



Open Arms

Evan Currie

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With the war officially over, and years of fighting weighing on her, Sorilla has officially put in her papers and called in every chit she's owed. It's time to hang up her power armor, lay down her rifle, and try to build something for herself rather than for other people. The War, however, is only over when the powers that be say it is. Faced with a potential political nightmare, the Alliance and SOLCOM are now working together, and Sorilla's number is up one more time as she finds herself unable to break the habit of serving. De Opresso Liber

Open Arms Details

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From Reader Review Open Arms for online ebook

Jeff Closs says

3.5 Stars, upgraded to 5 because I can't do half stars.

This (short) novel had a lot of positives and negatives to me. Let's see if I can run them down in a spoiler-free way.

In past novels, we have seen Sorilla become "tired" of her craft, and desperately needing a break, or retirement. The flash we have of her forthcoming retirement is heartwarming and a really nice side to see of a character that we see as smart and powerful in battle - her out of battle business acumen stands out to me and makes her a little more rounded. I really like that she can apply her skills and thinking to something other than just shooting more and different aliens.

However, good times can't last, and we see Sorilla come out of retirement for "one last mission". I do like that this "last" mission looks to encompass the entire next arc of the series, most likely 2 more books. We aren't looking at a simple single-book action here like we saw in book #6. (Personally, I'd like to have seen a few in-character followup comments to how that's all going).

Those info-dumps though, need to be edited out. There are too many, and they are nearly identical duplicates of each other. I understand the need for them, as not all readers will have started with Hayden #1 and followed along since then, but we only need them once.

That's not the only editing in need of serious help either. Misspelled words sprinkle the text here and there, and are common enough that they pulled me right out of the novel several times. Thankfully I didn't notice any homophone mistakes, something that did annoy me in books 5 or 6. Honestly, if I something was likely to tip my rating down rather than up, it would be the lack of serious editing - so the up-bump is in spite of, not because of, the editing.

This story feels the most "real" and rounded out of any I've read in this series. The politics are not simple, and I think that's what I like about them. It's clear there are more than 2 simple political entities involved here, although we don't know who they all are. I do like the shades of grey, rather than good vs bad. The obvious three players, being the Alliance, SOLCOM and the colony ship settlers create an interesting dynamic, but the possibilities of shadowy entities and worlds that are part of the situation but not fully investigated in this novel up the ante. I really enjoyed seeing Sorilla process the ideas of military intelligence, and intentionally draw attention to herself to keep the Alliance guessing about the capabilities of its operatives somewhat "dark".

The idea of colony ships filled with dissidents, and the culture they've created with a century or so of no contact with their origin is something we've not seen yet in this series, and although it's somewhat of a trope of sci-fi, I think it's used in an interesting way. Especially the musings on how ideologies change and adapt when external pressures are added/removed. I also like the potential conflict of having two space-faring human civilizations with strongly opposing ideologies in a small stellar neighborhood where that conflict could erupt and lead to larger conflict with the main political players in the series so far.

Of course, we wouldn't be reading a Hayden War novel if we didn't have lots of shooting, exploding and generally messy action. I do feel like Sorilla is getting to be a bit too "powerful", and would like to see some

hubris forced onto her character. I understand that she is the tough and gritty female lead, but sometimes she's too tough and skilled.

I really liked the inclusion of the Lucian Sentinals, and wish Kriss & Co. had a bit more time to shine. I have enjoyed the Kriss arc since he was introduced - I really like his point of view and outlook, and I continue to enjoy that through this story. However, when the action starts, he and the Lucians feel a bit too much like stage extras - I don't feel Mr. Currie explored their bad-assedness as much as he could have. Hopefully, we see more later.

We have more humour as the story and series moves forward, which is mostly a good thing, but in some contexts here it pushes towards camp a little too much for my taste.

The dialogue in the story is generally OK, but there are some examples of greatness and failure to be seen here. In the greatness camp there is the conversation between Aida and another supporting character using a breaching charge. This one shows great skill in using non-conversational cues and reader memory to show the growth of the technology of the human military. It's almost to the level of inspired - I don't often remember little nuggets like this to comment on in reviews later.

On the other hand, we have Mattan(?), one of Sorilla's previous mentors and commanders constantly, (as in nearly every sentence of dialogue), calling her Sister. I know she uses the French for Sister as a nick-name sometimes (some character fleshing we've seen over the last few books, that I didn't really "get" because it's a bit counter-intuitive, her not being French background) but I don't get what makes this character use it so much. It's stilted and frustrating to read, as it's not something you can read aloud and feel to be natural sounding. It doesn't quite make sense - and if it's used to create a feeling of closeness and past history, it's over-used. A couple of times, in key moments, would serve the purpose better.

