



The Gap Into Conflict: The Real Story

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Author of *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, one of the most acclaimed fantasy series of all time, master storyteller Stephen R. Donaldson returns with this exciting and long-awaited new series that takes us into a stunningly imagined future to tell a timeless story of adventure and the implacable conflict of good and evil within each of us.

Angus Thermopyle was an ore pirate and a murderer; even the most disreputable asteroid pilots of Delta Sector stayed locked out of his way. Those who didn't ended up in the lockup--or dead. But when Thermopyle arrived at Mallory's Bar & Sleep with a gorgeous woman by his side the regulars had to take notice. Her name was Morn Hyland, and she had been a police officer--until she met up with Thermopyle. But one person in Mallory's Bar wasn't intimidated. Nick Succorso had his own reputation as a bold pirate and he had a sleek frigate fitted for deep space. Everyone knew that Thermopyle and Succorso were on a collision course. What nobody expected was how quickly it would be over--or how devastating victory would be. It was common enough example of rivalry and revenge--or so everyone thought. The REAL story was something entirely different.

In *The Real Story*, Stephen R. Donaldson takes us to a remarkably detailed world of faster-than-light travel, politics, betrayal, and a shadowy presence just outside our view to tell the fiercest, most profound story he has ever written.

The Gap Into Conflict: The Real Story Details

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From Reader Review The Gap Into Conflict: The Real Story for online ebook

Stephen says

3.5 stars. Beginning volume of the very dark and gritty Gap Series. Excellent character study and hints of some very nice world-building. I will certainly read the next volume in the series though this book, on its own, was not spectacular.

Kevin Brady says

I like my fiction DARK.

There is no character in this series that isn't deeply, perhaps even fatally flawed. Donaldson is a master storyteller, well loved for his Thomas Covenant series. His science fiction is tighter paced, first-person viewpoints similar to Game of Thrones novels.

This story has it all for a hard-core science fiction lover. High tech, deep space, aliens that are distinctive and not humanoids, with very different motivations from ours. Blaster wars, derelict space-craft, pirates, politics... deep looks at the implications of implants that can control our emotions and other glands.

Not for the faint of heart. Rape, child abuse themes are present.

The character's flaws bind them together, and impose requirements for them to behave the way that they do. Ethics is the primary subject matter, and even the worst villain can be understood.

Hats off to Donaldson. I read every book in this series, and wish he'd do some more science fiction.

This series, IMO, shouldn't be missed.

notgettingenough says

3am. Surely the right time.

Call me completely insane, but I've agreed to read this (I wrote a few months ago)

....after a conversation that went like this:

Me: I *hate* Thomas Covenant

Noela: But you have to read the Gap series

Me: Huh?

Noela: It is about a girl who has the most appalling things happen to her. You read a bit, put it down thinking 'that's it! No more' but then you can't help yourself. You have to know what dreadful thing is going to happen to her next. You have to!

Me: Grumble, grumble, grumble, but...okay. Maybe. But.

The fact is, I have to confess, that I could scarcely stop thinking about anything else. I scoured Melbourne bookshops looking for copies, but TC is it. Donaldson just might as well not have bothered with writing another interminably long series. I asked everybody if they had a copy I could borrow. Have you ever tried doing this on the tram? Coffee shops? In the street? It doesn't work.

Finally, I happened to be in Hatchards <http://www.hatchards.co.uk/>, and there it was. Sorry, so sorry. I'm made a plug for a bookshop that isn't Amazon. This isn't usually done on goodreads. But. GO TO YOUR LOCAL BOOKSHOP!!!

Hesitates before saying this next thing. I don't know if Donaldson is a good enough writer to be doing this incredibly ambitious thing, creating the superbly flawed Angus Thermopyle. But if that is so, it doesn't matter. It is quite impossible to put this book down. Having finished book one, I'm desperate to read book two, but for logistical reasons I can't. Not until I've read HP AND the second two volumes of Northern Lights. I'm being held hostage, you see. In the attic bedroom of a house in Didsbury (hellllpppppppppppppppppp). I'm not allowed out until I finish these books.

Actually, it isn't dissimilar to what happens in this book to Morn, except that nobody is doing despicable thing to degrade and break me. Well, anti-Northern Lights readers *might* disagree there.

