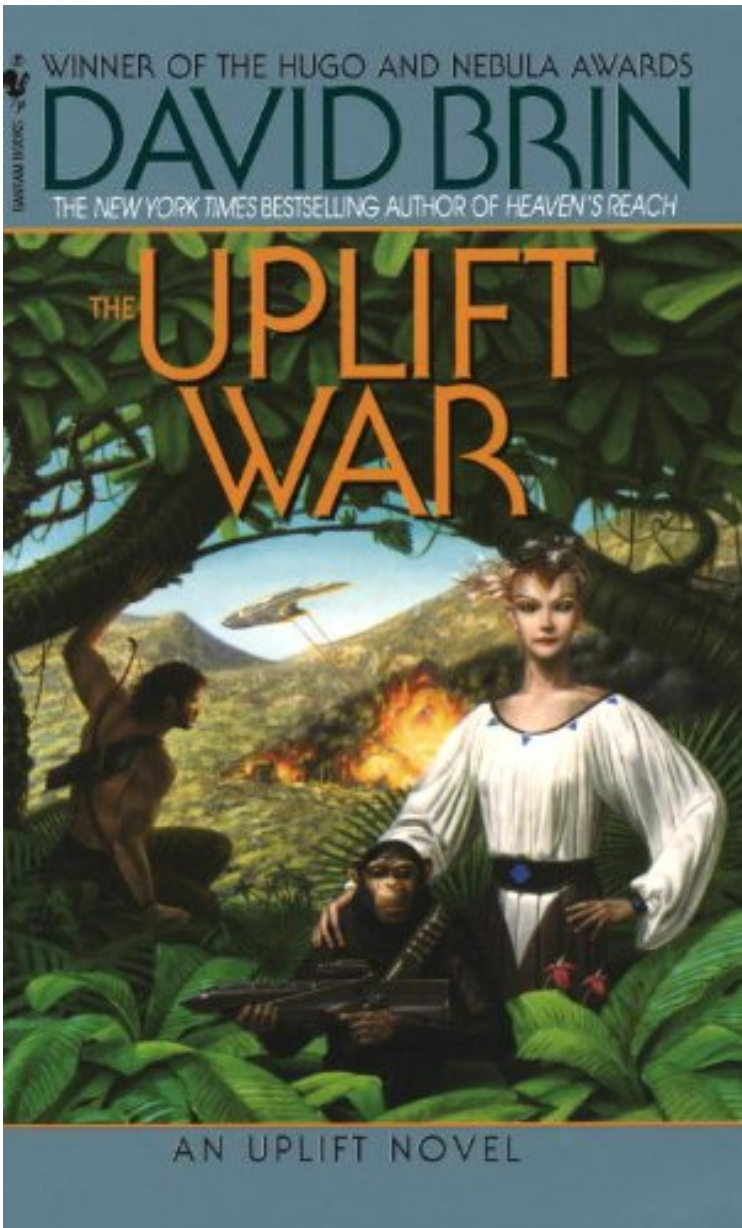


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The Uplift War



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Description : Description du produitDavid Brin's Uplift novels are among the most thrilling and extraordinary science fiction ever written. Sundiver, Startide Rising, and The Uplift War--a New York Times bestseller--together make up one of the most beloved sagas of all time. Brin's tales are set in a future universe in which no species can reach sentience without being "uplifted" by a patron race. But the greatest mystery of all remains unsolved: who uplifted humankind?As galactic armadas clash in quest of the ancient fleet of the Progenitors, a brutal alien race seizes the dying planet of Garth. The various uplifted inhabitants of Garth must battle their overlords or face ultimate extinction. At stake is the existence of Terran society and Earth, and the fate of the entire Five Galaxies. Sweeping, brilliantly crafted, inventive and dramatic, The

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Once "Uplifted," these creature must serve their patron race before they, in turn, can Uplift other races.