I'm looking forward to #8 in the series, Mr. Currie's writing draws me in and keeps me reading. I'm eager to see more of the series, more of the consequences going forward. Despite it not being completely consistent, this is a very interesting universe. It's clear that his characters have been both blessed and cursed to "live in interesting times". I'm looking forward to more of them.

Thomas Mckee says

Not as good as the previous six...

Although the author is a good writer, this story lacked something compared to the previous six books... But we'll written.

Michael James Dillon says

Fast and well-crafted

Excellent book, makes you think about how things fit together and how to make it work when things don't fit together at all.

The main character is extremely well written and I've enjoyed all of these books and the series every one of them

Yes like you guys have wasted money on books , but this is definitely not one of those at all, it's money well spent and not wasted a bit!

juliette dempsey says

Outstanding military SciFi adventure

Now what do I do. I've finished all the Aida series, please hurry up and write the next one.

If you loved the de Serrano books by Elizabeth moon. You will love this series.

Super tough heroine,.....check

Believable aliens.....check

Edge of your seat action.....check

Space battles.....check

I look forward to more from this author and check out his other series as well,they are just as good?

Sarah says

3.5 Stars. First and foremost I have to say that I love the Hayden War books. This is a series I don't hesitate to buy with each new release. This 7th book was enjoyable and entertaining. Compared to the others in the series it had a much lighter tone to it (almost comedic at times) and it felt a bit rushed, especially at the end of the story. However, I think the author mentioned that it was the start of a new story arc in which case it was a good start. I can't wait to see how things play out, especially with some of the unanswered scenarios in this book. Sorilla's character was much more flippant and a little off the deep end in this one. I'm wondering if we're going to get to see repercussions of her current mental state. Also wondering how things will continue with the alliance and how the second human colony developed. I really can't wait to read the next one. On one other note, the picture on the cover is totally not how I envisioned Sorilla. Maybe it's the flower. I have a hard time imagining her outside of her military get-up and the picture is almost an extreme contrast.

Pow Pwo says

In a world where The Human Race is alone against The ALLIANCE made of countless species of space faring civilizations, we get to book 7 of the Hayden War where our Colonel Aida is set to work with the Alliance... against the human colonies settled by human religious extremists, now (100 years after the founding of their planet) extremist Muslim and Christian terrorists.

It's just bad on so many levels, not even worth it as the side story that it is.

It is a worse version of the 6th book. There is no progress in the universe of the Hayden War. Yes there are disident's within The Alliance, but we knew that since book 3, it's not new, it's recycled content. Half the book is Aida explaining to the 100 year old isolationists what happened in the last 6 books and the current state of affairs, because although they can trade for military grade weapons, they cannot surf the internet or

watch TV to get news about the world they live in.

Not worth the read. Just skip this book.

Per Gunnar says

Hayden War Cycle is another one of my favorite series from one of my favorite authors. This installment in the series is another post-war story which means that it deals more with cold-war scheming than with outright war.

Now, this is Sorilla we are talking about so obviously, war or no war, there is shooting involved. Mr. Currie cooked up a scenario where he managed to involve some old Terran foes. Namely Christian fanatics and Muslim fanatics. Honestly this felt a bit cheap to me and it of course opened up for the usual politically correct (or not correct) bullshit ramblings. As it turns out Mr. Currie did (mostly) avoid too much of this. There are some nonsense about overreacting to the “methods” of certain well none religious fanatics that one would really only expect from certain groups of social oxygen wasters and the meat industry got poked a bit as well just for good measure.

Regardless of this I enjoyed the book very much. In the book we get to deal pretty exclusively with the Christian group of fanatics. I wonder if Mr. Currie plans to make the Muslim fanatics the subject of a future book. Personally I would prefer if he focused on the real threat and the devious conspiracies that are, partly, revealed in this book.

The story is mostly carried by Sorilla. I really like this character. Anyone that tries to take her lightly is in for a big and painful surprise.

Another character that I quite liked is Kriss, the Sentinel commander. Kriss is a perfect match for Sorilla. Both are no nonsense, kick-ass characters of the opinion that bureaucrats, politicians and other pencil pushers are not even worth to use as gun fodder. Kriss internal dialogues and interactions with Sorilla and other Terrans are quite fun reading.

As I hinted earlier there is plenty of action going on although it is all dirt-side. Even though my preference is for space combat it is very good as usual. Although the story starts of implying that we are dealing with a problem of simple fanatics it gradually becomes clear that the problem is quite more than that and by the end of the book it is not only the Terrans that are deeply concerned. Obviously the scene is amply set for future adventures for Sorilla & Co.

