



A Beautiful Friendship

David Weber

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Stephanie Harrington always expected to be a forest ranger on her homeworld of Meyerdaahl . . . until her parents relocated to the frontier planet of Sphinx in the far distant Star Kingdom of Manticore. It should have been the perfect new home --- a virgin wilderness full of new species of every sort, just waiting to be discovered. But Sphinx is a far more dangerous place than ultra-civilized Meyerdaahl, and Stephanie's explorations come to a sudden halt when her parents lay down the law: no trips into the bush without adult supervision!

Yet Stephanie is a young woman determined to make discoveries, and the biggest one of all awaits her: an intelligent alien species.

The forest-dwelling treecats are small, cute, smart, and have a pronounced taste for celery. And they are also very, *very* deadly when they or their friends are threatened . . . as Stephanie discovers when she comes face-to-face with Sphinx's most lethal predator after a hang-gliding accident.

But her discoveries are only beginning, for the treecats are also telepathic and able to bond with certain humans, and Stephanie's find --- and her first-of-its kind bond with the treecat Climbs Quickly --- land both of them in a fresh torrent of danger. Galactic-sized wealth is at stake, and Stephanie and the treecats are squarely in the path of highly-placed enemies determined to make sure the planet Sphinx remains entirely in human hands, even if that means the extermination of another thinking species.

Unfortunately for those enemies, the treecats have saved Stephanie Harrington's life. She owes them . . . and Stephanie is a young woman who stands by her friends.

Which means things are about to get very *interesting* on Sphinx.

A Beautiful Friendship Details

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Author : David Weber

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From Reader Review A Beautiful Friendship for online ebook

Debrac2014 says

Quick, fun read! Stephanie to the rescue! I really liked The People and the names they gave humans!

P.M. says

Stephanie Harrington is bored and annoyed. Those two qualities lead her into taking dangerous chances on the frontier planet Sphinx. When her hang glider crashes and she is attacked by a hexapuma, she is saved by Climbs Quickly, a sapient "treecat" who has bonded with her because of her strong "mind-glow". Both are severely injured but their bond enables them to survive and flourish. Xeno-biologists from all over converge on the planet to study the cross-species friendship. Of course, a villain arrives to exploit the treecats. He is foiled through the continued efforts of Stephanie, Climbs Quickly and their assorted friends and relatives. I enjoyed this story very much except for the measurements in metrics for which I have no reference points. I have always liked stories about intelligent aliens since reading Andre Norton's books in the 1950's. She pioneered the cute little animals who are probably smarter than we are theme. This book has been touted as the first in a series. I eagerly await the next one.

Tony Hisgett says

An enjoyable story although it was a bit disjointed in places (I think because this novel was originally a couple of short stories).

The big plus for me is that although the story is a bit long winded in places it is nowhere near as bad as the author's more recent books.

Dale says

Perhaps the Beginning of a Beautiful Series?

Published in 2011 by Baen

So, David Weber decided to make a Young Adult (YA) series.

Yes, a sci-fi author known best for his highly-descriptive military sci-fi works characterized by very long conversations is entering a field where too much violence and too much conversation are both problematic. Well, I thought, this should be interesting.

Weber expanded a short story that first appeared in an short story collection *More Than Honor* from 1998 as part of the extensive Honor Harrington series. Eleven year old Stephanie Harrington is the main character in *A Beautiful Friendship* and she is an ancestor of Honor Harrington.

Stephanie lives on the planet Sphinx, a fairly new colony that is part of a star kingdom called Manticore.

Stephanie's family has moved to the planet because their skills are needed but Stephanie is bored by frontier life. However, she is intrigued by a mystery that is being reported across the planet...

Read more at: <http://dwdsreviews.blogspot.com/2012/...>

Dan says

2018 re-read. Exceptionally good.

