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seven weeks. Life expectancy...

# FIFTEEN HOURS

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A young Imperial Guardsman arrives in the wrong battle on the wrong planet and gets caught in a meat-grinder war. With the brutal ork forces attacking in wave after wave, it is no wonder that the life expectancy of a new arrival is only fifteen hours.

## Fifteen Hours Details

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Author : Mitchel Scanlon

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## From Reader Review Fifteen Hours for online ebook

### **Sarah Mae says**

My cousins loaned this to me as a means of getting into the Warhammer 40k series. The universe in which it takes place in they made to sound very interesting, and figured this book was a good introduction. My one cousin described this book as simply "brutal." I have to agree, but not in the way he meant.

The story itself centers on a boring farm boy named Larn from a boring farm world who is drafted into a never ending inter galactic war and because of one clerical error, ends up being sent to the wrong planet. I was never bothered to care if he lived or died, in fact, halfway through the book I was wishing he would die already so the book could end.

What really got me bitching and moaning was the writing. The fact that Scanlon apparently didn't think the reader was smart enough to deduce that the orks were huge based on a description he gave, and felt it necessary to back it up almost immediately with Larn's internal monologue of "Oh, Gee, these orks sure are big" was insulting. And it just went down hill from there. I don't know who taught this man to write, but they need to let him know it's okay to say "gasp" instead of "a sharp intake of breath." It's just so bad. At one point, I realized, I would have rather been reading Twilight. And I hate Twilight!

The one thing I did like about this book, was the fact that, Zeebers, the one character I liked just by virtue of him hating Larn too, is ultimately the one who kills him.

This book was just all kinds of bad, and while I acknowledge that this was his first novel, Mitchel Scanlon is on my shitlist. Depending on how the other two books they gave me, my cousins might be on it too.

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### **Stephen says**

The first third or so is slow and dull, but the rest of the novel is solid.

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### **Bryan Croft says**

This book gave me a really good feel of how bad it sucks not being a super-human being in the grim dark universe that is 40k. That being said I absolutely enjoyed reading this, and personally consider this one quite excellent one shot story.

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### **Jack Mort says**

I liked the book overall, I didn't like the fact the ending is given away in the beginning, and did not like the ending.

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## **Mikita Taukachou says**

A pretty good representative of military science fiction, not limited by the wh40k universe. Perhaps, short, not so deep, sometimes predictable. But still, it gives a frank representation of a war in the "grim darkness of the far future".

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## **Jarrad Cole says**

This book was my introduction into the warhammer 40k universe. Great sci-fi military themed book.

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## **Theo Karner says**

A book set in the grimdark Warhammer 40,000 universe. Rather than the standard space opera approach that a lot of these novels take, this one is a more secluded look at a single Imperial Guard trooper and his confused and isolating induction into the Guard. The book has a World War I flavour to it, with the mud and trench warfare along with the apparent uncaring nature of Empires to wars of attrition.

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## **Jacob Sala says**

3/5. It was okay.

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## **Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says**

This is a Guardsman not a Marine... (or Rambo!)

Guard... ATTACK!!! Wow.. I've read this book in two days. For me it's fast 'cause I don't have much time unless you count the trips to work and so...

This is Herr Scanlon first book. I think he did an excellent work. I've read some reviews in other places (Amazon, Black Library and others) and most of all agreed this is a fast turning page book. It's catching and it's not for the feint of heart. In some parts it made me feel I was in a battlefield. It reminds me some stories about WW I in the trenches. It adds some good perspective about the guardsman life and the connection between them and their superiors.

There is one part that blew me away and made me tremble..

*"From the corners of his eye Larn caught glimpses of the others around him. He saw Bulaven, a lasgun in his hands taken from other Guardsman. He saw Davir. Scholar. Zeebers. He saw Chalker, his expression cool and detached, working the slide of his shotgun to send round after round into the enemy. He saw Vladek. Medical Officer Svenk. The cook, Trooper Skench, a laspistol blazing in his one remaining hand as he stood*

*besides others. He saw their faces. Scholar drawn yet steadfast. Bulaven dutiful, Zeebers nervous, Davir spiting obscene and angry oaths at the advancing orks. He saw steely determination and a refusal to go easily to death. As he saw it, Larn felt a feeling of shame that he had doubted these men when he had first met them. Whatever their manner they were all what a Guardsman should be. Brave. Resolute. Unbending in the face of the enemy. These were the men on which the Imperium had been built. The men who had fought its every battle. Won its every victory. Today, they were hopelessly outnumbered. Today it was their final stand.*

(page 227)

After reading this book, and before as well, I prefer the guardsman perspective than the Space Marines stories.

