any particular character.

In this story we get introduced to a bunch of alien species. We get some clues to their appearance, but I felt like they were never described in enough detail for me to clearly envision them. Only in the last few chapters could I picture one of the alien races. One of the alien species is actually one entity that inhabits multiple bodies which communiates telepathically, which I thought was extremely interesting. Other alien species seemed to have fascinating societal structures. I just wish that I was given more details. Most of the descriptions in this book relate to the action. It was written in a good way, but one of the things that I love in science fiction is exploring new worlds/species and that was missing a bit in this book.

If you prefer a plot driven story over a character driven story than you might really enjoy this. I personally would have liked to see the characters fleshed out a bit more. While I had a clear idea of the captain of the ship the Condor, the other characters seemed quite flat to me. One thing that did annoy me a little was the amount of times the female caption admires male bodies. I think hardly any (human) male character was introduced without her stating how hot he was. After a while that just starting to seem a bit much.

Peter says

Well, that was a waste of time. As far as sci-fi goes, there was nothing truly original to be found here. I've

come across every sci-fi concept before and in each case, it was done better somewhere else. I found it boring, cheesy and stupid all at the same time. The best thing you can say about it is that it's short.

It's quite clear that the author was going for that Firefly feel that a lot of people seem to enjoy. However, it never quite sets up the universe well enough for you to know what the stakes are or what the consequences might be. It also tries too hard to bring in some unexpected characteristics for the alien races, while making them still very human-like in order to be able to follow things from their point of view. All this resulted in completely unbelievable alien species that felt uninspired and convenient to the plot.

The characters were just as much of a mess. They were simply completely flat and boring, giving you no reason to want to root for them other than the fact they were human. I couldn't bring myself to care about anything that happened to them, especially since you can tell from quite early on how things are going to play out. The scenes from the alien's perspective were also completely unnecessary. All they did was muddle the already stupid plot and made the supposedly super advanced alien species seem very petty and very human.

The writing was completely amateurish. The dialogue was awful, made even worse by the narrator in the audiobook version. So many things lacked proper descriptions, leaving the reader to fill in a lot of the blanks. But then in some cases, we get some details towards the end of the book, meaning you have to fix the vague mental models you already had in your mind. The pacing is way too fast as well, with the author trying to fit a simple plot into half it's required length. Everything about the writing and story was more frustrating than entertaining.

I wouldn't be able to recommend this book to anyone. It's not awful, but it's so pointless and unoriginal, that despite its meagre 200-odd pages, it's still a waste of time.

Bob Milne says

When I was first offered a copy of Vick's Vultures for review, the press release promised a mix of Firefly and Mad Max. That was enough to catch my interest. When I had a chance to talk with Scott Warren about the book, he also mentioned Discworld having influenced his tone. That was enough to pique my interest. When I actually sat down to read it, I discovered that its Firefly sense of roguish adventure was cut with a good deal of Star Trek vibes. That was enough to sustain my interest.

I loved the concept of this right from the start. Humanity has progressed to the point where we're a legitimate star-faring race, but in doing so we've discovered how insignificant we are in the grand scheme of things. Races like the Malagath, the Dirregaunt, and the Kossovoldt have been around for eons, progressing far beyond anything to which we could aspire. They are the forces of power in the universe, with each of them controlling thousands of worlds. In order to compete, we have legitimized a form of interstellar piracy, scavenging alien ships for whatever technology and secrets we can, making our own ships into mechanical monstrosities of mismatch technology.

Culturally, those races have progressed beyond us as well, although that's actually to our advantage. While they may have the advantage of numbers, and may outclass us in terms of speed and firepower, they lack our passionate edge. When it comes right down to it, none of them are prepared for how sneaky, how clever, or how self-sacrificing we can be – and our backwards technology has actually led us to being something of a spacewalker bogeyman. It's something of a running joke in the novel, but it's also a lot of fun.