If you're a boy you'll love this because it is about space ships and stations and pirates and desperate adventures and a girl who is trapped by a zone implant into doing whatever your (um) heart desires. If you are a girl, I'm bugged if I know why you'll love this, but you will.

Mark Harrison says

Interesting sci-fi story featuring numerous pirates and Morn, a female cop captured and implanted with a mind control device. At the mercy of the depraved Angus she is horribly brutalised - too much in my opinion. Salvation might be in the form of another pirate the mercurial Nick - but will she live that long ?? Interesting premise but the violence spoilt things.

Shari says

This is my first Donaldson book to read. I finished it in just a few days, and it wasn't because it was short, but because there was something about Donaldson's narrative style that made me going. The story is pretty simple, told by a narrator who doesn't leave much room for the reader to judge, who gives little description to the setting, the era, and what humankind has achieved and reached thus far, and who concentrates only on what the "real story" is. And yet, the story was captivating. There certainly are brutal parts, but they are in keeping with characterization and Donaldson gives a general description rather than a detailed, blow-by-blow account. What really pulled me into the story was its pathos. Donaldson gives a physical and psychological study of greed, lust, and guilt in Morn, Angus and Nick. Science, even though well presented

here, is second only to the interplay of human emotions. I'm eager to read the next book of the series.

Katie says

I will tell you what I don't like about this book right up front, to warn those who might wish to be warned: there's a LOT of raping and psychological abusing of the main female character. In fact, it's an essential element of the story most of the way through the book. I don't criticize the actual book for it, because it was necessary in order to tell this particular story about this particular man who was acting fully within his character to do such a thing. But it's still really unpleasant to read. If you can't stomach that sort of thing, steer clear.

Now, on to the good stuff.

The first thing I ****loved**** about this book was its structure. First, we are told about a very brief scene and its subsequent aftermath from the point of view (and therefore, pure opinion) of most of the casual onlookers who witnessed it. Then we dial back and are told about the exact same sequence of events from the point of view of the onlookers who were more observant, and noticed things the casual bystanders did not. They have a slightly different hypothesis about what happened because they observed differently. Then we dial back AGAIN and see the same sequence of events from what the investigating security and official staff were able to piece together afterwards, using records and personal interviews, as well as their professional intuition and experience. Again, they paint a slightly different picture than the other observers, because they have slightly different information.

Then we get the real story, from the points of view of the two - and later three - players involved. But even here, there are three different versions of the story being told, because each person has a very different perspective on what is happening. So now we know the actual events that occurred, and yet we're still left facing the idea that there is no actual conclusive true story, because each of them experienced a different version of the same events.

I. Freakin'. Love that. Yes indeedy.

The other reason I really liked this book was that Donaldson wrote a totally unlikeable main character, and succeeding in making the reader care about him. In general, people like to root for people they identify with somehow, at least in part. That's why we root for the underdog - because we all feel like life hasn't really given us our fair shake. So it's rare to find a book where the protagonist is completely detestable, because what reader would desire to root for him? It's even more rare to find such a protagonist that is written so well that we actually do want him to succeed. These rare successful attempts are one of my favorite things to read.

This little novella is the first of a series, which I may or may not continue to read, but it also stands on its own as a fantastic open and shut character study. Bravo.

Joy says

Two men and one woman form a triangle composed of villain, victim and savior. But which person is which?

THE REAL STORY is the small-seed beginning of The Gap, one of the most hard-hitting sci fi series I've read. Powerful character archetypes find themselves on various sides of an ethical free-for-all. What can be justified when the goal is to keep humanity from being mutated into the enemy species?

I called it a series, but actually it's a 5-part novel, each book opening onto wider horizons than the previous book. The emotional experience of each character makes them all seem larger than life.

The Gap series is my favorite sci fi read of 2014.

Dr. Barrett Dylan Brown, Phd says

I found this on the street and thought it was a science fiction book... halfway through I decided I had stumbled into a perverse romance novel, then towards the end I thought it was sci-fi... now I'm not quite sure. It's not exactly romantic with all the rape and sexual torture so explicitly described, but, well, I don't know. I liked it, but felt kinda dirty afterwards and I don't quite feel like reading the next book in the series. I'm kinda scared to be honest.

