



The Abyss Beyond Dreams

Peter F. Hamilton

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The year is 3326. Nigel Sheldon, one of the founders of the Commonwealth, receives a visit from the Raiel—self-appointed guardians of the Void, the enigmatic construct at the core of the galaxy that threatens the existence of all that lives. The Raiel convince Nigel to participate in a desperate scheme to infiltrate the Void.

Once inside, Nigel discovers that humans are not the only life-forms to have been sucked into the Void, where the laws of physics are subtly different and mental powers indistinguishable from magic are commonplace. The humans trapped there are afflicted by an alien species of biological mimics—the Fallers—that are intelligent but merciless killers.

Yet these same aliens may hold the key to destroying the threat of the Void forever—if Nigel can uncover their secrets. As the Fallers' relentless attacks continue, and the fragile human society splinters into civil war, Nigel must uncover the secrets of the Fallers—before he is killed by the very people he has come to save.

The Abyss Beyond Dreams Details

Date : Published October 21st 2014 by Del Rey (first published 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Peter F. Hamilton

Format : Kindle Edition 641 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Space, Space Opera, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Abyss Beyond Dreams for online ebook

Claudia says

Adventures in the Void continue. But they are now taking place on Bienvenido, not Querencia.

Even though there are more or less the same features as in The Void trilogy and a lot more clichés than in PFH's other books, the adventures are as gripping as always and of course there are plenty elements of surprise. You'll find a lot of steampunk, nanotech, ANAdroids, telekinesis, time travel and Nigel :)

Lot of questions unanswered at the end so let's see what brings the last book in this universe.

Advice: if you are planning to read it, start at the beginning, and by beginning I mean the first book in **Commonwealth Universe series** which is Pandora's Star (Misspent Youth can be skipped, unless you are curious enough to see how rejuvenation started). Otherwise, a lot of things will not make sense and you'll miss the best part of this series.

Tamahome says

Here's the cover, Goodreads Librarian:

Update:

Thanks for all the likes everybody for my "review".

Liviu says

The Abyss Beyond Dreams (great and well deserved title given the content) is the first of a duology ending with Night Without Stars which I expect to advance the Commonwealth universe beyond the Evolutionary Void timeline, though for now we are still within it

High class sf combined with the Void magic like properties, an entertaining appearance from Paula Myo who helps Nigel (presumed gone with a colony fleet ~3000 AD but still in the Commonwealth semi-incognito in 3326 as per the blurb) manage a perfect heist (outside ANA borders obviously given who Paula Myo is) and get ***** to enhance the odds of success in his Void expedition (again per the blurb which is quite accurate as far as it goes)

Meantime (whatever that means obviously as the Void has its own time) inside the Void, Bienvenido already is a human planet about 3000 years old, with population descending from the Brandt colony ships (from about 500 years before in Commonwealth time as per above note about timelines) and the people there fight a continuous war against the local Fallers who are trapped also in the Void (we learn a lot about them as the book goes on and they are clearly set to be a powerful antagonist in future Commonwealth books if the author wants to write more)

A society with a mix of modern and magic - whatever tech that works plus the Void psychic capabilities - led by a corrupt aristocracy descended from the officers of the fleet of which The Captain (Philious, currently 77 - while their Advancer genes are slowly losing ground, people on Bienvenido still live longer than current humans) and his eldest son, The First Officer (sadistic villain Aothori), are at the top within a veneer of democracy in which the governing Citizen's Dawn party has no real political rivals

Heavily militarized due to the Fallers - huge eggs fall all the time from the strange forest like artifact in orbit and absorb humans and other animals, mimicking them perfectly - Bienvenido is resisting the Fallers relatively successfully for now, though there are dark rumors about Faller nests infiltrating cities.

