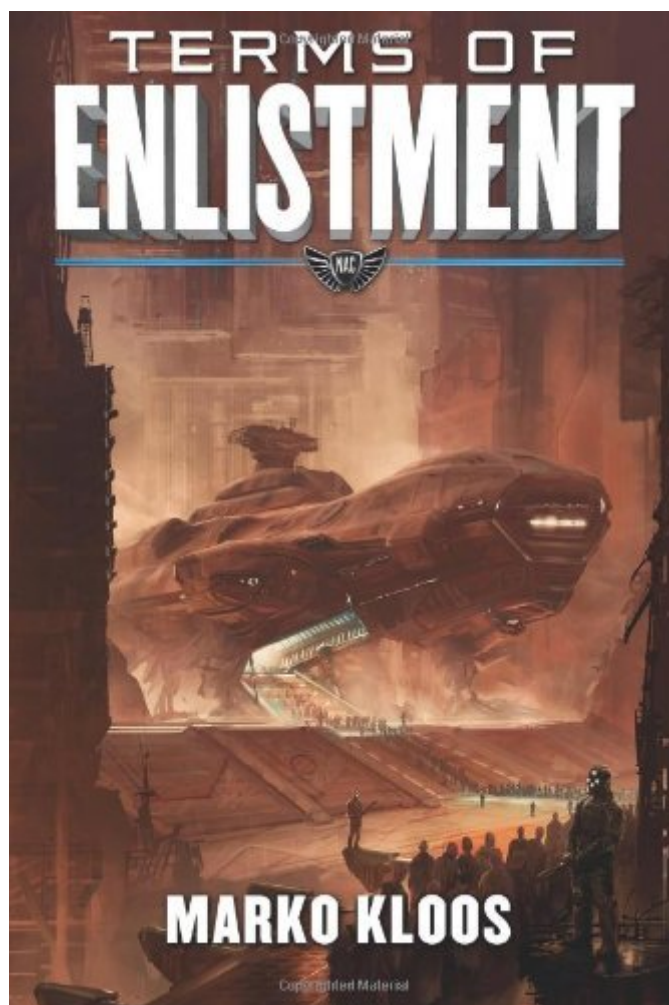


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Terms Of Enlistment (Frontlines Book 1)



Synopsis

The year is 2108, and the North American Commonwealth is bursting at the seams. For welfare rats like Andrew Grayson, there are only two ways out of the crime-ridden and filthy welfare tenements, where you're restricted to two thousand calories of badly flavored soy every day: You can hope to win the lottery and draw a ticket on a colony ship settling off-world, or you can join the service. With the colony lottery a pipe dream, Andrew chooses to enlist in the armed forces for a shot at real food, a retirement bonus, and maybe a ticket off Earth. But as he starts a career of supposed privilege, he soon learns that the good food and decent health care come at a steep price—and that the settled galaxy holds far greater dangers than military bureaucrats or the gangs that rule the slums. The debut novel from Marko Kloos, *Terms of Enlistment* is a new addition to the great military sci-fi tradition of Robert Heinlein, Joe Haldeman, and John Scalzi.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read almost exclusively military sci-fi. I really enjoyed this book. The universe and the socio-political structure is well thought out and illustrated throughout and evolves with the main

character. The tech is cool, believable and doesn't get into the weeds with physics or made up nonsense about undiscovered technologies like some similar stories. The only thing keeping this from being epic is that it doesn't appear to have a hidden agenda or social message like a lot of its peers. Also I really like the characters but I would argue there are too few and they don't develop the lesser characters which is something I highly enjoyed in books like *Old Man's War*. This book holds its own against its peers and I look forward to reading the sequels. One thing I'd like to point out is I enjoy the tone of the end. Most put us on equal footing or superiority with enemies but this one leaves an ominous feeling that we as humans are outclassed on the universe.

Andrew Grayson is not the complaining type, and that is all to the good. Grayson is the narrator of *TERMS OF ENLISTMENT*, a book-length homage to Heinlein's *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, without all of the libertarian preachiness. Unlike the naive hero of Heinlein's book, Grayson is a seasoned veteran of the Boston slums, who unapologetically joins the army to eat food that doesn't taste like recycled human waste (likely because that's what it is). Grayson doesn't complain about the grub in the Army, or the rigors of basic training (alleviated in his case by a friendly female bunkmate), or his initial posting to a rinky-dink Earthside platoon. This is a good thing. Complaining about the vicissitudes of military life is one of the soldier's basic rights and great pleasures, but there's only so much of this the reader can bear in one installment. Grayson is a bit one-dimensional and stolid, but he doesn't whine and he fights efficiently and bravely in dire circumstances. *TERMS OF ENLISTMENT* is a fast-moving, engaging read about combat in the far future. The prose is generally unspectacular, and the settings range from the near-grim to the impossibly grim, but author Marko Kloos moves the plot along and does a solid, efficient job describing the abundant action. By my reckoning, he makes only one mistake--and it's literally a huge one--but, hell, a military sci-fi novel wouldn't be any fun at all if everything always obeyed the laws of physics. If you like the genre at all, it's worth a pick-up.

I came to this book via a random recommendation from a friend. They know I love Heinlein novels for their fun, tight stories, and I approached this novel with a very open mind. After all, no one has really made me ever think, "This person totally writes like Heinlein." That open mind treated me well because I enjoyed the first half of the story. The book delves into basic training that is incredibly reminiscent of American basic training programs, and that accuracy helped bring me into the story because I've been through it. (Granted without coed dorms, or one basic training for all services....but that actually may be a worthy idea) The enjoyment continued as the protagonist was

assigned to the Terrestrial Army. I was intrigued by the idea of the protagonist having to deal with the internal conflict of having to possibly do a police action in his old hometown. I was intrigued by the concept of the army that is drawn from the very population they keep docile. The author, though, after roughly two missions, decides that his protagonist needs to get back to his basic training romance. Whereupon he comes up with a method to transfer to the Navy, go through some training, and then find the way to her ship. Now, as a previous military member, I would always caution someone that you may feel like you fall in love with someone in basic or your training school but in all likelihood it will not stand the test of time. The stresses of being sent to different parts of the globe (or in these books, the galaxy) tends to make these relationships last a few weeks once you get to your duty station. That point is where the author had me reflecting back on the first half in a little bit more depth. As I looked back, I found myself examining things that had happened a little bit more. I found myself thinking about the character motivations, the society, and the general structure of the novel. If, perhaps, he had restrained himself to a different path it could have been the best book I'd read this year. As it is, it feels like two different stories welded together. Two lackluster stories instead of one strong one. I'm seriously pondering if I even want to give the second novel in the series a shot.

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