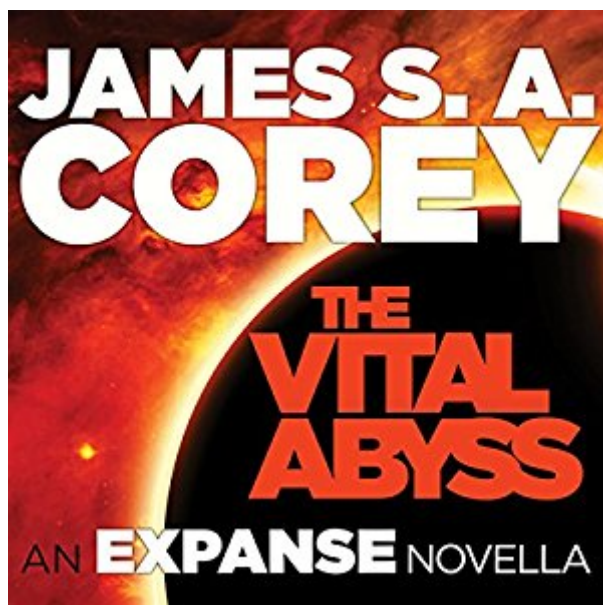


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# The Vital Abyss: An Expanse Novella



## Synopsis

From New York Times best-selling author James S. A. Corey... Somewhere in the vast expanse of space, a group of prisoners lives in permanent captivity. The only company they have is each other and the Belters who guard them. The only stories they know are the triumphs and crimes that brought them there. The only future they see is an empty life in an enormous room. And then the man from Mars came along.... Set in the hardscrabble solar system of the Expanse, *The Vital Abyss* deepens James S. A. Corey's acclaimed series. *The Expanse* (soon to be a major Syfy Channel television series) *Leviathan Wakes* *Caliban's War* *Abaddon's Gate* *Cibola Burn* *Nemesis Games* *Coming Soon* *Babylon's Ashes* *The Expanse Short Fiction* *The Butcher of Anderson Station* *Gods of Risk* *The Churn Drive*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

All through the Expanse series behind the protomolecule wrecking havoc on civilized space are parties dedicated to the development of the molecule as a tool for profit and power. Even further back in the shadows lie the rogue scientists who have given up so much to work with the protomolecule. This is their story. Warning: this is not a pleasant read, it is inhabited by sociopaths who have given up many of the traits we would define as human. No heroes here. However for hardcore Expanse fans (guilty) it is serious back story and who knows....it may even have a hint as to what to expect in the next full length novel. Written with the depth of craft I've come to expect from Abraham and Franck. Recommended.

As a young man, Dr. Cortazar watched his mother slowly die from Huntington's disease. After his death he went to the university and studied nanoinformatics. These studies led him to a position with Protogen where he worked with a group doing research on the protomolecule. Because of treatments given by Protogen, the employees he worked with did not see it as immoral or unethical to do research on humans. And their choice to do human testing led them to Eros. This novella fills in more pieces about how Protogen came to have the protomolecule, what led up to the infection of Eros and what happened to some of the people responsible. This is a must read for anyone following the Expanse series. For those that have not, I highly recommend the series.

"We've gone too far." - "The Expanse" tag line  
Five DISTURBING Stars. "The Vital Abyss" is yet another of the novellas about the universe of "The Expanse" series of novels, which includes the inhabited entities of Earth, Mars, the asteroid belt and more, written by the talented team of Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck under the pen name of "James S. A. Corey". I watched Season 1 of "The Expanse" on the Syfy television channel and it is now going into Season 2 soon, and I chose to not be 'spoiled' by the novels. But some of the detail-laden backstory novellas were too tempting, like "The Butcher of Anderson Station" and this one which is ostensibly set prior to the events of the "Leviathan Wakes" novel. Those without knowledge of the Expanse world and characters may find this novella too loaded with unfamiliar detail unless they refer to the Expanse wiki reference guide. At an initially undisclosed location, over 3 dozen specialists are held against their will, in unbelievable conditions, for unknown reasons. This is the dark, gut-wrenching story of Paolo and his fellow innocent associates whose status in the mind of the reader may evolve. The knowledgeable readers previous outlook on a major scientific discovery may also change. And more detail emerges on certain past events from the novels, novellas, and the TV show in the Expanse universe but from a different viewpoint. With this novella, a new protagonist has arrived in the Expanse storyline, Paolo, whose life gets an inordinate amount of backstory and who hopefully will reappear, especially to expand on what happens at the end of this novella. He makes an extended appearance in Season 2 of the TV version of "The Expanse". My copy of this novella also includes the first chapter from "The Lazarus War" by Jamie Sawyer. Highly Recommended. Five PUZZLING Stars. (Orbit Short Fiction. 73 pages. Text-to-speech and other special functions are enabled except Lending and X-Ray.)

This novella is the first time in the Expanse series that the authors have made use of a first person narrator, and it made for a gripping read. I've loved the whole series but this was a refreshing

change of pace that gave some deeper insight into the minds behind the infamous protomolecule experiment on Eros. Seeing the human side of the scientists that were previously only shown as nearly inhuman in their detachment provides a deep pathos, and makes the loss of their humanity through the unspecified procedure that made them into "research" that much more poignant.

No one need praise the growing body of work that encompasses the expanse universe, the authors have ensured themselves a place among the greatest of SciFi writers. However, *The Vital Abyss* deserves special attention for the stunning quality of the writing, character development and a carefully unfolding plot that works as a stand alone story while holding special surprises and insights for readers of the entire series. There are several pages I read my young son (age 10) and my freshman daughter- I read them as an example of what it sounds like to hear A masterwork of character development.

This is my favorite of the short stories in the Expanse universe. It is both a fascinating story of what happened to the scientists in the first book and an incredibly disturbing, detailed, and sympathetic look at the amoral sociopathy that is involved. It manages to make the main character sympathetic despite their absurdly horrible ways, and you can't help but root for them despite them being almost purely evil. It's a great story of humans in an inhuman world.

This review serves as blanket adulation for the authors known as James S.A. Corey. The Expanse novels and novellas have been a complete delight. Just the right balance of drama and humor. Most of all, great stories that are well told. My only complaint is that they are not writing feverishly 24/7 to satisfy my insatiable appetite for this series. C'mon, guys. Sleep is overrated. Gimme.

No spoilers here. If you like the SYFY series "The Expanse", you will love all 5 existing novels in the book series by James S. A. Corey. Then... While you're waiting for book 6, read all 4 short stories / novellas for intriguing and satisfying back stories of the characters you've grown to like. Then... Go watch the SyFy Expanse Series season 1 and notice things that flew silently under the radar the first time. Excellent multi-layered experience. Highly recommended.

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