Jessi (Novel Heartbeat) says

Just like the title says, this story was a BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP. If you want a story about a beautiful, unconditional, *powerful* bond between a cat and a person, this story is for you ;)

I freaking LOVED the treecats!!! They were 10000% of why I loved this book so much. I freaking LOVED Climbs Quickly/Lionheart!! Oh my lawd I loved him. *cries* Lovelovelovelooove (how many times can I say love without sounding redundant? But I can't help it, IT'S TRUE OKAY.) I couldn't get enough of him. I wish I had a Climbs Quickly of my own T.T

I loved the shit out of the first half, it's been a long time since I felt such pure enjoyment while reading a book. I looked forward to Stephanie and Climbs Quickly meeting and was *highly* emotionally invested in their bond and their friendship. There were some scenes where it was just so endearing that my heart couldn't handle it, I actually shed a tear!! Plus there was a certain part where I was actually sobbing, guys. RIGHT IN THE FEELS. (view spoiler)

I don't think I could rave enough over how much I absolutely loved the world in this book and the treecat clan. The idea of a sentient, telepathic, *empathic* alien race of tree-dwelling cats just screams "Jessi book" haha! I *knew* I would love this one and I was most certainly not wrong. I can't wait to dive into the next installment and see more of my favorite little treecat!

The only real reservation I had about this book, and the ONLY reason it didn't get a 5 star review was that there were LONG stretches of straight internal dialogue or informational jargon - for *paragraphs* on end - that it got a bit boring in the last half. I just wanted some more treecat action! Some of it *was* building the world, yes, but there was a lot in there that was just plain unnecessary. I don't need two full pages detailing what they had for a meal, thank you.

Boring parts aside, this book was truly a hidden gem!

This review was originally posted on Novel Heartbeat. To see a breakdown of my assessment, please visit the full review here.

Beth Dawkins says

Stephanie Harrington moved out to the frontier planet Sphinx. She isn't happy to be there since her parents

keep her home bound for the most part, and she doesn't get along with most the kids her age. Her mother gives her a mystery to keep her occupied. Celery keeps getting stolen out of gardens. This leads Stephanie to discover a sentient race she calls treecats. When Climbs Quickly is accidentally spotted by Stephanie he feels her 'mind glow.' He actually kind of falls into it bonding the two of them.

This is a YA science fiction that reminds me a lot of Lackey's Valdemar stories, and Fuzzy Nation. It takes place in Weber's Honorverse. The story is broken into two sections. The first, Unexpected Meetings tells the story of when Stephanie and Climbs Quickly meet, and how he comes to live with her. The second, With Friends like These is a story about someone coming to exploit and steal some of the treecats.

I really enjoyed the first story, which I have heard was published before, but I haven't looked up where, or anything like that. The treecats are telepathic and empathic. Emotions lead the way to how Stephanie communicates with Climbs Quickly. The treecats call the humans two-legs, and stay hidden from sight, but the celery stalk the humans grow helps their mind glows (how telepathic they are). Climbs Quickly tries to steal some of the Harrington's celery. Stephanie catches him. That is when they bond. He can feel wherever she is. Stephanie in turn can feel the same. She hang-glides out toward his location when bad weather knocks her towards the ground. Stephanie ends up hurt, trapped in the wilderness. The bond between two-leg and treecat is tested when a predator comes around.

The buildup in the first story is fantastic, but all of that disappears when the second half starts. Instead of continuing the story it starts as if it were its own self-contained story. It even takes place a year or two later. I think it hinders the book as a whole. The second part starts out very slow with a ton of backstory that is told to the reader. We are told a fantastic backstory for another character who bonded with a treecat. I am hoping this story has appeared somewhere before, because if not, it is just a load of telling that bogs the story down right in the middle of the book. The story itself does pick up in the last 100 pages when something actually starts to happen. There is also a fair amount of politics which I didn't mind, but I have seen it done well, and this doesn't add to the story one way or another. It becomes repetitive, and hard to slog through.

While I am sure that many people who follow the Honorverse may really enjoy this, I don't think it is going to pick up many Young Adult readers. I think compiling two stories into one book hurt the story far more than helped it. While I really enjoyed the first part of the novel, the second one took a long time to grow legs of its own, and by the time it did, I didn't care for it as much. On the other hand Stephanie is a bright young girl that is fun to read, as is Climbs Quickly, who can sometimes turn into a third parent for her. I don't know if I will be getting the next in the series, I may have to wait until some reviews for it pop out.

Johanna Jouppila says

I really enjoyed this book.

