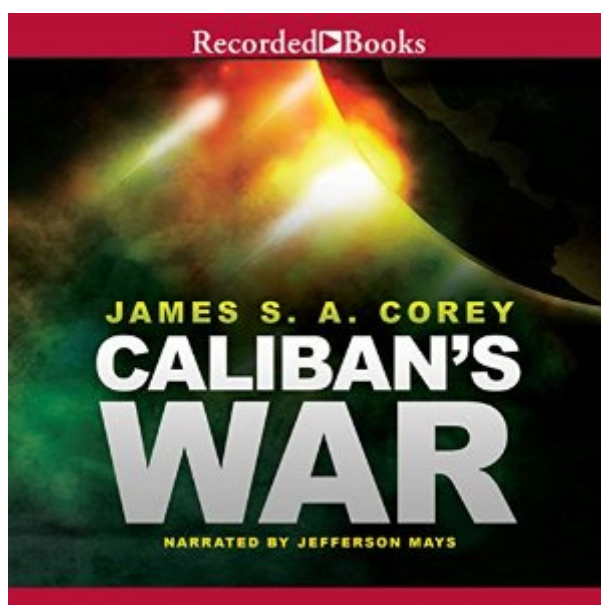


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Caliban's War: The Expanse, Book 2



Synopsis

James S.A. Corey's best-selling hit *Leviathan Wakes* earned Hugo and Locus Award nominations. In *Caliban's War*, the second chapter of Corey's *Expanse* series, a desperate Earth politician works tirelessly to prevent war from reigniting. Meanwhile, upheaval takes root on Venus and Ganymede. And amidst this tumult, James Holden and his crew on the *Rocinante* are charged with the impossible task of saving humanity from a terrifying fate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes the second book in a series is a let-down, particularly when it follows a strong initial entry. The good news is that *Caliban's War* advances the story that *Leviathan Wakes* began, introduces appealing new characters, adds depth to a familiar character, and reconfirms the authors' ability to tell an energetic, engrossing tale. Ganymede has been in crisis since Marines from Earth and Mars started shooting at each other. But how did the hostility begin? Only Gunnery Sergeant Bobbie Draper knows the truth: they weren't shooting at each other, but at the monster that was killing them. Since the "monster" could be the protomolecule last seen on Venus in *Leviathan Wakes*, the Outer Planets Alliance sends James Holden and the crew of the *Rocinante* to investigate. Meanwhile, Prax Meng is upset because his daughter Mei was apparently kidnapped during the fighting. Mei has a genetic disorder that puts her at risk of death if she doesn't receive regular treatment. Is there a connection between the snatch and the coincidental timing of the monster's attack? It's up to Holden and his crew to find out. A third storyline involves Chrisjen

Avasarala, an elderly, foul-mouthed UN official whose job is to keep the peace between Earth and Mars, a none-too-easy task. Her story eventually merges with Draper's and becomes one of political intrigue. I wouldn't recommend reading *Caliban's War* without first reading *Leviathan Wakes*. *Caliban's War* assumes a familiarity with the events that took place in the first novel.

Caliban's War is set just a little bit after the events of *Leviathan Wakes*, and so the solar system is still riven by long-running tensions among the big three players: Earth, Mars, and the Outer Planets. The events of *Leviathan Wakes* ratcheted that tension up exponentially and also added a fourth player -- the "protomolecule" which was crashed into Venus and is now altering that planet in major and incompressible ways. Things remain balanced on the knife edge of war and once again, the crew of the *Rocinante*, captained by James Holden, ends up smack dab in the middle. Their storyline is presented via Holden's point of view. The precipitating event in *Caliban's War* is the appearance of a protomolecule "monster" on Ganymede that slaughters all but one of a contingent of marines. The sole survivor, Bobbie, becomes another POV. She eventually ends up working for Avasarala, a UN diplomat trying to hold off war and figure out what happened on Ganymede and who was responsible; she becomes our third POV. Our last POV is Prax, a Ganymede botanist whose sick daughter was kidnapped, a crime seemingly related somehow to the protomolecule. Prax ends up with Holden and his crew then eventually all four POV characters end up together as their storylines dovetail. The characters that return from *Leviathan Wakes* are nicely deepened in this follow-up (I was an especial fan of Amos in this one), both in their individual constructs and in their relationships with each other. Sometimes, I'll admit, the portrayal may have bordered a bit on the overly-sentimental, but for the most part I enjoyed how the characters were made more complex via back stories, by their changing relationships, or by their realizations about themselves. The new characters vary a bit in effect.

An alien protomolecule has taken root on Venus. Earth and Mars are in a shooting match over an incident on Ganymede. The Solar system is moving towards all-out anarchy and war, and it falls to a well-meaning meddler, a canny politician, a Martian marine and a grief-stricken botanist to try to stop the descent into madness. *Caliban's War* is the second novel in *The Expanse* series, following on from last year's well-received *Leviathan Wakes*. This is old-school space opera, featuring the crew of a spacecraft as they attempt to save the Solar system from an alien menace. The series features some nods towards serious science - the ships work strictly by Newtonian physics and there is no FTL travel, with the scope of events being limited (so far) to the Solar system alone - but

it's certainly not hard SF. The emphasis is being on an entertaining, fast-paced read, and the book pulls this off with aplomb. The cast of characters has been expanded in this volume, with only Holden returning as a POV character from the first volume. Unlike the first novel, which had a grand total of two POVs, this second volume features four: Holden, UN politician Avasarala, botanist Prax and marine Bonnie. This means that the authors have three major new characters to introduce us to, as well as continuing the storyline from the first novel and evolving the returning cast of characters (Holden and his crew). This results in the pace being marginally slower than in *Leviathan Wakes*, although certainly not fatally so. Indeed, Abraham and Franck imbue the new characters with interesting backstories, motivations and quirks. It's also quite amusing that the most enjoyable character in an action-packed space opera is a 70-year-old politician with a potty mouth.

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