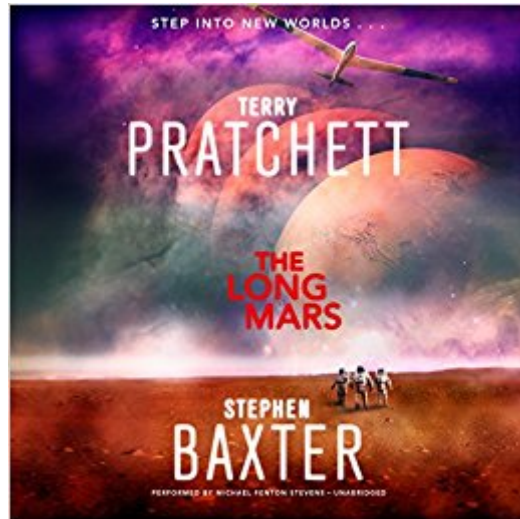




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# **The Long Mars (Long Earth)**



## Synopsis

The third novel in Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter's Long Earth series, which *io9* calls "a brilliant science fiction collaboration" 2040-2045. In the years after the cataclysmic Yellowstone eruption there is massive economic dislocation as populations flee Datum Earth to myriad Long Earth worlds. Sally, Joshua, and Lobsang are all involved in this perilous rescue work when, out of the blue, Sally is contacted by her long-vanished father and inventor of the original Stepper device, Willis Linsay. He tells her he is planning a fantastic voyage across the Long Mars and wants her to accompany him. But Sally soon learns that Willis has an ulterior motive for his request. Meanwhile, US Navy Commander Maggie Kauffman has embarked on an incredible journey of her own, leading an expedition to the outer limits of the far Long Earth. For Joshua, the crisis he faces is much closer to home. He becomes embroiled in the plight of the Next: the super-bright post-humans who are beginning to emerge from their "long childhood" in the community called Happy Landings, located deep in the Long Earth. Ignorance and fear have caused "normal" human society to turn against the Next--and a dramatic showdown seems inevitable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Long Earth is under tremendous strain due to the eruption of the Yellowstone volcano on Datum Earth; Sally, Joshua, and Lobsang are all involved in the rescue work to some degree or another. Sally's father contacts her out of the blue and invites her to join him on an

expedition to the Long Mars. Of course, he has an ulterior motive – and the consequences of his obsession are going to be far-reaching. Navy Commander Maggie Kaufman, along with her crew and a select crew from China, is on an expedition to the farthest reaches of the Long Earth, on which they will make quite a few earth-shattering discoveries. Joshua's focus is on the children of Happy Landings, the "Next." They're essentially post-human, and that makes normal humans fear them. The confrontation seems inevitable, especially after some of what Kaufman and her expedition discover. This is a solid piece of old-school science fiction, with a modern political bent; the exploration of both the Long Earth and Long Mars is well played. Long Mars in particular is an excellent piece of world building. High Demand Backstory: Two big names in the SF world will bring readers into the library asking for reserve slips. --Regina Schroeder --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Panoramic and fascinating...” (Kirkus) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

When I saw the next 'Long' series was titled The Long Mars, I immediately credited Baxter and Pratchett for at the very least taking the series places unexpected. Since the mildly disappointing Long War, I was somewhat geared for not so much low expectations, but an assumption that Long Mars would follow a similar pattern of the majority of the book being a sort of sociological exploration with a very intense world(s) changing event at the end. Even with differing expectations this book unfortunately still did not stir much for me. While intriguing the Mars plot simply served as a watered down repeat of the first book (i.e. a lengthy exploration of the many Long Mars) The simultaneous plot-line on the long Earth(s) seemed in fact a direct replica of Long Earth and until the character Paul appeared I was actually struggling to understand what the book was actually about this time. SPOILERS AHEAD (hard to review without them) The major plot-line of 'the next' a super-intelligent variation on humans, was quite intriguing. However, there was relatively little page-time devoted to these guys, and most of the time we just heard repeats of their origins explained to different characters in different situations. I got pretty sick of hearing explanations for 'low' and 'high' bulbs. The ultimate climax - a nuclear warhead threatening 'Happy Landings' was almost tense. Once again (you'll notice a theme here) the beat fell flat, when the situation was bizarrely resolved by the main characters having a debate about whether to set it off (I don't think many personalities are such that they would advocate for a nuclear bomb being used to wipe out an entire subspecies, even in fiction) Which brings me to my ultimate complaint - the characters. Only the barest development of interest occurred briefly for Lobsang, our other well-known folk, Joshua

