

# **Skylark of Valeron**

*E.E. "Doc" Smith*

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## **Skylark of Valeron Details**

Date : Published by Granada (first published 1934)

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Author : E.E. "Doc" Smith

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## From Reader Review Skylark of Valeron for online ebook

### James Hein says

The first three books of the series are typical EE Doc Smith and as a re-read I enjoyed the whole series again (see review for book 4)

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### Frank Carver says

And on to the third book in the the four-book “Skylark” series. I started reading it straight after “Skylark Three”. Much as expected from the previous two books, the formula is essentially the same: inciting event, training/tooling montage, embark on adventure, yikes, things are worse than expected, lucky escape, power-up, return, revenge.

This time, mere space travel is not enough, Seaton and chums find themselves “rotated” into the “fourth dimension” which leads to probably the weakest part of the book. Smith obviously wanted his heroes to face a completely unknown adventure, but I think he bites off more than he can chew, and has to back off from the trippy weirdness to tell what is essentially a “white man in the jungle” tale of a superior being facing and defeating hordes of weaker natives.

Once the fourth-dimensional digression is over, the story takes a more familiar turn. Lost in space, the crew find a planet (Valeron) of wise and peaceful humans being attacked by powerful but “hideous” chlorine-breathing aliens. The subtext here, though, is that the wise humans are actually the scientific elite, only surviving after a (conveniently unavoidable) cull of the great bulk of the population. This, in Smith’s eyes makes a society of only the best and brightest, able to take a purely rational approach to even the worst of challenges.

The skylarkers arrive in the nick of time and uplift the local humans with unheard-of (but instantly understood, naturally) scientific and technological advances through which the “Chlorans” are defeated. The now happy locals don’t quite go so far as to elect Seaton as Overlord as happened in the previous books, but do dedicate their planetary resources to build him an even more giant spaceship and a way to “phone home”.

Supposed antagonist DuQuesne is still in the picture, but Smith has to work pretty hard to keep him relevant. He begins by stealing the technology which peaked in the previous book, then uses it in a somewhat pointless “king of the world” scheme. It’s all a puppet-show, really, as by the time Seaton meanders home he is so buff that all of DuQuesne’s efforts were a complete waste of time.

Despite all the 1920s trappings inherited from the earlier books, things are changing as Smith enters the 30s. This is the first of his books to include anything even remotely resembling the computers which actually revolutionised life a few decades later.. His multi-kilometre-diameter spacecraft is mostly comprised of a giant “brain”, which he admits can think and act much faster than any human. Also, despite the fascist, eugenic, notes of the Valeronians and the characters interactions with other races, there are some cases where proto-god Seaton stops short of genocide

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## **Kenneth says**

More campy space opera from its first practitioner. Great escape reading for me in my college years. The third of Smith's Skylark novels, it takes up where the last one leaves off. The villain "Blackie" DuQuesne returns to earth on a captured Fenachrone ship and takes over. Meanwhile, Richard Seaton and Martin Crane with their wives encounter beings who are purely intellectual, composed of energy, and to escape them, they fling themselves into the fourth dimension where they are captured, but eventually escape back into our dimension but they discover they are lost in another galaxy. They discover the planet Valeron, which is threatened by the Chlorans from a nearby planet. Here we go again!

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## **Roddy Williams says**

'Valeron' takes us more or less straight on from the end of the last volume, although we see the denouement from the perspective of Duquesne, who has captured a Fenachrone war-vessel and is hiding among their fleet. Thus, he witnesses the destruction of the entire Fenachrone race. While Seaton and his chums are racing off to pursue the final Fenachrone ship (which is attempting to flee to another galaxy) Duquesne returns to Earth and takes control of the planet.

We then rejoin Seaton, Martin, Dorothy and Margaret as they continue their adventures. Having destroyed the last of the Fenachrone, they then encounter the pure intellectuals, beings composed of energy and, in order to escape them, rotate themselves into the Fourth Dimension.

They are there captured by a fourth-dimensional civilisation. Unable to communicate, they are forced to escape. Seaton manages to rotate them back into our universe in the nick of time but finds that they are so far from their own galaxy, they are lost.

In a nearby galaxy however, they discover the planet Valeron, peopled by nice white humanoid types and currently under siege by the Chlorans, green amoeboid type beasties from a neighbouring planet.

