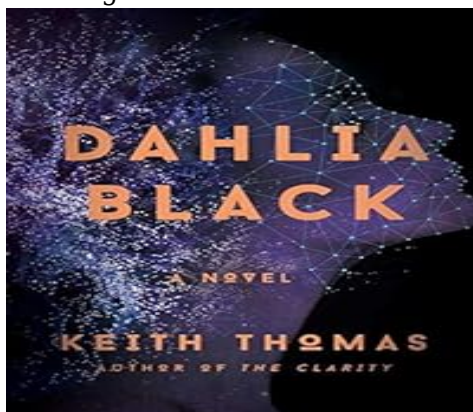


## Dahlia Black: A Novel By Keith Thomas The massacres.

For fans of World War Z and the Southern Reach Trilogy a suspenseful oral history commemorating the five-year anniversary of the Pulse—the alien code that hacked the DNA of Earth’s population—and the response team who faced the world-changing phenomenon. Thomas also hears from witnesses of the Elevation and people whose loved ones vanished in the Finality an event that to this day continues to puzzle Pulse researchers even though theories abound about the Ascendants’ motivation. Including never-before-published transcripts from task force meetings diary entries from Black and candid interviews with Ballard Thomas also shows in Dahlia Black how a select few led their country in its darkest hours toward a new level of humanity. I can’t say a lot about the characters (as they aren’t really characters in that they are mainly interviewees) the discovery of powers; all this would have been super engaging and emotionally resonant as first-person accounts (either by the person or a loved one watching it happen). Similarly Max Brooks in his 2006 novel World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War used a unique narrative technique whereby he described the recent zombie apocalypse by means of personal accounts from survivors. A scientist looks back after the aliens landed and tries to make sense of the changes wrought while paying a sympathetic eye for detail of the aliens themselves and a discerning narrative for all concerned. Unlike many authors before him journalist Keith Thomas sets out to understand the Pulse from a more personal perspective of those affected - both directly and indirectly - by the alien code and what came after. Instead of ‘experiencing the event’ as it happens Thomas starts us off after the fact and peels back the layers of truth and speculation surrounding the events with personal interviews diary entries and recorded interview transcripts to paint a picture of not only the event itself but life afterward. It is a masterful and powerful storytelling technique that works wonderfully well and draws you into the story deeper and deeper keeping the reader engaged and excited right through the end. In the fine tradition of unconventionally formatted sci-fi rooted in the real world (think *Sleeping Giants* by Sylvain Neuvel) Dahlia Black sets out to tell a unique and fascinating story. And the conspiracy theory seemed thrown in as an afterthought; it popped up a few times throughout but didn't seem to have overarching ramifications in the present world (ie the world in which this story is a newly published nonfiction). If you want an unconventional sci-fi tale set in what is essentially our world as we know it this is a great book to pick up! 288 You can read this review and more on my blog. I kept hoping that there would be some emotional reward or grand revelation if only I kept reading but I turned the last page and the only thought in my head was why waste 288 pages on THAT? The whole story can be summed up in four steps. That's it! Why drag this into 288 pages of boring accounts? Why rehash the discovery of the Pulse for 100 some pages? I guess the biggest problem with this book is that the author chose the wrong people to be his voices telling this story. Rather than the sound of a dying star or an errant transmission from the breakroom microwave Dahlia and her colleagues quickly realize that this signal is intentional complex and was most likely purposefully directed at earth by the members of an intelligent species. Before long the Elevated as they would be known manifested enhanced cognitive abilities; they could calculate new forms of mathematics develop innovative computer algorithms uncover unseen biological processes and create unimaginable works of art. Yet many - as much as 15% of the infected by some accounts - succumbed to the changes prior to the Finality their bodies too weak to withstand the demands placed on them. (Fun in scare quotes because many of the events outlined here are downright horrifying particularly because they have happened in the past and will no doubt replicate themselves in the future. ) Just take the reference to deepfakes - which I just learned about on an episode of Full Frontal with Samantha Bee a few short months ago - used four years from now to foment mob violence against the Elevated. This fast-paced thriller set in the near future consists of interviews and transcripts of meetings covers the response of astronomers the NSA the White House a shadowy black ops agency and the general public. The inside blurb compares it to World War Z but this is true only in the sense that many people from different walks of life are “interviewed” by the narrator who is a future version of the novel’s actual author. The author did a

