



Gemworld, Book One

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Dazzling to behold, Gemworld is one of the wonders of the Federation: an artificial world composed entirely of crystal, its atmosphere held in place by a sophisticated network of force fields. Home to a half dozen different sentient races, this singular world is a low-gravity playpen of mammoth spires, endless fractal staircases, gemstone arcs, and dazzling prisms, all carefully nurtured by the planet's many inhabitants -- until now. Lieutenant Melora Pozlor, who previously served on "Deep Space Nine(TM)," is currently stationed aboard the "Starship Enterprise(TM)" where an urgent telepathic summons alerts her to the danger threatening her homeworld.

The crystals that once sheltered her people, and several other alien species, are now growing at a vastly accelerated and uncontrollable rate, wreaking havoc throughout the planet. Captain Picard orders the "Enterprise" on a rescue mission to Gemworld, but they arrive to find a world in chaos -- and an unexpected menace that traps the crew of the "Enterprise" along with the fragile civilization they hoped to save!

Gemworld, Book One Details

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From Reader Review Gemworld, Book One for online ebook

Rob says

My first foray into the world of Star Trek literature, and what a place to start. Gemworld is a fascinating planet, multiple species, no gravity, and a shell protecting the air inside. However all this adds to complications when sabotage occurs. It is up to Picard and the crew of the Enterprise to save the day.

John Cipolla says

Very fast paced read. Its a Picard save the world type of story . Enterprise and planet are held together near a rift. Melora's character is very interesting. These are her people the enterprise is saving. The people look upon her as a hero because they are a closed society. So closed that they create their own problems. The shell programming is damaged and guarded by 6 people that know its secrets.

Angela says

The Enterprise goes to Gemworld, a world full of crystals that is dying. The planet really is unusual with 6 sentient species and low gravity. All characters act like you expect, and there's a character that was a guest star in DS9.

A good read.

Jimyanni says

This is a well-written book based on the moderately interesting (but completely implausible) concept of a world without gravity that nonetheless has a "native" species that is humanoid. Even given that it eventually admits that they are not truly native to the planet, I would expect them, over the millennia that they have inhabited the planet, to have diverged more from the human norm than they have. The book also features Reg Barkley prominently, which I consider a bug rather than a feature; if you LIKE the character of Barkley, you might consider this a four-star review, although even then I'm not so sure. And as a final drawback, it is a "continued next time" story, which I've always hated. Again, if you don't share my dislike of books that "end" in mid-story and require us to buy another book to see the end of the story, take my rating with a grain of salt.

Robert says

There seem to be a lot of people out there who don't care much for the writing of John Vornholt. In this Gemworld book, the difficulty seems to be more that Barclay is one of the major characters. The awkwardness of Barclay's character seems to take over when passages deal with him for any length of time. So the reader has to allow for it.

But with that one caveat, Gemworld Book One has a lot going for it. The scene is a planet made up of crystals. One does not get to see all six races in this volume, but what one does see is exotic enough, and the clue is mysteriously asked, whether all these races could have possibly originated on this world.

We are also given the hint that the malevolent inter-dimensional being in the rift is trying to communicate after a fashion.

So by the end of Book One, we are left without knowing which Senior Engineer is the saboteur, without knowing how the Enterprise is going to save the day, without having met the last of the six races, without knowing why the malevolent being is so upset, and a few other things.

The end of Book One is not a nice ending such as the ending of The Fellowship of the Ring or the ending of Star Wars Episode 4. But it is also such that one doesn't waste too much time before picking up the beginning of Book Two. And an author who makes you want to do that, however subliminally, isn't all bad.

David says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/10514828>

Joshua Palmatier says

I have to say that John Vornholt is not one of my favorite Star Trek writers, so I started reading this duology called **Gemworld** with a little trepidation. I was mildly surprised. The writing was at a higher level than the last book I read by him (I can't remember which book that was), although it didn't pass into spectacular. But what really surprised me was the actual plot elements and the detail of the world he created here.