Escaping from a close encounter with an egg as a green recruit - though losing one hand in the process and seeing his best friend from childhood ingested and becoming a Faller - lieutenant Slvasta is fanatical about fighting the Fallers in his province; very successful and attracting a large following from the regular soldiers who know their odds of surviving are the best under his command, he becomes an embarrassment to his lazy superiors so he is promoted to captain and shipped as regimental liaison to the capital Varlan.

Slvasta is still bugged by his last active mission where he was only partly successful as he eradicated the infestation but could not find the usual number of eggs and by an encounter with a strange trader and his entourage, trader who called himself by an unusual name - Nigel - and whom Slvasta proved that he was human by having him cut his finger (Faller blood is blue) but still suspected of having something to do with the missing eggs...

In the capital, Slvasta tries to change things and improve the odds of fighting the Fallers against bureaucratic obstacles, while being pulled into opposites by his friendship with a capable and less corrupt aristocratic officer and by his association with the humbler citizens too. Similarly he is pulled between a rich girl whom he would have a chance of marrying as she is only 5th daughter while Slavsta is something of a hero - marriage which would open him the path to ascension and eventually to lead a regiment or even more - and a humbler tax office girl whom he meets when he tries to find out more about "Nigel"...

And so it goes, lots of things happen, the novel is structured beautifully as it starts with a horror like chapter (quite relevant later too) in which the Fallers appear, followed by Nigel and Paula in the Commonwealth, then followed by Slvasta's odyssey and then things are pulled together masterfully

There is everything one wants in sf - great characters, mind bending stuff, adventure, politics, romance, revolution....

Just to give one example of the elements that make the book excellent, example that is not that spoilery - the Void has many odd properties compared to the regular universe (as we learned in the Void trilogy), however it needs internal consistency, so when even stranger things happen, the Void manufactures evidence of past things that actually never happened that way at least, or as Nigel puts it:

"That's how the Void outside the loop attempts to balance the books and make the present correct, to neutralize the paradox." He grinned savagely. "It's like the old Creationists claiming God laid down the dinosaur fossils a few thousand years ago."

(only here it actually happened/s....)

The ending is awesome and quite surprising in many ways and while obviously requiring the announced sequel, it has enough closure to be fully satisfying - given the end of The Evolutionary Void we know what

happens with the Void, and I was still quite surprised...

Overall just superb stuff, PFH in great form and a very balanced book between the sfnal human universe and the magic like Void with mostly new elements so no feeling of a retread of the Void trilogy or the original Commonwealth duology.

Top sf of the year so far

Christina says

What just happened? . This started out really good. Spaceship entering a "VOID"..mysterious things happening with time, Aliens chewing and eating people, frantic escapes to the planet, body doubles, etc...super fast paced, and although i was confused at times, was really getting into it ...then..BAM! i got to book 3 , which is about 140 pages in, and i was suddenly constantly repeating "wft? " and "i have no idea what is going on" and " what happened to Laura? and Nigel? and who the fk is Slvasta? " ..what seemed like a whole new story began in book 3: New characters, new places, new terms. I have no idea what happened. I pushed myself through, but found myself skimming and completely bored until book 4 which is at around page 260..then i could not force myself to read anymore. Horrible, choppy , story; no flow whatsoever.

A total disappointment.

Mark Medina says

Good, not awesome.

Enjoyable but not outstanding. Continues the story of the void begun in previous commonwealth books. Some of the same characters, and lots of new ones. Action moves to a different planet within the void, and introduces New bad guys. A bit over long for what it is, but still a worthwhile read.

Sarah says

ESP + Telepathy + Telekinesis + Sobbing, Hysterical Women = DNF @ 16%

The women in this were absolutely absurd. Over-emotional, tantrums, hysteria, sobbing... Hamilton tried to write it off as the void affecting them but then why were only the women hysterical? And why did the remaining man stay rational? It was a huge contrast to Pushing Ice and Reynolds's extremely well written women.

What a horrible experience, if brief.