and Agnes (who surely should have had something to think about undergoing the whole transition thing) seemed to just bungle along the storyline with barely a reaction to the plot let-alone experiencing anything too compelling. Some stuff happening for Sally, but honestly who cares about her? Long Earth rates as one of my most frustrating to read series - I so desperately want there to be a continuation of the themes explored in book one - such as the giant transparent thing - or at least more exploration of Joshua V or even Lobsang. I suspect that I am going to be unhappy though, its hard to see what the authors are hoping to achieve with the series, but it doesn't seem to be working.

One more part in the imaginative saga of the Long Earth, this one is (somewhat unfortunately) following the same path as the prior books. We get ideas and imaginative leaps that are truly magnificent, but that are left by the side without much explanation. Tidbits of mysteries are thrown in, only to be left unresolved. And to top it all off, the ending is, well, bereft of emotional impact (and surprise). The book seems static, which is accentuated by the characters which didn't change any since we last saw them (and this book picks up 4 years after the last one). There is some development (or rather exposition of her past) with Sally, but that's about it. Once again the book seems like it's setting up something, but what, and how and when we will get to it... A good guess. It was an enjoyable read, but a somewhat frustrating experience. If you liked the first two books, this one will appeal to you, but do not read this one first. It is very much a Volume 3.

I love Terry Pratchett so you can imagine how excited I was when I saw he'd written a new science fiction novel. In fact three of them! And what an intriguing title! What could it mean? I didn't know this Stephen Baxter guy but I figured he was bound to be okay if Terry Pratchett liked him. Oh, how my hopes were dashed! I'm writing only one review and putting it on all three books: The Long Earth, The Long War, and The Long Mars. That's because the books are basically indistinguishable. Yes, I read all three because in my excitement, I bought all three. Without reading the reviews. Okay, I'm dumb. The problem with these books is that they seem to mistake an interesting setting for an interesting story. I agree, the concept of an infinite series of Earths that can be reached, sequentially, by single steps, is new, at least to me. What would happen if such an infinite resource suddenly became available? There's lots of room to explore there, lots of possibilities. But the "characters" in these books don't really interact with these worlds or with each other. In fact, I put characters in quotes because they are simply devices for the authors to move through their imagined universe. They have no depth, no emotion, no lives, no pains, no loves, no fears, no joys.

They are viewpoints, sometimes with a little bit of attitude but generally very bland. And where is the story? There isn't one. At least I can't think of a story other than a dispersed set of people, aliens, and artificial intelligences "explore" an infinite universe which feels basically like one of those old time movie reels where the film is going slowly enough for you to see the images flicker. This happens slowly in the first book, more quickly in the second, and on Mars (and again the Earth) in the third. By the way, there is no war in *The Long War*, in case you were thinking that would add excitement. Instead it is supposed to be a look at human interaction with other intelligent species. I think. But if it is, it is not very imaginative or insightful. All the viewpoints presented are the same, "let's be friends." There are other people who don't want to be friends but we never see anything from their POV. And we don't see much, except events, from the main characters viewpoints either. *The Long Mars* is especially frustrating because it takes half the book to get to Mars, which turns out to be an even more boring exploration than the Earth was. And, spoiler alert, it ends in a setup for a likely fourth book. Meanwhile back on Earth, the authors demonstrate a classic misunderstanding of evolution while in the same book expounding on what a simple idea it is to grasp once it is explained to you. I'm referring to the spontaneous and timely appearance of a new human species with just the qualities needed to take the human race to the next level.

Appropriately, they call themselves the Next. While the books have almost an exclusively American perspective, the Next species is reputed to appear spontaneously around the globe. There were so many ways to go with this concept, it is disappointing that they didn't choose any of them. 3 stars for *The Long Earth*: the idea is new and, being the first book, it's not as boring. 2 stars for *The Long War*: it's more of the same but the writing is not terrible. 1 star for *The Long Mars*: it's even more of the same and the evolution stuff was just too much for me.

After the first book in the series, I so wanted to like the rest of them. Having been a Terry Pratchett fan for as long as I can remember, it's really sad to me that the second and third books of the Long Earth series were so god-awful boring. Each chapter was a chore; finishing the book was more of a relief than anything.

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