Gavin says

This was my second attempt at reading a Stephen R. Donaldson novel. My first attempt was way back in my teens when I picked up Lord Foul's Bane. My read of the first Thomas Covenant book went so poorly that I never even finished the story. I had loved the concept and found Donaldson's writing to be fairly engaging, but I was too disgusted with the character of Thomas to continue reading his story. It was my hope that The Real Story would have more of what I liked and less of what I did not. Unfortunately that was a forlorn hope.

The Real Story was incredibly dark and brutal and proved to be an uncomfortable read. Mostly due to all the abuse and rape depicted within the story. I'm actually convinced that Donaldson might have a bit of a rape fetish! The characters did not help matters as none of the three main characters were particularly likeable. The main character Angus Thermopyle was even more loathsome than Thomas Covenant.

Despite a whole host of issues I did still find the actual story fairly intriguing and engaging. On the surface it is the tale of how the handsome swashbuckling pirate Nick Succorso outwits fellow pirate, and a man of dark reputation, Angus Thermopyle and in doing so saves the trapped beauty, Morn Hyland. The structure of the story was intriguing. We got the tale from the perspective of the casual observer, and then the tale from the perspective of the more discerning observer, before finally getting the real story from the POV of Angus himself. The story was one of rivalry, deception, and treachery.

I found the story quite engaging. I'd likely have enjoyed the tale more if the characters had been more likeable and the content less disturbing.

I'm not sure if I'll press on with the rest of the series. I can tolerate a bleak and depressing book when it is short like this one was, but the sequels are far larger in size. The slight glimmer of hope might be that the second half of the story focused less on the abuse of the captured Morn and more on the battle of wits between Angus, Nick, and Morn.

Rating: 3.5 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by Scott Brick. This story actually played to Brick's strengths as a narrator. The cast was tiny and the story was bleak so it suited Brick's wonderfully mournful sounding voice.

Wanda says

I have a negative past with Stephen R. Donaldson's work. I loathe the *Thomas Covenant* series and I could only read the first book of the *Mordant's Need* duality. I had the second book on my TBR until I realized that the thought of picking it up depressed me profoundly and I decided to let it go.

So it was with distinct reservations that I picked up *The Gap into Conflict* and no one was more surprised than me when I actually enjoyed it. The subject matter is difficult, but the insights into the main character, Angus Thermopyle, were worth the struggle. And, as Donaldson promises, we get the "real story" about what is going on in his psyche. It's not pretty, but it is truthful, as he confronts his feelings and admits to himself that he maybe isn't as rough & tough as he likes to think. It was kind of like getting a peek into the mind of someone like Ariel Castro, the Cleveland kidnapper.

I liked that no character was locked into a role, that everything kept shifting as the novel unfolded. Morn Hyland starts as a victim, but certainly doesn't end that way. Nick Succorso is set up to look like a hero, but a small foreshadowing by Donaldson indicates that he is no white knight.

I never thought I would ever say this: I'm looking forward to the next book in this Donaldson series!

Book number 266 of my Science Fiction & Fantasy Reading Project.

Joseph Michael Owens says

I'm ready to roll when the rest of you guys are (Peter, Nick, Jack et al. & anyone else who wants to get in on a group read)!!

<http://i77.photobucket.com/albums/j47...>

Sumant says

This is got to be by far the darkest book I have read this year, because there were so much stomach churning scenes in this book that it gave me a feeling of watching a psychological horror movie like **Misery**. Also I was a bit skeptical reading **Donaldson** again due to the fact that **Thomas covenant's** first two books were a drag for me, but **Donaldson** sure has turned the tide in this book and has written some compelling stuff.

Some of the strong points of the book are

1. *A compact story.*
2. *Hard to like any character.*

Let me elaborate on the above points

1. **A compact story.**

The story starts when a space pirate known as **Angus Thermopylae** arrives with a woman known as **Morn hyland** in space bar known as **Mallory's**. Also she comes to attention of a womanizer pirate known as **Nick Succorso**. After a few days police comes to the bar and arrests **Angus** on charge of theft, and **Morn** leaves with **Nick**. Now the folks in the bar starts speculating on, which lead to this and all kinds of rumors start flying around, **Donaldson** gives us these rumors in first few chapters but the truth is not so simple.