Jack Tripper says

While *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* is technically the seventh novel in the Commonwealth saga (which began with 2002's *Misspent Youth*), it still makes for a more-than-suitable entry point into the universe, as Hamilton does an excellent job getting the reader up to speed on all the future-tech and lingo, the history of the Commonwealth, and the nature of the mysterious Void, a black hole-like spatial anomaly about which not much at all is known, other than the fact that it's expanding, and that an ancient race known as the Raiel have been guarding it for a million years. Past expeditions into the Void by the Raiel have failed, as none have ever returned.

All the background exposition is seamlessly integrated into the story, which mostly takes place in the same time-frame as the recent Void Trilogy, though it begins a couple hundred years earlier, opening with 90 pages of pure horror. There's an eerie, ominous intensity here that's rarely equaled in modern SF (or modern horror for that matter). Science-team members aboard the giant starship Vermillion -- on a mission to found a new settlement away from the Commonwealth -- are prematurely brought out of suspension to find that the ship has somehow been sucked into the Void, even though their flight path took them nowhere within light-years of it. They don't know how this is possible, but they do know that no one's ever made it out. They soon discover that the Void is exponentially larger on the inside, like a Möbius strip, and that basic laws of physics like temporal flow are out of whack. They also suddenly have telepathic and telekinetic powers, able to read one another's thoughts and move objects with their minds. But as fascinating as all this is to the group of scientists, things take a horrific turn when [Early, vague SPOILER] they decide to investigate a strange anomaly/organism floating in space. Suddenly their lives are turned into living nightmares, and no one can trust their crew mates, as they may not be what they seem. They may be monstrous doppelgängers. [End SPOILER]

And that's just the opening pages of this inspired, epic novel, which then jumps ahead a couple centuries (to the time-period of the Void Trilogy), shifts from viewpoint to viewpoint, spread across thousands of light-years, and re-introduces the reader to some familiar faces, like the 1300 year-old Nigel Sheldon, possibly the single most powerful person in the Commonwealth, and the bizarre Raiel, the alien race which, with the help of Nigel, may just be ready to once again investigate the Void, due to the dreams/visions of the human prophet Inigo, and their mind-blowing implications. The world-building is exceptional, as can be expected from this author, but what really struck me was the characterization, which was surprisingly deft compared to other modern space opera writers. I cared about the fate of these characters, which isn't always the case for me, particularly in this sub-genre, due to the dissociation I sometimes feel when reading about such far-flung, alien worlds. Hamilton manages to retain the human element amidst all the techno-wizardry.

Though I've read Hamilton before, this was my first Commonwealth novel, and yet never did I feel overwhelmed or lost. *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* does a great job of familiarizing the reader with this fully-realized, immersive world, and unlike some past efforts by this author, its 600-plus pages are tightly-paced and mostly free of bloat, maintaining a high tension level and a sense of wonder throughout, a sense of wonder matched only in my experience by such classic SF novels as *Hyperion*, *Dune*, and *Anathem*. I'm not ready to put it quite at the level of those just yet, as the story's only half-complete, but I do know I'll be revisiting it again and again in the future. Here's hoping the second half of this story delivers.

For now, though, I'm off to read the rest of the Commonwealth novels.

4.5 Stars

Monica says

This review was originally published on Avid Reviews: <http://www.avidfantasyreviews.wordpress.com>

For those of you who have never heard of Peter F. Hamilton, he is a giant within the science fiction genre, and specialist in space operas in particular. In *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* Hamilton returns to the Commonwealth and the universe of his acclaimed Void Trilogy with the first installment of Chronicle of the Fallers, a new two-part series. *Abyss* is perfect both for fans of Hamilton's work and for new readers; the events of this novel expand on the story and setting of the Void Trilogy, but Hamilton gives enough background to make the story easy to follow for readers that are new to the Commonwealth. This impressive novel lives up to Hamilton's reputation and gives the reader all they could ever want in a science fiction story and more: an alien landscape with magic-like properties, a fascinating and engaging plot, wonderful characterization, plenty of adventure, a dash of politics, and a story on an epic scale.

