

= Halo : Contact Harvest =

Halo : Contact Harvest is a military science fiction novel by Joseph Staten , based on the Halo series of video games . The book was released in October 2007 and is the fifth Halo novel , following 2006 's Halo : Ghosts of Onyx , written by Eric Nylund . Staten is a longtime employee of Bungie , the developer of the Halo video game series ; he directed the cut scenes in the video games and is a major contributor to Halo 's storyline . He set out to write a novel that appealed to gamers , as well as those who had never read a Halo novel .

Set in 2525 , twenty @-@ seven years before the events of Halo : Combat Evolved , the novel tells the story of the United Nations Space Command 's first encounter with the alien collective known as the Covenant on the colony world of Harvest , and the beginning of the long war that follows . The novel is an ensemble piece , with the action being narrated from both human and Covenant viewpoints . The protagonist is a young Marine , Staff Sergeant Avery Johnson , who also appears in the Halo video games . Upon release , the book was generally well received and became The New York Times bestseller in its first week . Critics pointed to the novel 's success as a sign of the increasing importance of story in video games .

= = Background = =

According to Staten , Tor Books asked Bungie if they had someone suited to writing the next novel ; Staten , having written much of the Halo series canon , was the obvious choice . The author found that the book was the perfect way to elaborate on the Halo story without stripping it down for a video game : " I always felt we shortchanged [the player] . We don 't have a lot of time to tell story while the bullets are flying . " In addition , Staten said that the novel was the perfect way to do the character of Sergeant Johnson ? who had appeared somewhat one @-@ dimensional in the games ? proper justice as a well @-@ rounded character . Replying to G4TV 's question about writing action , Staten replied that he felt that writing " involves slowing things down " , in comparison to a game of Halo . The author also said that the work of his favorite science @-@ fiction authors helped teach him the importance of honing a " strong , consistent voice " .

Originally , the novel was due to ship before the September 25 release of Halo 3 ; Staten stated that due to his involvement with both projects , the novel slipped behind . He also emphasized that he hoped Contact Harvest was a good novel , not just a good Halo novel ; " ... someone who isn 't a Halo fan ? someone who hasn 't read any of the previous novels ? will be able to pick up Contact Harvest and enjoy the read " .

This focus on accuracy was a challenge for Staten , as he believes his audience is highly intelligent , willing , and able to report flaws ; fellow Bungie employees cross @-@ referenced his drafts with the " Halo Story Bible " to ensure canonical agreement . One example of fans taking Staten to task over the novel occurred soon after the novel 's cover was revealed in July 2007 . The cover depicts the protagonist , Sergeant Avery Johnson holding a weapon known as the Battle Rifle . As the weapon was first introduced in the video game Halo 2 and the events of Contact Harvest take place decades before the game , fans were quick to say that Staten had made a mistake . Staten later pointed out he had good reasons for including the offending weapon in the book , and justified the inclusion by stating that the weapon is a prototypical form of the version players use in the game .

= = Synopsis = =

= = Setting and characters = = =

Contact Harvest takes place in the year 2524 of the Halo universe , where faster @-@ than @-@ light technology has allowed humanity to spread across the galaxy , founding new colonies administrated by the United Nations Space Command , or UNSC . The wealthier " Inner " colonies are politically dominant over the more recently established outer colonies , although the older

planets rely on the new worlds for raw materials . Tensions lead to unrest and outright rebellion , with radical members of the outer colonies known as " Insurrectionists " launching terrorist attacks on the UNSC in a bid for independence .

Contact Harvest features several characters seen previously in the video games as well as new characters . The protagonist is Avery Johnson , a Marine who is sent to the colony of Harvest to deal with suspected Insurrectionist activity ; Johnson had previously appeared in the video game Halo : Combat Evolved and its sequels , as well as the novel Halo : First Strike . A side character is Wallace Jenkins , a hapless Marine who is assimilated by the parasitic Flood in Halo : Combat Evolved and plays an important role in the novelization of the game , Halo : The Flood . Contact Harvest also illuminates the origins of several alien Covenant characters who play important roles in the video games , such as the Brute Chieftain Tartarus and the three Prophet Hierarchs , Truth , Mercy , and Regret .

