

The Forever War Study Guide

The Forever War by Joe Haldeman

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Plot Summary

The Forever War by Joe Haldeman is a classic science fiction story of William Mandella, a man who is in the top percentile of the world as far as intelligence, education, and physical fitness. As a result, he is included in the elite group of people conscripted into the united armed services of the world to battle the unknown and elusive Tauran aliens. Although this war spans over a millennium, Mandella unwittingly sees it through from beginning to end due to the time differential created by travel through constantly evolving wormholes. Not only is The Forever War an intense, mind-bending space chronicle, it is also a social commentary regarding war, politics, and how executive decisions affect civilians and military personnel alike.

Mandella is among the first that will face the Taurans, and since very little is known about this sworn enemy, military training involves a wide variety of environments and procedures as the humans attempt to prepare for anything. In addition, the majority of the preparation takes place in sub-zero temperatures because the planets the strike force is trying to secure are all near the newly discovered collapsars—stars that provide no heat. Mandella and his fellow recruits feel as though much of the training is pointless, but are not in any position to argue since capital punishment is the normal consequence for not following orders. The mission itself is successful and takes only a few months to complete. However, due to time dilation, they return home to an Earth that has been transformed into a highly violent and aggressive place. Mandella has difficulty with how much his mother has aged, not to mention the fact that she is involved in a relationship with another woman, demonstrating the global acceptance of alternative sexual orientations in order to control overpopulation. Mandella and his lover, Marygay Potter, feel isolated and alienated from this new society. Mandella's mother dies since her importance to society was rated zero on her seventieth birthday. The zero rating means that she is not relevant enough to merit any form of medical care. While Mandella is visiting Marygay's family at a commune in South Dakota, both of her parents are brutally killed by raiders. Although they had wanted nothing more than to get out of the military, they quickly decide to return as soon as possible. Marygay and Mandella agree that it is preferable to have a single enemy in the face of almost certain death as opposed to constantly being surrounded by different enemies.

Despite the fact that they had been promised easy assignments, both Marygay and Mandella are appointed combat platoons in short order. During this tour of duty, both of them are severely injured, Mandella losing a leg and Marygay an arm. During the months it takes to get to Heaven, the military resort planet, they are both prepped for what their lives will be like after their amputations. However, once they arrive, due to the time dilation, methods have already been developed to assist people in growing new limbs. After their time spent together in recovery they are given their next assignments. To their dismay, they are to be separated. It has been over two hundred years since the war began and since they are to be traveling in opposite directions, it is likely that they will never see one another again. Both Mandella and Marygay attempt to contest their orders, but to no avail. They share farewells and fly off to battle.



By the time Mandella reaches the launch location of his mission, a three-week, virtual reality crash course called the "can" has been created. The "can" injects a user's brain with every bit of information deemed valuable for the Major of a Strike Force in the year 2458. Mandella's training takes place in a gas-filled tank and includes the use of every weapon ever invented, the history of every battle ever fought, along with military facts, figures, and theories. When Mandella is inserted back into the military, he finds himself the exception on many different levels. First, and most noticeably, he is the only heterosexual in his company. Additionally, Mandella is literally hundreds of years older than his subordinates, which not only creates a mutual culture shock, but requires everyone in his company to learn how to speak and understand his dialect.

Mandella leads his Strike Force to a freezing planet circling a dull star where they build a base in preparation for the Tauran attack. The Taurans finally arrive and all but demolish Mandella's company, partially because his subordinates do not follow his orders. The surviving personnel head home to Stargate on a ten-month journey to discover that it has, once again, completely changed. Not only is Earth now a planet made up entirely of clones with a single consciousness, but the war has been over for two centuries. Part of their welcome home is an explanation of the 1,143 year-long war that summarizes the idea of the whole thing being based on a misunderstanding between Earth and the Taurans. Upon further exploration, Mandella discovers that the leaders at the time believed that Earth needed a war to unify its people. The returnees are informed that they are free to decide where to live, what do, and with whom to do it. Mandella finds a note in his personnel file from Marygay in which she informs him that she has been waiting for him by using a space cruiser as a time machine. Utilizing time dilation to her benefit, she has been traveling several light years and back over a period of a month, and when she returns, five years have passed. Mandella and Marygay have their first child, a boy, approximately 1,146 years after they first met.



Private Mandella, Chapters 1-2

Private Mandella, Chapters 1-2 Summary

The Forever War by Joe Haldeman is a classic science fiction story of a man, William Mandella, who is in the top percentile of the world as far as intelligence, education and physical fitness. As a result, he is included in the elite group of people conscripted into the united armed services of the world to battle the unknown and elusive Tauran aliens. Although this war spans over a millennium, Mandella unwittingly sees it through from beginning to end due to the time differential created by travel through constantly evolving wormholes. Not only is The Forever War an intense, mind-bending space chronicle, it is also a social commentary regarding war, politics, and how executive decisions affect civilians and military personnel alike.

The story begins with Private Mandella sitting through a training class that is intended to teach several ways to kill without making any noise. At this point, Mandella notes to himself that while he has recently been educated on many ways to kill, not a single one of them has been a silent method. He and his fellow recruits watch a brief film with much disinterest in which eight people are actually killed silently. In response to the film, Rogers, a female recruit, asks the sergeant how likely it would ever be, as depicted in the film, that one would face a Tauran armed solely with a compact shovel. The sergeant swiftly responds that this is a prime example of how the recruits must get creative in finding the weak spots of the mysterious Taurans and kill them even if armed only with a nail file.

After the required ritual of shouting obscenities in unison at the sergeant, which Mandella has a hard time taking seriously, the troops head to the billet for the night. Each evening there is a sleeping roster in which male and female recruits are paired in bunks. Before heading to bed, Mandella stops off in the lounge for a drink and the news, where he learns that yet another ship has been lost. This happened four years ago in Earth time, but it is all relative. With subjective time, it could have been yesterday. Mandella gets to the billet after most of the others were asleep and quietly slips into bed with his assigned sack-mate for the night.

The next morning, Mandella and the other privates, wearing coveralls and armed with heating mechanisms controlled by the commanding officer, are preparing for space war by building a bridge in freezing cold, slushy Missouri. The heating mechanisms are not turned on while the grunts are working in order to demonstrate how cold it will be on Charon, the planet where they will be heading for the next training phase. Mandella notes to himself that Charon's temperature remains right around a lethal absolute zero at all times, so unless the army was planning to freeze the whole company upon landing, training in the intense cold is pointless.



Private Mandella, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The main character is introduced and the tone of the novel is set here. Mandella is portrayed as a sarcastic and unwilling participant in this war, yet his nonplussed response to a film depicting actual murder demonstrates that he has become callused and is accepting of it to some extent. Chapter 1 mentions the loss of one ship, foreshadowing the loss of many more to come. Mandella's interactions with Rogers, his sleeping partner, suggest a lenient and open attitude about sex and multiple sex partners within the armed forces. Chapter 2 is the description of a training activity and the "army half-logic" from which it stems. Not only is the training a poor example of skills needed and the environment for which to prepare, but all of the privates have an IQ of at least 150. The smartest and the brightest are being utilized to lift heavy objects and paste bricks together to build a bridge rather than provide services in their areas of expertise such as physics and biology.



Private Mandella, Chapter 3

Private Mandella, Chapter 3 Summary

After completing training on Earth, Mandella and the rest of the company head for Charon, the planet where the rest of their training will occur. The three week journey, a large majority of it spent in double gravity, results in exhaustion for all and injuries such as broken bones for many. The rest of the trip is spent in half gravity, which causes at least half of the crew to be constantly motion-sick while the other half follow them around, cleaning up the mess. Once they reach the base on Charon, Mandella and his shipmates meet Captain Sherman Stott and Sergeant Octavio Cortez, their company commander and first sergeant. After his introduction, Captain Stott tells them two things: First, that this is to be considered a combat situation; and second, that capital punishment is the only punishment on Charon for not following orders. He then turns things over to Sergeant Cortez, who appears to be missing part of his skull, judging by its total flatness on one side and the lack of a full ear. Surprisingly, although his appearance states otherwise, Cortez speaks to the troops calmly and gently. Cortez reiterates that capital punishment is indeed the only disciplinary action taken. However, he clarifies that normally this is unnecessary because the purpose of almost every order given on Charon is to save someone's life, and disobedience itself will most likely give the subordinate up to the elements. Cortez then releases the company to get fitted by the armorer for their personalized fighting suits.

Private Mandella, Chapter 3 Analysis

However intensive their training has been, the troops are young, scared, and inexperienced. The events in this chapter demonstrate the military's serious, no-nonsense attitude toward the war as well as the lack of concern for the individual. It is made clear to the troops that many of them will die. The morbid undertones of the writing also foreshadow many deaths to come.



Private Mandella, Chapters 4-6

Private Mandella, Chapters 4-6 Summary

Using Sergeant Cortez as a model, the armorer demonstrates the multiple features of the fighting suit. Every command to the suit is given by its wearer, utilizing a series of minute motions of the body. The company is reminded that while most of them can apply a hand grip of over a hundred pounds, in the fighting suits that grip is multiplied exponentially, making it possible to easily tear a thick shaft of steel in two as well as break their own necks if they are not careful. In the outside environment on Charon the suit is a deadly weapon, especially to the person inside if its powers are handled carelessly. The armorer explains that within the last two months alone, eleven casualties have occurred as a result of the suits' exhaust systems coming into contact with the plentiful pools of frozen helium and hydrogen located all over the planet.

Mandella and the rest of the company spend hours learning to walk in the suits. The biggest adjustment is that the only requirement for movement is an impulse from the brain to the suit. Any actual movement by the wearer causes a complete overshoot of what was initially intended and creates a number of unsafe complications. Captain Stott, leading the training maneuver, demonstrates the ease with which death can occur by heating up a small rock and placing it on one of the many frozen pools of liquid hydrogen. The rock speeds in a zigzag pattern all over the ice and flies off the other end. Stott explains that this is exactly what will happen to a person, except that when the exhaust system of that person's fighting suit comes into contact with the ice, an immediate explosion results that is equivalent to that of a hand grenade.

On day three, the company uses their finger-lasers to dig holes into the rocky surface of Charon. Once the initial crater is created, one must descend to the bottom and create another, deeper crater. When the hole is deep enough, a timed bomb is left on the floor and the only thing left to do is walk gingerly out of the hole. During this operation, there is a simple mistake that, as the armorer had predicted, results in the first fatality. A female Russian private gets trapped in a rock slide after setting the bomb. She finally manages to get free and emerges from the hole. After she has gotten a small distance from the crater, Cortez directly orders her to lie down flat on her stomach. Instead, she continues to run away from the bomb and the entire company watches as her head is blown off her body. That night, Mandella sags with his good friend Rogers and together they just cry.

Private Mandella, Chapters 4-6 Analysis

In Chapter 4, Mandella and the rest of his company are introduced to the fighting suits and their powerful abilities, which are important later in the book. The company's first death on Charon occurs in Chapter 6 during a training accident. It is obvious that the troops are emotionally invested in staying alive, but watching one of their team get

blown up in front of their eyes makes it clear that survival is not feasible for everyone. The depth to which this first death affects the company extends even to Cortez and Stott, who disappear for the rest of the night as if they know this is only the beginning.



Private Mandella, Chapter 7

Private Mandella, Chapter 7 Summary

Ten days into their stay on Charon the company executes their first battle simulation. Mandella is on Team A, headed up by Marygay Potter. They are to ambush and take a bunker just under a mile away. As the grenade launcher and assistant team leader, Mandella makes an attempt to reach the bunker with a grenade while they are under rock cover, but is out of range. Potter voices her displeasure. Mandella assures her that as soon as they are in range he will not miss a single hit. He comments under his breath how her condescending tone is less than desirable.

After Team B loses three of its members, including its grenade launcher, Team A moves in closer for the attack. Mandella, concerned about the lack of brightness in his image converter, doubles the intensity. Potter and Mandella share a sarcastic dialogue about who is in charge and who should be doing what. Once in range and under sufficient cover, Mandella lets fly all fifteen of the grenades. Before he can see where they land, he is hit by an enemy laser intended to simply blind the victim for the duration of the exercise. However, since Mandella had turned up the magnification so high, he experiences an eye-stabbing, flesh-burning sensation.