The story takes place in the year 3326, where interplanetary travel is possible and the Commonwealth reigns. In the center of the galaxy is the Void, a place once thought to be a black hole, where the laws of physics do not always apply and magic-like mental powers are commonplace. The story follows Nigel Sheldon, one of the famous founders of the Commonwealth. When he is visited by the Raiel, the self-appointed guardians of the Void, they convince him to journey into the Void to search for the existence of a colony of vessels that were pulled into the alien landscape and lost. But when Nigel discovers that humans are not the only life-forms to have been sucked into the Void, he realizes he must discover the secrets of the murderous alien Fallers in order to find a way to destroy the threat of the Void to the Commonwealth forever. But the fragile human society is soon forced into civil war by the relentless attacks of the Fallers, and Nigel is suddenly in danger of being killed by the very people he has come to save.

I was impressed with this novel's seamless blend of space opera, fantasy, and horror. It is a story that will appeal to a wide audience because of its amalgamation of many different story elements, rich and detailed world building, and shocking plot twists that will guarantee the reader will want to devour the next installment in the series as soon as it is released. Hamilton also does a wonderful job of tying together several different plot lines and characters despite the fact that these different POVs and situations are spread far apart in the story progression. When Hamilton does come back to a specific plot element or character, it is often to give the reader an explanation that suddenly opens up his understanding of the story in a major way. He makes sure to give the reader plenty of "Oh wow!" and "That's why that happened!" moments that are the mark of a truly engrossing story.

Though this novel will be most likely be more enjoyable to the readers who have already read the Void trilogy and are familiar with the Commonwealth, Hamilton writes in a way that makes *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* accessible and enjoyable to new readers as well. If you do enjoy this novel, I would definitely recommend reading the rest of Hamilton's Commonwealth novels in order to gain a greater understanding of the world building and nuances behind this story. There is some debate on whether or not this novel can be read as a standalone, and though I found that Hamilton gave plenty of background for new readers, if you do have trouble with this book I recommend giving the Void Trilogy a try. Hamilton is a really fantastic writer who has perfected the space opera into an art form, and any fan of science fiction would be terribly missing out by not giving his work a try.

My rating: 8/10

I received a copy of this novel from Netgalley and the publisher in return for an honest review.

SciFi Kindle says

Like Hamilton's earlier Void trilogy, this story is largely set in the pocket universe of The Void, where electronics and other post-19th century technology fails, and society has developed around ubiquitous psychic ability. Hamilton avoids continuity problems by devising an independent planet, Bienvenido, within the same Void as the earlier stories on which to stage the action. Here, all the same physical Void laws remain the same, but have slightly different nomenclature. Likewise, a similar social structure has arisen in Bienvenido to that of the earlier novels' Querencia; a corrupt aristocracy with limited democratic dressing. Astonishingly, he also carries over the same archetype for his main protagonist; an idealist young lawman who enters the lion's den city as an outsider intent on reform. The main situational difference between Querencia and Bienvenido is the ongoing threat of 'Fallers', alien pod-people who murder and assume the shape of their victims. Some sentimental wish fulfillment is introduced when a super-capable Nigel Sheldon appears on the scene from the outside universe. His Commonwealth technology is largely functional in the Void due to some effective planning, and he proceeds to manipulate people and events in order to stop these Fallers and break everyone free from the Void.

While it's enjoyable to watch Nigel outsmart every other character in the book, it kind of reduces the drama to see him so wildly under-matched. The pacing often felt rushed as well, with several years of machinations compressed down to a few pages in order to hasten events. I think the story works best when it leans into the SF genre and away from the Fantasy one: The Commonwealth scenes are just more entertaining to me than the horseback ones. One notable exception can be found in the most interesting moment of the whole story, the discovery in the Desert of Bones. Here there is depth and wonder worthy of the Space Opera genre.

