



Forever Free

By Joe Haldeman

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The brilliant sequel to The Forever War, winner of the Hugo and Nebula Awards.

From Joe Haldeman, the all-time master of military science fiction, comes the new novel set in the universe of his Hugo and Nebula Award-winning classic The Forever War. An epic story about war, peace, and the price of freedom, Forever Free reintroduces readers to William Mandella--who has been living peacefully on the planet called Middle Finger, a refuge for humans who refuse to become part of the group mind known as Man. But after decades of this peace, Mandella and others are tired of living like zoo animals. So they steal a starship--and embark upon a voyage that will forever change their understanding of the universe...and themselves.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

You can't lose for winning--especially, it would seem, if you're Joe Haldeman. Suffering the same fate as many an author who's dared to pen unconventional sequels to a ferociously loved book (in this case, *The Forever War*), Haldeman has risked the ire of his many devoted admirers a second time (the first sequel was the award-spangled *Forever Peace*). But Haldeman's call--not too surprisingly--proves to be a deft one, giving us a book that, while significantly different from its predecessor, turns out to be equally captivating and sensitive, in many ways even more thought-provoking. (Sure, it doesn't match *The Forever War* for sheer impact, but then again, what does?)

As in *The Forever War*, the heart of this story is the dry, ironic bite of fighting-suit vet William Mandella, now middle-aged and a parent (along with his love and comrade-in-arms Marygay) to two teen-aged kids. The family leads a spartan life on the cold and desolate planet Middle Finger, which serves as a sort of genetic safe-deposit box for the current incarnation of humanity, an inhuman race of group-mind clones known as Man. But the animals in the zoo are getting restless, and a core group of vets led by William and Marygay plot an unusual escape: hijacking a reconditioned time ship and using it to take a 40,000 light-year tour (over 10 years of their own time) to rejoin the world they know only after 2,000 generations have passed. Much of the action involves the hatching and fruition of this plot, but Haldeman doesn't really mix things up until nearing the end, when he dissolves physics as we know it and calls down the wrath of God itself. --Paul Hughes

From Publishers Weekly

In this long-awaited sequel to *The Forever War*, Haldeman describes the postwar life of retired soldiers William and Marygay Mandella on the half-frozen planet Middle Finger, where they and other humans have been secluded by the newly evolved, superhuman race of Man. The long war with the Taurans is over and William and company are little more than relics, kept around to provide archaic genes should the Man ever wish to alter their own, cloned near-perfection. Dissatisfied with their stagnant lives, William and his fellow vets steal a starship. They plan to travel so far and fast that time dilation will allow them to return only a decade older but millennia in their world's future. Disaster strikes just days into their voyage, however, when their antimatter engines mysteriously malfunction in direct violation of the laws of physics. Returning home in escape craft, Mandella and his mates discover that everyone on the planet has disappeared, leaving only their clothes behind. Further, all communication with the outside universe has been cut off. Despite a slow start, Haldeman builds considerable tension with the mystery that confronts his human survivors of what appears to be the complete disappearance of not only humanity, but also of Man and the Taurans. Some truly weird events have occurred and Haldeman gives them a genuinely spooky feel. Mandella's laconic narrative, so effective in getting across *The Forever War*'s antiwar message, proves just as effective in this sequel. The novel is weakened, however, by what feels like an overly hasty conclusion, burdened by Haldeman's decision to invoke not one but two *deus ex machinae* in the book's final chapters. Still, this is a well-written and worthy sequel to one of SF's enduring classics. (Dec.) FYI: Haldeman's *The Forever War* (1974) and *Forever Peace* (1997) each won both the Hugo and Nebula awards for best SF novel. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

In the aftermath of the *Forever War*, a group of combat veterans living on the distant planet of Middle Finger decide to sever their ties with the group-minded genetically identical society of "Man." Commandeering an anti-matter driven spaceship, they begin a journey beyond the Galaxy, where they confront a mystery that

eventually brings them into confrontation with the greatest mystery of their existence. The author of The Forever War and Forever Peace continues his exploration of the essential nature of humanity in a deceptively simple story that questions the foundations of human belief. Haldeman's clear, concise storytelling and his understanding of human behavior make his latest effort a strong addition to most sf collections.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tiara Garcia:

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