Once back inside the billet and out of his fighting suit, Marygay immediately gives Mandella a big kiss. She explains that his grenades took out the bunker completely and made way for the rest of the company to finish the exercise. Mandella barely has time to bask in his success when all personnel are called to the assembly area. Stott informs them that although nobody actually died today, he is disappointed in the operation as a whole. He points out that thirty-seven of the company placed themselves directly in enemy fire and reminds them that, according to the military, they are each "an investment of over a million dollars and one-fourth of a human life." Those who "died" in battle are to go without food, allowed only to drink two liters of water and swallow one vitamin ration during a three-day period. Mandella is singled out by Stott due to the fact that the skin around his eyes is burnt and peeling. Upon the discovery that Marygay was his team leader, Stott asks her if she had ordered Mandella to turn up the magnification on his image converter. Although she knew that Mandella had taken it upon himself, she told Stott that she did not remember either way. Stott condemns her to the same fate as the other "dead." Mandella asks Marygay to be his sack-mate for the night and she coyly agrees.

Private Mandella, Chapter 7 Analysis

Although this chapter is the narration of a battle simulation performed by the company, it is also the first time the reader is able to witness the interactions between Mandella and his love interest, Marygay Potter. Interestingly, she is an acting sergeant for the duration and Mandella is under her command. Their dialogue throughout the simulation is mostly



bickering, some good-natured and some not-so-good-natured, which is followed later that evening by the two of them having great sex. The interpersonal events in this chapter point to the strong possibility that there is a future between the two of them. Additionally, once back at the bunker, Mandella discovers that he is something of a hero since his shooting completely disabled the bunker. However, in an experience that will be repeated, Mandella has no time to enjoy his laurels because Captain Stott begins disciplinary action for poor performance and stupidity right away.



Private Mandella, Chapters 8-9

Private Mandella, Chapters 8-9 Summary

After two weeks of training around Miami Base on Charon and the loss of eleven company members, the remaining privates are moved to darkside, where their orders are to build and pressurize a bunker in preparation for a simulated attack. They are deposited next to all the necessary building items. However, since the materials are submerged in a deep pool of helium, they spend the better part of a day brainstorming methods and actually extracting everything out of the pool. During this process, one of Mandella's team members begins to stumble repeatedly over his own feet and falls down on his back, breaking the heat exchanger on his fighting suit. The medic informs Mandella, who has been promoted to Acting Corporal for the duration of the exercise, that this man will die before they can get him out of the suit. Thinking quickly, Mandella has the others build a box out of the available building materials around himself, the unconscious man, and an empty fighting suit. As soon as enough heat has been pumped into the box, Mandella manages to extricate the man out of his suit and into the new, fully functional suit, saving his life with only seconds to spare.

Once again, before Mandella has the opportunity to enjoy his heroism, a ship is sighted on the horizon. Immediately all personnel flatten themselves to the surface and prepare for the worst. Instead of attacking, the ship lands and Stott and Cortez emerge. Stott yells at the company for cowering in fear rather than firing at the vessel. He acknowledges that it would not have made a difference, but would have at least shown some "fighting spirit." Stott reminds them that they have less than a week before they face the real enemy and, from this point on, demands the demonstration of "a little more will to live."

Mandella and the rest of the company build the bunker and its defense system in a day once the foundation is complete. The laser weaponry is meant to be handled by only one person at a time in a vulnerable position at the top of the bunker, exhibiting once again the army's willingness to trade one life for many. Each private has his or her turn at the helm of the laser while the others practice maneuverability on Charon's copious pools of frozen hydrogen and run through training drills. Once the privates see how easily the laser destroys the practice targets, they are unconcerned about the upcoming attack from Miami Base. Every private in the company is dismayed and overwhelmed when the attack takes three more casualties from their ranks.

Private Mandella, Chapters 8-9 Analysis

This is the second time that Mandella has saved the day, as it were, and is abruptly interrupted from basking in the glow of his success by Captain Stott in the form of a ship. This is one of the many examples of UNEF's sheer lack of concern for morale. Rather than rewarding Mandella's quick thinking and good work Stott focuses on what



has been done wrong. The irony introduced in these two chapters is that Stott's straightforward orders are to demonstrate "more will to live," but that command directly follows the entire company getting flat on the ground in an instinctual act of self-preservation. According to Stott, the desire to remain alive would have been better shown by firing at the ship, which ironically would have made them much more visible and more of a target. Additionally, at the time of Stott's order, the company is reeling in the loss of eleven company members, with three more to be lost by the end of Chapter 9. It is unlikely that the troops have anything but a will to live.



Private Mandella, Chapters 10-11

Private Mandella, Chapters 10-11 Summary

Upon completion of the training activities on Charon, the company takes a six month journey to Stargate, the last stop before going into battle on a planet near the first collapsar ever detected. During their one-week stay they assist in building a new wing, which doubles the size of the base. It is planned that Stargate will be the command center for the entire war. When they leave Stargate on the ship Earth's Hope, many are anxious about heading into the collapsar, not to mention apprehensive about the first ever planned attack on the enemy. The journey, however, is simple and painless. Now that they have arrived in Tauran territory, most trepidation surrounds the idea of finally facing the enemy.

Since space travel is very difficult on the human body, the majority of the crew spend their time lying still. Most of the soldiers are in their beds when the captain informs them that they have been pursued by a Tauran vessel for the last week. They are told that the enemy ship and weapon it had fired were both destroyed by tachyon bombs. A month later, they arrive at the planet on which the enemy base is located. Their orders are to ambush and take the enemy base, collect at least one prisoner, and maintain the functionality of all equipment as much as possible. Being taken as a prisoner by the Taurans is not an option, because in that instance, the fighting suits are all set to auto-destruct.

Seventy-two soldiers board six scout ships and head for the surface. When the landing coordinates are in sight, it becomes obvious that they are under water at least three miles deep. After landing on the water and beginning to sink, airbags shoot out of the ships and cause them to float just below the surface. The scout ships fly to the beach, deposit their human cargo, and leave. The environment of this planet is hot and sparsely populated with unidentifiable shrubs. Cortez rounds everyone up and orders them into formation by platoon. Due to his background in physics, Mandella is assigned to Platoon Seven with Cortez and other people deemed to be more necessary than others in an unknown, unforeseen crisis.

Private Mandella, Chapters 10-11 Analysis

These two chapters are the beginning of the first-ever attack on enemy territory. The "army half-logic" that frustrates Mandella so much is evident in two ways. First, when the scout ships arrive on the planet's surface, the landing location is underwater, terrifying the troops that they will die before they even reach battle. They are not even told for what they should be prepared. Second, the platoons are divided in the classic UNEF important/necessary personnel and not-so-important/not-so-necessary personnel, reinforcing that the end justifies any means.



Private Mandella, Chapters 12-13

Private Mandella, Chapters 12-13 Summary

Moving in a formation where Platoon Seven is protected by the preceding six, the company observes the blue-green foliage that amounts to not much more than vine-like stalks. Potter, leading Platoon Two, is the first to spot the movement of several animals, large and dark green in color. Cortez orders them to open fire. After all of the animals have fallen, they approach for a closer look. Although these animals look very different from humans, Mandella feels sick and nauseated at how similar they appear once their internal organs have been exposed. Cortez, on the other hand, is only concerned about whether or not the animals are dangerous.

While this is being determined, it is discovered that a female private from Platoon Seven with extraordinary extrasensory perception skills suffered the equivalent of a massive brain hemorrhage at the exact moment that the company opened fire. Five other privates with lesser degrees of Rhine ability also report severe headaches and other related symptoms. Cortez decides that no more of the animals should be harmed, and while the company resumes its march, the body of the dead private is destroyed by their orbiting ship. When they break for rest, each platoon takes a two-hour shift to guard their sleeping counterparts. Marygay seeks out Mandella and they share a brief moment of closeness mingled with sadness and regret until they are sharply ordered to get some sleep by Cortez, who reminds them that they only have two hours until they are on guard duty.

Almost immediately after they begin their guard shift, a line of the same green, teddy bear-like animals they had slaughtered earlier surrounds the camp. The guards are ordered to hold their fire. Having taken a stimtab to stay awake, Mandella is positive that the bear in front of him is probing his mind. His suspicions are confirmed when others on watch report the same thing. The question is raised of whether or not the bears are spies for the Taurans. Cortez decides that even if that is the case, the humans have already been discovered, and offensive maneuvers would only harm more members of the company. Cortez orders everyone to take a stimtab and continue in the direction of the enemy base. The bear creatures follow them at a distance for the next nine hours until the company is ordered to halt and, in sheer exhaustion, get some rest.

Private Mandella, Chapters 12-13 Analysis

The humans become acquainted with their first alien species in this section of the book. Although these creatures appear to have no facial features but a big gaping hole that resembles a mouth, they appear to have some sort of collective consciousness as well as the ability to probe the minds of the humans. Rhine ability, or extrasensory perception, and the lack of it in most humans is an important factor that will play a large role in the outcome of the plot. In this case, true to army form, Cortez directs the troops

to destroy them simply because they are unknown, not because they are a threat. This results in the death of one human and the debilitation of several others. Had there been more of a sixth-sense connection, it might not have been necessary to cause so much damage. These chapters also show how Marygay and Mandella are beginning to turn to one another for comfort, as well as the development of their relationship.



Private Mandella, Chapter 14

Private Mandella, Chapter 14 Summary

It is on Mandella's watch, the teddy bears still peacefully surrounding them, when Cortez orders everyone to take cover. A transparent, bubble-like Tauran ship is passing by. This is the first time they have seen the enemy and Mandella's mental description of the Tauran captain is less than complimentary. They are unsure as to whether or not they were spotted by the enemy, but the alien ship continues on its course. Less than an hour later, Cortez assembles the Seventh Platoon and the other platoon leaders to explain the next course of action. Cortez draws a map of the enemy base and tells them that they are at a disadvantage because although they know the location and appearance of every structure, they have no idea about the function of most of them. The technology of their communications, however, is far more advanced than that of the Taurans. Right before the attack, the Earth's Hope creates interference in the atmosphere, severely hindering the Taurans' ability to communicate.

After questioning Cortez' orders on how many prisoners will be taken, Potter is relieved from platoon command. Cortez resumes where he left off, explaining in a general way which buildings will be taken first and how. It is preferable, Cortez tells them, to disable any enemy weapons rather than demolishing them altogether to allow the reconnaissance drones to obtain helpful data. There are several structures that will be destroyed in order to gain access to the inside of the base. The only other specifics that Cortez provides are directions on retreat. Before sending the platoon commanders to brief their subordinates, Cortez informs them that they have all been pre-programmed with a post-hypnotic suggestion that will be activated when it is time.

Private Mandella, Chapter 14 Analysis

The humans have their first exposure to a Tauran in this chapter, and they are immediately disturbed by its appearance. This is the last time that they will see a Tauran that is not either attacking them or dead. It is unclear as to whether Cortez' motivations are to be helpful or not, but he unnecessarily and prematurely tells the troops that they will be fighting under hypnosis. What is clear, however, is the depiction that they will fight whether they want to or not. It is also in this chapter that it becomes more apparent that Marygay, much like Mandella, has pacifist tendencies.



Private Mandella, Chapter 15

Private Mandella, Chapter 15 Summary

After cautiously approaching the enemy base, Cortez divides the company into three firing squads. The Hope drops its frequency-scrambling bomb, Cortez recites the trigger poem, and the battle begins. Mandella finds himself compelled to destroy the enemy. Even though he is consciously aware that the flashing images in his mind are not real, he cannot stop himself from feeling rage, from wanting revenge, from thirsting for enemy blood. The Tauran defense system consists of shimmering spheres that slice through anything with which they come into contact. Mandella watches as a private right next to him cleanly loses a large portion of his head. Although the bubbles are deadly, they are all released at least six feet from the ground. Cortez orders the company to stay low.

When one of the buildings opens up and Taurans begin pouring out, the carnage multiplies exponentially. The Taurans continue to run directly into laser-fire, regardless of the fact that they must trample their own wounded and dead to move forward. There does not appear to be a single hand weapon and Mandella cannot stop himself from laughing maniacally at the gory slaughter. It takes Cortez quite a while to get his company to cease-fire, and when they do he orders them to find him a prisoner. Once a Tauran has been taken captive for interrogation and examination, Cortez orders them to kill the rest, which they do gleefully. Realizing that he will not be able to escape, the Tauran prisoner commits suicide. After securing every building in the base and not locating a single Tauran, Cortez brings the company out of hypnosis. To say that morale is low is quite an understatement. Cortez orders everyone to take a sedative, and doubles the dosage for those who appear suicidal. Mandella is repulsed by his actions and sickened by humanity as a whole.