My biggest surprise with this story is how proximate it is to the Void trilogy. While it is technically set in between the Starflyer and Void episodes of Hamilton's Commonwealth stories, it isn't the narrative bridge I had expected. The readers who will enjoy this story most are those who preferred the Void stories, appreciating a good dose of Fantasy with their SF.

Cathy says

The first one hundred pages were good, I thought I was getting back into the fascinated science fiction universe that I'd spent thousands of pages exploring with this author before. My curiosity was ramping up as I saw pieces of the past being pulled into what appeared to be an exciting new mystery and the puzzle pieces seemed to be assembling. And then...the rest of the book is a boring and totally stereotypical revolution full of comrades and cells and people I don't care about in a city I don't care about on a world I don't care about. All of my early excitement drained away into a plodding determination to keep reading because surely something interesting was coming, surely the pieces of this huge sweeping millennia long science fiction saga were all going to fall into place and fit together, but this huge book is almost entirely a dull fantasy story with nothing original in it. *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* did revolution decades ago, that was interesting and stirring and short! What does this add to revolutions? And even the stuff about Nigel is so slight that it's practically incidental, there wasn't enough to make me care about him. There wasn't enough about any of the characters to me care about them. The only emotion in any of it was in what happened to Laura, and that was barely a few pages here and there. It's an extremely disappointing book.

Chris Berko says

My eleventh Peter F Hamilton book and structurally it is unlike all the others. At first I thought it was going to be the first below five star read from him but by the finale all was forgiven and redemption was had. I love the way he writes, I love long multi-volume stories, and I just bought the second in this series. Great stuff!

***Absorbed in Countless Worlds* says**

Awesome, as in f*****g great!

Jason says

4 Stars

The Abyss Beyond Dreams by Peter Hamilton is yet another science fiction novel tailor made for me and my interests. This is book one in the Commonwealth: Chronicle of the Fallers series duology. I scored this book only 4 Stars as it does suffer some pacing issues(not uncommon in a Hamilton novel), as well as a few minor quirks. But, make no mistake, for my enjoyment, this was a perfect book that I loved and couldn't put down. There are some incredible portions of this story that are mind blowing and so freaking cool. Then there is a tremendous amount of slow time spent one geo-politics that is quite dry and boring. Overall, The Abyss Beyond Dreams picks up where the Commonwealth duology ends.(Those two books were one story nearly 2400 pages in length).

The first 25% of this book is science fiction space opera action that was thrilling to read. The second quarter introduces us to all the players. The third quarter is very slow. And the final quarter brings things together with some action to a satisfying conclusion. Of course it is not the end as the story goes on in the second book of the duology.

The Void:

"‘Yes. As far as we understand, it’s some kind of micro-universe with a very different quantum structure to spacetime outside. Thought can interact with reality at some fundamental level, which is why we’ve suddenly acquired all these mental powers.’ ‘By the action of watching, the observer affects the reality of that which is watched,’ she whispered."

The science :

"‘This layer, where we exist, is only one of them. The Heart, where you say your soul lives on in glory after death, that’s another. But there are two more layers that are critical here: the memory layer and the creation layer. The memory layer stores everything: you, your thoughts, your body’s atomic structure. And the creation layer, well, that can take a version of you from any moment of your life and physically manifest it.’"

Potential spoiler quote that is freaking cool :

"‘Yes. As soon as Shuttle Fourteen entered the Forest, it got entangled in the loop. There’s a place in the memory layer, a subsection where she repeats that whole experience every twenty-seven hours and forty-two minutes. It creates her, and makes her and the science team relive the same section of their expedition every time. Sonofabitch, they started over every twenty-seven hours and forty-two minutes for the last three thousand years. That’s . . . just . . . damn!’"

Peter Hamilton is one of my very favorite authors period. The Abyss Beyond Dreams will be loved by all fans of his writing. Unfortunately, this book really shouldn't be read unless you have already completed the massive Commonwealth duology. I loved this book and I love everything Hamilton writes.