The books focus on the remains of an ancient water world, where the water has mostly evaporated away, leaving behind crystalline structures with liquid marrow trapped inside and an atmosphere held in place by a lattice of forcefields. The mass of the planet is so low that it basically has no gravity. I don't have enough of a science background to know whether this setup is even possible, but it was intriguing enough to hold my attention.

In any case, something has happened and now mutant crystal is growing at an increasing rate, threatening to destroy the entire planet. Melora, one of the inhabitants of the planet who has joined Star Fleet (and who first appeared in an episode of Deep Space Nine), and Deanna receive a dream distress call and the *Enterprise* sidetracks to investigate.

Upon their arrival, they are immediately nearly destroyed by a mysterious dimensional rift that doesn't appear on their sensors, but it spewing dark matter toward the planet, which the massive shield that keeps the planet in one piece uses to help keep its inhabitants alive. The problem is that there's too much dark matter, and the shield is converting the excess into the mutant crystal. But no one can figure out why.

The story unfolds from there. The best aspect of the two books is the world itself and the inhabitants. Having no gravity except on the *Enterprise* and its shuttles gives an interesting twist to the investigation. Having the *Enterprise* and its shuttles flying about in atmosphere, with the crew able to work on repairs and learn about the world without the need of spacesuits was also interesting. As pointed out in the book, this would be a perfect starbase. So in the "oh, cool" scale, the books have a huge wow factor that sparks the imagination.

My problems with the book, which I overlooked while reading because of the wow factor, all have to do with the writing. Some of the key plot elements are "discovered" so much as stated or asserted. For example, the dimensional rift. There was never an investigation into what was generating the dark matter, and it was said repeatedly that the rift didn't register on their sensors . . . so how did they know what it was? How did they know it led to another dimension? There were a few other elements like this in the books. It would have been simple to fix something like this, and I don't see why that wasn't done. Most of the character's emotional states were also just stated, rather than shown, which made the emotional content of the book kind of flat. I didn't like the "romance" aspects of the book either, especially in book 2. Not that I don't like romance elements, but it just felt somewhat cheesy.

But as I said, the wow factor is great enough that you can overlook, or at least "overread", these other aspects. There's a good plot here overall, with plenty of twists and turns, especially in book 2. (Book 1 is mostly setup.) Not the greatest Star Trek books I've ever read, but definitely fun.

Maurice Jr. says

I love Star Trek books that introduce a previously "unseen" planet. A good author can take you there in such a way that you can not only see the planet as they describe it, but you can even feel like you're there. Having read this, I feel like I've now been to Gemworld.

Lieutenant Melora Pazlar is the only Elaysian in Starfleet. She's from the low gravity planet Gemworld, and as such, has to wear a special gravity countering suit to be able to function in what we consider normal gravity. Her current assignment is to the Enterprise, to assist with some upcoming low gravity experiments they have upcoming. However, an unusual emergency call from home pushes all those plans aside. Lt. Pazlar receives a telepathic distress message from a Lipul, one of the five species her people share Gemworld with. It comes as a dream, which is no surprise- the Lipuls are known by the Federation to do their interstellar exploration telepathically in "dreamships." She enlists Lt. Reg Barclay to help her speak to Captain Picard, but it takes Counselor Troi receiving her own dreamship visit to convince Captain Picard to believe her. He reroutes the Enterprise to Gemworld to see if they can help.

Gemworld is composed of crystals held together by a shell, a complex array of crystals and force fields. The shell collects dark matter and other energy to keep the planet going. They worship the shell as their Sacred Protector; it has kept Gemworld alive long past the time when the oceans dried up and the land went fallow. Now, for the first time in millennia, the shell is malfunctioning. A rift has opened in space near Gemworld that threatens to destroy the planet by unleashing a deadly barrage of thoron radiation.

Pazlar guides an away team to her enclave, where they discover a horrible truth. The shell has been sabotaged to keep drawing dark matter in an endless loop until it destroys their world. It could only have been done by one of the six Senior Engineers- one representing each race on Gemworld.