Other reviewer said this was a teenager writing or something. I agree. It's not like Dan Abnett or Ian Watson. But I guess this "teenager" writer made this book even greater. The common soldier is not a writer or poet. I guess that made us see almost from the eyes of the main character. It was good also 'cause the pages were turning even faster. Overall.

If you want to read about a common guardsman and not a hero I would recommend this book. You won't see here a man who have kill 1001 orks while drinking beer.

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### **Christian says**

Fifteen hours by Mitchel Scanlon is a grim book about one soldier's misfortune when he signs up for the Imperial Guard. Arivin Larn has given up his simple life of a farm boy to become a fighter in the Imperial Guard. He isn't too far into his training when he gets called to his first mission. However, when he and his squad make planetfall, they realize that they're on the wrong planet and soon after that, all of them die to artillery fire except for Larn. He finds his way to Imperial Guard lines. He joins a new unit and fights for his life as the enemy draw closer and closer. I thought this book interesting because of the situation Larn was in. He was a farm boy with little to no fighting experience dropped off into one of the most deadliest killzones in the entire galaxy. Nobody believed he would survive the first day and everyone in his new squad gave him a 15-hour life expectancy. Larn is in no way a hero in this book, he just fights because he wants to live and that's why I thought the book stood out. The main character was in no way like a hero and he acted just like how anyone would in his situation. The author also did a really good job using imagery to set the scene of his story. All the minor characters, enemies, and fight scenes were superb, but I felt that the story was little too short. I felt that the author could've gone into detail a bit more and that not enough things were explained. Other than that I thought it was a solid book and would recommend this book to pre-teens and teens.

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### **Michael T Bradley says**

My favorite aspect of the 40K universe is most likely the WWI influences. As such, this book (& one of the Gaunt's Ghosts books) is top of the list as far as that goes. The GG book deals with trench warfare; this one is just ... seriously, you could take out "ork," insert "Hun," and ... you'd pretty much have a straight-up WWI book here. [Well, OK, WWI in space, but still.]

I won't say a lot because there's not a hell of a lot to say. If you like "All Quiet on the Western Front" and books of that ilk, you'll most likely enjoy this. It's very similar. Characters trying desperately to keep a shred

of humanity & hope in the face of certain death. I did not care for the prologue. I really dislike when books give away the ending (as obvious as this ending might have been) and then do not add anything new to it when you get there. I did enjoy the ambiguity of the ending.

The short story attached to this (in the first Imp omnibus) feels odd, because it's a 40K story rather than just a straight-up WWI story. It honestly works kind of better than the novel, but I still dug the book for just unapologetically being an anti-war character-focused novel. It was grating, that goddamn nickname the main character is given, but overall, excellent work.

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### **Ted Henkle says**

For my second foray into Warhammer 40,000 (WH40K) literature, I chose Mitchel Scanlon's "Fifteen Hours." This story follows 17 year old Arvin Larn, from his involuntary induction into the Imperial Guard to his frontline experiences during the Siege of Broucheroc, an industrial city surrounded by Orks.

The first three chapters introduce us to the main character, his family, and his in-transit training with the 14th Jumael Volunteers.

By the end of Chapter Four, Larn finds himself the sole survivor of the 6th Company, after they were directed--by mistake--to make planetfall near Broucheroc, and ended up crash landing in no-man's land (Chapter Five).

In Chapters Six through Seventeen, our hapless hero learns the significance of fifteen hours: It is the life expectancy of a new recruit to Broucheroc. During these 12 hours, Larn faces Ork snipers, friendly fire, some unfriendly team mates, incompetent officers, bad food, an all-out Ork assault, and a night patrol into no man's land.

Technically, Larn survives past 15 hours to see the dawning of a new day--but his fate is not a happy one. Basically, "Fifteen Hours" is WH40K's version of "All Quiet on the Western Front"--and just as depressing. The author paints a grim picture on what life for an Imperial Guardsman on the frontlines is like. But this is in-keeping with all the WH40K background material found in the core rulebooks and supplements, known as "codexes."