Private Mandella, Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter describes the first of only two battle scenes in the entire book, despite the fact that the war itself lasts 1,143 years. This speaks to the futility of war, one of the major themes throughout the book. Cortez himself is a veteran of the Vietnam War, a conflict that to this day has been criticized as unnecessary and more destructive than productive. Although the soldiers in Vietnam were not hypnotized, it is characterized by the same sort of brutal and bloody taking of lives. The remorse and shame of the troops after the Tauran slaughter can be likened to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by veterans of Vietnam and other wars.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 1

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 1 Summary

Ten years later in Earth time and two years later subjective time, Mandella has been promoted to Sergeant and Potter has been promoted to Corporal. Both of them are leading their own strike force squads. Stott, who is now a sub-major, has called a meeting with all the squad leaders to determine the source of the low morale on the ship. Mandella suggests that it might simply be the fact that everyone has been on the ship for so long and another squad leader points to the hate-conditioning that all troops had undergone. Both theories are dismissed by Stott. He asks Potter her opinion, who says that her squad wants to get off the ship, which Stott takes to mean that they are looking forward to battle. The bottom line that the squad leaders will not bring to the table is that the low morale is the result of simple fear.

They are aboard the Anniversary, being closely followed by a Tauran ship. The Anniversary's computer has informed them that it will be at least fourteen days before the Tauran vessel is close enough to engage. Stott sternly reminds them of this and tells them that they should have a little more faith in the computer's predictions. Almost immediately a message is delivered to the sub-major instructing him to put the entire ship on alert. They will begin initial evasive maneuvers in just under an hour. All personnel are ordered to their acceleration shells within the next thirty minutes. Mandella decides to have a cup of coffee first and meets up with Marygay. They discuss whether this is a drill or the real thing. Marygay demurely informs him that she can get information from one of her officer "friends" that she has been visiting in the evenings. Trying not to sound jealous, Mandella tells her that if this man ever hurts her, just say the word and he'll take care of it. Marygay, referring to Lieutenant Estelle Harmony, Mandella's current playmate, offers the same service.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter is a jump from the last section in which Mandella and Marygay have just finished their first campaign. They are now a little bit wiser and ten subjective years have passed. Despite the passage of time, the army still plods forward in the general direction of the enemy while leaders such as Stott find it incomprehensible that anyone would not want to fight. This chapter also sheds light on the growing intimacy between Marygay and Mandella as demonstrated by their solemn agreement that there would be retribution to any outside lover who hurt either one of them.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapters 2-3

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapters 2-3 Summary

Mandella heads for his squad's shell compound and meets with his second in command. They are each given a shot which protects their bodies on the cellular level and prevents cells from being crushed during the pressurization and depressurization that occurs during tactical maneuvers. Mandella orders his squad into their individualized shells and pressurizes the chamber with a substance that collapses the shells into their bodies. The sensations experienced by the body are simultaneously compressing and expanding. The signal informs that the acceleration is over and Mandella depressurizes the chamber. While dressing he notices a large bruise on Marygay's side. She tells him that for some reason her suit does not fit properly, and that this is the second time this has happened. Marygay informs the medic and the armorer of the problem and Mandella reports to the briefing room as requested by the commodore.

The commodore tells the officers and squad leaders that they have been able to detect certain technologies from the Tauran vessel. It has been determined that due to time dilation, the enemy ship has space travel abilities that are twice as advanced as that of their last contact. Chances are slim that the Anniversary will be able to outrun the Tauran ship, and the only way to combat this superior speed is to allow the tactical computer to perform random evasive maneuvers. The commodore explains that their only hope is the fact that the Tauran weaponry does not seem as advanced. The meeting closes with an order for all personnel to prepare to get in their shells with a ten-minute warning. The next day, all personnel spend five hours by their shells, killing time. When the order comes to suit up, everyone gets into their shells and the logistic computer takes control of the ship. While lying in his shell, Mandella has a long discourse with himself on the nature of humanity, the relationship between computers and humans, and the logic behind military decisions. The signal to leave the shells is given and Mandella depressurizes the chamber. Mandella assumes that since they are still alive they must have won.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapters 2-3 Analysis

This is the humans' first real contact with the disadvantages of time dilation. Unfortunately for them, they are now in a combat situation with Taurans from their future, which means their chances of survival are quite bleak. This demonstrates the

rapid progression of alienation from society and technology while foreshadowing major losses that are in the mail.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 4-5

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 4-5 Summary

While Mandella is getting dressed, Rogers calls him over the intercom and tells him to go to Marygay's squad bay because something has gone wrong. When he arrives at squad bay three, he discovers Marygay still in her suit covered in blood. She is slashed open down the front of her body and a portion of her intestines are spilling out from the cut that gets deeper as it travels down her body. Marygay appears to still be breathing, but superficially. Mandella begins to helplessly apply pressure to the wound and treat her for shock. While waiting for the medic, Margay comes to and Mandella holds her head, assuring her that she will be okay. When Lieutenant Harmony and the other medics arrive, Mandella explains to them the suit malfunctions that had occurred previously. He can tell by their faces that the outlook for Marygay's survival is not good, and they explain to him that approximately one-third of the ship was inexplicably destroyed. Mandella feels overwhelmed by Marygay's predicament and the sudden loss of thirty of his strike force members, but he is called to the assembly area for a briefing.

On his way to the briefing, Mandella looks down and sees blood all over his tunic. He stops off to clean up in the restroom where a female corporal is crying and brushing her hair. She tells Mandella that the only way to view this tragedy is to be grateful they are still alive. When they arrive at the briefing, the commodore explains that this disaster has been caused by an example of the academic concept of future shock, which is what happened when Tauran technology from the future came into contact with human technology from the present. The results have obviously been devastating. The commodore tells the remaining officers and squad leaders that, although it will most likely cause him to be court marshaled for cowardice, they will return to Stargate without attacking the enemy base because it is imperative that the human intelligence get its hands on the valuable information left behind by the Tauran weapons. Mandella thinks to himself that this is not strategic bravery; rather it is the commodore's simple will to live that will bring them back to Stargate alive. The rest of the briefing is, in Mandella's opinion, a sermon on one man's perspective of war theory.

The next day, Mandella visits Lieutenant Harmony at her cabin as soon as she is available for an update on Marygay's condition. She tells him that since Marygay is the first ever pressure-suit injury, things are a bit more complicated than usual. They have had to empty her intestines completely and replace the natural intestinal flora with a chemically man-made substance which is wreaking havoc on her digestive system. Harmony suggests that Mandella wait a couple of days to see her since she is simply very ill, but not in immediate danger. Mandella is relieved until Harmony tells him that if the ship goes past a certain velocity, Marygay is likely to die. Since it is necessary to



exceed that speed in order to make it back to Earth, Harmony suggests that he prepare himself to lose her unless she makes a much speedier recovery than expected. Later in the evening, he and Harmony attempt to "confraternize," but neither of them can concentrate.

A week later, Mandella sees Marygay for the first time since her injury. She is awake, but much thinner and highly medicated. He visits her every day and sees a small amount of improvement every time. Marygay seems to know that her chances for survival are not good and she will not allow Mandella to speak about what will happen when they get back to Earth. She simply does not believe she will see Earth again, so she makes Mandella tell her all about his childhood and his life. During these visits, Mandella's background in physics gives him an idea. Together, Mandella and one of the doctors create a specialized cocoon in which Marygay will be mostly protected from the organ-thrashing gravities experienced with travel at such velocities. When it is time, both Marygay and Mandella are in their shells. After the acceleration has ceased, Mandella climbs out of his shell and looks for Marygay. She is not in her shell and once again there is blood everywhere, leading Mandella to assume the worst. Smiling, the doctor tells him that although she hemorrhaged, Marygay is under the care of Lieutenant Harmony and will heal nicely.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 4-5 Analysis

As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, the company sustains heavy damages and casualties. Although they have been in danger of death from the first day they met, this is the first time that Mandella realizes that he might actually lose Marygay to death. These two chapters speak to the precariousness of life and the careless manner in which it is treated by UNEF. The only reason the Anniversary is returning to Stargate is because all of the fighting suits have been destroyed, and it would be impractical to continue.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 6-7

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 6-7 Summary

After the collapsar jump, it is still a ten-month journey back to Stargate. It takes Marygay approximately six weeks to completely recover from her near-fatal injuries. After the recovery, she is once again a fully-functional member of the crew, participating in what most consider pointless exercises. They are required to continue the strict formal army code of discipline. Mandella thinks it is because they will not be allowed to leave the armed forces. Marygay assures him that it is simply the only way they can maintain organization and stability in a crew that will be cooped up for almost another year. By the time reach Stargate, it has been seventeen years since they left, and the base has truly come into its own as headquarters of the war in size, population, weaponry, and ships. Shortly after their arrival, they are escorted to a briefing with the resident general.

The general says that he does not understand why they do not want to remain in the army, since combat only makes people stronger, but they will be sent back to Earth as promised. They are informed that should they want to re-enlist at any time after their return to civilian life, they will have their pick of non-combat assignments at the location of their choice at top pay. Although each of them will be receiving back pay for the past twenty-six years, they are cautioned that the money will not last as long as they think. The general then turns over the rest of the briefing to a male captain who, Mandella notices, is very effeminate and wearing makeup. The captain begins by asking who of the company is homosexual. Most in the company are shocked and not a hand is raised. The captain informs them that "homolife" is the encouraged lifestyle on Earth as a form of birth and population control. There have been a combination of natural disasters and human rioting that has severely depleted the Earth's food supplies. He goes on to describe the current employment structure and how approximately two-thirds of Earth's population is unemployed. There are no longer any gender-specific pronouns, no more worldwide electricity, and the currency has been changed to calories. Mandella and the rest of the company spend the rest of their time on Stargate trying to catch up in the library or getting high in the NCO club.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 6-7 Analysis

In the nearly twenty Earth years that they have been in the army, the only thing that has remained consistent has been the army itself. Technology, society, even science and sexuality have changed, but UNEF is still strict, still Machiavellian, and still trying to crush an unknown enemy. Although they are warned that things on Earth are very

different than they think, everyone that has survived the last campaign is aching to go home. The fact that before they leave Stargate the carrot of being promoted and given non-combat assignments upon re-enlisting makes it seem as though the army must have had some idea that the majority of them would find present day Earth unbearably different than what they are used to.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 8

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 8 Summary

After reeling in the flurry of welcome-home dinners and honorary receptions with important military and political personnel, Mandella heads to his mother's house. She is almost twenty years older than she was when he last saw her and his father is dead. She keeps her door chained shut at all times and never leaves her apartment without a bodyguard. Stopping at a food store on the way home is a disorienting experience for Mandella due to the universal use of ration books. While his mother prepares dinner, he looks in the newspaper for the Help Wanted section. He is dismayed when his mother explains that it has been at least ten years since there has been a Help Wanted section because the government assigns jobs based on need. She tells him that although his retirement money will run out rather quickly, it is still too large of an amount to be eligible for employment. Mandella absorbs the tangled web of employment dealers, job subletting, fake identification and bribery, and how to keep it all under the radar of the Employment Board.

Before Mandella heads to the gun store to purchase a suitable weapon, his mother tries to give him a gun that once belonged to his father. He declines, saying that he's not going far. Less than five minutes later, a well-dressed man pulls a metal pipe on him in the elevator. Mandella pretends to reach for a weapon and threatens to kill the man, who backs down. When he reaches the gun shop, he purchases the most explosive weapon he can find, as well as a number of different accessories including a bullet-proof jacket and a knife to hide in his boot. After strapping on all his new equipment, Mandella takes the monorail to Hyattsville and then calls an autocab to take him to the address of a bar where he will have his first appointment with a job dealer. While waiting for just a few minutes he is offered a fix of heroin, a female prostitute, and a male prostitute. Mandella refuses all three and is grateful when the dealer arrives. He explains that he would like to find employment in physics, which is his field of expertise, but the dealer tells him that his education is almost twenty-five years old and suggests employment at a bodyguard agency. Again, Mandella declines. The dealer tells him he will see what he can do.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter is the first of several that fulfill the foreshadowing of Mandella's growing alienation from society. The standard perspective about employment before he left Earth had simply been that those who were able to work definitely did, and as much as possible. He has a difficult time getting his mind around the idea that people are not only encouraged, but required to live off the system, and those who do not are breaking

the law. Additionally, the fact that a well-dressed man pulls a weapon on him is perplexing. By the time Mandella is offered a fix of heroin, a female prostitute, and a male prostitute at a bar, he is almost coming to grips with the fact that the things he sees and experiences on Earth will only continue to get more and more out of his frame of reference.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 9

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 9 Summary

When Mandella returns to his mother's apartment, there is a blinking light on the phone. After fumbling around with communications technology that he does not understand, he is able to ascertain that Marygay has called from her parents' co-op in South Dakota. Mandella calls her back and she tells him that she had to stop working in the field to come to the phone. As soon as they see each other over the screen, they decide to take a trip around the world together, starting with London. Mandella reminds her to bring a gun. When they meet the next morning at the Ellis Island jetport, they immediately get a room and spend several hours making love. While smoking a joint in the afterglow, they discuss killing and war, and how the world has changed in so many negative ways. They agree that although wars in the past often stimulated society technologically, artistically, and socially, this war has done no such thing. This war simply has the Earth's economy riding on its coattails.

