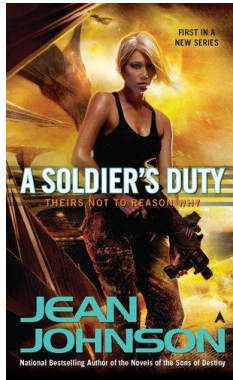


Review by: Bill Lawhorn
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Ia is a settler from the farthest reaches of Human space. As a teenage girl she develops the talent to walk the paths of time and possibilities. What she sees is not pleasant and there is little hope for humanity. But there is a chance, if only she can follow the narrow trail to salvation. She dedicates her life to saving humanity.

Her first step is to join the Space Marines. Well, and survive basic training. Although she knows what is coming and has prepared for most things, some things still happen that she doesn't expect and opportunities arise that give her a chance to improve her odds of success. She knows that she must find a way to finish basic, become an enlisted marine, and then make the jump from enlisted to officer by field promotion. This is the only path to the highest levels of command. On top of that, gaining just the right nickname won't hurt either. There will be plenty of opportunities to fail and being diverted into the psi corps is not an option.

This is the first book in a new series that follows the rise of Ia. It is a pretty straight forward military SF story. The quirk lies in Ia's ability to sense the future and past of people. The ever present danger of having her secret ability discovered too soon is her greatest risk. She also still has to do the things that she sees, so she trains hard and is able to take advantage of her heavy world physiology, which gives her surprising strength and fast reflexes.

Some might see her as another Honor Harrington, and there are many similarities and differences. Both have psychic abilities that they keep hidden. Both have the respect of their comrades. Ia has more foreknowledge so doesn't have to make as many quick tough choices that Honor makes, but she does have a greater weight of responsibility. In addition to Honor Harrington, I see some similarities to the works of Ian Douglas

As the first in a series this is a good starting point. I like the ability to see the paths of time, but this may create some issues as the story progresses, in that Ia may be too powerful. The grey times when she can't see a clear path are the best moments of the novel. But the strength of the power should not keep readers away. This is the first book that I have read by Jean Johnson, but it won't be the last.