

With such classic novels as *Orphan Star* and *The Tar-Aym-Krang*, *New York Times* bestselling author Alan Dean Foster has captivated readers with his brilliantly imagined Humanx Commonwealth, the interstellar empire where intelligent aliens and humans live side by side. Now Foster takes us back to the unplanned beginnings of this extraordinary alliance ...

In the years after first contact, humans and the insect-like Thranx agreed to a tentative sharing of ideas and cultures despite the ingrained repulsion they had yet to overcome. Mindful that one day they might need each other as allies, the leaders of the two species conceded that the only way to reach an accommodation was through a slow, lengthy process of limited contact. When the time was right, the leaders of both worlds would reveal to their respective peoples that a union with an alien race was indeed possible.

However, they never planned for a chance meeting between a misfit artist and a petty thief. Desvendapur was a talented Thranx poet who was bored with his life and needed new inspiration for his work. Hearing a rumor that a secret alien contact project existed on his homeworld, he recklessly forged a new identity and headed off to find his muse.

In a place unlike the familiar Hives of Willow-Wane, Desvendapur ran into Cheelo Montoya, a small-time criminal with big dreams of making a fast buck. But chance and circumstance tossed the con man and the mad poet together in what was to become a journey that would forever change their beliefs, their futures, and their worlds.

Alan Dean Foster has written in a variety of genres and is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Approaching Storm* as well as novelizations of several films, including *Alien*, *Star Wars*, and *Transformers*. His books have been translated into more than fifty languages and have won several literary awards.

Eric Jason Martin is an Earphones Award-winning narrator. He has narrated many dozens of audiobooks in fiction and nonfiction. He is also the host and producer of the award-winning *This American Wife*, a popular podcast, and now web series, that features original comedy and stories, as well as interviews with authors such as Robert Greene and Amy Tan.

Read by Eric Jason Martin

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