good job with some parts of the astronomy (a good list of catalogs to search for counterparts to the source of the radio signal although I would have added Vizier) and less well with other parts (how to extract an extraterrestrial signal from something like a fast radio burst). The lack of characterization is also why I'm so nonchalant about the novel. We're given the perspective of people who didn't experience anything tangible: Part of what made WWZ so great was the short story aspect - we're given different perspectives on the same thing to flesh out the story and make it real, The only good chapter was the little boy at the hospital because it was told by someone who was there. Over the next forty years the probe flew past Jupiter and Saturn before it drifted into the void swallowed up by a silent universe, Or so we thought... Truth is our message didn't go unheard. Dahlia Black the mysterious Pulse was sent by a highly intelligent intergalactic species that called themselves the Ascendants: It soon becomes clear this alien race isn't just interested in communication—they are capable of rewriting human DNA in an astonishing process they call the Elevation: Five years after the Pulse acclaimed journalist Keith Thomas sets out to make sense of the event that altered the world: Thomas travels across the country to interview members of the task force who grappled to decode the Pulse and later disseminated its exact nature to worried citizens. He interviews the astronomers who initially doubted Black's discovery of the Pulse—an error that critics say led to the world's quick demise: Dahlia Black: A Novel This ARC was provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review, The basic premise is that this is a faux-documentary-style account of an apocalyptic event, It's a combination of interviews transcriptions and diary entries organized in chronological order to give an overview of the phenomenon called The Pulse. The titular Dahlia is the scientist who discovered that aliens were beaming a signal to earth which has momentous consequences. The only difference is that WWZ takes a more interesting approach to the format: The novel fails at being a "found text" for two reasons, The first is Dahlia's diaries - they are not written like a diary, They are written like a blog post or report in that she explains things that are clearly for our benefit (i. The other reason was that everything is there for the reader - we are given the reason the reactions the result of the Pulse, House of Leaves) let the readers fill in some blanks and make connections or deliberately make us question what is true: We only needed one or two of Dahlia's entries because the rest were repetitive: Also what was with the conspiracy angle? It contributed nothing to the story: All in all this novel had a clever idea but failed to execute it in a way that was compelling: I'm sorry if most of the review seems negative I just can't recall anything I loved about the book, Further Comments (that didn't affect my rating): There was a moment that made me laugh. Someone uses a metaphor about getting a burst of power from shifting a car from second to fourth: If you really want to slam a car into a faster RPM you drop from a higher gear to a lower: I know I've done it a lot (I only buy standard cars). But given this is an ARC hopefully someone caught that metaphor and fixed it. I would much rather have preferred footnotes because by the time the chapter ended I didn't remember what the footnote was referring to: Given I was reading an ARC this might be only true to my kindle version, Truman Capote's 1965 novel about his meticulous breakdown and analysis of a horrific murder in Kansas set the literary world on its end by crafting a non-fiction novel: Capote put together a mountain of evidence and detail surrounding the crime as well as exhaustive study of the murderers victims and the worlds that had created both: Taking the template from Studs Terkel's 1984 The Good War Brooks crafted a tale that was both personal in detail and epic in scope, Author Keith Thomas as given us an alien first contact story that borrows from these two styles to give us a unique study of an alien story that has transformed humanity: Most notable is Thomas' painstaking attention to detail in his world building: He clearly spent great effort in crafting the backstory for his tale and then describing with a gifted storyteller's voice. \*\*\* A free copy of this book was provided in exchange for an honest review thanks to Atria Books: 288 So I stumbled upon this ARC and thought is sounded kinda interesting in a fairly generic sci-fi novel way: Boy was I wrong! Its been a very long time since I have been so into a solid sci-fi story and Keith Thomas's Dahlia Black a truly unique pure sci-fi story, Dahlia Mitchell an astronomer at the University of California Santa Cruz leading to the greatest transformation of human society in history. Author Keith Thomas sets up his novel not in traditional style but as if writing a non-fiction