Overall this is a nicely written book with a well balanced mix of action and non-action material, very good characters and a decent story. Not surprisingly I am looking forward to the next installment in the series.

Peter Barnick says

This just get's better and better!

Go Sister! Got to love Ida and her relationship with Kris. The whole series has that Saturday afternoon

cinema serial feel. Tune in again next week to discover what will happen to our hero's and the earth! All presented by the author with style that totally engaged me. You can't just read one book. Got to devour the entire On Silver Wings series.

Zad says

Well, the first half of the book was hard to get through. I usually read Evan's books really quickly. When reading the first half I had to put it down from time to time because it felt repetitive and unnecessarily long-winded. Now the other half is one action packed, fast paced ass-kicking which was good.

Another point I'd like to raise is that Aida is never wrong, she always draws the right conclusions, and she has the self-confidence to back that up. She is getting a little unbelievable, which does not help the reader to identify with the protagonist.

Amber says

Sorilla Aida is retired or she's supposed to be at least. In the last book it was clear that she needed a break, needed out of the fighting and warfare. Unfortunately her retirement is shortlived as she gets called back for "one last mission." She continues to be the unflappable, perfect soldier which can strain the boundaries of belief a bit but I also continue to be willing to brush that fact aside.

Here Sorilla is tasked with going to a world primarily occupied by white supremacists, people that most of earth was all too happy to see leave and never return, in order to see how they have progressed. But soon after arriving she finds far more than expected. It quickly snowballs into a problem on a scale the Alliance is reluctant to admit to but that has far bigger implications. It's a great setup for more books and interesting novel in its own right.

However, the problem I have is that while this book is interesting on its own it doesn't directly continue the story of the last novel which presented more than a few new questions about the Ross, The Alliance, and what place humans now occupied in the midst of everything. It doesn't address any of those questions or possibilities and aside from being mentioned occasionally the Ross are almost entirely absent from this book.

It works well as a spin off of the series but not really as a continuation of it or of the Cold War arc. I hope the next book will go back and address some of the questions brought up in book 6.

Ryan says

Disappointment

I like this series and I enjoy Evan Currie, but this book was not the best in the series.

I'm not even upset about the politics, something that honestly provided new perspectives and material on what could happen in the future.

No, I'm disappointed in the writing and the story. There were so many small mistakes in the language that shouldn't be happening in book 7 of a series. I heard an explanation for who the Ross were 5 or 6 times...once is all I needed because it is book 7!

My hope is that the second in this next trilogy will be better reviewed and hopefully Mr Currie will tighten up the writing for his loyal readers who don't need everything explained multiple times in the same book.

M Hamed says

he thinks that he is writing a decent Book.with inner dialogue ,thoughts ,feelings ,structure with feminist subtext (every paragraph for the first half of the book was finished with some one saying what a bad ass she was ,every single funky paragraph from every single fucking character)

i believe he really thinks he is doing a good job of alleviating the genre with some REAL writing and professional approach to a childish, and lets be honest,a pointless genre
i mean military space opera is the equivalent of paranormal romance

anywhoo,he fails

Ernest says

Soldiers like Aida Sorilla don't get to retire just cause the war is over.

They don't get to fade away, either. Aida's reward for her contributions in bringing the war with the Alliance to an end is to be sent to work with her former enemies to find out where advanced weapons are coming from on a huge human colony inside Alliance space. Bad enough that she has to work with the alien special ops fighter that she'd squared off against more than once. They had to go and promote her in the deal. Great action and as much fun as ever. My only complaint is that it's too short, but we are promised two more books in the arc and they can't come soon enough.

Michael Wood says

Combined Arms From SOLCOM and Alliance Fight Rebels

This great military space opera is focused on Green Beret teams and Alliance Sentinels (think alien SEALs) as they confront a rebellion in two human worlds that ended up within Alliance lines. Who is bankrolling the revolt? Who is providing Alliance tactical and strategic weapons? Who, in either nation, would have the

ability to do so?

Our heroine is once again teamed up with Kriss, the Sentinel.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED AS BOTH AN INDIVIDUAL BOOK AND AS A SERIES

Tony Hisgett says

I really loved three quarters of this book, I thought the whole build up of the story was great and Sorilla is a brilliant heroine. However, the last quarter of the book wasn't quite as good. I thought the combat was confused and the zealots really shouldn't have been much opposition for the Alliance and SOLCOM Special Forces.

Finally I found the ending very unsatisfactory, I presume some of the loose ends will be tied up in the next book. The problem is, this author has a habit of leaving things unfinished and then not picking up on these loose ends in the next book.