I give Fifteen Hours a 3-star rating, primarily because of the downer ending.

My rating is only 0.7 less than the average rating on Amazon.com, with only 61% of raters loving the story (4 & 5-stars). Many of the unsatisfied raters (1 & 2-stars) were critical of the author's writing, whereas I thought the author did a good job with this being his first novel.

I just wanted to see the hero prevail over "...the grim dark future."

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### **Bill Golden says**

After reading several reviews, I'd like to clear a few misconceptions:

1.) This is *not a good book to introduce you to WH40K. If you want a good entry point to the galaxy according to Games Workshop, get the Ultramarines Omnibus, the Space Wolves Omnibus, or start reading the Horus Heresy novels.* They introduce the WH40K galaxy in much better detail.

2.) This is a book about *war*. It's not a kid's book, where a happy ending is almost mandatory; rather, it's ending is perfect for what the book is trying to communicate. I read 3 series by another, unrelated author in an unrelated universe, with wonkier endings than this one has, and they worked.

What it does right is tell the story of an Imperial Guardsman from induction, through part of basic training, to his very first day in combat. There are no frills, but plenty of symbolism is present: his homeworld is warm and colorful, yet the planet he fights on is cold and grey. It's basic, but again... it works.

What it doesn't do right is jump around in the beginning. You see nearly nothing of Arvin Larn's basic training. You know almost nothing of his social life before or during his Guardsman days. Worst of all, it almost loses the reader before they even reach the battle.

Once Scanlon gets you to the fight, though, he does an amazing job of painting the scene in the grimdest possible terms. This isn't honorable warfare, or even glory and heroism: this is dirty, muddy, bloody trench warfare in its basest form. The generals are incompetent, artillery is inaccurate, and it all ends in tears.

This isn't high literature by any stretch of the imagination. This is just an entertaining read to kill a few hours (maybe 15 of them?) between serious books, or a change of pace from reading paeans to the Space Marines. If you like 40K, you'll enjoy this book; if you don't, or have never tried reading in the 40K galaxy, it's still an interesting book.

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### **Tarl says**

Sure, we're all used to reading about Space Marines, but there's a good number of Imperial Guard novels out there as well.

This isn't one of them.

The story is nicely circular, starting and finishing in the same place. It helps to contain the rest of the tale and keeps the reader interested as to how the main character got into the situation that he did.

Unfortunately, that's the most exciting thing about the main character and the storyline. Detailing the arrival of the main character to the wrong warzone, the story follows his adjustment to a life in the regiment, and the people within.

Yes, the battles are handled well, and Scanlon does a good job capturing the basic feel of the orks as well as the mistakes that sometimes happens in larger engagements. Some of the characters come across as interesting, though we never really learn a lot about them beyond the most basic of fact.

However, for the length of the entire novel, nothing actually happens.

Yes, there's a lot of battles, there's some inner views of the Imperial Guard, and a bit about the average daily activity of what the warriors of the Imperium go through on a battlefield. But all of that falls flat without any real character development (our main character really doesn't change that much from the time he lands until the predictable twist at the end of the tale), no real plot, and a climax that was as bland as the rest of the novel.

Scanlon needed to do a lot more with his characters within this novel, or had some sort of resolution to

everything. Without either, the reader ends up going over a description of trench warfare that's as about as exciting as the real thing. (ie: a lot of waiting, a couple small moments of excitement, and that's it)

As the first book in the Imperial Guard series of books, this was a poor example of what the series was attempting to do. I do not recommend for anyone to pick this up, even hard core 40k fans unless you are in real need of new reading material. (as I was when I picked this up) It's not worth the read.

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## Teo says

Mitchel Scanlon's "Fifteen Hours" is his first novel, and was the first entry in the Warhammer 40K universe told from the perspective of a regular trooper of the Imperial Guard; it was also my first Imperial Guard read. After reading about a dozen or so Space Marine novels about various chapters, I sort of grew weary for the time being of these genetically engineered, mostly invincible, over-zealous religious fanatics who basically do nothing more but pray and kill in the name of the Divine Immortal God-Emperor of Mankind, and dismiss any thoughts they may occasionally have as irrelevant. So reading about the largest entity in the Imperial army, about the ordinary people who actually do think and who can die – the Guardsmen – was a welcomed change.

