



Alien Archives: Eighteen Stories of Extraterrestrial Encounters

Robert Silverberg

Three Rooms Press (Oct 29, 2019)

Softcover \$16.00 (404pp)

978-1-941110-80-5

Robert Silverberg is an enduring voice in science fiction, and eighteen of his extraterrestrial-themed short stories and novellas are included in *Alien Archives*, collected for a new generation looking for life beyond our stars.

Some of these stories may be familiar to genre enthusiasts—or may soon be, with film and television adaptations in the works. Each entry features an all new introduction from Silverberg himself, with new insights into his history and process; they also comment on trends and troubles in science fiction at large.

Silverberg's wealth of material and endless imagination ensure that, even though it's themed, the collection casts a wide net. Each entry involves a new angle or twist on the extraterrestrial encounter. In "Sundance," humans are the invaders; it's a familiar trope that takes a hard left into poignant cultural commentary. Parallels are drawn to the tragic history and enduring trauma of Indigenous peoples. "Gorgon Planet" is a whimsical blend of futuristic fantastical with ancient mythology; in it, a band of scientists transforms into radar-wielding Perseuses to defeat a not entirely alien foe.

Though the collection's focus is out of this world, its most compelling moments come in the hearts of its characters, as they wrestle with the inescapable influences of love, anger, and grief that plague all sentient beings. "One-Way Journey" tackles a legacy of loss, while "Bride 91" explores finding love in unexpected places and against all obstacles: a man enters into his ninety-first temporary marriage contract. Taking place on good old terra firma, "Amanda and the Alien" is a collection standout, following a young woman who takes in an escaped alien for her own, vengeful purposes; it challenges the genre's heroic resistance narrative.

Proving that human beings are sometimes the most alien creatures of all, *Alien Archives* is a delight for anyone who still wants to believe.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (November / December 2019)

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