Mandella and Marygay have tickets for a round-the-world dirigible trip and since there is some ambiguity in the ration ticket laws, they are able to eat sumptuous meals for the three days they fly over the ocean to London. Immediately after their arrival in London, they begin sightseeing. Mandella notes to himself that this city seems remarkably safe when compared with Washington. Over dinner he asks Marygay how her parents came to live on a commune. She tells him that her father got caught with extra ration tickets and would have gone to prison if he and her mother had not been taken by a "bodysnatcher." She clarifies that bodysnatchers offer people a place to stay, a plot of land, and new identities if they move to a commune to farm the land. This, she explains, is the only safe place for them because the communes provide a large percentage of the world's foodstuffs and the government cannot afford to lose any farmers.

On their last night in London, Marygay and Mandella stumble upon a girl being beaten and gang-raped. Mandella immediately fires his gun into the air. Most of the boys run, but one of them fires back. Mandella shoots at the boy's arm, but a large portion of his chest flies off as well. The half-naked girl screams and runs down the street. When Mandella tries to walk, he falls directly on the sidewalk, realizing that he has been shot in the leg. Before he and Marygay can escape the scene, he passes out. When he comes to, the police put him under hypnosis and determine that his story matches the girl's and he is released. Marygay and Mandella decide that they want to get away from the city and just disappear into the wilderness. They find that the wilderness is just as dangerous as the city with farms being raided on almost a nightly basis by nomadic gangs. As a result, they decide to go back to their own country, which is at least more



familiar to them. Mandella plans to meet up with Marygay at the commune a week after they return.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 9 Analysis

It is interesting that the novel portrays the dirigible as a highly successful enterprise and something that is still in existence twenty years later, when in reality dirigibles are a thing of the past. This is one of the points in the book that lay bare the fact that it was published in 1974.

The killing of the gang-rapist in London is just one of a chain of events that confirm that Earth is not the home it used to be, nor is there any refuge on Earth from itself. Marygay and Mandella leave the states to get away and they find the same kind of violence from which they were trying to escape. Their decision to make another attempt to leave violence behind foreshadows its lack of success in the future.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 10

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 10 Summary

A woman Mandella does not recognize answers the door at his mother's apartment. His mother introduces her as Rhonda Wilder, her roommate. The three of them spend the evening together and Mandella tells them the story about London and why he is back much sooner than expected. Mandella is slightly surprised that his mother does not blink an eye when she learns that he killed a man. He tells them that he is planning to head to South Dakota within a week to visit Marygay and her parents. Eventually, Mandella's mother has to go to work and he and Rhonda are left alone. Acting on a hunch that he has had all evening, he asks Rhonda the nature of her relationship with his mother. Upon hearing that they are lovers, Mandella is shell-shocked. Rhonda explains to him that this is the state of the times and that she can understand why this is hard for him because she was born just two years before him even though she is actually twenty years older than him. She encourages him to try to accept that things have changed and reminds him that his mother needs love too. Overwhelmed, Mandella writes his mother a note and leaves that night for South Dakota.

After a long and arduous journey, Mandella walks toward the Potters' farm on a dirt road. Frustrated with the lack of any signs of life, he stops at the first house he sees and rings the bell. The door does not open, but a woman speaks to him through the door and gives him directions. She explains that she cannot let him in because her husband is not home, but that he is welcome to take a drink from their well. Mandella takes her up on the offer and continues down the road. He finally arrives at the Potters' commune and Marygay comes rushing happily to meet him, wearing little more than a loincloth. Mandella is pleased. She introduces him to her parents who are very welcoming and dressed very much like Marygay. Mandella is not sure how he feels about that. They enjoy a home-grown, home-cooked meal and describe commune life to Mandella.

After dinner, Mr. Potter shows Mandella the tower where they each take their turn every night keeping watch for jumpers. He shows him the rifle they use while standing guard and Mandella, at Mr. Potter's urging, takes a practice shot. The Potters' farm is farther in from the road than most, so the most they experience is hearing gunfire a couple of times a month. Mr. Potter explains that while the people closer to the road take more of a risk, they are allowed more of an income than the rest and they are also allowed weapons with much more firepower. When Mandella understands how watch occurs, he and Marygay ride bicycles to the commune recreation center where they engage in a lively conversation about the war. Mandella is interested to learn that most of them are angry about it because of the amount of money it costs to execute, but at the same



time, they understand that should the war suddenly come to an end, Earth's economy will collapse.

Mandella quickly settles into a comfortable routine of working hard during the day, eating well, and spending time with Marygay in the evenings. One night they are at the recreation center when they hear gunfire. They immediately rush back home, but before they can make it there is an explosive barrage of bullets from all around them. Mandella and Marygay army-crawl back to the cottage past several burning houses. Marygay's mother is bleeding on the floor, and while Marygay kneels beside her, Mandella runs to the tower to check on her father. When he reaches Mr. Potter he finds dried blood on his face from a bullet hole above his eye. Mandella takes the ammunition and the rifle and returns to Marygay and her mother, telling them that his death was quick and painless. Unable to locate a secure place inside the house, Mandella tells Marygay only to shoot if someone breaks in and then he climbs onto the roof. After Mandella fires unsuccessfully at the bulletproof truck that pulls up to the house, the jumpers enter the cottage to be instantly gunned down by Marygay. They bury her parents in the backyard and Marygay cries quietly.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 10 Analysis

Mandella takes the trip to South Dakota to be with Marygay in the hopes of finding some peace. His very first interaction with anyone on the commune is with a woman through a door because she will not open it unless her husband is home. If nothing else, this is certainly a sign that if there is to be any peace, it will be short-lived. Despite the fact that they are truly in the country on a farm, Mr. Potter shows Mandella where the weapons are and explaining how they keep watch every night against jumpers. Although it is less violent than the city, it is unfortunately no surprise when both of Marygay's parents are killed by the nighttime raiders.



Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 11

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 11 Summary

When Mandella and Marygay return to his mother's apartment in Washington, she is very sick, bedridden, and coughing a great deal. Mandella insists that he take her to a doctor immediately. He goes to the phone and calls a hospital. After asking him if he is kidding, the nurse on the other end explains to him that his mother had received a zero priority rating on her seventieth birthday, meaning that her level of importance in society qualifies her for no medical treatment whatsoever. Mandella hangs up on the nurse and without delay begins to locate various medicines for his mother on the black market. Over the next four days, he and Marygay try to keep his mother alive, but she eventually dies. Mandella calls his brother who is currently living on Luna, the community on the moon, to tell him the news. He is not surprised, nor does he seem very upset. He tells them they should come live on Luna as well, which is much more individualized than Earth. This would mean that they would have to re-enlist, but they would be in supervisory, non-combat positions. After a long discussion, Marygay and Mandella decide to rejoin the Force because living on Earth is unbearable. They are in their new location on the moon for less than a day when they receive their new assignments. Both of them are promoted to Lieutenant and ordered into combat.

Sergeant Mandella, 2007-2024 A.D., Chapter 11 Analysis

This chapter contains the final straw in the chain of events that leads Mandella and Marygay back into the army. After the loss of Marygay's parents, it takes only four days to lose Mandella's mother. With nothing left for them on Earth, they do exactly as UNEF had hoped and predicted. They re-enlist. True to form, everything has changed but UNEF. They are told one thing and what they get is another. It takes just over an hour for them to be reassigned to a battle-bound Strike Force.



Lieutenant Mandella, 2024-2389 A.D.

Lieutenant Mandella, 2024-2389 A.D. Summary

Leading their platoons, Mandella and Marygay climb into their new, upgraded fighting suits. After making sure everyone had taken their "happy pill," a drug designed to relax the user without impeding reasoning ability, they clamber aboard the assault ship. Mandella notes how efficient the army has become. The ship they are boarding is meant for one use only in case the mission is a failure, but the ship that picks up survivors is much nicer. Before they can reach their target Tauran base, the ship and many of the people inside, are blown apart. Mandella notices that his leg has been crushed by debris and then amputated by the fighting suit. Thanks to the pill, before he passes out he thinks, "This is not so bad..."

Mandella comes to in the infirmary, which is overflowing with people missing body parts. He watches the doctors as they operate on the others, and helped along by the drugs in his system it seems as though they are mechanics fixing broken machinery. After easing in and out of consciousness for an indeterminate amount of time, Mandella wakes up in a private room with Marygay on the opposite bed. She is missing part of her arm. He tries to decipher the way that he feels about that, but the mood-altering chemicals not only keep him calm, but also only allow him to pinpoint emotional ambivalence. Marygay opens her eyes, confirming his guess that she was already awake but allowing him time to get used to her missing arm, and tells him that they are going to Heaven, which is the army-sponsored rest and recreation planet. Unfortunately, however, their directives are for a total of four missions and they are not permitted to return until all missions are complete or they lose too many personnel to efficiently carry on, whichever happens first.

The doctor comes in to check on them and teases them about still being in separate beds. He then goes on to tell them that the reason they are so heavily drugged is that there are over twenty amputees on the ship and they are not equipped to handle the emotional reactions of that many people at once. The doctor warns them that once they are off the drugs, it will be very difficult to deal with one another. He tells them not to be surprised if they are unable to continue their relationship as they had hoped. They are taken to their acceleration shells, which like the fighting suits are far more technologically advanced than the ones with which they are familiar. The second mission cripples the company to the point of only twelve fully functioning personnel, so they cut their losses and head for Heaven.

Heaven is an ecologically Utopian planet with a carefully maintained balance between humanity and nature. They land in the jungle city, Threshold, where seventy-five percent of the buildings are part of a massive hospital. During his initial examination, Mandella learns that he is practically a billionaire and that according to Earth-time he is 215 years old. After his surgery, he wakes up to find a metallic-looking appendage where his leg used to be. He is informed that during the time it took to travel from the last mission to



Heaven, new discoveries have been made that allow the complete regeneration of limbs with nerves, blood vessels, bones and muscle. The only difference is that the new limb is unbreakable. The aide who explains this to him has no frame of reference for the time when this was not possible. Limb regeneration has been going on since before he was born. During the painful healing process, Mandella develops cancer in six separate locations due to the blockage of his body's natural inclination to resist unfamiliar cells. He experiences this with a mixture of misery and fascination at watching his new leg grow right in front of his eyes.

Marygay, also going through the regeneration process with her arm, visits with him every day. He is finally able to gently walk, but his new leg is completely stiff. Both he and Marygay undergo intensive physical therapy which at first is agonizing, but gradually becomes simple exercise, and eventually they are both released from the hospital. They spend a blissful six months living lavishly together on Heaven, indiscriminately spending millions of dollars on any whim. Although the economy is now based on electronic credit and the prices on Heaven are extremely inflated to recycle veterans' money back into the army, Mandella and Marygay spare no expense. They travel, hike, swim, eat, drink, and celebrate being alive. One day, while enjoying a costly lunch, they receive their orders. Once again, they are both promoted, but to separate companies. Not only are chances of survival slim, but the moment they board ships in different directions they immediately begin to experience different time dilations. They will most likely never see each other again. Dismayed, Mandella makes a feeble attempt to protest, but he is informed that the army "plans in terms of centuries...not in terms of people."

Lieutenant Mandella, 2024-2389 A.D. Analysis

The use of mood altering drugs is extensive throughout the novel, especially the uniform directives of military personnel. In this case, everyone in the company takes a "happy pill," reportedly for the benefit of the user, but in actuality is just another form of control. It is abundantly clear that the efficiency of UNEF extends to every facet of operations, including the utility of drugs and the "waste not want not" mentality. What actually happens in this chapter is that a large number of less-than-willing participants are drugged and placed in a disposable spaceship. When things go wrong, they are kept alive only if a reasonable percentage of them is still intact enough to serve UNEF's purpose. Mandella's hallucination about doctors being mechanics and wounded soldiers being broken machinery illustrates this dynamic perfectly.