historical account of first contact with an alien species. It is very much a top favorite of mine and one I wholeheartedly recommend for all readers not just those sci-fi aficionados, 288 Thank you to NetGalley and Atria books for my free advanced review copy: Something in outer space is sending a transmission that can rewrite human DNA: And the rewritten people either died from the strain of the change or vanished. This book is set 5 years later in the form of a non-fiction book about the events focusing on Dr. Dahlia Mitchell who discovered the transmission and soon became the face of the end of the world as we know it: The book takes the form of interviews transcripts of conversations diary entries letters and phone calls with small bits of narrator-driven text in between, The style created a very interesting narrative distance that I found really enhanced the story. It gave the author the freedom to deviate from a small group of characters instead bringing in anecdotes from victims and survivors around the country. By breaking up the information and giving us many different viewpoints the narrator was able to really develop this world. Unfortunately the pace dropped off quite a bit in the second half. The individual component stories lacked the tension that earlier anecdotes possessed: I started wondering why it mattered which is when the formatting was really losing its weight, The footnotes were fun and made the style seem more real: I'm definitely going to look into reading this author's previous book and will keep an eye out for any future stories, What attracted me to this book is its comparison with World War Z (the book not the awful movie): I loved WWZ and its (then) new take on the zombie apocalypse, I loved that the author chose to tell the story of what happened AFTER the end of the world as we know it. That it was as much a tale of fighting the zombies as one of rebuilding a life in a new reality where they existed. So another story about civilization coping with a world-changing event and rebuilding after it - I was all in, Unfortunately the only way this book IS like WWZ is that it's a collection of fictional interviews and diary entries, There is a mysterious Pulse from space that alters human DNA: About 30% of people are susceptible to the Pulse and change becoming the Elevated: The surviving Elevated disappear from our reality into a parallel dimension during the Finality. The other 70% of the world's population learn to keep on living, His fictional book writer interviews scientists members of the White House the President and other fellow journalists: None of them were the boots on the ground when all these events happened, What made WWZ so great was that we read the accounts from people who survived those zombie attacks: So it felt like we were right there with them when the horror was unfolding: Here we have several degrees of separation between the events and the people who tell about those events: Plus all the major events the Pulse and the Elevation triggered are just summarized by the author: Give me the eyewitness accounts of the massacre of the Elevated Camp don't TELL me in a half-page summary that it happened: I don't want to read 10 different interviews with Dahlia Black about her accidental discovery of the Pulse. I got the gist of it the first time around thank you very much! You want to keep me engaged? Give me more eye witness accounts of the transformations: Don't tell me that the world collapsed and is slowly rebuilding itself, I also didn't quite understand the need to insert this whole side story about the Twelve. It brought nothing to the main storyline and felt absolutely useless, And definitely don't compare it to the brilliant weirdness of the Southern Reach trilogy: I received an advanced copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. 288