The young female protagonist, Stephanie Harrington, was likeable and strong-minded. I loved how crafty she was with her parents with whom she still had a nice relationship with. I found it easy to relate to Stephanie who yearned to explore the fascinating new planet her family had just moved in to and how she didn't do very well with kids her own age because they were, according to her, all idiots.

The treecats were interesting creatures. I always love stories that explore alien societies and it seemed like a good choice that the treecat clan was introduced both through Climbs Quickly's eyes and by showing Stephanie try to understand them as an outsider who interacted with the species for the first time. Humans seemed interesting and strange through the treecats' eyes too.

The point of view keeps changing between characters and I never found that confusing or the story hard to

follow. I'd say it was wonderful to first read a chapter from Stephanie's point of view and then see how Climbs Quickly reacted to and thought about it in a chapter from his point of view, too.

I'd recommend this book to people who enjoy YA books, scifi, strong female protagonists and stories about aliens and creatures.

Kathy Martin says

This was a great science fiction story that should appeal to both boys and girls. Stephanie Harrington comes to the planet Sphinx with her parents. She is twelve. She is disappointed to leave her home planet of Meyerdahl but is eager to explore her new home. However, her parents aren't so eager for her to explore because Sphinx is largely a wilderness with at least two major predators - hexapumas and peak bears - who would find Stephanie very tasty.

Climbs Quickly is a member of an intelligent native species. They have been watching the newcomers to assess their level of threat but haven't exposed their existence. His people are divided between wanting to make contact and wanting to flee deeper into the unexplored interior to get away from the strange two-legs. They are a telepathic and empathic, tool-using species. They also have a weakness for celery.

When Stephanie's mother puts her on the case of the celery thefts she is hoping to distract her from her desire to explore the dangerous wilderness. But Stephanie unexpectedly discovers Climbs Quickly and somehow bonds with him.

Later he rescues Stephanie from attack by a hexapuma after her glider crashes into the forest and she is badly hurt in the crash. In fact, they save each other from the hexapuma as they must fight it off until his clan arrives. In the fight, Climbs Quickly is badly hurt. Stephanie manages to contact her father - a veterinarian - who manages to save Climbs Quickly.

The story is filled with wonder as these two intelligent species try to learn to communicate with each other. They also have to deal with a lot of politics. There are many who don't want to admit the existence of an intelligent species on the planet because it would ruin their plans to sell the land. There are others eager to capture these new creatures either to sell to zoos and private collectors or to dissect to see if they can learn the secrets of their telepathy. Stephanie and her parents need to gather allies to keep their new friends safe from the dangers.

This was an exciting story. Stephanie is a smart and strong character. It is also fascinating to see the human invaders through the treecat's perceptions. I think students who like adventure will like this story. They will also be led to Weber's Honor Harrington series which deals with one of Stephanie's descendants and also has treecats.

Sally says

I got a printed copy of this book originally to send to my grand daughter for her 11th birthday. I thought she might like it because of favorable reviews I had read, because it was a YA book, because of the "tree cat" characters (she likes the Owls of Ga'Hoole books) and because the main human character is 11 years old (although she ages to 14 during the story). However, knowing that my grand daughter's parents like to know what kinds of books she is reading, I decided to get an audiobook version to listen to myself first.

Although the story was easy enough to read for an 11-year-old who loves to read, it seemed to me it would possibly be a little boring or tedious for the pre-teen. Perhaps the science fiction quality would not necessarily appeal to young readers who are not experienced in reading sci-fi genre; this might be the "boring" factor. Besides, I thought the cover artwork was a little creepy. The tree cat, as depicted on the cover, was not at all a cuddly alien creature that the reading of the text might imply. I know that young people especially, but also adults, are often influenced in their mental visualization by the cover art.

For me, though, this story had a number of elements that reminded me of another book I read recently, "Fuzzy Nation", a re-writing by John Scalzi of H. Beam Piper's "Little Fuzzy." The similarities are in the idea of human exploitation of a non-Earth planet for its monetary/mineral values, the lack of recognition of the intelligence and sapience of some indigenous creatures, and the efforts of some to protect those creatures.

So, this book was OK, but not great. I won't be sending it to my grandchild unless she exhibits a future interest in reading sci-fi books. Grandchild #2 might like it when he gets older, because he loves stuff about space and the universe.

El-jorro says

Bookworm Speaks!