The story begins with Captain Victoria Marin and her crew discovering a derelict Malagath ship. As

surprised as they are to find survivors on board, they are even more surprised to find that First Prince Tavram, heir apparent to the Malagath, is among of them. What began as a salvage operation turns into something of a rescue, albeit one for which they expect to be paid well. Complicating matters is pursuit by the same Dirregaunt ship that betrayed the Prince, aided by the hive-mind Graylings, who have a particular hatred (and hunger) for humanity. When late-breaking orders from Earth threaten to undermine everything Captain Marin has accomplished, things get even more intense.

I know, it sounds nothing like Star Trek's happy optimism, but it does capture the vibe of Enterprise exploration, Original Series adventure, and Deep Space Nine grimness – along with Mad Max's inspired scavenging, and Firefly's roguish culture. There's a lot of space opera action here, mixed with equal amounts humor and horror. The pacing is just this side of breakneck, and more jaded readers will be pleased to know that it never devolves into unnecessary romance. As for the aliens, they are fantastic creations, falling anywhere recognizably bipedal to six-legged monstrosities. There's enough science to really establish the gap between human and alien technologies, and some really inventive ways our backwards methods and primitive tools are put to use.

All-in-all, Vick's Vultures is a lot of fun, and a book that completely delivers on its premise. It subverts a lot of our expectations, and does so to make for a stronger, more enjoyable story.

Originally reviewed at The Speculative Herald

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary ARC of this title from the publisher in exchange for review consideration. This does not in any way affect the honesty or sincerity of my review.

Tracy says

This military science fiction novel crossed my review desk ages ago. The publisher requested that I review it saying it had “pioneer spirit and the wisecracking tone of Firefly combined with the action and taut pacing of Mad Max: Fury Road.”

At the mention of Firefly I was hooked. How could I resist?

Vick's Vultures is set in a future where Earth, far behind the rest of the universe in terms of technology, runs a privateering fleet of spaceships whose crews scavenge alien tech from wrecks. This enables earth to gradually expand its reach into universe and slowly cultivate tenuous alliances while aiming to keep Earth's location off everyone's radar.

The story emphasises the position of Earth as being at the bottom of the universal dung heap with a government that walks a fine line between keeping Earth's location secret because they're hopelessly outgunned and slowly acquiring power / tech so they can one day defend themselves in a universe full of more advanced and often predatory species.

Victoria Marin is the Captain of the U.E. Condor and on one of her scavenging missions, she and her crew stumble upon an alien prince in need of rescuing, then find themselves firmly in the middle of an age old war between two of the most advanced civilisations in the universe.

Vick's Vultures is fast paced from beginning to end and the action sequences are excellent. The story arcs, tension and world building thoroughly engaging.

The character of Victoria and the obsessive Dirregaunt Commander, who is the villain of this piece, are a little stereotyped but none the less fun to read. I found some of the secondary characters more interesting than the main ones. I felt like the end needed a couple of extra scenes rather than an epilogue that summed everything up. I would like to have read the unfolding of the final events after the big battle finale.

However, what I particularly enjoyed were the various alien civilisations that Warren constructed. I found them unique, enjoyed the different cultural / social customs and loved the backstory of intricate politics and betrayal.

The whole feel is rather like Firefly crossed with Star Trek. It's space opera done very well. I became hooked on reading it and abandoned my afternoon plans to finish it. It was rollicking good fun.

I'm definitely going to read the next one and check out the rest of Scott Warren's books.

Four Stars!

Merrytoad says

Really good escapist fun, I enjoyed Vick's Vultures it some ways it brought back happy memories of reading Horatio Hornblower albeit space battles instead of on the high seas, also a touch of Firefly that fabulous TV series that showed that Science Fiction could be real fun.

A lovely number of twists and turns, also a nice mix of characters, its not all about Victoria. Look forward very much to some sequels.

Dan says

Not bad, I look forward to the next book.