The irony in this chapter is that just when Mandella and Marygay begin to share a life together, they are abruptly separated with very minute odds of ever seeing each other again. They have been through very traumatic times together and their relationship has been building to a climax only to be cut short by the omniscient, omnipotent presence of UNEF which seems to have no purpose other than to destroy what has been created.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 1

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 1 Summary

Mandella is shipped directly to Stargate on a journey that takes almost one hundred subjective years. Immediately upon his arrival he is placed in the "can" which is an "accelerated life situation computer" where he spends three weeks literally absorbing electronic information about war history, combat, fighting techniques, and logistical and tactical training. After two weeks of necessary healing immediately following the session, Mandella, who is now around 450 subjective years old, is given an appointment with Colonel Jack Kynock at the officer's bar for "temporal orientation." The purpose of this meeting is to familiarize him with present day military and social standards as well as prepare him for command. By the time Kynock arrives to meet with him, Mandella is well into his seventh beer and less than concerned about whether or not the meeting takes place at all. To Mandella's surprise, the colonel is friendly, and like himself, out of his time element. Kynock begins telling Mandella some of the things that have happened on Earth since he has been gone.

The Pacifist Movement is an historical item with which Mandella is not familiar. Guerrilla warfare initiated by angry veterans of the first two campaigns of the war, it received large amounts of cooperation and backing from the general population. Mandella asks why this was not included in his education in the can, and Kynock explains that the Pacifist Movement was an example of veterans gone awry, not something UNEF would want advertised. Mandella muses that last time he was on Earth, it had seemed impossible that any of the population would rebel because they had all seemed to buy into the paradigm of the government running everything. Kynock points out that mankind goes through cycles and that he had just been on Earth during a cycle of severe oppression. Kynock and Mandella have a long discussion about subconscious motivational conditioning and how the army no longer utilizes it because it has determined that robot-like soldiers are less likely to survive. Kynock offers Mandella a look at his psych profile, and Mandella is intrigued. According to Kynock, Mandella's profile says that he is a pacifist, but unsuccessfully, which makes him slightly insane. Mandella is not surprised. The final issue that Kynock discusses with Mandella is the concern over his heterosexuality, which is, at this point in time, considered a psychological disorder. However, due to the fact that he is only one of eleven other people to survive from the beginning of the war, there is nothing else to do with him but make him commander of his own Strike Force.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 1 Analysis

From this point forward in the novel, there is a darkness around Mandella that is not addressed directly, but it is clearly there. The sarcasm in both the narration and the



dialogue become a bit more bitter and less lighthearted. His meeting with the Temporal Orientation Officer is a confirmation of Mandella's resignation to his fate and his apathy in general. Not only is he quite upfront about how he does not believe he will make a good officer, but he is also half-drunk by the time he arrives, demonstrating how unimportant it is to him that he absorb the information given to him in the meeting.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 2

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 2 Summary

The next day, Mandella meets his company for the first time. Since conception and birth no longer take place on Earth as a result of mating and pregnancy, all 112 of them are what he would consider "test-tube babies." Mandella reflects on how similar most of them look to one another, and how things have changed in the last 450 years. Every single person on the planet is drafted into the service at age twenty and serves at least five years. Those with the highest genetic ratings are encouraged to become combat soldiers and extend the mandatory five years to ten. Turning down such an honor is considered "sociopathic" in present-day society. Although no one has ever made it through all ten years alive, people continue to sign up. Looking over his soldiers, he is amazed that every single one of them is homosexual.

Lieutenant Hilleboe, his Second Field Officer responsible for the daily operations of the company, begins their first muster with a stern, no-nonsense discourse which Mandella feels is a bit too strict, but he had not had the opportunity to speak with his officers very much before this. He had been planning to institute an open-door policy by which any soldier could come to him with any concern during specific allotted times; but after Hilleboe's speech, it is clear to him that to tell the company that now would make it appear that he and his Second Field Officer are not a united front. He opts to talk to her later and have her make that announcement. While he is pondering these things, Captain Charlie Moore, Mandella's second in command, runs in with the combat orders to build a base on a portal planet in enemy territory and then wait two or three years until their replacements arrive. After checking with the Commodore, he decides to announce their orders to the company. He gives a short talk that sounds to him like what an officer should say and introduces the Commodore. Mandella half-listens to her explanation of the Masaryk II, the ship they will be on for twenty months and Sade-138, the collapsar to which they will be traveling. His brain snaps to attention when he hears that this trip will cause a time dilation of approximately three hundred years. His heart sinks because even though he had known it was inevitable, it is now certain that he will never see Marygay again.

Mandella invites his five officers to his private quarters for some brandy and an informal meeting. Second Lieutenant Diana Alsever, the company's head doctor, chooses instead to inhale some sort of drug from small capsules. After asking them if they are all aware of his heterosexuality, he encourages them not to call him "Sir" or "Major" in private, but his first name, William. Even as the words are coming out of his mouth, he is doubtful of how smart a move that might have been. His officers tell him that they do not think any differently of him, but that it is just an unusual "eccentricity." They assure him that it should not be a problem with the troops, but they seem a bit confused as to why someone would want to have relations with the opposite sex. Alsever, in particular,



expresses her repugnance at the idea. After the meeting, Mandella and Moore set out on an expedition to bar-hop every single place in the area, but by the time they reach their twelfth destination, Mandella decides to get some sleep in the limited time still available.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 2 Analysis

It is not until he actually meets with his Strike Force that Mandella realizes how incredibly out of touch he is with modern day society. Aside from the obvious things such as his entire company being homosexual, none of them speaking his language, and none of them knowing their parents, Mandella realizes during his meeting with his officers that he has no idea if he should hold doors open for men and slap women on their rear ends, or if he should act as though they are all members of one big family.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 3

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 3 Summary

Shortly after the journey begins aboard the Masaryk II, Mandella and Moore meet in the officer's lounge and drink coffee, which they agree is the worst they have ever tasted. Hilleboe comes in and asks Mandella if he will be speaking to the company before it is time for the acceleration tanks. Barely avoiding telling her that it is his job to make those decisions, he assigns her to go over some routine items with the platoon leaders, which is a job that would usually have been done by one of her subordinates. She leaves the lounge, clearly irritated. Moore and Mandella have a brief discussion about how Hilleboe is going to cause problems and possibly undermine his authority, but Mandella has not yet determined how he is going to handle her. Mandella and Moore spend the rest of the time before they go into the tanks exploring the ship, and it quickly becomes clear that the close quarters will make a serious morale problem quite likely long before the end of twenty months.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 3 Analysis

It becomes clear in this chapter that issues will arise between Mandella and Hilleboe. Mandella feels as though he constantly has to remind her on some level that he is the commander and she is not. The fact that Hilleboe does not respect him foreshadows the fact that Mandella's entire company will reach the point of not only not trusting his judgment, but not even following a direct order.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 4

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 4 Summary

After a short time aboard the Masaryk II, it is brought to Mandella's attention that there is an underground distillery business being run by the cooks. Although the beverage they are producing is almost one hundred percent alcohol, he chooses not to put a stop to it in the hopes that it will improve the morale on the ship. Out of curiosity, he asks Diana to find out how it is being done. She returns not only with an explanation of how sugar from chow-time desserts is being distilled and traded, but also with a sample bottle. Mandella cannot finish one drink because the taste repels him. Diana, who is not a drinker and usually prefers mood altering substances of the more chemical variety, finds it to be quite delightful. She proceeds to get very drunk in just a short period of time, and in slurred words tells him that he has a problem, referring to his heterosexuality. She then begins getting undressed and says that this is the only chance he'll ever have to have sex with her, so he had better take advantage of it. Mandella, who has been celibate for over a year, is partially disappointed and partially relieved when she passes out before anything happens.

As time goes on, Mandella notices more and more the widening gap between himself and the troops. Not only do they call him the "Old Queer" behind his back, but half the time he can hardly understand what they are saying because English dialects have changed so much since Mandella's time. He thinks about Captain Stott, and how he had disliked him. He tries to put himself in the shoes of the troops by wondering how much worse it would have been had Captain Stott been openly homosexual and if the whole company had to learn a different dialect just to communicate with him. Mandella does not blame the troops for alienating him, but he has no idea how to deal with the issue. They finally arrive at Sade-138 and begin building the base. Although Mandella is simply following their orders from UNEF, the troops become even more discontented when they learn that they will be building the defense systems before housing. The entire base is built in four weeks, and then there is nothing left to do but train, wait, and get on each other's nerves in close quarters.

Several months go by without excitement when Private Graubard begins stirring things up a bit. Initially, Graubard and his lover break up and upon seeing him in the cafeteria, Graubard nearly beats him to death. Mandella puts him in solitary confinement for a week, anger-management counseling, and disciplinary labor. He then transfers the private to a different platoon to avoid seeing each other as much. The next time Graubard sees his ex-lover he kicks him in the throat, collapsing his trachea, which has to be completely reconstructed by Diana. Graubard is again sentenced to a longer period of time in solitary confinement, anger-management counseling, and disciplinary labor. For two weeks Graubard remains silent, but then another fight between him and his ex-lover breaks out. This time, both parties are seriously injured and although



Mandella is well within his rights to have him summarily executed, Charlie suggests sending Graubard back to the ship, and Mandella agrees. He calls the company together to explain the situation and at the beginning of the assembly, Graubard makes an attempt on Mandella's life. Later on, Mandella wishes he would have killed Graubard in self-defense, which would have solved the problem then and there, but it is not in his nature to do so. Instead, he kicks him in the chest, knocking him unconscious. As Mandella is bleeding on the floor, he realizes that executing Graubard will make things even worse between him and the troops.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter describes in detail more of the alienation process that is occurring for Mandella. In comparing himself to Stott, his first commander, Mandella sees similarities, although this situation is worse because there is 450 years worth of future shock to contend with as well. This building alienation culminates in one of his privates attempting to assassinate him and his pacifist nature instinctively causing Mandella to disable him rather than kill him.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 5

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 5 Summary

Diana is treating Mandella's injuries in the clinic right after the attack and they discuss with Charlie the best way to handle Graubard. Mandella thinks he should kill the private himself. Charlie and Diana disagree and tell him that his authority as commander will be compromised if he does not delegate the responsibility to someone else. They go in a circular discussion about this for some time, and then Diana goes to check on Graubard in his holding cell. A few minutes later, she and several privates rush into the room with Graubard on a cart. His belt is looped around his neck and he is unconscious. While trying to resuscitate him, she explains that he tried to kill himself and had a heart attack in the process. Before Diana cuts open his ribcage to get directly to his heart, Mandella notices a red mark on Graubard's chest that occurs only when someone struggles against an injection. After Diana spends thirty minutes attempting unsuccessfully to bring him back to life, she goes next door to clean up and change. Mandella follows her because he has a strong suspicion that she killed Graubard to make everyone's life easier. In medical terms, Diana tells Mandella that Graubard was the cause of his own death, and without saying a word they look at each other, knowing the truth. After the Graubard event, Mandella's new nickname among the troops is "Killer."

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter is a demonstration of Diana's loyalty to Mandella. It is clear that keeping Graubard alive would cause more complications than killing him, but unfortunately his execution will alienate the troops from their commander even more. Despite her oath as a doctor to "first do no harm," it is obvious that Graubard's death is caused by an injection rather than a heart attack as a result of attempting to hang himself. His death in this manner creates the lesser of two evils. Rather than the troops hating him for the execution of one of their own, Diana takes it upon herself to handle the situation and the troops regard him with a distant half-respect rather than outright disdain.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 6

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 6 Summary

Just over a year after their arrival at Sade-138, the Taurans finally appear. Charlie and Mandella are sitting in Mandella's office when the commodore contacts them from the orbiting Masaryk II with the information that the first Tauran ships have been spotted. The computer estimates that it will be just under a month before they are actually in attack range. The company is quite disturbed by this information. They had expected the Taurans to attack early while they were building the base and since it had been over a year, there had been an unspoken hope that maybe they were not coming at all. During the month of waiting for the enemy, Mandella trains the troops hard using their strongest combat weaponry. Shortly after the first Tauran sighting, a second cruiser appears. Mandella and Charlie are concerned because there has never been a battle with more than one Tauran cruiser at a time, and it almost guarantees that they will have to fight the Taurans on the ground. Due to time dilation, they have no idea how advanced the Tauran weaponry will be, but judging by the fact that they have sent two cruisers instead of one leaves Mandella with a sense of foreboding.

The Masaryk II is able to destroy one of the Tauran cruisers, but is blown up shortly thereafter by one of the enemy drones. As soon as the Masaryk II is gone, one of her fighters and three of her drones begin pursuing an escape route back toward the collapsar at top speed. As part of the base, the company had built an opaque stasis field that renders all standard weapons inoperable and kills any life form not properly protected. Within the field itself they hid two nova bombs and a fighter pre-programmed for Stargate. The field had proven useful in other battles against the Taurans until the enemy created their own protective force fields and used spears to compromise the human fighting suits. Once the Taurans land, Mandella and Charlie toy with the idea of evacuating all personnel into the stasis field and using the nova bombs to detonate outside the field. They decide against it in the likely case that the Taurans send several waves of fighters.

