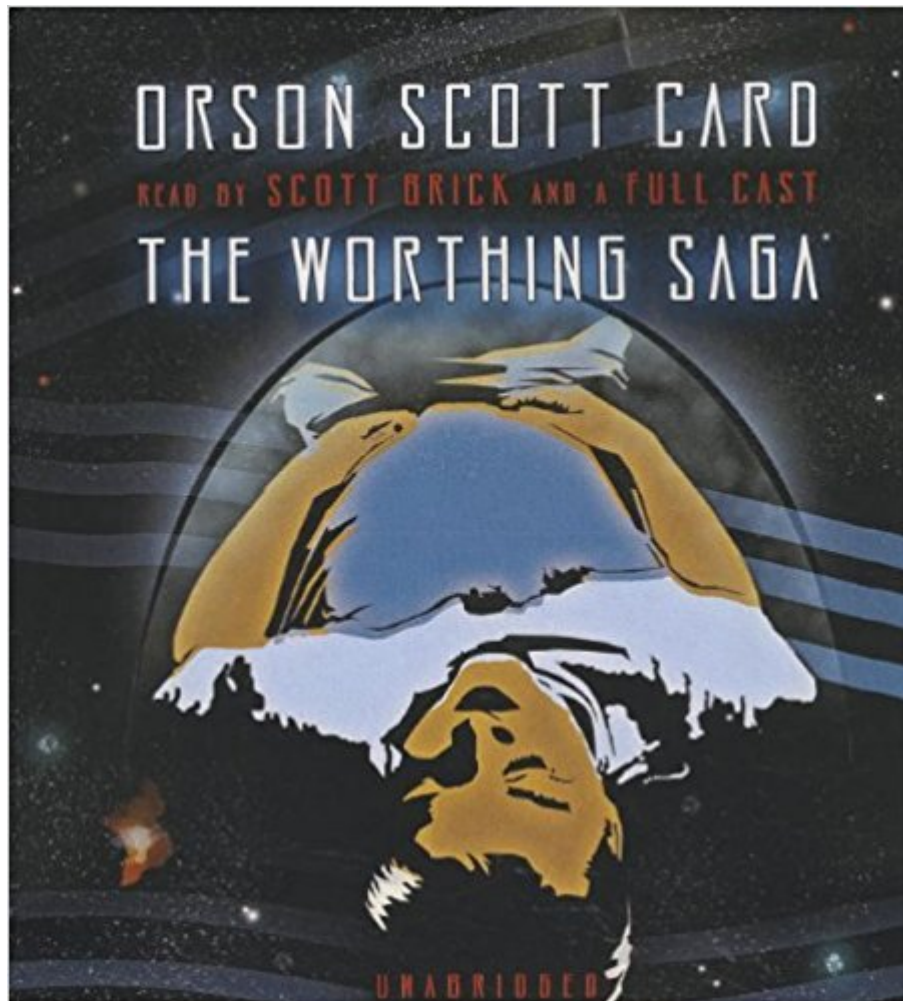




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The Worthing Saga



Synopsis

It was a miracle of science that permitted human beings to live, if not forever then for a long, long time. Some people, anyway. The rich, the powerful, they lived their lives at the rate of one year every ten. Some created two societies: that of people who lived out their normal span and died, and those who slept away the decades, skipping over the intervening years and events. It allowed great plans to be put into motion. It allowed interstellar empires to be built. It came near to destroying humanity. After eons of decadence and stagnation, a few seed ships were sent out to save our species. Each carried human embryos, supplies, teaching robots, and one man. The Worthing Saga is the story of one of these men, Jason Worthing, and the world he found for the seed he carried. This is a full cast recording, with an afterword read by Orson Scott Card.

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Customer Reviews

Scott Brick, actor, narrator, and writer, attended UCLA and spent ten years in a traveling Shakespeare company. Passionate about the spoken word, he has narrated a wide variety of audiobooks, from thrillers and science fiction to classics and nonfiction. He has recorded more than eight hundred audiobooks and won over fifty AudioFile Earphones Awards and several of the prestigious Audie Awards. He was named a Golden Voice by AudioFile magazine and the Voice of Choice for 2016 by Booklist magazine.