We follow a 17-year old recruit named Larn, fully indoctrinated with the Imperial propaganda, from a farming planet Jumael IV, from the time he is drafted, through his four months of basic training in boot camp under the steel hand of Sergeant Ferres, until his first mission on a barren world where the orks and the humans have been in a stalemate that's been lasting for 10 years.

A glance at the cover reveals a cool tagline: Basic training: four months. Planetary transportation: seven weeks. Life expectancy: fifteen hours. "Fifteen Hours" also has a real hook of a beginning: The sky was dark, and he knew he was dying. Granted, the very first sentence also spoils the ending, but since "Fifteen Hours" does not feature any plot twists or behind-the-curtains schemes, it matters not.

"Fifteen Hours" is so far the shortest of all WH40K novels I had read, the word count on the 256 pages rising to barely over 70 000. The plot progression is rather straightforward, and while the Imperial Guard POV may have been a novelty in the WH40K library, the novel is filled mostly with clichés. Substitute the Emperor with God, and the orks with any aliens that spring to your mind, and you have a fairly generic military fiction set in the future.

Scanlon's vocabulary is not exactly broad, but I've found his conversations generally well written, even interesting (though clichéd), and the pacing is adequate. What he suffers from is a heavy repetition of words and phrases. By a series of circumstances, Larn ends up in a totally unknown to him five-men firing squad, where the veterans refer to him as new fish. New fish is, believe it or not, repeated throughout the novel exactly 170 times. That makes 0,66 times per page. Since it's not exactly a common term, you'll certainly notice it and it won't take long before it starts to be a nuisance. Next, there's abruptly. I can't tell you how many times someone either does or feels something abruptly. Actually, I can: 52 times. Sometimes even in quick succession. Finally, we arrive to no man's land. That is a strip of land between the orkish and the human lines that belongs to no one. It is mentioned 45 times, again sometimes with only a sentence or two in between.

Individual character development is scarce, and again very generic. There's Larn, the naive and yellow

recruit; Bulaven, big and burly, but good natured; Davir, the wise-cracking sarcastic joker; Scholar, the educated, almost geekish soldier; and Zeebers, unfriendly, quiet and cold. I actually don't mind the use of clichés, as long as they're put together properly, which Scanlon does well most of the time. I can't say that you'll actually warm up to these characters, but I've read much worse. It was very interesting, though, to see the Guardsmen, unlike their elite Space Marine brothers, not buying completely into the Imperial propaganda, and actually have some traces of free thought. After a decade of fighting a relentless and pointless war in the frozen muddy trenches on a backwater planet no one cares about, many of them have become disillusioned not only with the chain of command, but even with the Emperor. Surely, a visiting Inquisitor would find his hands full.

Character description is, however, impossible to find, save some instances of a couple of sentences at most, offering only the basic information about a character's appearance. The situation somewhat improves with locales. Though not very present, the few passages describing locales are aptly written.

I don't know if I should consider it good or bad in regards to the novel, but the parts I enjoyed the most were the two interludes between chapters 3 and 4, and later between chapters 10 and 11. The former is titled "A Day in the Life of Erasmus Ng", and it offers a horrific insight in the life of a man that is nothing more but a microscopic and insignificant cog in a immensely vast, far from properly oiled, Imperial machine - one of the untold billions. It also shows that no action, no matter how apparently small, goes without a proper reaction. Erasmus Ng, though he appears on only a couple of pages, is the best written character in the novel.

The latter interlude is titled "As Above, So Below or Grand Marshal Kerchan and the Genius of Command" gives insight into the inner workings of the chain of command. Again, a very interesting interlude.

There are also several subchapters that serve only as fillers, the most useless among them being the one about a 'rat boy'. The use of these fillers is not commendable, but it is understandable, since the real start of the novel is the drop-off, and from there until the end the time-frame is only 15 hours. Taking that into account, "Fifteen Hours" is also the least action-filled book in the WH40K universe I've read so far, with a sort of an anti-climactic closure. If you're looking for bolter-porn, skip this title.

The biggest strength of "Fifteen Hours" lies in the fact it is a breath of fresh air in a franchise whose biggest attraction are the Space Marines; ironically, they're also the dullest that WH40K has to offer. Reading about ordinary soldiers who have emotions, who bleed and die, is more interesting to me as a reader. Sadly, the idea of "Fifteen Hours" was much better than the final product.

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Rating: 6/10