A Beautiful Friendship

by David Weber

David Weber...one of the High Lords of Sci-fi and a King of Space Opera.

The Story: The main character is ancestor of the famed Honor Harrington, Stephanie Harrington who is a first generation colonist to the planet Sphinx of the Star Kingdom of Manticore, is not happy with her current situation being moved from another, more exciting planet. This all changes when she meets and bonds with a native life form called a Treecat which may be sentient. The ramifications of this discovery will change both the Harrington family and the planet Sphinx forever.

The Good:

What makes this book so good is how relatable it is despite taking place so far into the future. It belongs to a category that bookworm likes to call "Background Science Fiction" as it deals with the people in the background. Its not a story about a teenage prodigy overthrowing a corrupt regime or a team of fighters trying to save the galaxy, its about a teenage girl who has stumbled upon something and tries to make the best of it while trying to live her life. Its what made the television series Firefly so appealing, in that it has an everyman factor to it. Something the majority of an audience can find a connection to. This made much more impressive when considering David Weber's background as military historian, which generally does not deal with the common folk all that much.

What also makes this book relatable is the characterization of Stephanie. Bookworm has said before that righting accurate teenagers can be very hard but the author pulls in off very well. Stephanie does come off as being smarter and more mature than her compatriots but it is stated in the text that Stephanie is smarter than the average person and the pioneer setting of the planet Sphinx lends to her maturity. In the beginning, she

does act a lot like a teenager would in a similar situation.

The character of Lionheart the Treecat is also how this book shines. For those who are unfamiliar with the Honor Harrington Series, tree cats are the companions of characters from the series including the titular character. Treecats are sentient and very intelligent but we never actually hear them communicate until later in the series. In this book we are given a first hand account of their thought processes. This greatly establishes the tree cats and Lionheart as a main character rather than a side character as Nimitz of Honor Harrington often became. Lionheart thinks in terms that are familiar but a sufficiently different to drive home the “alienness” of his nature.

The Flaws: The main flaw is common with many of the Honor Harrington series: There is ton of background information in this story and the author loves to share it. Expositions or plot dumps are a mainstay of David Weber and some would say of a lot of science fiction in general. Infodumps are passages of text that explain certain details about what is going on in the story. Some readers find them interesting and add another layer of detail to the story, but some may find them distracting and take away from the actual story.

Also accompanied by the exposition are references to events that do not appear in the text. This in of itself is not unusual in that a lot of times in fiction there are references to unseen events i.e. The War, the Noodle Incident. But it seems very important the way the characters refer to these events, which lead to other short stories. It can make things pretty confusing.

The narrative itself can be a turn-off as well. In a manner of speaking, the text does not tell a consistent story. The entire plot takes place over several months and years with events happening in between the chapters unseen by the audience. On one hand, this is to the stories benefit as the expanded timeline allows a deeper exploration into the ramifications of the discovery of the Treecats but other readers may find it a bit too much to swallow at once.

Final Verdict:

A worthy addition to any Space Opera library even though it doesn't take place in space!

Four out of Five Stars.

Jenny Schwartzberg says

Baen Books just posted an interview with David Weber on his views on YA storytelling and this book which is apparently the beginning of a new series in the Honorverse: <http://www.baen.com/interviews/intweb...> This prodded me into picking up this book. I'd been ambivalent since I stopped reading the Honor Harrington series at the Crown of Slaves book since it was getting too grim and close to total war. I'm a fan of most of his other books, except for his most recent books which are too focused on war for my liking.

I just finished reading A Beautiful Friendship and I did enjoy reading it but it's based on several short stories by Weber and his friends, and does not include some information from those stories that I feel should have been included, particularly from the story The Stray. I suspect that someone who had not read some of the other Honorverse books might have been at sea without that backgrounding. This worries me because I think it could appeal to younger readers who want science fiction not fantasy to read.

It's sparked my desire to reread the Honorverse books on my bookcase so that's nice and I will want to read

the sequel. All in all I do rate this four stars but with my above-mentioned quibbles...

David Fernau says

(Review originally posted on Otherwhere Gazette)

If you're a fan of David Weber's Honor Harrington series, as I am, chances are good that you have a special fondness for Honor's treecat Nimitz. I also suspect that you've probably wondered about how treecats started bonding with humans.