Smith is pretty much repeating plotlines continuously but does so, it has to be said, in a very entertaining manner, despite his rather casual attitude to genocide, which he is happy to carry out with gay abandon in most of his work. He also quite cleverly interweaves what appears to be logical scientific theory and laws of physics with complete techno-nonsense, such as the convenient headsets that one can don to assimilate all the knowledge and expertise of a friendly scientist chum.

It's juvenile hokum that is typical of - but generally far superior to - most of the contemporaneous work that was being published in the mid Nineteen Thirties.

The tale was first serialised in 'Astounding' in 1934 and published as a novel in 1949.

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## **Clint says**

This was even a little better than the second one, which was a vast improvement over the first one. I don't think E.E. Smith is ever going to be remembered for dialogue or pace or believability or overall balance. About a quarter or a third of this book was a pointless adventure into the 4th dimension, which, though very unnecessary to the story, was really entertaining. Then there followed more intergalactic wars with weapons of ever-increasing size and ability. The speeds with which space ships move around this far into the series are just hysterical, but there's something so addictive and fun in reading about them. Just like watching overdone Japanese stuff, think Kamen Rider, the enemy and the weapons to fight the enemy just get bigger and bigger and bigger. So fucking fun.

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### **DavidO says**

The parts starring Duquesne were pretty interesting. When the point of view switches to the "good guys" the plot gets less interesting, while the science fiction elements get more interesting. The good guys are so powerful and intelligent that any obstacles they have are quickly overcome, which can get a bit dull, but the way in which Smith imagines the front line of science progressing is interesting.

It took me a while to get through this audiobook, mostly because the lack of a driving plot meant I didn't feel strongly drawn to putting headphones back on and listening to this.

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### **prcardi says**

Storyline: 1/5

Characters: 1/5

Writing Style: 2/5

World: 2/5

Smith really wasn't a novelist. I can see how these would have been a lot of fun as magazine installments for adolescent boys in the time between the World Wars. The technological speculation would have been amazing, the adventures awe-inspiring, and the vicarious feeling of heroism and doing-good-for-the-universe satisfying. This and its predecessors do, however, embody just about every flaw cynics and critics make about the science fiction genre: stultifying writing, alpha male heroes, weak willed damsels-in-distress, technobabble, showy technology and action in place of detail, depth, or meaning. The future of science fiction is written here, though. Science fiction would continue to be enamored with technology.

Technobabble gets more and more plausible. We still love a damsel and hero, though we generally like them to be a little more like us - complicated, flawed, hopeful. A few setbacks along the way make our hero's struggle more believable. However hokey Seaton et al might be today, the road map to our science fiction present is written in E.E. Doc Smith's *Skylark of Valeron*. It just took us a long while to make out the details.

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### **NeilWill says**

This, the third in the *Skylark* series (previously reviewed by me the first novel, *The Skylark of Space*, and also the second, the confusingly named *Skylark Three*) opens to reveal that Richard Seaton's Nemesis, Marc C DuQuesne did not die at the hands of the Fenachrone supermen in *Skylark Three*\*, but instead was able to steal a battleship from them before their planet was destroyed. DuQuesne then goes to Norlamin, lies to the locals, and claims to be an employee of Seaton and Crane, whereupon they give him a very powerful spaceship with all the technology from the previous book. DuQuesne then conquers the Earth, and becomes very popular by abolishing war and crime, and creating full employment by building a defence system for the planet.

But what are Seaton and Crane up to? They were deep in intergalactic space chasing the Fenachrone at the end of *Skylark Three*; their velocity is so great that it's easier to visit a new galaxy than turn around and come back. They encounter mental beings of no physical form, the "Intellectuals," who decide they want to

recruit Seaton. To escape Seaton and company rotate *Skylark Two* (*Skylark Three*'s lifeboat) into the fourth dimension.

The fourth dimension is an extremely wacky place. You can reach past the outside of sealed objects (Seaton uses a tin of tobacco to demonstrate). More annoyingly the four-dimensional beings use shock tridents that reach inside the humans' bodies and grasp nerve junction to control them. Also the three dimensional matter is much denser than the local stuff; the land appears to be flat; light comes from the surroundings and vanishes leaving the night pitch black. Finally time is all messed up; they're only supposed to be there for one ten thousandth of a second yet it feels much longer.

