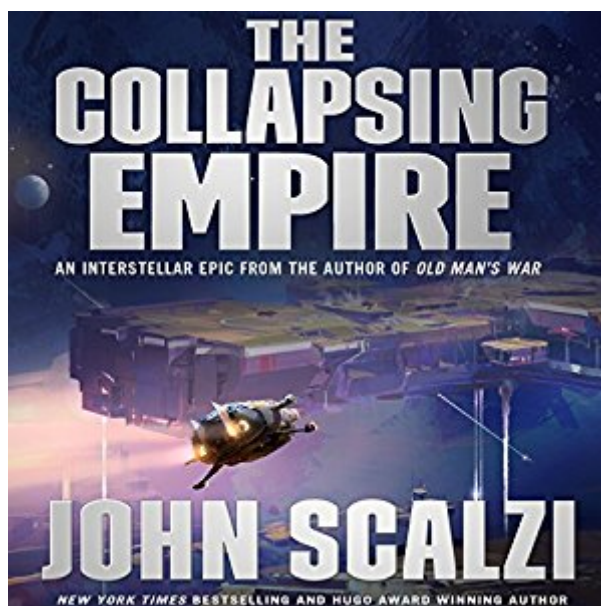


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The Collapsing Empire: The Interdependency, Book 1



Synopsis

Our universe is ruled by physics, and faster-than-light travel is not possible - until the discovery of The Flow, an extradimensional field we can access at certain points in space-time that transports us to other worlds, around other stars. Humanity flows away from Earth, into space, and in time forgets our home world and creates a new empire, the Interdependency, whose ethos requires that no one human outpost can survive without the others. It's a hedge against interstellar war - and a system of control for the rulers of the empire. The Flow is eternal - but it is not static. Just as a river changes course, The Flow changes as well, cutting off worlds from the rest of humanity. When it's discovered that The Flow is moving, possibly cutting off all human worlds from faster-than-light travel forever, three individuals - a scientist, a starship captain, and the empress of the Interdependency - are in a race against time to discover what, if anything, can be salvaged from an interstellar empire on the brink of collapse.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

About two thirds of the way through it starts becoming obvious that the story isn't going to wrap up in this volume. I'm okay with the idea of a multi-volume saga, but in previous series Scalzi at least wrapped up the story in each book, and then the next book is more of a sequel. In this case the book just ends pretty much right in the middle of the action. It's almost as if he wrote an entire story and then his publisher decided to chop it in half to make more money. I loved the writing, the characters and the story but am not a fan of the "cliff hanger" ending.

A little "Dune", a little "Game of Thrones", a little "Leviathan Wakes", with the rest being pure Scalzi himself. It's a great read, like his others. Not one you want to put down. Add to that the fact that's it fun to be starting a new saga. And the best part is that Scalzi's created one of his best characters to date in Kiva Lagos (mostly because she swears a lot). And that's saying something because Scalzi is not known for character-driven plots. Like the last two Old Man's War books, this story takes place with a high scope. A forty-thousand foot view. This is not like "Zoe's Tale" or "The Ghost Brigades" where you knew one character intimately. And like the last two "Old Man's War" books, the story stays focused on politics and governmental milieu (although it's not a political thriller). One negative is that it seemed the good guys win their obstacles a little easy. Like someone grabs the gun from Chekhov's mantle, but the security manager saw him bring in bullets, and they knew who was going to do it, so they replaced the gun with one of those bang flag things. Challenges were nipped in the bud right away so that the goal became how to make it so no one noticed they nipped the bud while finding out who grew the flower. If you're not familiar with Scalzi's stuff, then this is a good jumping in point. It's closest to "Lock-In" for style and "The End of All Things" for content.

There are two things that you should know about The Collapsing Empire: the book is one of Scalzi's best and it is part of a multi-book deal with the publisher. The story is incomplete by design, since it will be continued in at least one sequel. And if you're in 2017 that sequel will not be available for at least a year. Hereditary feudalism is a terrible form of government. It has all of the faults of a dictatorship with the added dimension of inevitable incompetents who got the job simply because they were born into the right bloodline. There's a reason that there are few monarchies in the modern world. Now that few believe in the divine right of Kings (or Queens), feudal governments don't have the stamina to survive. The idea of a star spanning feudal government is pretty implausible. This said, the Empire of the Interdependency of worlds is a believable and well thought out world. The characters are fascinating and well drawn. There is a lot of suspense that is not resolved in this book. In short, this is one of Scalzi's best books, but we're all going to have to wait impatiently for him to write the sequel. I suppose that, to paraphrase Neil Gaiman, we will have to repeat to ourselves that "John Scalzi is not our bitch". Still, I wish that he'd drop what ever else he is doing and get to work on the sequel. I'm waiting!

Book one of my summer list finished. I've only read one other Scalzi book (Redshirts. Star Trek fans should check it out) but was intrigued by the premise. Imagine if every state in the country were

completely shut off from every other state. That's kind of the premise of Collapsing Empire. The Interdependency has existed for well over a millennia but the only network for interstellar travel is through a "sub-dimension" known as the Flow. While mostly stable for centuries, the Flow begins to collapse. Can humanity survive? We follow three main characters, the ruler of the Interdependency, the son of a Flow physicist who first recognized the impending collapse, and a businesswoman named Kiva. She's easily my favorite character, but if the F-bomb offends you, steer clear. Kiva uses it the way most of us use oxygen: all the time. There's a line of dialogue from near the end that is so spot on I feel I must share it: "I'm continually confronted with the human tendency to ignore or deny facts until the last possible instant. And then for several days after that, too." I realized pretty quickly that there was too much story to wrap up in one volume. While the main plot wraps up here, there are many plot threads left in play. Don't expect the collapse to be quick. There's still a great deal of story to be told.

The Collapsing Empire (The Interdependency #1) by John Scalzi Buckle up and enjoy the ride! John Scalzi is on top of his game here, and this is a great start to a new series! The characters are delightfully complex and nuanced. And yes they drive the plot, and drive it well. The one thing they cannot drive, however, is the Flow. Which only gives our galactic Interdependency its reason for existing. Ruh rho. Yes, there are times when you can see ahead of the plot a bit, but there also many other times when you are surprised by it. Also the author's narrative is fun, and the timing is well paced. Now I *need* that next installment!!

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