The story is as simple and compact as that but when you get the whole picture your head starts pinning around with the brutality and violence present in it.

2. *Hard to like any character.*

Angus Thermopylae is got to be most disgusting character I have read in grim dark because there is no bounds which this man will go to achieve his purpose. At the start he is seen as running away from the space patrol, but his faith saves him and awards him a victim with whom he can do all sort of despicable things.

Morn hyland is living in an ideal world and has achieved her objective of becoming a police officer, but things start turning to worse for her when her patrol ship start chasing **Angus** for the crime he has committed.

Most of the story revolves around the above two characters we hate **Angus** when he starts breaking **Morn** on physical as well as the mental level, but **Morn** too has done something nasty with no fault of hers. It became really hard for me to like any of the characters although I sympathized with **Morn**.

This definitely is a brutal book and people having issues with normal grim dark stuff should stay away from it but if you are able to digest it then this is not ride which is to be missed. I give this book 4/5 stars.

Ethan says

If this were a longer book, I'm not sure I would have finished it. There's an awful lot of rape and murder going on, and it's not always clear that it's serving the plot. The main character casually murders people by the dozen. In the middle of the book there are almost a dozen scenes in which the main character rapes one of the other major characters. This isn't described in excruciating detail, but it's stomach churning and probably makes this book something to avoid for anyone personally dealing with sexual violence trauma. My biggest criticism of the first Thomas Covenant book is that I couldn't bring myself to care about a protagonist who is a rapist. Indeed, one wonders whether Donaldson is capable of writing a book in which the main character isn't a rapist. But at least with *The Real Story* it doesn't seem that you're supposed to sympathize with the rapist (at least at first - I suspect that Angus will become more sympathetic in later books).

Despite all this, I can appreciate the quality of Donaldson's prose and his skill with character development, which is probably what prevented me from putting this down (although I seriously considered it several

times). My edition contains an afterward in which Donaldson explains some of his ideas behind the series, some of which honestly sound pretty cool. I'm particularly intrigued by the aliens as well as figuring out what's going on with Morn and Nick. Nonetheless, I'm still not sure if I'll pick up the sequels. It will depend how I feel about this one after I've had time to digest it.

R.P. Morel says

Good story, but very dark like a lot of Donaldson's writing is.

Joe says

The Gap really explores the cycle of hero/victim/villain. Between the first book and the last, the cycle has turned atleast twice, with the main characters exploring and fulfilling all the roles.

The Real story is a brutal book. No mistake, its a hard read. But between Donaldson's writing, and the compelling back story, it really sets the stage for a wider story. The characters do develop and change over time. This is a dark book, with dark characters, and is by no means a book that is intended for non-mature readers. The rest of the series is in much the same vein.

Miriam says

I have been a fan of Stephen R. Donaldson since I read the Thomas Covenant Chronicles in the 70s. In this new series, the Gap Chronicles, Donaldson moves to science fiction from fantasy. Be warned, this is a brutal series to read (like The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo), but it is also a phenomenal study in character development. The first book is the most difficult, and really only sets the stage for the rest of the series. I read this series after it was completed so I was able to read it straight through and my copy of The Real Story included a forward by Donaldson on why he wrote it. Basically he takes a victim (Morn Hyland), a villain (Angus Thermopyle), and a hero (Nick Succorso) and reverses their roles. He makes the victim the hero, the villain the victim, and the hero the villain in a stunning saga that takes place across the vast exapnses of space in the midst of a struggle between humanity and the aliens bent on humanity's annihilation. This is one of the best science fiction stories I've read. The characters stay with me. I've never forgotten them and think about them often, even though I read this series years ago. I purchased it recently for my son, who also really liked it, but I was dismayed at the time that some of the volumes had gone out of print. I now own them all in hardback, thanks to Amazon's marketplace and Half Price Books!