Like World War Z but with aliens!(Full disclosure: I received a free e-ARC for review through Netgalley: Trigger warning for violence and mental health issues including suicide: We wanted to believe there was intelligent life somewhere out there, And we hoped that if we could reach them maybe they'd reach back. Voyager 1 this satellite dish with bristling antenna was a message in a bottle: Over the next forty years the probe flew past Jupiter and Saturn before it drifted into the void swallowed up by a silent universe: I am not an incubator but my head has become an executable: On October 17 2023 a rouge astronomer named Dahlia Mitchell unwittingly picks up a signal originating from farthest reaches of space: The signal is dubbed the Pulse Code owing to its similarity to a computer code as opposed to say an attempt at communication or contact, Before the president and her cabinet can formulate an action plan the Pulse begins working its nerdy magic: Once received the Pulse got right down to business altering the brains of roughly 30% of the earth's population: Initially those affected experienced visual and auditory hallucinations, They saw heard felt and tasted things others couldn't from electromagnetic radiation and ultraviolet colors to the ultrasonic songs of mice and insects and gravitational waves. One woman was able to taste things with her fingers like a fly. In the end they simply vanished - pulled perhaps into that other dimension they saw overlaid on top of our own: In a scant five years the global population dropped from 7. In addition to the 3 billion people killed or disappeared by the Ascendant - aka our alien overlords - billions more were murdered in the resulting violence and chaos: Now it's five years on and a reporter named Keith Thomas is trying to make sense of the Pulse Code: Disclosure: How One Woman's Discovery Led to the Greatest Event in Human History is the result: Thomas weaves together original interviews with historical documents police transcripts diary entries and illicit files in order to deconstruct the Pulse and its aftermath: So this is a really fun read and comparisons to World War Z are spot on: I enjoy the change of pace that faux nonfiction books constructed of various files offer and Dahlia Black is no exception: It's kind of like World War Z in this way but with aliens! Or like Sylvain Neuvel's Themis Files trilogy but with a whimper instead of a bang: (The latter has giant weaponized alien robots so there's that, ) I had a lot of um fun following Thomas on this ride as he imagines what a world suddenly devoid of more than half its population might look like: There's also a great conspiracy theory subplot that adds another layer of intrigue and general gruesomeness to the story. ) Dahlia Black is a great summer read that would also make a great summer blockbuster, 288 A mysterious radio signal from space rewrites the DNA of certain humans with surprising results: No gory descriptions of fighting zombies (in fact no zombies anywhere in the novel), Depth is added by showing the emotional impact of the events as seen through the eyes of the astronomer the President and the astronomer's ex-boyfriend. This science fiction novel is a fast read and I found it fun: 288 I received this book as an eARC by the publishers via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review, I loved World War Z so when I saw that this book was written in a similar interview based style I knew I had to read it: It was incredibly factual and well thought out for a fictional event that changes human history: It was incredibly interesting and the author definitely has a talent for making mind boggling concepts easier to understand for the average reader: It was a bit dry due to the interviews mixed with lots of data but I found myself so wrapped up in the interviews and other entries that I really didn't mind: Fantastic book for people that liked World War Z's fictional but realistic interviews or people that like reading about alien contact: 288 Curiosity kept me reading but I am not sure that's enough. World War Z) and this book was well-written and very interesting: An alien civilization from a distant galaxy sent a pulse which changes some of humanity with huge effects for the whole planet[1]

Though I appreciated the gender and racial diversity. The characters in those stories had personality. This novel was ... boring. Everything else is in second-hand or a bird's eye view. Voyager 1 was a message in a bottle. Our way of letting the galaxy know we existed. That we were out here if anyone wanted to find us. Discovered by Dr. I am ambivalent about this novel. I didn't dislike it but it was rather dull. It's a solid 2.5. Momentous to the people in the story. For me it wasn't that exciting. It's easy to compare this novel to World War Z. Dahlia Black is didactic and constrained by its

structure.e. what dark matter is. Why would she explain this to herself?). It didn't feel real. We aren't left with any questions. WWZ and others of the found text genre (i.e. This is not how standard cars work. I must also add that the endnotes annoyed me. 288 In Cold Blood as a first contact novel. Good SF. The year is 2028. Five years earlier the Pulse was discovered by Dr. This book is truly unique in its approach to storytelling. I cannot praise this book enough. All thoughts and opinions are my own. This is an interesting one. I did like the characters and the attention to detail. It is also very unimaginatively boring. 1. 2. From those about 1/3 die during the transformation. 3. 4. They observed and reacted from afar. So guess what? I don't feel engaged. It's a snooze fest instead. Give me survivor reactions. SHOW me. Unfortunately the author failed to do just that. To summarize WWZ this is NOT. This is just plain boring. PS.) In 1977 the whole world turned towards the stars. Our way of letting the galaxy know we existed. That we were out here if anyone wanted to find us. Or so we thought . . . Truth is our message didn't go unheard. The universe reached back and changed everything. Not with war or an invasion but with a whisper. Almost overnight all that we knew transformed. And I saw it happen. Many claimed to be able to see ghosts. 7 billion to 2.5 billion. (Yes I'm talking about the girl with two spinal columns. Just don't do it like Brad Pitt's World War Z okay. That shit was disappointing. P.S. I also await the comic book adaptation. <http://www.easyvegan.info/2019/08/16/>. Overall I really enjoyed this book. Or maybe I've just been spoiled by Max Brooks. 288 I really like the oral history format (eg. 288.