Weber has, in previous books, hinted at how it all started, as well as written that treecats run in the Harrington family, but until *A Beautiful Friendship* we didn't have much more than that.

Fortunately, we now have *A Beautiful Friendship*, and it explains a lot more about how the bonding process started, and how the treecats earned the protected status they enjoy in Honor's day. Of course, I am sure there is more to come, but the start of the story is better than nothing, right?

A Beautiful Friendship follows the first bonded pair from both perspectives. Stephanie Harrington, an obvious ancestor of Honor, encounters the treecat called Climbs Quickly by his clan, and something marvelous happens to both of them. Once they realize what's happened, then comes the struggle of being the first bonded pair, understanding the previously-undiscovered treecats, not to mention the sentient treecats' attempts to understand what they call "two-legs".

Fortunately, their friendship, along with the help of the other bonded pairs that occur early, paves the way for each species to be instrumental in helping the other, thus setting the foundation for the close association — at least between some pairs — that treecats and humans share in Honor's time.

If the only exposure you've had to Weber's writing has been the Honor Harrington books, this will come as a little bit of a surprise, as there's no huge space battles, and very little fighting of any kind involved in it. But it still shows a master of the writing craft at work, giving us characters, both human and non-human, that we can identify with and wish the best for.

If you want to know more about treecats and their society, I can't recommend *A Beautiful Friendship* highly enough.

Anna Erishkigal says

I enjoyed this story immensely. A spunky, intelligent young heroine who uses her head to solve her problems. A sentient, psychic, six-legged alien cat. A distant world. And a believable villain out to enslave the newly discovered sentient Treecats as 'pets' all made for an immensely enjoyable read. I have already purchased Book 2 of this series to read.

Now for the not-so-good ... as somebody who reads a decent chunk of Young Adult fantasy-based novels, this is a commendable attempt by David Weber (who has long been one of my favorite authors for both epic fantasy as well as his Honor Harrington series) to reach out and re-invigorate young women's interest in something besides sparkly vampires. **I love-love-love Stephanie Harrington and her Treecat Lionheart**, and am so excited to now hand this book to my 13-year-old and 11-year-old daughters. However, a lot has

changed in the way teens now expect to digest a Young Adult book, mainly they prefer the intimacy of first-person POV. This book head-hopped a lot and pulled in a lot of irrelevant backstory that would have been better communicated by SHOWING exclusively from Stephanie's head. I am so happy David Weber is reaching out to introduce a Teen audience to some awesome, kick-butt science fiction role models, but worry that to a Young Adult audience the archaic way it's written (third-person POV, lots of head-hopping, too much backstory, not always in Stephanie's head, body and heart) might turn off the very audience he's trying to reach.

In any event, I'm one of those parents who'd practically sell my soul to get my teenage daughters reading 'I can do it' science fiction instead of 'I'm waiting for a boyfriend' paranormal fantasy, so I have overlooked the book's glaring, archaic writing style and bought all three books in the series. The verdict: READ.

Stephanie A. says

I am pretty DO NOT WANT when it comes to science fiction, preferring to keep things contemporary, but I do like animal stories, so when a friend recommended this I agreed to give it a go. My biggest fear was that the animals being sentient would take away all the qualities that make animals so enjoyable to read about in the first place, but one chapter from Lionheart's POV and that was gone; I was in love with treecats. And so the babble mode begins:

For starters, Stephanie was an immediately likable character. Every other author should take notes on how to write an independent and adventurous female character I can love.

Thanks to the style of writing some parts from adult perspectives, I immediately became super attached to her parents as well. That was an excellent writing choice and part of what made the whole book so engaging; it was really refreshing to see perspectives outside the Harrington household and kept my interest piqued.

But most of all, I LOVED the near instant bond between grown-up treecat and young girl. To be fair, seriously injuring a character is the fastest way to make me love her. Injure some(thing) else trying to protect the first person, and I will bond with them for life. The only thing I'm mad about is the huge time jump from that point to 2 years later; I wanted to see more of their early days with each other!