1The Day of PainIn many places in the Peopled Worlds, the pain came suddenly in the midst of the

day. It was as if an ancient and comfortable presence left them, one that they had never noticed until it was gone, and no one knew what to make of it at first, though all knew at once that something had changed deep at the heart of the world. No one saw the brief flare in the star named Argos; it would be years before astronomers would connect the Day of Pain with the End of Worthing. And by then the change was done, the worlds were broken, and the golden age was over. In Lared's village, the change came while they slept. That night there were no shepherds in their dreams. Lared's little sister, Sala, awoke screaming in terror that Grandma was dead, Grandma is dead! Lared sat up in his truckle bed, trying to dispel his own dreams, for in them he had seen his father carry Grandma to the grave--but that had been long ago, hadn't it? Father stumbled from the wooden bedstead where he and Mother slept. Not since Sala had been weaned had anyone cried out in the night. Was she hungry? "Grandma died tonight, like a fly in the fire she died!" Like a squirrel in the fox's teeth, thought Lared. Like a lizard in the cat's mouth, trembling. "Of course she's dead," Father said, "but not tonight." He took her in his vast blacksmith's arms and held her. "Why do you weep now, when Grandma has been dead for such a long time?" But Sala wept on, as if the grief were great and new. Then Lared looked at Grandma's old bed. "Father," he whispered. Again, "Father." For there lay her corpse, still new, still stiffening, though Lared so clearly remembered her burial long ago. Father laid Sala back in her truckle bed, where she burrowed down against the woven straw side, in order not to watch. Lared watched, though, as his father touched the straw tick beside his old mother's body. "Not cold yet," he murmured. Then he cried out in fear and agony, "Mother!" Which woke all the sleepers, even the travelers in the room upstairs; they all came into the sleeping room. "Do you see it!" cried Father. "Dead a year, at least, and here's her body not yet cold in her own bed!" "Dead a year!" cried the old clerk, who had arrived late in the afternoon yesterday, on a donkey. "Nonsense! She served the soup last night. Don't you remember how she joked with me that if my bed was too cold, your wife would come up and warm it, and if it was too warm, she would sleep with me?" Lared tried to sort out his memories. "I remember that, but I remember that she said that long, long ago, and yet I remember she said it to you, and I never saw you before last night." "I buried you!" Father cried, and then he knelt at Grandma's bed and wept. "I buried you, and forgot you, and here you are to grieve me!" Weeping. It was an unaccustomed sound in the village of Flat Harbor, and no one knew what to do about it. Only hungry infants made

such cries, and so Mother said, "Elmo, will you eat something? Let me fetch you something to eat." "No!" shouted Elmo. "Don't you see my mother's dead?" And he caught his wife by the arm and flung her roughly away. She fell over the stool and struck her head against the table. This was worse than the corpse lying in the bed, stiff as a dried-out bird. For never in Lared's life had he seen one human being do harm to another. Father too was aghast at his own temper. "Thano, Thanalo, what have I done?" He scarcely knew how to comfort her as she lay weeping softly on the floor. No one had needed comfort in all their lives. To all the others, Father said, "I was so angry. I have never been so angry before, and yet what did she do? I've never felt such a rage, and yet she did me no harm!" Who could answer him? Something was bitterly wrong with the world, they could see that; they had all felt anger in the past, but till now something had always come between the thought and the act, and calmed them. Now, tonight, that calm was gone. They could feel it in themselves, nothing soothing their fear, nothing telling them worldlessly, All is well. Sala raised her head above the edge of her bed and said, "The angels are gone, Mama. No one watches us anymore." Mother got up from the floor and stumbled over her daughter. "Don't be foolish, child. There are no angels, except in dreams." There is a lie in my mind, Lared said to himself. The traveler came last night, and Grandma spoke to him just as he said, and yet my memory is twisted, for I remember the traveler speaking yesterday, but Grandma answering long ago. Something has bent my memories, for I remember grieving at her graveside, and yet her grave has not been dug. Mother looked up at Father in awe. "My elbow still hurts, where it struck the floor," she said. "It still hurts very much." A hurt that lasted! Who had heard of such a thing! And when she lifted her arm, there was a raw and bleeding scrape on it. "Have I killed you?" asked Father, wonderingly. "No," said Mother. "I don't think so." "Then why does it bleed?" The old clerk trembled and nodded and his voice quivered as he spoke. "I have read the books of ancient times," he began, and all eyes turned to him. "I have read the books of ancient times, and in them the old ones spoke of wounds that bleed like slaughtered cattle, and great griefs when the living suddenly are dead, and anger that turns to blows among people. But that was long, long ago, when men were still animals, and God was young and inexperienced." "What does this mean, then?" asked Father. He was not a bookish man, and so even more than Lared he thought that men who knew books had answers. "I don't know," said the clerk. "But perhaps it means that God has gone away, or that he no longer cares for

