

that may affect all existence is about to take place. Unfortunately, only one set of aliens knows what that event is and their ruling dictatorship is hell-bent on keeping it that way. Lissa Windholm, an Earth woman with a spirit of adventure men find attractive, is determined to uncover the mystery and share the knowledge with everyone. Lissa and her partner Karl, a tyrannosaurus-like scientist, make some startling archeological discoveries on the planet Jonna about beings known as the Forerunners, but a psychologically scarred starship captain and an impressively ancient and profit-minded human rogue have other plans for the relics. Moving from one key sequence to another, Anderson omits much of the buildup and back story customary for such epic-scale SF, yet his protagonists and the worlds they explore always feel rich and real. (May 23)

FYI: Anderson died in 2001.

RED THUNDER

JOHN VARLEY. *Ace*, \$23.95 (416p) ISBN 0-441-01015-6

★ And the heart-pounding space race is on! When a Chinese spacecraft, *Heavenly Harmony*, threatens to land on Mars a few days before the U.S. shuttle vehicle *Ares Seven*, washed-up ex-astronaut Travis Broussard, his brilliant but unconventional cousin, Jubal, and four kids from Florida decide to build their own private spaceship, *Red Thunder*, and get there first in this riveting SF thriller from Hugo and Nebula award winner Varley. Jubal has invented an amazing new power source, the Squeezer, which provides enough thrust to get them to Mars in a mere three days. While the Chinese and other Americans head to Mars the long way, the team works feverishly to build a spaceworthy craft, because although they all want Americans to land on Mars first, a more pressing reason for their visit to the red planet arises. Jubal has discovered a potentially disastrous design flaw in *Ares Seven*, which has Travis's ex-wife aboard. With a plausible cover story, a lot of help and a raided trust fund, *Red Thunder* gets built. Will its creators evade the feds who keep nosing around? Will they launch? Will they beat the Chinese to Mars? Can they save *Ares Seven*? Do you have to ask? In the end, they put their lives on the line, proving that Everyman can be a hero, too. With hilarious, well-drawn characters, extraordinary situations presented plausibly, plus exciting action and adventure, this book should do thunderously well. (Apr.)

Forecast: The Tom Clancy-ish jacket art is misleading, but Varley's name in big type at the top will ensure this reaches his core audience of male adolescents and young men.

WASTELAND OF FLINT

THOMAS HARLAN. *Tor*, \$27.95 (432p) ISBN 0-765-30192-X

Defly weaving alternate history with traditional space-opera elements (the plucky civil-

ian archeologist, the band of loyal mercenaries, the unorthodox yet honor-bound naval captain), Harlan (*The Dark Lord*) presents an SF "puzzle" novel highly sensitive to character and culture. Employees of the Company and the star sailors of the Fleet explore Ephesus III, a mystery planet left half-rebuilt. While the Company serves as a standard-issue corporate backdrop, the unusual Fleet represents the military arm of a dual Aztec-Japanese empire, Imperial México. Swedish-Russian Gretchen Anderssen, an exile from the last nation to resist the Imperial México conquests, leads the Company team. To discover the secrets of Ephesus III, she must work with Green Hummingbird, who's an Imperial judge and *naullis* (shaman). Mitsuhara Hadeishi, a Fleet *Chu-sa* (commander), lends support as he struggles to keep his ideals, despite his lack of opportunity in a class-ridden Imperial military. In a plot that draws heavily on Aztec and Japanese traditions, Gretchen and Hummingbird clash over their alternate ways of seeing (scientific and mystic), but learn to synthesize their expertise. While the book shows some military hardware in action, Harlan puts far greater emphasis on the workings of minds, whether human or alien. (Apr. 25)