The base's defensive lasers are programmed to fire at anything that moves outside of a certain circumference of the base. At first, they appear to be working very well as wave after wave of Tauran fighters and drones are destroyed. However, the lasers are specifically designed to function in sub-zero temperatures. Overheating will certainly cause malfunctions and inability to aim. With each explosion, the surface of the planet gets hotter and the lasers become less effective. Suddenly, the fighter that had gone into escape mode reappears with two of its three drones, apparently having gone around the collapsar rather than through it. One of the drones flies directly into the second enemy cruiser, destroying it immediately. The other drone impacts with the planet and the fighter continues to speed by, needing a month or two to actually slow



down. Mandella realizes this means they only have to deal with what is left of the Taurans on the surface of the planet.

Mandella quickly looks at the information on the computer to see what kind of effect the impact of the drone will have on the planet and abruptly orders the entire company to the surface of the planet because there is about to be a massive earthquake. Hilleboe, Charlie and Mandella run to the surface and just before the earthquake hits, they realize that not a single private had followed his order to evacuate the underground base. They watch the base collapse with the majority of the company still inside. After the ground settles, Mandella orders everyone still alive to carefully move back into the stasis field. Although he had given specific instructions on who was to cover whom during the retreat, mostly everyone simply runs toward the safety of the field without much concern for anyone else. Mandella finally reaches the dome and after narrowly being missed by a rocket, dives in.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 6 Analysis

This is the second and final battle scene in the book, which is, interestingly, a war novel. The fact that there are only two battles in the entire book speaks to the fact that there is so much more to war than just the battles. Its repercussions trickle down to every aspect of society and life. The inevitable disregard of Mandella's orders takes its toll in this chapter when he realizes there is about to be a massive earthquake and no one takes him seriously. At least two-thirds of his company is lost simply because they do not take him or his orders seriously. Again, when Mandella orders the survivors back into the stasis field, rather than following his instructions on coverage, it is a jumbled, disorganized, all-out run.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 7

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 7 Summary

Once inside, Mandella sees the disabled rocket that almost killed him moving slowly through the inside of the field and knows that it will self-destruct as soon as it exits the other side. That is one of the benefits of the field. One of the drawbacks is demonstrated by the nine bodies lying on the ground of those people whose fighting suits had somehow lost their protective shell. Since the field disables all electronic equipment, their bodies had also been deactivated when they had passed through the field. As a result, they froze instantaneously. Unable to utilize any sort of communication device within the field, Mandella waves the survivors of the company together, a total of 42 people including both Diana and Charlie. He begins distributing shields, knives, bows and arrows, and other primitive weapons, which are the only things effective in the field. They begin to wait, which is the only thing they can do until the Taurans either send their own primitive weapons into the field or actually march right in.

Several hours later, a flood of small darts enters the field through the top of the dome, and since there is no form of verbal communication possible in the field, five of the 42 remaining soldiers are killed. Expecting the Taurans to rush right in, they position themselves facing outward in a circle, preparing for an attack. Nothing happens for at least two hours, during which time Mandella painstakingly instructs everyone to tap the person next to him as soon as he sees any incoming. Shortly after the second wave of darts, the Taurans begin stepping into the field in a line. It takes very little time to realize that the Tauran's shields are no match for the human arrows. Finally, after sustaining very heavy casualties, the Taurans turn around and leave the field, apparently deciding to return to their random clouds of arrows as their best offensive maneuver. After a few days, no more darts enter the field. Following a hunch, Mandella takes a metal rod and passes part of it to the outside of the field. As he had suspected, the tip is melted off. The Taurans are inundating the field with laser fire as they did in previous battles, simply waiting until the humans inside go insane for lack of sensory input and shut down the generator. Mandella decides to use the original idea of sending the nova bombs outside of the field to detonate. Six days after the detonation of the bombs, hopefully enough time for the outside rock to stop boiling, Mandella turns off the generator.

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapter 7 Analysis

It is only at this point, when most of the company is dead, that the remaining soldiers begin to follow Mandella's lead. By the time he turns off the generator for the stasis field, only nineteen of a 112 compliment have survived.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapters 8-9

Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapters 8-9 Summary

As soon as the stasis field is turned off it is clear from the cooled lava that still glows red in certain places that there are no other living beings on the planet. The nineteen survivors immediately board the twelve-passenger fighter, turn on the life support systems, and get out of their fighting suits. They are able to breathe relatively fresh air for the first time since the beginning of the Tauran attack and even take showers. While waiting for the other fighter to return, Mandella's final order as commander is that there will be no more military action until they get back to Stargate. Mandella thoroughly enjoys being a peer among peers and they all spend time playing games and discussing what it will be like when they return to their society after the 700 years of time dilation. When the other fighter finally returns, they split personnel evenly between the two ships and set off for Stargate on a ten-month subjective journey.

When they arrive at Stargate there are hundreds of ships in orbit. Mandella immediately assumes that since things are so busy, they will be immediately shipped to their next assignment because subjectively, they have only served just over one of the ten required years. Once they disembark, they are called to a meeting in the auditorium. Strangely, the only people they see are men and women who look disturbingly similar to one another. Their society has, once again, completely changed. Not only is Earth now a planet made up entirely of clones with a single consciousness, but the war has been over for two centuries.

Part of their welcome home is an explanation of the 1,143-year-long war that summarizes the idea of the whole thing being based on a misunderstanding between Earth and the Taurans. Upon further exploration, Mandella discovers that the leaders at the onset of the war had believed that Earth needed a war to unify its people. The returnees are informed that they are free to decide where to live, what do, and with whom to do it. Mandella finds a note in his personnel file from Marygay in which she informs him that she has been waiting for him by using a cruiser as a time machine in space by a "heterosexual Coventry" planet called Middle Finger. Utilizing time dilation to her benefit, she has been traveling several light years and back over a subjective period of a month, and when she returns, five actual years have passed. Along with Diana and Charlie, who eventually get married, Mandella heads to Middle Finger to find Marygay. Mandella and Marygay have their first child, a boy, approximately 1,146 years after they first met.



Major Mandella, 2458-3142 A.D., Chapters 8-9 Analysis

The culmination of everything Mandella has ever thought about the war is confirmed in these final chapters. The war started on false pretenses and even Stargate only still exists as "a monument to human stupidity." The end of the book is a surprise twist and is at first glance a happy ending. It seems as though true love prevails and then even has a love child, but to fully understand what is actually going on, closer examination is necessary. Marygay and Mandella are living on a planet called "Middle Finger," a gesture whose meaning has not changed much through the years, which is a refuge for heterosexuals who do not fit in on Earth anymore. The alienation continues.



Characters

William Mandella

William Mandella is the novel's main character. Mandella ranks in the top percentile of the world for intelligence, education, and physical fitness. As a result, he is included in the elite group of people conscripted into the united armed services of the world to battle the unknown and elusive Tauran aliens. Although this war spans over a millennium, Mandella unwittingly sees it through from beginning to end due to the time differential created by travel through constantly evolving wormholes. Over the period of the war, which spans 1,143 years, Mandella is promoted from private to sergeant to lieutenant and finally to major, commanding his own strike force.

Mandella is among the first that will face the Taurans, and since very little is known about this enemy, military training involves a wide variety of environments and procedures as the humans attempt to prepare for anything. After the mission, Mandella returns home to Earth. However, due to time dilation, it has been transformed into a highly violent and aggressive place. Mandella has difficulty with how much his mother has aged, not to mention the fact that she is involved in a relationship with another woman, demonstrating the global acceptance of homosexuality as a means to control overpopulation. Mandella and his lover, Marygay Potter, feel isolated and alienated from this new society. Mandella's mother dies since on her seventieth birthday she had been rated a zero in relation to her importance to society. While Mandella is visiting Marygay's family at a commune in South Dakota, both of her parents are brutally killed by raiders. Although they wanted nothing more than to get out of the military, they quickly decide to return as soon as possible. Marygay and Mandella agree that it is preferable to have a single enemy in the face of almost certain death as opposed to constantly being surrounded by different enemies.

Despite the fact that they had been promised easy assignments, both Marygay and Mandella were appointed combat platoons in short order. During this tour of duty, both of them are severely injured; Mandella loses a leg and Marygay an arm. After their time together during their recovery, they are given their next assignments. To their dismay, they are to be separated. It has been over two hundred years since the war began and since they are to be traveling in opposite directions, it is likely that they will never see one another again. By the time Mandella reaches the launch location of his mission, a three-week, virtual reality crash course called the "can" has been created. The "can" injects the user's brain with every bit of information deemed valuable for the Major of a Strike Force in the year 2458.

When Mandella is inserted back into the military, he finds himself the exception on many different levels. First and most noticeably, he is the only heterosexual in his company. Additionally, Mandella is literally hundreds of years older than his subordinates, which not only creates a mutual culture shock, but requires everyone in his company to learn how to speak and understand his dialect. Mandella leads his Strike Force to a freezing



planet circling a dull star where they build a base in preparation for the Tauran attack. The Taurans finally arrive and all but demolish Mandella's company, partially because his subordinates do not follow his orders. Upon returning to Stargate after the mission, Mandella finds that the war is over. Mandella finds a note in his personnel file from Marygay in which she informs him that she has been waiting for him by using a space cruiser as a time machine. Utilizing time dilation to her benefit, she has been traveling several light years and back over a period of a month, and when she returns, five years have passed. Mandella and Marygay have their first child, a boy, approximately 1,146 years after they first met.

Marygay Potter

Mandella first meets Marygay on Charon when she is his team leader in a training operation. From the very beginning, their relationship is a combination of affection and sarcastic banter, true to form for many lasting relationships. Marygay is among the first that will face the Taurans, and since very little is known about this sworn enemy, military training involves a wide variety of environments and procedures as the humans attempt to prepare for anything. After the mission, Marygay returns home to Earth, but due to time dilation, she finds that it has become a highly violent and aggressive place. Marygay and Mandella feel isolated and alienated from society, and after the death of Mandella's mother and both of Marygay's parents, they decide to re-enlist. Despite the fact that they had been promised easy assignments, both Marygay and Mandella were appointed combat platoons in short order. During this tour of duty, both of them are severely injured, Mandella losing a leg and Marygay an arm. After their time together during their recovery, they are given their next assignments. To their dismay, they are to be separated. It has been over two hundred years since the war began and since they are to be traveling in opposite directions, it is likely that they will never see one another again. Marygay reaches Stargate well before Mandella and leaves him a message telling him to come join her on Middle Finger, a "Coventry for heterosexuals." Utilizing time dilation to her benefit, she travels several light years and back over a period of a month, and when she returns, five years have passed. Mandella and Marygay have their first child, a boy, approximately 1,146 years after they first met.

Rogers

Rogers is Mandella's first sack-mate at the beginning of the book. He describes her as feminine, yet "a little butch." She is the only one to say anything about how the majority of their training is "silly" and she is also promoted slightly faster than her counterparts on their second campaign.

Captain Sherman Stott

Captain Sherman Stott is the company commander in charge of the first campaign against the Taurans and is also Cortez' direct superior. During training on Charon, Stott



chastises Mandella and the other privates for not showing a "will to live" when they respond to a perceived attack by dropping flat on the ground, an instinctively self-preserving act. Although he had hated him when he had decided to stay on the ship rather than take his chances in the battle with the Taurans, Mandella cannot help but feel sick of the resemblance between him and Stott when he has his own command.

Sergeant Octavio Cortez

Sergeant Octavio Cortez is the first sergeant on Mandella's first campaign as a private. Cortez has obviously been wounded in battle, judging by the deformities of his face and head. He is the most direct authority that brings Mandella through his second campaign, when he is promoted to a Sergeant himself. Specifically, Cortez leads the very first attack on Taurans in human history, which is a bloody slaughter fought by soldiers under post-suggestive hypnosis.

Lieutenant Doctor Estelle Harmony

Doctor Estelle Harmony is a doctor in the company where Mandella is a Sergeant and also a frequent sack-mate of his. When Marygay is almost fatally wounded, Doctor Harmony is fundamental in saving her life.

Captain Charlie Moore

Captain Charlie Moore is Mandella's executive officer while he is commander of a Strike Force. After Charlie hits on Mandella and he declines, the two of them become friends. Charlie survives the campaign and, along with Diana and Mandella, travels to a planet called Middle Finger after the war to find Marygay. Charlie and Diana, although both of them lived most of their lives as homosexuals, eventually end up getting married.