Human intelligence, which developed by itself (and brought about the Uplifting of chimpanzees and dolphins), is an affront to the aliens who plan an attack, threatening a human experiment aimed at producing the next Uplift. Such is the premise of this novel, which won the 1988 Hugo Award.ExtraitHow strange, that such an insignificant little world should come to matter so much.Traffic roared amid the towers of Capital City, just beyond the sealed crystal dome of the officialpalanquin. But no sound penetrated to disturb the bureaucrat of Cost and Caution, whoconcentrated only on the holo-image of a small planet, turning slowly within reach of one down-covered arm. Blue seas and a jewel-bright spray of islands came into view as the bureaucrat watched, sparkling in the reflected glow of an out-of-view star.If I were one of the gods spoken of in wolfling legendsthe bureaucrat imagined. Its pinions flexed. There was the feeling one had only to reach out with a talon and seize...But no. The absurd idea demonstrated that the bureaucrat had spent too much time studying theenemy. Crazy Terran concepts were infecting its mind.Two downy aides fluttered quietly nearby, preening the bureaucrats feathers and bright tore for the appointment ahead. They were ignored. Aircars and floater barges darted aside and regimented lanes of traffic melted away before the bright beacon of the official vehicle. This was status normally accorded only royalty, but within the palanquin all went on unnoticed as the bureaucrat's heavy beak lowered toward the holo-image.Garth. So many times the victim.The outlines of brown continents and shallow blue seas lay partly smeared under pinwheel storm clouds, as decepltively white and soft to the eye as a Cubru's plumage. Along just one chain of islands-and at a single point at the edge of the largest continent-shone the lights of a few small cities. Everywhere else the world appeared untouched, perturbed only by occasional flickering strokes of storm brewed lightning.Strings of code symbols told a darker truth. Garth was a poor place, a bad risk. Why else had the wolfling humans and their clients been granted a colony leasehold there? The place had been written off by the Galactic Institutes long ago.And now, unhappy little world, you have been chosen as a site for war.For practice, the bureaucrat of Cost and Caution thought in Anglic, the beastly, unsanctioned language of the Earthling creatures. Most Gubru considered the study of alien things an unwholesome pastime, but now the bureaucrat's obsession seemed about to pay off at last.At last. Today.The palanquin had threaded past the great towers d Capital City, and a mammoth edifice of opalescent stone now seemed to rise just ahead. The Conclave Arena, seat of government of all the Cubit race and clan.Nervous, anticipatory shivers flowed down the bureaucrat's head-crest all the way to its vestigial flight feathers, bringing forth chirps of complaint from the two Kwackoo aides. How could they finish preening the bureaucrat's fine. white feathers, they asked, or buff its long, hooked beak, if it didn't sit still?"I comprehend, understand, will comply," the bureaucrat answered indulgently in Standard Galactic Language Number Three. These Kwackoo were loyal creatures, to be allowed some minor impertinences. For distraction, the bureaucrat returned to thoughts of the small planet, Garth.It is the most defenseless Earthling outpost ... the one most easily taken hostage. That is why the military pushed for this operation, even while we are hard-pressed elsewhere in space. This will strike deeply at the wolflings, and we may thereby coerce them to yield what we want.After the armed forces, the priesthood had been next to agree to the plan. Recently the Guardians of Propriety had ruled that an invasion could be undertaken without any loss of honor.That left the Civil Service the third leg of the Perch of Command. And there consensus hadbroken. The bureaucrat's superiors in the Department of Cost and Caution had demurred. The plan was too risky, they declared. Too expensive.A perch cannot stand long on two legs. There must be consensus. There must be compromise.There are times when a nest cannot avoid