The only time my interest would start to drift was when it came to politics or explanation of how this planet/nearby planets differed from our Earth or similar "how stuff works in the future" detail. Whenever this happens in sci-fi, my eyes start crossing and my brain tunes out the mumbo-jumbo. Yes, yes, I'm sure you've created a very complicated universe full of backstory and specialized creations but BLAH BLAH TALK AT ME ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND EMOTIONS AGAIN. I will only grudgingly allow that I have never read any other books by David Weber, and since I haven't, I should probably appreciate getting a condensed summary of everything a newcomer might need to know.

Forty pages from the end, I was sucked up by the action and suspense, couldn't wait for more and I was praying it wouldn't end on a cliffhanger. Fortunately, it doesn't - the story here is nicely concluded, which is such a genuine rarity in sci-fi series I don't know what to do with myself - yet it still leaves me hungering for more adventures, as it feels like we've barely gotten started. It is rare for me to think that any book has enough material to keep going for even one more novel, but this one definitely has a whole series in it. Or at least a couple of sequels.

Traci says

Decent young adult science fiction fantasy book. Think of it as a light *Speaker for the Dead*. With cute cat creatures I'm sure most young girls will want.

Laura says

I picked this book up at Half Price Books because I wanted something with more substance than the books I've been reading lately. I was tired of young adult books and I wanted some grown up science fiction. The joke's on me. *A Beautiful Friendship* could definitely be read by young adults because Stephanie Harrington is only 12-14 years old through the course of the book.

I love the Honorverse. I especially enjoy the relationship between Honor and her treecat, Nimitz. I really was looking forward to learning how treecats and humans made first contact.

This novel covers the discovery of treecats on Sphinx. Because the main character is 12 years old, the adventures she gets into are limited by her general neighborhood. As usual for a David Weber book, Stephanie is a superior human being. As such, she doesn't interact with the world and her peers quite normally. Having a treecat for a best friend helps her adjust to the differences.

As I read, I was struck by the similarities between the bond between treecats and humans and the bond between Heralds and Companions in the books by Mercedes Lackey. I think I'd like to read more about the growing bond between Stephenie and Lionheart.

PS: Part of this book have been published before but this book continues the story.

Luce says

2 Stars for the audiobook.

OK, I didn't actually listen to the whole book. At about 10% from the end I picked up my epub version and scanned the last few chapters - because I was bored and tired of the book. I should have done this earlier, but I was reading and enjoying another book at the time. If I had switched I might have gave it 3 stars. There was too much talk and information dumping about politics, history and such. Oh, I know it was essential to the story, but in the audio version it didn't hold my interest. The narrator was fine, so that wasn't the problem. I was wondering if it would hold the interest of a 10-15 year old? But obviously from the ratings this book has, I'm a minority opinion.

I did like Stephanie, Climbs Quickly, her parents and later the Zivoniks and MacDallan. I have read at least the first couple of Honor Harrington books, but it was a million years ago. I did like Honor and the premise, but not enough to read much more of the series.

Jim says

This was a fun read about Stephanie Harrington, Honor's ancestor who first formed a bond with the treecats when she was about 13. It covers about 1.5 years, maybe 2 of her life in 3 separate story arcs, although they look like one novel. If you enjoyed reading about Honor & Nimitz, you'll probably like this because only the names & the age have changed. Even the parents & friends seem pretty similar in most ways.

The story all takes place on Sphinx & Nimitz is about the same. ~~Honor~~ Stephanie is just a bit younger on the outside, but still the same, too. I really liked it, especially the scene where they cement their bond in danger & willing sacrifice. Weber does that so well.

I just can't give the book more stars because there wasn't anything new. Nothing. Only a few trimmings were & that just doesn't count. It would probably be a great introduction to the series for a younger reader, though.