First Lieutenant Hilleboe

First Lieutenant Hilleboe is Mandella's Second Field Officer when he is commanding his own Strike Force. She is responsible for keeping the troops in line as well as the day-to-day operations of the company. Hilleboe is skilled at maintaining discipline, but she and Mandella do not always see eye to eye on how members of the company should be treated.

Second Lieutenant Doctor Diana Alsever

Diana Alsever is the lead doctor under Mandella's command. Although a self-proclaimed homosexual, she makes a pass at Mandella one evening while drunk. It is implied that she saves Mandella a lot of inevitable complications by secretly killing a private who attempted to assassinate him. Diana, along with Mandella and Charlie, travel to a planet



called Middle Finger to find Marygay after the war, where she and Charlie end up getting married. Diana delivers Mandella and Marygay's first child.

Beth Mandella

Beth Mandella is Mandella's mother. Once he arrives back on Earth after his first campaign, he stays with her for a brief period until he discovers that she is in a relationship with another woman. The next time Mandella sees her, it is only for four days, after which she dies due to her documented lack of importance to society. Her death is the final straw that sends Mandella back into UNEF.

Richard and April Potter

Richard and April Potter are Marygay's parents with whom she and Mandella stay until both of them are killed by raiders on their South Dakota commune. Their deaths send Marygay and Mandella back to his mother's, who dies shortly after their arrival.

Rhonda Wilder

Rhonda Wilder is Mandella's mother's roommate and lover.

Colonel Jack Kynack

Colonel Jack Kynack is the "Temporal Orientation Officer" with whom Mandella meets at the officer's club to get acclimated to the military standards and social morals of the present.



Objects/Places

The Taurans

The Taurans are the species against whom Earth is waging war.

United Nations Exploratory Force, UNEF

The United Nations Exploratory Force, or UNEF, is Earth's worldwide military.

Charon

Charon is the planet where Mandella and the rest of his company have their first assignment.

Stargate

Stargate is UNEF's headquarters for the war and the largest known portal planet.

The Earth's Hope

The Earth's Hope is the space cruiser that transports Mandella's company on their first combat mission.

Fighting Suit

A fighting suit is an individualized combination of weapon and shield against the elements worn by each soldier.

Acceleration Shell

An acceleration shell is a one-person cocoon that maintains life systems while traveling past a certain speed.

Miami Base

Miami Base is the UNEF base on Charon.



The Anniversary

The Anniversary is the cruiser that transports Mandella and Marygay on their second battle assignment.

Rhine Ability

Rhine ability is an individual's level of extrasensory perception.

Collapsar

A collapsar is literally a star that has collapsed in on itself, leaving behind a wormhole that enables almost instantaneous space travel over light years. Use of the collapsars is the direct cause of time dilation.

Middle Finger

Middle Finger is the planet where Marygay waits for Mandella while he returns from the war.

Sade-138

Sade-138 is the location of Mandella's final campaign.

The Can, ALSC

The can is an "accelerated life situation computer" where Mandella spends three weeks literally absorbing electronic information about war history, combat, fighting techniques, and logistical and tactical training.

Masaryk II

The Masaryk II is the ship where Mandella begins commanding his own Strike Force.

Heaven

Built and controlled by UNEF, Heaven is an ecologically Utopian planet with a carefully maintained balance between humanity and nature. Seventy-five percent of the jungle city, Threshold, is a massive hospital.



Themes

Gender and Sexuality

The presentation of gender and sexuality in the novel is varied. At the beginning of the war, it is not only encouraged, but martial law that the men and women in UNEF have sex with both assigned and chosen partners. All of the assignments and choices are heterosexual and no one seems to think of having it any other way. Then, after decades away due to time dilation, the troops of the first campaign return to Earth to a world where a large percentage of people are homosexual, strongly recommended by the government as a form of population control. When Mandella takes on his own Strike Force, he is the only heterosexual in his company and he is referred to as the "Old Queer." Finally, at the end of the war, Earth is made up of bisexual clones who do not reproduce sexually, but utilize a test-tube approach to population. The homosexuals are given the option to remain as they are and stay on Earth or their sexual orientation can be switched if they prefer. There are still "breeder" planets, but no homosexual planets, which gives pause to what the author is saying about the equality, or inequality, of lifestyle choices. Additionally, the idea that women are not suited to combat is directly confronted by the novel, and women are depicted no differently than men in this respect. The imposition of open and obligatory sex with multiple partners is an interesting twist, however, because it seems highly unlikely that women would be as sexually accommodating as they are portrayed. Finally, the relationship between Mandella and Marygay appears to be a case of true love, but there is also the subtle inference that the "happy ending" is the simple result of the lack of other heterosexual fish in the sea.

Alienation

Mandella has been conscripted to fight the unknown sworn enemy of the human race, the "alien" Taurans, with his superior intellectual, educational, and physical prowess. Ironically, throughout this process, the "aliens" are not destroyed. In fact, just the opposite is true. Not only do Taurans and humans end up peacefully coexisting, but those sent out to remove alien forces become alienated themselves. At first, societal changes have occurred within decades and friends and family members are still alive to create a point of reference. Once centuries begin to slip by, everything has changed and veterans of the war are anchorless. Even at the end of the book, when it appears that Mandella and Marygay are finally building a life of their choosing, there is still the implication that it is on a planet that is for misfits. From the beginning of his training to the end of the war some 1,100 years later, Mandella helplessly sets out on a fast track to total estrangement from society.

Pacifism

The position of the author is patently anti-militaristic in that there is not a single mention of anything positive coming from UNEF, the war, or the government. In fact, even the enemy is portrayed as the peaceful victim of a vicious attack from Earth based strictly on economic need. The two battles in which Mandella directly participates are graphically illustrated as bloodbaths executed by pawn-like soldiers who also are victims of a powerful and unstoppable chain of command. Mandella's actions in relation to violence throughout the novel demonstrate a belief in pacifism, specifically anti-militarism. Violence in self-defense and subjective justice is depicted as acceptable by his use of a gun to kill a gang-rapist and commune raiders.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first-person, told from William Mandella's point of view. The narration is subjective and depends thoroughly upon the sole experience of the narrator, Mandella. Mandella is only aware of what is happening to him and what he has gone through in the past, and the entire story rests upon that frame of reference. Although he can guess and make inferences about other people's perceptions of events, the only facts that are actually presented are from Mandella's world. This point of view is integral to the story because it creates the potential for an informal and emotional experience for the reader. Additionally, it affords the reader the opportunity to experience things as Mandella does, rather than knowing what is coming with a third person narration. The novel contains equal parts of narration and dialogue, both of which range from funny and witty to descriptively heart-rending. There are many times throughout the book when Mandella is under an unusual amount of stress and the narration becomes almost stream of consciousness.

Setting

The novel is initially set on Earth in the year 1997 at a military facility in Missouri. The new recruits train in the slush, snow, and cold to prepare them for the absolute zero temperatures on the many portal planets where they will both train and fight. After finishing training on Earth, Mandella and the rest of the company head for Charon, the planet where the rest of their training will occur. The company loses fifteen personnel in the process of building a base and completing their training. This is quickly followed by a long journey to Stargate, which is in the process of becoming the human headquarters of the war. After a two-week stay in an environment very much like Charon, the company heads for a planet which harbors a Tauran base where the first battle of the war occurs.

By Earth year 2007, Mandella is a sergeant aboard the Anniversary, a ship on its way to engage the enemy. Before they can reach their destination, a large percentage of the ship is destroyed, along with all of the fighting suits, and there are many casualties and serious injuries. Since it would be inefficient to carry on without the necessary equipment, the Anniversary travels to Stargate after a number of careful off-course maneuvers to avoid tracking by Taurans. It is while on Stargate that Mandella is given the opportunity to stay on Earth as a civilian, and he and the rest of the survivors jump at the chance.

After landing on Earth, Mandella at first stays with his mother, expecting to find a job. However, upon the discovery that there are no legal jobs available, Margay contacts him and they decide to travel around the world with their earnings, beginning with London. Mandella kills a man who had been part of a gang-rape and he and Marygay decide to



go back to the states and live with her parents on their South Dakota commune. Although things are natural and peaceful there for a brief period of time, raiders eventually kill both of Marygay's parents, so she leaves the commune and goes directly to Mandella's mother's house in Washington. She dies within four days of their arrival because she is not important enough to merit medical care, and Mandella and Marygay decide to re-enlist on Luna, which is the community on the moon where Mandella's brother lives.

They are in their new military assignments on Luna for less than a day when they are both promoted to Lieutenant and receive orders into combat. Their ship is attacked by a Tauran vessel and both Marygay and Mandella lose a limb. They are sent to Heaven to recover. Built and controlled by UNEF, Heaven is an ecologically Utopian planet with a carefully maintained balance of humanity and nature. They land in the jungle city, Threshold, where seventy-five percent of the buildings are part of a massive hospital. After recovery and furlough, Mandella and Marygay are separated by UNEF, promoted and sent into battle. Mandella boards the Masaryk II as commander of a strike force. After the majority of his troops are decimated by the enemy, he and the survivors return once again to Stargate, where they learn that the war has ended.

Language and Meaning

Since this novel is a first-person narrative, the language is personal and informal. Both the dialogue and the exposition are wryly sarcastic at times, which adds to the intimate flavor of the story. Despite the fact that the writing is over 30 years old, it is quite contemporary and easy to understand for the modern reader. The language flows easily, and in contrast with a more formal writing style, it is not necessary to concentrate on the reading, or read passages more than once, because it is written the way many people think and speak. The only exception to this is in the scientific and technical descriptions of futuristic technology that are a bit more difficult to absorb than the story itself.

Structure

The novel is comprised of four main sections based on the time frame and Mandella's ranking in the armed forces. The first two sections "Private Mandella" and "Sergeant Mandella" cover ten and seventeen years and have fifteen and eleven chapters, respectively. "Lieutenant Mandella" is by far the shortest section with only one chapter, but it covers 365 years. The last section, "Major Mandella," has nine chapters and spans 685 years. All told, the novel's time frame is ten subjective years of Mandella's life, but 1,146 Earth years. Despite the occasional techno-speak, this book is an enjoyable, easy read.

Quotes

" 'Tonight we're going to show you eight silent ways to kill a man.' The guy who said that was a sergeant who didn't look five years older than me. So if he'd ever killed a man in combat, silently or otherwise, he'd done it as an infant. I already knew eighty ways to kill people, but most of them were pretty noisy." Private Mandella, Chap. 1, p. 3

" 'Now, as the captain said, there'll be only one kind of disciplinary action on maneuvers. Capital punishment. But normally we won't have to kill you for disobeying; Charon'll save us the trouble.' " Private Mandella, Chap. 3, p. 15

" 'All you have to do is lean up against a boulder of frozen gas; there's lots of it around. The gas will sublime off faster than it can escape from the fins; in escaping, it will push against the surrounding 'ice' and fracture it...and in about one-hundredth of a second, you have the equivalent of a hand grenade going off right below your neck. You'll never feel a thing.' " Private Mandella, Chap. 4, p. 17

"...she kept running, careless leaping strides, and at the high point of one leap there was a flash and a rumble, and something big hit her below the neck, and her headless body spun off end over end through space, trailing a red-black spiral of flash-frozen blood that settled gracefully to the ground, a path of crystal powder that nobody disturbed while we gathered rocks to cover the juiceless thing at the end of it." Private Mandella, Chap. 6, p. 26

"The two weeks' training around Miami Base eventually cost us eleven lives. Twelve, if you count Dahlquist. I guess having to spend the rest of your life on Charon with a hand and both legs missing is close enough to dying." Private Mandella, Chap. 8, p. 33

" ' Every one of you saw us coming in and not one of you responded with laser fire. It wouldn't have done any good but it would have indicated a certain amount of fighting spirit. You have a week or less before the real thing and since the sergeant and I will be here I will insist that you show a little more will to live.' " Private Mandella, Chap. 9, p. 40

"The collapsar stargate was a perfect sphere about three kilometers in radius. It was suspended forever in a state of gravitational collapse that should have meant its surface was dropping toward the center at nearly the speed of light. Relativity propped it up, at least gave it the illusion of being there...the way all reality becomes illusory and observer oriented when you study general relativity. Or Buddhism. Or get drafted." Private Mandella, Chap. 10, p. 47

"The command group was supposedly the safest place, buffered by six platoons: people were assigned to it because there was some tactical reason for them to survive at least a little longer than the rest.." Private Mandella, Chap. 11, p. 52