taking risks. The mountainous Conclave Arena became a cliff of dressed stone, covering half the sky. A cavernous opening loomed, then swallowed the palanquin. With a quiet murmur the small vessel's gravitics shut down and the canopy lifted. A crowd of Gubru in the normal white plumage of adult neuters already waited at the foot of the landing apron. They know, the bureaucrat thought, regarding them with its right eye. They know I am already no longer one of them. In its other eye the bureaucrat caught a last glimpse of the white-swaddled blue globe. Garth. Soon, the bureaucrat thought in Anglic. We shall meet soon. The Conclave Arena was a riot of color. And such colors! Feathers shimmered everywhere in the royal hues, crimson, amber, and arsenic blue. Two four-footed Kwackoo servants opened a ceremonial portal for the bureaucrat of Cost and Caution, who momentarily had to stop and hiss in awe at the grandeur of the Arena. Hundreds of perches lined the terraced walls, crafted in delicate, ornate beauty out of costly woods imported from a hundred worlds. And all around, in regal splendor, stood the Roost Masters of the Gubru race. No matter how well it had prepared for today, the bureaucrat could not help feeling deeply moved. Never had it seen so many queens and princes at one time! To an alien, there might seem little to distinguish the bureaucrat from its lords. All were tall, slender descendants of flightless birds. To the eye, only the Roost Masters' striking colored plumage set them apart from the majority of the race. More important differences lay underneath, however. These, after all, were queens and princes, possessed of gender and the proven right to command. Nearby Roost Masters turned their sharp beaks aside in order to watch with one eye as the bureaucrat of Cost and Caution hurried through a quick, mincing dance of ritual abasement. Such colors! Love rose within the bureaucrat's downy breast, a hormonal surge triggered by those royal hues. It was an ancient, instinctive response, and no Gubru had ever proposed changing it. Not even after they had learned the art of gene-altering and become starfarers. Those of the race who achieved the ultimate-color and gender had to be worshipped and obeyed by those who were still white and neuter. It was the very heart of what it meant to be Gubru. It was good. It was the way. The bureaucrat noticed that two other white-plumed Gubru had also entered the Arena through neighboring doors. They joined the bureaucrat upon the central platform. Together the three of them took low perches facing the assembled Roost Masters. The one on the right was draped in a silvery robe and bore around its narrow white throat the striped tunic of priesthood. The candidate on the left wore the sidearm and steel talon guards of a military officer. The tip of its crest feathers were dyed to show the rank of stoop-colonel. Aloof, the other two white-plumed Gubru did not turn to acknowledge the bureaucrat. Nor did the bureaucrat offer any sign of recognizing them. Nevertheless, it felt a thrill. We are three! The President of the Conclave—an aged queen whose once fiery plumage had now faded to a pale pinkish wash—fluffed her feathers and opened her beak. The Arena's acoustics automatically amplified her voice as she chirped for attention. On all sides the other queens and princes fell silent. The Conclave President raised one slender, down-covered arm. Then she began to croon and sway. One by one, the other Roost Masters joined in, and soon the crowd of blue, amber, and crimson forms was rocking with her. From the royal assemblage there rose a low, atonal moaning. "Zooooon" "Since time immemorial," the President chirped in formal Galactic Three. "Since before our glory, since before our patronhood, since before even our Uplift into sentience, it's been our way to seek balance." The assembly chanted in counter rhythm. "Balance on the ground's brown seams, Balance in the rough air streams, Balance in our greatest schemes." "Back when our ancestors were still pre-sentient beasts, back before our Gooksyu patrons found us and uplifted us to knowledge, back before we even spoke or knew tools, we had already learned this wisdom, this way of coming to decision, this way of coming to consensus, this way of making love." "Zooooon" "As half-animals, our ancestors still knew that we must choose ... must choose three." "One to hunt and strike with daring, for glory and for territory! One to seek the righteous bearing, for purity and propriety! One to warn of danger looming, for our eggs' security!" The bureaucrat of Cost and Caution sensed the other two candidates on either side and knew they were just as electrically aware, just as caught up in tense expectation. There was no greater honor than to be chosen as the three of them had been. Of course all young Gubru were taught that this way was best, for what other species so beautifully combined politics and philosophy with lovemaking and reproduction? The system had served their race and clan well for ages. It had brought them to the heights of power in Galactic society. And now it may have brought us to the brink of ruin. Perhaps it was sacrilegious even to imagine it, but the bureaucrat of Cost and Caution could not help wondering if one of the other methods it had studied might not be better after all. It had read of so many styles of government used by other races and clans—autarchies and aristocracies, technocracies and democracies, syndicates and meritocracies. Might not one of those actually be a better way of judging the right path in a dangerous universe? The idea might be irreverent, but such unconventional thinking was the reason certain Roost Masters

had singled out the bureaucrat for a role of destiny. Over the days and months ahead, someone among the three would have to be 'the doubting one. That was ever the role of Cost and Caution. "In this way, we strike a balance. In this way, we seek consensus. In this way, we resolve conflict." "Zooon!" agreed the gathered queens and princes. Much negotiation had gone into selecting each of the candidates, one from the military, one from the priestly orders, and one from the Civil Service. If all worked out well, a new queen and two new princes would emerge from the molting ahead. And along with a vital new line of eggs for the race would also come a new policy, one arising out of the merging of their views. That was how it was supposed to end. The beginning, however, was another matter. Fated eventually to be lovers, the three would from the start also be competitors. Adversaries. For there could be only one queen. "We send forth this trio on a vital mission. A mission conquest. A mission of coercion. "We send them also in search of unity ... in search of agreement ... in search of consensus, to unite us in troubled times," "Zooooon!" In the eager chorus could be felt the Conclave's desperate wish for resolution, for an end to bitter disagreements. The three candidates were to lead just one of many battle forces sent forth by the clan of the Cooksyu-Cubru. But clearly the Roost Masters had special hopes for this triumvirate. Kwackoo servitors offered shining goblets to each candidate.

The bureaucrat of Cost and Caution lifted one and drank deeply. The fluid felt like golden fire going down. First taste of the Royal Liquor - As expected, it had a flavor like nothing else imaginable. Already, the three candidates' white plumage seemed to glow with a shimmering promise of color to come. We shall struggle together, and eventually one of us molt amber. One shall molt blue. And one, presumably the strongest, the one with the best policy, would win the ultimate prize. A prize fated to be mine. For it was said to have all been arranged in advance. Caution had to win the upcoming consensus. Careful analysis had shown that the alternatives would be unbearable. "You shall go forth, then," the Conclave President sang. 'You three new Suzerains of our race and of our clan. You shall go forth and win conquest. You shall go forth and humble the wolfling heretics.' "Zooooon!" the assembly cheered. The President's beak lowered toward her breast, as if she were suddenly exhausted. Then, the new Suzerain of Cost and Caution faintly heard her add, "You shall go forth and try your best to save us"