SNARE

KATHERINE KERR. *Tor*, \$27.95 (592p) ISBN 0-312-89045-1

Popular fantasy author Kerr (the Deverry series) once again crosses genres to deliver a large-scale SF adventure, with crowd-pleasing results. Three very different groups of human settlers go, not all willingly, to the planet Snare: a band of Islamic fundamentalists, a group of horse tribes and the pragmatic Cantons people. All descend on Snare's indigenous reptilian species the ChaMeech, and eight centuries of territorial and social turmoil follow. In Kazrajistan, the despotic Gemet Great Kahn rules the followers of the Third Prophet, but a secret rebel organization led by Captain Idres Warkannan seeks to restore the rightful heir, Jezro Kahn, long assumed murdered by Gemet. Warkannan sets out to find Jezro with his nephew Arkazo and Yarl Soutan, a renegade Cantons sorcerer, who claims to be searching for the lost Ark of the Covenant, the settlers' original ship. Meanwhile, suspicious of Soutan and Warkannan, Gemet sends Zahir Benumar, one of his elite warriors, to discover their plans. In the guise of a disgraced soldier, Zahir joins a horse tribe led by the inquisitive Spirit Rider Ammadin, hoping to use the tribe as cover while he follows Soutan's trail. Matters grow more complicated when a ChaMeech named Water Woman asks Ammadin's help and tells her of a powerful sorceress named Sibyl, who may be the last link between Snare's inhabitants and their distant past. Though the ending falls a little flat, Kerr masterfully manipulates the converging plot lines. (Apr. 23)

RING

KOJI SUZUKI, TRANS. FROM THE JAPANESE BY ROBERT B. ROHMER AND GLYNNE WALLEY. *Vertical* (www.vertical-inc.com), \$24.95 (356p) ISBN 1-932234-00-4

The success of the 2002 American movie *The Ring*, a remake of Hideo Nakata's *Ringu*, has excited interest both in the original film and in the novel on which it's based. The plot will be familiar to the movie's many fans: a reporter, Asakawa, connects the death of his niece to the deaths of three other high school students. During his investigation, he discovers a videotape with a terrible warning: "Those who view these images are fated to die at this exact moment one week from now." With the aid of a friend, Asakawa traces the video to an alleged psychic and her daughter, Sadako. As in a classic ghost story, fate singles out one, often innocent character as a scapegoat. But the misogynistic society that persecutes Sadako and her mother must ultimately bear witness to its sin—or perish. Despite a somewhat pedestrian and unintentionally comic prose style that seems derived from manga comics ("Ryuji was right. Men could not bear children"), fans of the movie won't be disappointed. Anyone curious in how the Japanese see themselves will find this book a fascinating, and ultimately highly disturbing, experience. (Apr. 15)

Forecast: Aptly billed as the Japanese Stephen King (because both writers provide insights into how their respective cultures view themselves), Suzuki once rode a motorcycle from California to Florida. A national author tour, by presumably more conventional transport, is sure to boost sales, since there was no mass-market tie-in to the movie.

SF/Fantasy/Horror NOTES

April Publications

Visitations, Jack Dann's first fiction collection in more than 20 years, features 14 stories by the Nebula Award-winning Australian writer, including "Visitors," "A Cold Day in Mesozoic" and "The Dybbuk Dolls." (*Five Star*, \$25.95 255p ISBN 0-7862-4961-7) The same publisher also offers *Night Lives: Nine Stories of the Dark Fantastic*, by Phyllis Eisenstein, which includes such chilling tales as "Night Life," "Dark Wings" and "Altar Ego" (with Alex Eisenstein). (\$25.95 292p ISBN -4958-7)

Fans of genre classics won't want to miss two worthy reissues: *Strangers* (1978), a novel of galactic adventure and romance by eminent SF editor Gardner Dozois (*ibooks*, \$12 paper 192p ISBN 0-7434-5846-X); and Edgar Rice Burroughs's homage to Anthony Hope's *Prisoner of Zenda*, *The Mad King*, which first ran as a serial in *All-Story Weekly* in 1914-15 (*Wildside* [www.wildsidepress.com], \$32.95 294p ISBN 1-59224-933-7).

Jeffrey Thomas's *Letters from Hades*, the first