They were thoroughly repulsive, but their worst feature was not a difference from human beings, but a similarity...Whenever the laser had opened a body cavity, milk-white



glistening veined globes and coils of organs spilled out, and their blood was a dark clotting red." Private Mandella, Chap. 12, pp. 56-57

"It's almost impossible to get sexually excited inside a suit, with the relief tube and all the silver chloride sensors poking you, but somehow this was my body's response to the emotional impotence, maybe remembering more pleasant sleeps with Marygay, maybe feeling that in the midst of all this death, personal death could be very soon, cranking up the procreative derrick for one last try..." Private Mandella, Chap. 13, p. 61

"We were each allowed one stimtab. Without it, no one could have marched an hour. A second pill would have been welcome after the edge started to wear off, but the mathematics of the situation forbade it; we were still thirty clicks from the enemy base, fifteen hours' marching at the least. And though you could stay awake and energetic for a hundred hours on the tabs, aberrations of judgment and perception snowballed after the second one, until in extremes the most bizarre hallucinations would be taken at face value, and a person could fidget for hours deciding whether to have breakfast." Private Mandella, Chap. 13, p. 63

" 'Enemy vessel overhead.' His voice was almost laconic. Strictly speaking, it wasn't really overhead, but rather passing somewhat east of us. It was moving slowly, maybe a hundred clicks per hour, and looked like a broomstick surrounded by a dirty soap bubble. The creature riding it was a little more human-looking than the teddy bears, but still no prize." Private Mandella, Chap. 14, p. 65

"I knew it was just post-hypnotic suggestion, even remembered the session in Missouri when they'd implanted it, but that didn't make it any less compelling...a hundred grisly details as sharply remembered as the events of a minute ago, ridiculously overdone and logically absurd. But while my conscious mind was rejecting the silliness, somewhere much deeper, down in that sleeping animal where we keep our real motives and morals, something was thirsting for alien blood, secure in the conviction that the noblest thing a man could do would be to die killing one of those horrible monsters..." Private Mandella, Chap. 15, pp. 72-73

"The ground between us was slick red with Tauran blood — all God's children got hemoglobin — and like the teddy bears, their guts looked pretty much like guts to my untrained eye. My helmet reverberated with hysterical laughter while we slashed them to gory chunks..." Private Mandella, Chap. 15, p. 76

"At first it was pretty grim. A lot of the people, like Lucky and Marygay, almost went crazy with the memories of bloody murder multiplied a hundred times. Cortez ordered everybody to take a sedtab, two for the ones most upset. I took two without being specifically ordered to do so. Because it was murder, unadorned butchery — once we had the anti-spacecraft weapon docket out, we hadn't been in any danger. The Taurans hadn't had any conception of person-to-person fighting. We had just herded them up and slaughtered them, the first encounter between mankind and another intelligent species. Maybe it was the second encounter, counting the teddy bears. What might



have happened if we had sat down and tried to communicate?" Private Mandella, Chap. 15, p. 79

"After this raid, I would probably be eligible for retirement, with full pay. If I lived through the raid, and if they didn't change the rules on us. Me a twenty-year man, and only twenty-five years old." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 1, p. 86

"This is the first manifestation of a very important effect that has heretofore been of interest only to theorists...In an engineering sense, as we haven't done any important research and development aboard ship...that enemy vessel comes from out future!" " Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 2, p. 92

"It was Marygay lying in her suit...she was covered every square inch of her with a uniform bright sheen of blood...it started as an angry welt up by her collarbone and was just a welt as it traveled between her breasts until it passed the sternum's support...and opened up into a cut that got deeper as it ran down over her belly and where it stopped...a few centimeters above the pubis a membraned loop of gut was protruding...She was still alive, her heart palpitating, but her blood-streaked head lolled simply, eyes rolled back to white slits, bubbles of red froth appearing and popping at the corner of her mouth each time she exhaled shallowly." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 4, p. 98

"Relativity traps us in the enemy's past; relativity brings them from our future. We can only hope that next time, the situation will be reversed. And all we can do to help bring that about is try to get back to Stargate, and then to Earth, where specialists may be able to deduce something, some sort of counter-weapon, from the nature of the damage." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 5, p. 108

"Marygay's shell was empty. I walked over to it and saw blood. 'She hemorrhaged.' Doc Wilson's voice echoed sepulchrally. I turned, eyes stinging, and saw him leaning in the door to the locker alcove. He was unaccountably, horribly, smiling. 'Which was expected. Doctor Harmony's taking care of it. She'll be just fine.' " Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 5, p. 117

"It looked as if there was something wrong with his skin, his face; and then I realized he was wearing powder and lipstick. His nails were smooth white almonds." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 7, p. 122

"He also said, in answer to an impolite question, that his powder and paint had nothing to do with his sexual orientation. It was just stylish. I decided I'd be an anachronism and just wear my face." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 7, p. 124

"Eventually the cab came. It swerved to the curb when I waved at it, the door sliding open as it stopped. Looked as if it worked the same way as the autocabs I remembered. The door stayed open while it checked the thumb print to verify that I was the one who had called, then slammed shut. It was thick steel. The view through the windows was dim and distorted; probably thick bulletproof plastic. Not quite the same as I remembered." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 8, p. 134-135



"We ticked off the things that bothered us: violence, high cost of living, too many people everywhere. I'd have added homolife, but Marygay said I just didn't appreciate the social dynamic that had led to it; it had been inevitable. The only she said she had against it was that it took so many of the prettiest men out of circulation." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 9, p. 143

"It was a girl they were attacking; it was rape. Most of them scattered, but one pulled a pistol out of his coat and I shot him. I remember trying to hit his arm. The blast hit his shoulder and ripped off his arm and what seemed to be half of his chest; it flung him two meters to the side of a building and he must have been dead before he hit the ground...I'd certainly seen enough death these past two years, but this was a different thing...there was nothing noble in being crushed to death by the failure of some electronic component, or in having your suit fail and freeze you solid; or even dying in a shoot-out with the incomprehensible enemy...but death seemed natural in that setting. Not on a quaint little street in old-fashioned London, not for trying to steal what most people would give freely." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 9, pp. 147-148

"We buried her father behind the house, and when the truck came back with April's small body wrapped in a shroud, we buried her beside him. The commune's sanitation truck came by a little later, and gas-masked men took care of the jumpers' bodies. We sat in the baking sun, and finally Marygay wept, for a long time, silently." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 10, p. 160

"I found mountaineer's oxygen at a sporting goods store and even managed to get some black-market antibiotics through a character in a bar downtown in Washington. But Mom was beyond being able to respond to amateur treatment. She lived four days. The people from the crematorium had the same fixed smile." Sergeant Mandella, Chap. 11, p.163

"Finally I woke up in a regular bay. I was strapped down and being fed through a tube, biosensor electrodes attached here and there, but no medics around. The only other person in the little room was Marygay, sleeping on the bunk next to me. Her right arm was amputated just above the elbow. I didn't wake her up, just looked at her for a long time and tried to sort out my feelings. Tried to filter out the effect of the mood drugs. Looking at her stump, I could feel neither empathy nor revulsion. I tried to force one reaction, and then the other, but nothing real happened. It was as if she had always been that way. Was it drugs, conditioning, love? Have to wait and see." Lieutenant Mandella, p. 173

"I'd had skin for a week before they uncased the new leg and trundled the machine away. It was ugly as hell, hairless and dead white, stiff as a metal rod. But it worked, after a fashion. I could stand up and shuffle along." Lieutenant Mandella, p. 179

"This was not just a separation. Even if the war was over and we left for Earth only a few minutes apart, in different ships, the geometry of the collapsar jump would pile up years between us. When the second one arrived on Earth, his partner would probably



be a half-century older; more probably dead. We sat there for some time, not touching the exquisite food, ignoring the beauty around and beneath us, only conscious of each other and the two sheets of paper that separated us with a gulf as wide and real as death." Lieutenant Mandella, p. 184

"Since you can figure on going into battle roughly once every subjective year, and since an average of 34 percent survive each battle, it's easy to compute your chances of being able to fight it out for ten years. It comes to about two one-thousandths of one percent. Or, to put it another way, get an old-fashioned six-shooter and play Russian Roulette with four of the six chambers loaded. If you can do it ten times in a row without decorating the opposite was, congratulations! You're a civilian." Major Mandella, Chap. 2, p. 201

"It was dawning on me that I had not the slightest idea of how to conduct myself socially. So much of my "normal" behavior was based on a complex unspoken code of sexual etiquette. Was I supposed to treat the med like women, and vice versa? Or treat everybody like brothers and sisters? It was all very confusing...The one time Charlie made a pass at me, he was very polite about it. I hoped my refusal was also polite — but figured I'd be getting lots of practice." Major Mandella, Chap. 2, p. 208

"A simple psychotic troublemaker a commander can lock up and forget about. But not a failed assassin. And I didn't have to take a poll to know that executing him was not going to improve my relationship with the troops." Major Mandella, Chap. 4, p. 229

"My relationship with the troops did improve, in a sense. At least outwardly, they showed more deference to me. But I suspected it was at least partly the cheap kind of respect you might offer any ruffian who had proved himself to be dangerous and volatile. So "Killer" was my new name. Just when I'd gotten used to "Old Queer." Major Mandella, Chap. 5, p. 234

"We rushed to the ship, sealed it and filled it with cool air and popped our suits. I didn't press seniority for the one shower; just sat back in an acceleration couch and took deep breaths of air that didn't smell like recycled Mandella...It was good to walk around and talk again. I officially suspended all things military for the duration of our stay on the planet. Some of the people were survivors of Brill's mutinous bunch, but they didn't show any hostility towards me." Major Mandella, Chap. 8, pp. 268-269

"I supposed I was more likely to get a court-martial than a furlough, anyhow. Losing 88 percent of my company, many of them because they didn't have enough confidence in me to obey the direct earthquake order. And we were back where we'd started on Sade-138; no Taurans there, but no base either." Major Mandella, Chap. 8, p. 270

"The 1,143-year-long war had been begun on false pretenses and only continued because the two races were unable to communicate. Once they could talk, the first question was 'Why did you start this thing?' and the answer was 'Me?' " Major Mandella, Chap. 8, p. 273



" 'All this is in your personnel file. But knowing you, you might just chuck it. So I made sure you'd get this note. Obviously, I lived. Maybe you will, too. Join me. I know from the records that you're out at Sade-138 and won't be back for a couple of centuries. No problem. I'm going to a planet they call Middle Finger, the fifth planet out from Mizar. It's two collapsar jumps, ten months subjective. Middle Finger is a kind of Coventry for heterosexuals. They call it a "eugenic control baseline." No matter. It took all of my money, and all the money of five other old-timers, but we bought a cruiser from UNEF. And we're using it as a time machine. So I'm on a relativistic shuttle, waiting for you. All it does is go out five light years and come back to Middle Finger, very fast. Every ten years I age about a month. So if you're on schedule and still alive, I'll only be twenty-eight when you get here. Hurry! I never found anybody else and I don't want anybody else. I don't care whether you're ninety years old or thirty. If I can't be your lover, I'll be your nurse. —Marygay' " Major Mandella Chap. 8, p. 273



Topics for Discussion

The Forever War was first published and distributed in 1974. How do you think the technology in the book would have been different had the book been written in 2007? What, if any, technologies described by Haldeman actually exist in modern society?

At the end of the book, the world seems to be a Utopian paradise with a cure for every possible ailment or condition. Do you agree that this would be a perfect world? Why or why not? What are the benefits and challenges that might arise from these circumstances?

Why do you think that there is not a single mention of any form of communication between soldiers and their family and/or friends on Earth? What do you think this says about the military's perspective on relationships?

Haldeman makes it clear that all military personnel have highly active sex lives and are very promiscuous. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? What effects does this have on things like company morale and cohesiveness? What, if any, moral statements is Haldeman making with this aspect of the story?

What do you think about the way Haldeman deals with the issue of homosexuality? Do you think that his presentation of this topic demonstrates acceptance of homosexuality or homophobia? Why?

Haldeman makes reference to past wars, specifically the Vietnam War. What kind of statement is he making about Vietnam, and about war in general?

What social trends from the 1970s does Haldeman institute into the book? Why do you think he has many of the characters, including Mandella's mother and military personnel, smoke marijuana and take speed as though it were commonplace?

What does Strike Force Command's statement that it "plans in terms of centuries...not in terms of people" mean? Why does the Force plan in that fashion?

Why do you think that although the war in the book spans over a millennium, there are only two actual battle scenes in the entire book? What is Mandella saying about the relationship between actual battle and its repercussions?