Tangre Bertoran, the Elaysian Peer (leader) and proxy for the Gendlai Senior Engineer, refuses to believe that the Sacred Protector could be at fault and inhibits their efforts to discover the truth. Unfortunately for Bertoran, the truth is that the shell is the problem, and the best way to save the planet is to shut down the shell just long enough to reboot and turn it back on. Pazlar and the Enterprise crew crisscross the planet to locate the other Senior Engineers and get from them the jewels that they carry. The jewels are the keys needed to shut down the shell.

In the first of a two part story, Picard, Barclay, Pazlar, Data and Troi are the main ones involved in the effort to save Gemworld. Troi is immobilized by contact with something from the rift and confined to sickbay. Her communication though could be key to resolving things.

Picard and company meet a Lipul (looks like a big, sentient jellyfish and lives inside the crystal), a Yiltern (composite creatures, each composed of hundreds of batlike forms), some Alpusta (huge spiderlike creatures) and the Gendlii, a large fungal lifeform. It stays where it originally rooted when it drifted to Gemworld, and needs proxies such as Tangre Bertoran to reach out to the rest of the planet.

When a plan conceived by Bertoran fails (resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Alpusta), the search for the Senior Engineers becomes more critical. Unfortunately, the first one they find is the Elaysian Engineer Zuka Juno, and he's dead.

Part Two can't come fast enough for me- I need to know who killed the man :-)

Howlin' Mad says

reg barclay FTW!!!!

K says

Decent TNG novel. A little slow at times, and other times, fast paced. I enjoyed seeing Barclay have a more lead character roll. I also enjoyed the authors lack of introduction for each character (Geordi's blindness, etc.) and not over using Data and his mannerisms. 4.25/5

Marcello Tarot says

Quando Gemworld uscì, fu accompagnato da un certo battage pubblicitario, al punto che mi spinse a comprarlo anche perché le recensioni che avevo letto erano tutte piuttosto positive anche se un po' strane, e ora – a lettura avvenuta – posso capire perché.

Premetto che ho letto questa coppia di libri parecchio tempo fa, e che non mi sarei sognato di farne una recensione se non fosse che mi è capitato di inserire un riferimento al romanzo mentre recensivo Dark Passions (v.), anche perché non è che ricordi tanto bene la storia.

Ciò che senza ombra di dubbio salva il romanzo è lo stile di Vornholt, sempre chiaro anche quando deve dare descrizioni complesse di un ambiente che spesso ricorda più il fantasy che non la fantascienza. Elaysia viene talvolta dipinto in paesaggi mozzafiato, scritti talmente bene che sembra di vederli, ma lo stesso vale anche per le scene o gli esseri più raccapriccianti che quasi ti fanno voler allontanare fisicamente il libro da te per distaccarti da quell'ambiente a tratti spaventoso (sarà che quando leggo mi immergo totalmente nel libro, evadendo dalla realtà circostante? ^_^;).

Le sei razze che popolano il pianeta vengono tratteggiate con cura, e forse ciò che può non piacere è che si tratta di esseri talmente lontani dall'antropomorfismo da sapere a priori che non li si potrebbe mai incontrare in un episodio delle varie serie. Forse vengono tratteggiate con fin troppa cura, perché alla fine risultano farla da padrone togliendo lo spotlight dai protagonisti cui siamo affezionati e dei quali vogliamo leggere le avventure.

Oltre al dramma umano e alieno, il romanzo presenta un giallo, ed è proprio questa la parte costruita peggio: solitamente non leggo gialli pertanto le poche volte che mi capita mi sembra quasi tutto nuovo e non arrivo mai a individuare il colpevole. In questo caso invece verso i tre quarti del primo libro avevo capito chi fosse il responsabile dei tragici avvenimenti; la soluzione mi sembrava talmente ovvia che mi ero detto che sicuramente stavo sbagliando perché doveva trattarsi di una pista per fuorviare i novellini come me. Ci sono rimasto malissimo quando – giunto alla fine del libro – ho avuto la conferma che il colpevole era invece proprio quello che pensavo!