When they come out they find themselves very lost, not recognising the nearby galaxies. Seaton realises that he will have to, at the very least, rebuild his Fifth-Order Projector to find their way home, and probably go further and build a Sixth-Order one (which operates on the frequency of thought). Fortunately his time in the fourth dimension has given him some ideas on how to do that, which is just as well as he needs to come up with something to deal with the Intellectuals. However he needs a stable planet and a nearby white dwarf star (for the heat/pressure to make a neutronium lens).

They find such a planet, Valeron, only it has recently gone through a close pass with another star leading to the death of most of the inhabitants (humans), and has also acquired a new planetary neighbour whose atmosphere is made up of chlorin\*\* (sic). Unfortunately the inhabitants of this planet "Chlora" are amoebas who promptly lay siege to Valeron. Just as things are getting a bit hairy for the defenders Seaton and the *Skylark* arrive and save the day.

Seaton goes on to build what he wants to call *Skylark Four* (to get the accuracy they want it would need measuring circles four light years across, but that turns out to be impractical so it's a sphere only one thousand km across) but Dorothy, his wife, insists it has a better name so it becomes *Skylark of Valeron*. Now to deal with the Intellectuals, and also DuQuesne, the very popular total ruler of Earth.

**Read This:** For more space adventures; the fourth dimension sequence in particular is full of cool ideas.  
**Don't Read This:** If building bigger ships and greater technology is boring.

\* The book, not the ship. DuQuesne never boards *Skylark Three* (the ship).

\*\* Word tried to autocorrect this to chlorinE. And just now lower cased that E. Well done, but not in this case.

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### **AG Fishman says**

Classic space opera.

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### **Darth says**

I love these campy old naive space operas.

The hero's are all but infallible, the villains are always foiled, and there isn't any harsh reality cutting in on your story.

Of course if this was written in the last 40 years I might find all that irritating instead of gitchy - but I have a soft spot for old timey sci-fi, and it is fun to read the books where George Lucas took 60% of Star Wars out of - that is between the Skylark series and the Lensmen series.

If you want your mind expanded, read something else - if you want to zoom across the galaxies and into the 4th dimension - these are AWESOME

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### **Caleb Wachter says**

The Skylark of Valeron was a huge accomplishment for Seaton & Co., and it seems kind of like the end of this book is going to be it for the story. The entire thing ramps up, there's a strange expedition out of our space-time, and it all wraps up wonderfully well as the scope and scale of the story increases by orders of magnitude with each book.

The quality of the story improves with each entry, and thankfully by the time you've gotten to this book, you've been Darwinian-ally selected for a strong ability to suspend disbelief, which is essential if you're going to enjoy this good ol' Space Opera.

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### **Al Brown says**

Done, this book is becoming very dated, sadly. EE "Doc" Smith's character dialog and attitudes is and has been dated for quite a while. I remember reading this many years and enjoyed it then. This time thru I was just hanging on to be done.

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### **Doug Farren says**

I read this one a LONG time ago. The Skylark series is a classic which I periodically go back and reread every decade or so. The science is outdated and the level of technology is a bit too far-fetched but it's still a classic space opera.

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### **John says**

NeilWill makes a very post on post on this book. The 4th D stuff is really cool.

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### **Jeffrey says**

This is a quaint book. One written just prior to the Science Fiction revolution that occurred at the end of the Thirties and brought us Asimov and Heinlein, "hard science" fiction and a hint of things to come. How a food engineer (donuts) could have had his finger on the pulse enough to predict uranium based power production and computers is beyond me. He even has the fairly modern concept of the Singularity

(implemented by humans instead of computers, however). Unfortunately for him, everything changed. He chose scientific terms that didn't win minds like order instead of dimension. The two protagonist scientists bring along their helpless uneducated house wives on the adventure, which while providing a nice opportunity for the author to stop and explain the unexplainable is still an annoying trope that could have been avoided by making them a bit more evenly yoked. Genocide is still a viable option in his universe, and I could help but cringe when he uses the phrase "uber alles" at one point in the book. For some reason, I felt that much of this particular problem was redeemed by his final statements exhibiting hope that mankind could stop hating each other for being different.

In the end I enjoyed it, mostly because I was able to get myself in the right mindset to read the book.

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