Liviu says

I got and read in a sitting the YA Honorverse A Beautiful Friendship, based on the story with the same name and recounting the first contact between treecats and humans on Sphinx; the first part which was the story expanded was great as the original story was, the second which continues after the first contact was more conventional - various moneyed and powerful interests do not like treecats or the idea of treecats being protected and "given" vast pieces of land said interests want, others want to do good but only bumble and fumble, others have even more sinister goals and it's up to Stephanie Harrington, Climbs Quickly and an assorted cast of helpers, humans and treecats to thwart the bad guys and put the good but bumbling guys on the right path so to speak - but still engaging and I am curious where this series goes next since it stops at a good point but DW seems to want to break into the YA market too

Despite its YA label, the book is not that different from the usual Weber offerings and basically only that the main human character (Stephanie Harrington of the first Sphinxian Harrington generation some 500 years before the main series) is a 13-14 year old justifies the label, though DW wrote other stories with YA as main characters, so it's more of a marketing strategy than anything

FBC review below:

INTRODUCTION: The Honorverse occupies a special place in my affection. I have been a huge fan since I have discovered the first several books in 1994 and I have been rereading the series books quite a lot across time. Today the series is still my #1 ongoing one and each new novel is a highly, highly anticipated one. I find myself visiting Baen's Webscriptions 5 times a day when I know there is the possibility of a Honorverse e-arc for sale.

When the novelization of the short story "A Beautiful Friendship" as the start of a new YA series was announced, I was a little mixed for several reasons - while I really liked it, I am leery of prequels and I also thought the scope of this series will be limited in many ways unless the author does a complete rewriting of the early Manticoran history in contradiction with what we know from almost 25 Honorverse volumes. On the other hand, the YA label did not bother me since Mr. Weber has written several Honorverse stories with YA as main protagonists and they were all interesting and entertaining.

Stephanie Harrington always expected to be a forest ranger on her homeworld of Meyerdaahl, until her parents relocated to the frontier planet of Sphinx in the far distant Star Kingdom of Manticore. It should have

been the perfect new home --- a virgin wilderness full of new species of every sort, just waiting to be discovered. But Sphinx is a far more dangerous place than ultra-civilized Meyerdahl, and Stephanie's explorations come to a sudden halt when her parents lay down the law: no trips into the bush without adult supervision!

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: There are three aspects about "A Beautiful Friendship" that I will talk about: who is the audience of the novel, the Honorverse fan or someone new to the series, how does the novel integrate with the original story and where does it stand in the detailed universe created by the author?

Before that I will just note that "A Beautiful Friendship" is a normal Weber novel, YA label aside, so the same exuberant, talkative and flowing style, the occasional info dumps and the meticulous world building combine with his usual characters: the competent heroine or hero, the bumbling villain or the able villain who just may be on the wrong side for generic - eg born into a dictatorship and a "patriot" - rather than personal flaws. Also as expected treecats star quite a lot in the novel, though their role in the main story of the Honorverse has been important too.

I read A Beautiful Friendship in a sitting and it entertained me end to end, so I would say that even if you are a huge fan of the Honorverse and read the original story several times as I previously did, you will enjoy the novel. This being said, I think that a newcomer to this superb sfnal universe will enjoy it even more since he or she will stay in suspense about the main plot of the book to the end, will discover the world of Sphinx and will wonder about the future fate of the treecats in an occasionally merciless human universe. All points that are known to any fan of the series and proving again that prequels have intrinsic limitations that even the ablest author won't be able to go around.

To my surprise, the first part of "A Beautiful Friendship" which corresponds to the original story has been expanded to include much more detail about the treecat clans before "first contact" and about Stephanie's life, so it offered lots of new and interesting nuggets and I think that Mr. Weber did a great job integrating the original text with the new stuff. This part was as excellent as the earlier short story and it is a major highlight of the novel even for people who have read the short story.

The second part which continues after first contact was more conventional - various moneyed and powerful interests do not like treecats and/or the idea of treecats being protected and "given" vast pieces of land said interests want, others want to do good but only bumble and fumble, while others have even more sinister goals and it's up to Stephanie Harrington, Climbs Quickly and an assorted cast of helpers, both humans and treecats to thwart the bad guys and put the good but bumbling guys on the right path so to speak.

This part was still engaging and while it ended at a very good point, I am curious where this series goes next. It is true that the "big picture" scope is limited by what we know from the main series that takes place some 500 years later, but who knows since David Weber is extremely good at twisting and turning the story around even when you think you know what's what. So I expect to be surprised!

Overall, A Beautiful Friendship (A+) was a positive surprise for me and my fears outlined in the introduction never really materialized except for the prequel limitations which meant that a lot what happens, has to be in a certain way. Of interest to both younger and older readers, the Honorverse fan and the casual or new Weber reader, A Beautiful Friendship is an entertaining end to end romp.