Per concludere, consiglio il libro a chi vuole leggere qualcosa di diverso e che esuli dai canoni Trek cui siamo abituati, volendosi gustare qualcosa di fantasy e una punta di horror. Lo sconsiglio a tutti gli altri e in particolar modo ai divoratori di gialli!!

Chuck says

Standard fare.

Mikael Kuoppala says

The two Gemworld books must be the most visual Star Trek novels I've ever read.

Imagine a planet that is so old it has to be artificially maintained by growing magnificent chrystral formations to keep the hollow planet from deteriorating into extinction. Due to the low mass of the planet there is virtually no gravity, and the six very different species that inhabit it are constasntly "flying" through the chrystral formations.

Sounds like a fairy-tale?

Well, it is. But the childishness is an acceptable side-effect considering the ideal setting and fascinating sci-fi concepts that produce it.

Unfortunately the story doesn't quite live up to the setting. We get the usual sabotage/murder mystery we have seen so many times. And the plot is often just as childish as the setting. Fortunately that plot is structured well, and the exellent use of three good characters make this book one of the most entertaining ones in a long time. It's nice to see some more rarely used characters from time to time, instead the old and recycled ones.

But the writing.

The first few chapters of the book cause pain for the reader, because the writing of John Vornholt- who has proven himself to be quite a good prosaist before- is absolutely unprofessional.

But in the end, I recommend this unique, and entertaining book, that offers the most beautiful mental landscapes imaginable.

Adam says

It would appear I'm not alone in my dislike for John Vornholt's writing style, however the first installment in his "Gemworld" duology managed to surprise me.

Elaysian Melora Pazlar makes a return to the Trek universe, promoted to Lieutenant and serving onboard the Enterprise for an upcoming mission of scientific importance. After receiving telepathic contact from one of the sentient species on her homeworld - the titular Gemworld - Pazlar convinces Picard that the planet is in danger. Responding with all due haste, the crew arrive to find a deadly dimensional rift in the locality which is causing the planet to destabilize.

Gemworld is a tour-de-force in worldbuilding: Vornholt has crafted a unique, complex and fascinating society which is rather dazzling to imagine. On Melora's homeplanet, six sentient species have co-evolved in peace over millennia and all inhabit a bizarre crystalline psuedo-planet which make it possible to traverse to the very "core" of the world under negligible gravity. There's some wonderful descriptive prose outlining the appearance of the planet and the associated non-humanoid species. This sort of setting would have crippled any television show's budget and is perfectly suited to the theater of the mind through the written word.

Melora's character is very true to her one-time Deep Space Nine appearance: opinionated and slightly hot-headed, but fiercely intelligent and proud of her species. The author throws Reg Barclay into the mix as a romantic foil to balance out her brashness; for the most part, this is successful, although his mannerisms and dialogue border on annoying and clichéd in several scenes.

I enjoyed the "Renaissance Man" parallels drawn with the species of Gemworld: here is a collection of species who achieved technological greatness in a by-gone age, but who have regressed to superstition and ignorance. Their reverence for the sphere which protects their planet ("The Sacred Protector") was well written, and a nice allegory for many cultures on Earth who are all too ready to revere that which they don't understand.

The crew's primary adversary, Peer of the Jeptah Tangre Bertoran, is somewhat underdeveloped and his grievances and protective nature seem slightly simplistic, although perhaps that's to be expected when it comes to superstitious characters?

I was underwhelmed with Deanna Troi's B-story, although it's clearly linked to the larger story of the dimensional rift. While the scene of her trashing her quarters was half-disturbing half-comical, we've seen it all before - it's basically a mashup of TNG's "Man of the People" and "Night Terrors". Consequently, the resulting coma scenes in sickbay don't really resonate and left me ambivalent when it came to caring about the outcome.

Oh, and one final point - Vornholt really overuses certain descriptive phrases. We hear Riker being referred to as the "big man" one too many times, likewise with Picard pursing his "thin lips". But this is John Vornholt, and if that's my worse observation from the book, then my expectations have already been surpassed!