Carolyn F. says

Audiobook

Oh my gosh this book was long! And I agree with other reviewers that this is a book within a book within a book. The beginning was good - at first I thought it would be in the vein of Alien with lots of blood and gore. Then the next "book" started which I did not find very interesting at all and if this were a physical book I would have stopped reading it about a third of the way in. All of the lives intersect neatly in the end - too neatly. It's like the author had to justify all of these seemingly extraneous characters - most of whom were boring. I am not interested in the slightest to see how this series progresses.

Metaphorosis says

reviews.metaphorosis.com

3 stars

At the request of the alien Raiel, human genius Nigel Sheldon enters the Void - a strange section of the universe where normal laws do not apply. Within the void, on the planet Bienvenido, a determined young man fights to protect his world from the dangerous Fallers.

Authors often feel compelled to tell the same story again and again. Sometimes literally the same story, from

a different viewpoint (as in Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Shadow*). More often, it's the same plot dressed up with different characters (as in L.E. Modesitt's *Recluce* series, or almost anything by K.J. Parker). I don't necessarily object to that approach - I keep buying Parker's stories as they appear, and I like them all; I bought the entire *Recluce* series in e-form when it was on sale recently.

If you're going to tell the same story, though, you have to somehow make it new. Peter Hamilton treads pretty close to the edge in this book. If you read his *Void* trilogy, you'll recall Edeard, the young man from the country who gathers power to fight against injustice in the big city. In *Abyss*, we have Slvasta, a young man from the country who gathers power to fight against injustice in the big city.

It's impossible to believe that Hamilton didn't recognize the similarities; Edeard is specifically referred to here - Nigel has experienced all of the dreams about him. Yet Hamilton offers no real comment, no nod to the fact that he's covered this ground before. To be fair, the details have changed - Edeard gathered telekinetic power, while Slvasta aims for political power - and the hidden powers are quite different. But the foreground characters and the society are very similar. For much of the book, I wondered what Hamilton was trying to show us, other than that power corrupts.

Similarity aside, the book is entertaining and well written. It focuses mostly on the Void (the strength of the *Void* trilogy), and far less on the Commonwealth (the *Void* trilogy's weakness). The story is interesting, the characters appealing. The philosophy is pretty straightforward (much as in Modesitt's *Recluce* books, good and bad are clearcut), which is attractive on a small scale, but works less well as the book goes on. Hamilton introduces some difficult moral decisions, but then decides to pass them by rather than actually examining them.

Hamilton seems to assume (probably correctly) that most people will have already read the *Void* series - he provides a the key background filler, but when his characters enter the Void, they figure out its properties with remarkable speed. Some other insta-knowledge is equally off-putting, but is clarified later in the book. Hamilton does get carried away with some minor jokes that feel out of place ("comrade", "sheriff procedurals"). Some of the pseudo-science could do with a little more handwaving (enzyme-bonded concrete made out of ... pretty much anything? what is that?). There are one or two strange cultural errors (tacos as a no-crumb space food? maybe he means burritos). Some key decisions in the book (e.g., a trip by Slvasta) seem highly unlikely, and weaken the story. I give Hamilton credit for trying to introduce some racial variety, but it doesn't quite work out. For one thing, skin color is never noted unless it's black. For another, the planet was populated by a very small group; after many generations, the population is likely fairly homogenous.

All in all, a decent start to a new duology. Despite the disappointing conclusion of the *Void* trilogy, Hamilton has maintained enough interest in the Void that I could see reading the second book of this set - in part because it promises to escape the "Edeard Take Two" structure of this book. If you haven't read any Commonwealth or Void stories before, you'll be fine with this and should enjoy it. If you've read the *Void* trilogy and want more of the (very much) same, this is it. If you were only mildly interested in the *Void*, or if you're looking for something startling or original, look elsewhere.

NB: Received free copy from Net Galley.