= = = Plot summary = = =

Humanity has spread across the galaxy , and the outer colony " Harvest " is one of the most remote . Although Harvest itself is only one @-@ third the size of Earth , its fertile surface serves as the breadbasket for the other colonies . The United Nations Space Command Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) notices strange disappearances of human ships around Harvest , and assumes that Insurrectionists are attacking the vessels . ONI pulls Staff Sergeants Avery Johnson and Nolan Byrne from the frontlines of the civil war to raise a militia to protect Harvest . The disappearances are revealed to be alien Kig @-@ Yar vessels intercepting the ships in their search for relics left by the Forerunners , an ancient race sacred to the Kig @-@ Yar and other members of the Covenant . Members of the vessel are shocked to discover that their instruments indicates hundreds of thousands of Forerunner relics on the planet of Harvest . A Covenant Unggoy Deacon named Dadab is alarmed when he realizes the Kig @-@ Yar shipmistress intends to steal a portion of the relics for herself , starting with relics leaving the planet on a human cargo ship . The ship is actually a trap set by the humans , with Johnson and Byrne on board . Johnson and Byrne kill several of the Covenant boarding party when they enter the cargo ship , which is later destroyed by a methane explosion . Dadab and his Huragok friend , Lighter than Some , escape the blast and are picked up by a Covenant ship crewed by Jiralhanae . These agents , led by their chieftain Maccabeus , have been ordered to confirm the presence of the relics ; despite the reservations of his nephew , Tartarus , Maccabeus agrees to parley with the humans on Harvest . In the midst of the meeting in Harvest 's gardens , the Covenant begin a firefight and the peace talks are shattered .

On the Covenant holy city of High Charity , two San ' Shyuum , the Minister of Fortitude and the Vice @-@ Minister of Tranquility , plot to take the place of the three Prophet Hierarchs currently leading the Covenant . They visit the old , supposedly senile Philologist for blessings and advice , seeking a third San ' Shyuum to help them usurp the throne . As Tranquility and Fortitude are meeting with the Philologist , the " Oracle " , a Forerunner A.I. named Mendicant Bias , suddenly awakens from eons of dormancy . Mendicant Bias informs the San ' Shyuum that the " Forerunner artifacts " found at Harvest are actually the A.I. ' s " makers " , living Forerunners ? meaning that the humans themselves are the descendants of the Covenant 's gods , and that all the Covenant 's writings are false . The Minister of Fortitude realizes that the truth must never be revealed , as this revelation would tear the Covenant apart . Instead , Fortitude , Tranquility , and the Philologist plot to quickly take the throne so they can exterminate the " reclaimers " .

Back on Harvest , Johnson and his squad of militia are heavily out @-@ manned and out @-@ gunned . Maccabeus is ordered to " glass " the planet from space , but disobeys and launches a ground assault in an effort to recover the " relics " . The human militia tries to keep the aliens busy while evacuating the civilians from the planet ; this requires Johnson and his team to board an orbital platform controlled by Dadab and his troops . Tartarus challenges Maccabeus for control of the Jiralhanae pack , killing his uncle and becoming the next leader . Lighter than Some is killed by Tartarus ' troops , and Dadab goes off to kill those he believes are responsible . As his weapon only has one more shot left , Dadab searches for Tartarus , who is fighting Johnson . Dadab destroys

Tartarus ' shield , and the enraged Brute kills the deacon . Wallace Jenkins , a young militia member that had lost his family in the battle , attempts to finish Tartarus off , but the alien escapes . The human civilians and survivors of Harvest successfully evacuate the planet on hundreds of freighters , while on High Charity , the Minister of Fortitude , Tranquility , and The Philologist become the new Prophet Hierarchs . They take the names Truth , Regret , and Mercy , declaring a new age for the Covenant has begun , and that the humans must be annihilated for their crimes .

= = Reception = =

Upon release , Contact Harvest debuted at # 7 on The New York Times Best Sellers list ; it remained on the list for four more weeks . The novel also appeared on the USA Today bestseller 's list at the same time . Reviewers noted that despite being an unproven writer , Staten had succeeded in crafting an excellent novel ; complaints included the perceived overly descriptive prose and use of military jargon . In response to the success of the novel , Will Tuttle of Gamespy.com said that " it makes sense " because videogames are increasingly about the story . A ten @-@ CD audiobook was later released , featuring the voices of Holter Graham and Jen Taylor ; Publishers Weekly enjoyed Graham 's performance , but felt Taylor 's over @-@ emphasis and [sic] cheesy dialects detracted from the tension of the novel .

Contact Harvest 's success was surprising to some . On January 8 , 2008 , National Public Radio 's " All Things Considered " segment ran a story in which the Chana Joffe asked Staten if gamers read and acting surprised that Halo had a story . Several writers covering the story believed that the " All Things Considered " piece was biased against gamers and insulting . Scott Siegel of Joystiq , in particular , railed against interviewer Chana Joffe , saying that she " takes unfair jabs at video game fans " .