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

Another recommendation from my husband, with the caveat that The Gap series can be a pretty dark and brutal read. I asked, "Dark and brutal like A Song of Ice and Fire but with spaceships?" His answer: "Actually, that's not such a bad comparison, in the horrible-things-happening-to-the-main-characters kind of way." So I picked this up knowing exactly what I was in for.

This first book, originally meant to be a standalone novella, only reads like an introduction to the three main characters. However, it's still a great story, meant to explore the classic archetypes of hero, villain and victim by presenting a scenario in the first chapter and then telling the "real" story behind it in the rest of the book. Things are not always what they seem and characters are not always who you think they are.

I look forward to reading the second book so I can start getting to the actual story and meat of this series.

Thomas Stacey says

A tough read, even for me. Grimdark is one thing, then there's the hell the female lead has to endure throughout the entire book. Well written, but uncomfortable reading.

Having just finished the third book, it's definitely worth persevering. The first book (more of a novella) serves as an introduction to the central characters. From here a very dark yet satisfying story emerges, with superb world building and interesting characters.

For people on the fence, I'd recommend trying book 2 before calling it quits.

Zade says

Donaldson can write like nobody's business and this excursion into space opera is no exception. It is fast-paced and intricately plotted. There are a few reasons, however, that I cannot give it five stars. First of all, the level of violence, particularly sexual violence, is off the charts. It's excruciating to read and there are scenes you wish you could scrub from your brain. This violence is not gratuitous--it is key to understanding the actions and thinking of the characters, but it is definitely disturbing and not at all for the sensitive. To his credit, Donaldson forces the reader to face the uncomfortable fact that human monsters are created, not born. The most despicable character in the book is also the saddest. Donaldson makes sure the reader can never settle comfortably into a bad guys vs. good guys mindset.

The second detractor of this book may actually be a plus for some readers. The book, hardly more than a novella, is merely the prelude for a much longer series of books. As tempting as it might be to skip this small introduction, you really must read it if you hope to understand what is happening in the second novel. Furthermore, in order to get the whole story, you must read all five books of the Gap Cycle. Each novel ends without any kind of resolution to the problems developed therein.

Having covered the negatives, let me make clear that Donaldson is a first-class world builder. Although his style is nothing like Herbert's, he has created a universe that is arguably as complex as that of the first three Dune novels. These books are easily fascinating enough to make you read each book in one (long) sitting, but if you do that, you'll have to go back and read them again because there's so much there.

I first read these books in the 1990s, when the last couple in the series first came out. They've stuck with me at least 20 years, in ways both positive and disturbing. I am rereading them now in anticipation of posting them on paperbackswap.

I rate books by whether or not I'm willing to give them space on my limited shelves. In terms of quality, the

Gap Cycle merits a place. I won't be keeping my copies, though, because I don't want to risk my children picking them up.

Johnny says

Not having picked up a Donaldson book since the second trilogy of Thomas Covenant, I was surprised to rediscover just how much I savor this author's prose. Reading his books is tantamount to Hannibal Lector adorning his meal with fava beans. I really feel like I get into the character's heads.

This book is essentially a science-fiction homage to Wagner's Ring Cycle, but it is considerably more than that. It deals with a cataclysmic love triangle, but it is considerably more than a soap opera or that sophisticated English antecedent to the soap genre, Jane Austen. It is a mystery of a sort, but it is much more than that. It is a story where you quickly know what happens, but why and exactly how it happens unfolds like certain flower blossoms at dawn.

A space pirate takes a hostage. The hostage is drop-dead gorgeous. The space pirate perceives something of the Stockholm Syndrome taking place in his victim and this feeling of power mixed with false signals of love creates emotions he's never felt before.

A space rogue creates an elaborate plan to rescue the hostage. But before we start to accept him as Hans Solo the lovable space rogue, we discover that he has issues, as well. We find that there are byzantine layers of conflicting emotions and desires in this character's psyche, as well.

And, of course, we delve into the motivation of the victim, as well. What is her motive for almost simultaneously betraying one of the members of this triangle and helping the same member of the triangle. Is it guilt? Is it love? Donaldson unveils the answer in a riveting story that has me wanting to get my hands on the next volume fairly soon.

If you're looking for "wild magic," this series isn't for you. If you're looking for textured psychological action in a science-fiction universe, it just might be the book you've been waiting for.
