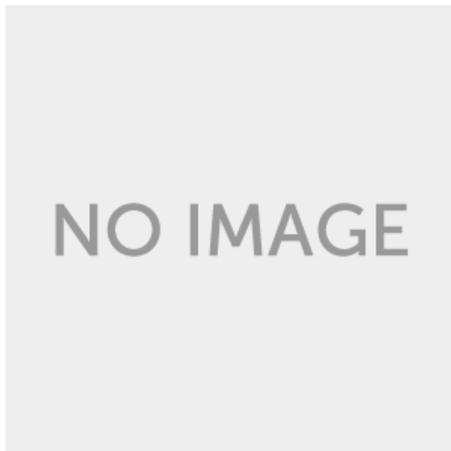


## Wolfbane, by C. M Kornbluth



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Victor Gollancz, London, 1973. British edition, hardcover. Something of a minor sf classic, by the heralded team of Pohl and Kornbluth. First serialized in Galaxy Science Fiction, October and November 1957. The Earth has been torn away from the Sun, kidnapped by a runaway planet , whose inhabitants - enigmatic, utterly alien Pyramids - have their own plans for Earth's resources. And humankind, depending for warmth on a constantly renewed but woefully inadequate Moon, wracked by hunger and ruled by a slavish conformity to tradition, is dying out. But there are those who defy convention and refuse to give in. Feared and persecuted by the ordinary citizens, these 'Wolves' are preparing to fight back against the Pyramids.



## Reviews of the **Wolfbane**, by C. M Kornbluth

one life

I normally like Pohl & Kornbluth but this is too far off the beaten path (or any path) for my taste. Aliens have kidnapped the Earth and taken it into extrasolar space, where it forms a system with the alien planet and the moon, which the aliens have transformed into a renewable sun. The authors portray the resultant culture quite well. The citizens employ an elaborate etiquette to reduce friction

in a society barely on the subsistence level. Wolves don't fit in, either because of greed or ambition. Glenn Tropic is between the two groups although moving to wolf. Citizens spend much of their time meditating and occasionally "an Eye," forms in the air above one and that person is "translated." They disappear but no one knows what happens to them. They are fairly certain that a "Pyramid" on Mount Everest has something to do with it. Tropic joins the Wolves, who never Translate -- until Tropic does. Then, people associated with Tropic start translating. The Pyramids, or perhaps aliens controlling the Pyramids, use people as components in their system to run the worlds. Tropic manages to radically change the system but the ending does not truly feel like it solves the problems.

Zololmaran

Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth are probably best known for two of their collaborations, "The Space Merchants" and "Gladiator-at-Law," two scathing satires of 1950s American capitalism which were not only funny send-ups of advertising (Merchants) and the legal profession (Gladiator) but also fast-paced adventures set in a future (but all-too-recognizable) America. "Wolfbane" is not nearly as well known, but is at least as good as those two classics, albeit very different in tone. The social satire is not nearly as pronounced in "Wolfbane," a story of a future earth that has been literally stolen from its orbit by unseen aliens. The sociological element is still there-- the book begins by imagining the type of society that would grow up in a world full of privation, in which humans are helpless victims of aliens who are unseen and inscrutable-- but the caustic criticism of 1950s America is replaced by an almost elegiac tone. As the book goes on, the tone changes, as one man slowly learns that it is possible to rebel against the aliens. I hear echoes of this book in a lot of later science fiction (including the "Matrix" films), but the novel has dated much less than most SF of its era. Highly recommended.

Kann

This book is from the "Golden Age" of Science Fiction. Its only about 150 pages long. Which is about the average for that time period (compared to 400 pages now). It is also a self contained novel, as apposed to the serial books published now - which use the same cast in multiplul books.

I first read this when I was a kid. It held up beatuffly.

If you wold like to see what Science Fiction used to like, this book won't disappoint. Or simply just read a very good book.

Nalmezar

It's easy to miss the point of Kornbluth and Pohl's "Wolfbane". Sure, a starving humanity stratifies itself into "sheep" and "wolves." Still, the falsity of that stratification and - in fact - all dualities is at the heart of the book and really what these two brilliant sci-fi authors are trying to tell us.

The good news for sci-fi fans is we get a fascinating problem. A rogue planet pops into the solar system and steals Earth from orbit and there's nothing mankind can do. After all our weapons prove useless and no one returns from an invasion of the rogue planet, most of the human population dies out due to a dwindling food supply in the dwindling starlight as the solar system fades into the distance. And so we have a post-apocalyptic vision - shuffling drones and those few who rebel.

However, AFTER that set-up is when things really get good. The authors set up this almost insurmountable problem and then solve it. However, there's a deeper point here. At first, there seems to be an inherent criticism of meditation, but then the table turns in a way that you can only get in Sci-fi. Kornbluth and Pohl seem to ask us what's the difference between a wolf in sheep's clothing or a sheep in wolf's clothing - especially if you can't tell the difference? Thought-provoking stuff from sci-fi masters.

Quellik

On settling down with this novel (on recommendation, I think I recall, of Instapundit) I enjoyed the

flash of recognition of the classic SF style. Written well, with interesting, unexplained phenomenology (mysterious pyramids, Earth moving from the Solar System), followed by a "rational" "scientific" explanation within a sharply constrained set of premises. Unfortunately, perhaps because the length of this novel is probably 1/3 of a contemporary SF novel, the character development is limited. Also, the ending is consistent with the narrative arc but without any unforeseen twists and therefore markedly anticlimactic. All in all, the pleasure from the first four fifths of the novel outweighed the weaker ending.

Ber

Very good sci-fi that I recommend to everyone that will listen.

Snake Rocking

I would never describe Wolfbane as great literature but it does have staying power. I read Wolfbane more than 35 years ago and still think of the novel's plot and ideas from time to time. It probably has the greatest appeal to young men who are feeling rebellious and nonconformist. But we all need help figuring out human nature and deciding what kind of human being we want to be. This is what makes Wolfbane a good read.

Too bad it's out of print--an interesting angle to the invading-aliens-make-us-docile story. Worth looking for.

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