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The Swarm: Volume One Of The Second Formic War



Synopsis

Orson Scott Card and Aaron Johnston return to their Ender's Game prequel series with this first volume of an all-new trilogy about the Second Formic War in *The Swarm*. The first invasion of Earth was beaten back by a coalition of corporate and international military forces, and the Chinese army. China has been devastated by the Formic's initial efforts to eradicate Earth life forms and prepare the ground for their own settlement. The Scouring of China struck fear into the other nations of the planet; that fear blossomed into drastic action when scientists determined that the single ship that wreaked such damage was merely a scout ship. There is a mothership out beyond the Solar System's Kuiper Belt, and it's heading into the system, unstoppable by any weapons that Earth can muster. Earth has been reorganized for defense. There is now a Hegemon, a planetary official responsible for keeping all the formerly warring nations in line. There's a Polemarch, responsible for organizing all the military forces of the planet into the new International Fleet. But there is an enemy within, an enemy as old as human warfare: ambition and politics. Greed and self-interest. Will Bingwen, Mazer Rackam, Victor Delgado and Lem Juke be able to divert those very human enemies in time to create a weapon that can effectively defend humanity in the inexorable Second Formic War?

The Second Formic War#1 *The Swarm*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

ORSON SCOTT CARD is the author of the international bestsellers *Shadow of the Giant*, *Shadow Puppets*, *Shadow of the Hegemon*, and *Ender's Shadow*, and of the beloved classic of science

fiction, Ender's Game, as well as the acclaimed fantasy series The Tales of Alvin Maker. He lives in Greensboro, North Carolina. AARON JOHNSTON is an advertising specialist, and was the co-author, with Orson Scott Card, of the contemporary SF thriller Invasive Procedures. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and son.

As a stand-alone book, I enjoyed this. As a massive fan of the Enderverse, this book had me raising my eyebrows. This book seems to contradict many major points established in Ender's Game. ****Spoiler Alert**** In Ender's Game, belief in the existence of the Hive Queen was something that got Mazer "laughed to silence" by authorities after the Final Battle. In this book, Mazer and Bingwen PROVE that the Hive Queen exists before the Second Formic War even begins, and take videos of one of her "Daughters". In Ender's Game, the idea that the Hive Queen is the ruling and animating will/intelligence in the Formics is something that Mazer introduces to Ender as a new concept that is not widely understood/accepted by the Fleet or humanity, a hundred years after the Second Formic War. In this book, most everyone already agrees that the Formics have a hive mind, controlled by one intelligent being, even before Bingwen shoots video proving the Hive Queen's existence. The casual use of the Ansible by various military commanders and the Ansible falling into Pirate hands makes the idea of it being a total secret 100 years later when Ender/Bean learn about it, is pretty out there. In Ender's Game, the first contact with the Formics is supposed to be when they blacked out Eros, and Eros was supposed to have been the Formic's forward post, won by 1000 marines fighting through tunnels to eradicate the Formics. This is how we supposedly stole their tech. In this book, they do black out a random asteroid, but it isn't Eros, and the 1000 marines who die are nowhere in sight, nor is any of the tech Mazer talks about. Finally, the existence of Daughters of the Hive Queen as "battle generals" brings up a huge point -- in Ender's Game our main strategic advantage according to Mazer was that we have "greater available intelligence" that we can bring to bear on each battle, because we have many commanders, while the Formics only have the Queen. Having Daughters of the Hive Queen seems to blow this out of the water. I know this seems really nit-picky. I did actually enjoy the book on its own, but the contradictions and inconsistencies between the existing Enderverse and this book constantly brought me up short, and took me out of the story.

While I am not a fan of trilogies and stories over multiple books, it is easy to get hooked on this new offering from authors Card and Johnston. This was the first book I had ever read by either of the authors, and I worried that I may not understand what was going on in the story, this being billed as

"The Second Formic War." However, the book is written to be read by both new and established fans. Card and Johnston supply enough of the back story so that readers understand who the characters are and what part each played in the first Formic War. I thoroughly enjoyed the plot, which centered around the characters desperately attempting to determine the strengths of the Formics and trying to develop the science to combat an enemy that is foreign to our understanding, making it difficult to come up with an effective strategy. Card and Johnston have created interesting characters, and their individual agendas help to keep the story moving forward at all times. While some may argue that the writing would be better suited for a graphic novel, I get the feeling that this is what the writers were trying to accomplish...not to create a gritty, futuristic war-is hell novel, but rather to entertain readers with an engrossing story. If that was their goal, they succeeded. It is also safe to leave the Kindle unlocked when the kids are around. Even though the story contains hardened soldiers, space pirates, and bureaucratic jerks, somehow the authors have managed to write compelling dialogue without including an f-bomb on every other page. Good for them. While the ending does leave us wondering what will happen to the characters as the war progresses, there is a climax to book one instead of a cliffhanger ending that forces the reader to buy the next book. Based on the excellent writing and interesting storyline, I look forward to purchasing the next installment in the series.

Orson Scott Card and Aaron Johnston are unusual in that their protagonists actually care about right and wrong and are guided by moral frameworks, unlike so many other science fiction authors. As a result, their books are particularly appealing. The Swarm is no exception. The pace is fast moving, the cause is hopeless, but people in the story are determined to try anyway. Real life is reflected in some especially cruel and callous people who focus on themselves at the expense of others. However, several characters who you might initially label as bad or evil begin to exhibit some redeeming qualities. All of this makes the people more believable, as human beings are rarely completely one sided on the spectrum of ethics. As the story closes, you realize that the major tension that has been building is still unresolved, so we'll just have to wait for the next book in the series.

I forgot that this was book 1 of a three book series so I was disappointed not getting to a real final scene, making the end a little anti climatic. However, anticipating that final scene helped me breeze through the book quickly. I agree with other reviewers, that viewed holistically, the book didn't move the formic saga forward much even if it was an enjoyable read. I wish the authors well and look

forward to the next two books.

I read most everything Orson Scott Card writes and the first and second formic war series don't disappoint. The characters and story line is every bit as compelling as the Ender series and the Shadow series and I am eagerly awaiting the rest of this series. If you like complex and well developed science fiction that explore the universe around us and our place in it then you'll enjoy both these books. Note - and a minimum I would suggest reading the First Formic War series prior to reading this. The Ender & Shadow series can be read before or afterwards.

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