us. Lared studied the corpse of Grandma, lying on her bed. "Or is he dead?" Lared asked. "How can God die?" the old clerk asked with withering scorn. "He had all the power in the universe." "Then doesn't he have the power to die if he wants to?" "Why should I speak with children of things like this?" The clerk got up to go upstairs, and the other travelers took that as a signal to return to bed. But Father did not go to bed: he knelt by his old mother's body until daybreak. And Lared also did not sleep, because he was trying to remember what he had felt inside himself yesterday that he did not feel now, for something was strange in the way his own eyes looked out upon the world, and yet he could not remember how it was before. Only Sala and Mother slept, and they slept together in Mother's and Father's bed. Before dawn, Lared got up and walked over to his mother, and saw that a scab had formed on her arm, and the bleeding had stopped. Comforted, he dressed himself and went out to milk the ewe, which was near the end of its milk. Every bit of milk was needed for the cheese press and the butter churn--winter was coming, and this morning, as the cold breeze whipped at Lared's hair, this morning he looked to winter with dread. Until today he had always looked at the future like a cow looking at the pasture, never imagining drought or snow. Now it was possible for old women to be found dead in their beds. Now it was possible for Father to be angry and knock Mother to the floor. Now it was possible for Mother to bleed like an animal. And so winter was more than just a season of inactivity. It was the end of hope. The ewe perked up at something, a sound perhaps that Lared was too human to hear. He stopped milking and looked up, and saw in the western sky a great light, which hovered in the air like a star that had lost its bearings and needed help to get back home. Then the light sank down below the level of the trees across the river, and it was gone. Lared did not know at first what it might be. Then he remembered the word starship from school and wondered. Starships did not come to Flat Harbor, or even to this continent, or even, more than once a decade, to this world. There was nothing here to carry away to somewhere else, nothing lacking here that only other worlds could possibly supply. Why, then, would a starship come here now? Don't be a fool, Lared, he told himself. It was a shooting star, but on this strange morning you made too much of it, because you are afraid. At dawn, Flat Harbor came awake, and others gradually made the discovery that had come to Lared's family in the night. They came, as they always did in cold weather, to Elmo's house, with its great table and indoor kitchen. They were not surprised to find that Elmo had not yet built up the fire in his forge. "I scalded myself on the gruel this morning," said Dinno, Mother's closest friend. She held up the smoothed skin of her fingers for admiration. "Hurts like it was still in the fire. Good God," she

said. Mother had her own wounds, but she chose not to tell that tale. “When that old clerk went to leave this morning, his donkey kicked him square in the belly, and now he’s upstairs. Too much hurt to travel, he says. Threw up his breakfast. There were a score of minor, careless injuries, and by noon most people were walking more carefully, carrying out their tasks more slowly. Not a one of them but had some injury. Omber, one of the diggers of Grandma’s grave, crushed his foot with a pick, and it bled for a long, long time; now, whi... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Despite I do prefer novels over short stories, the saga is a good combination. The first part is a short novel, about the adulthood initiation of a boy to whom is imposed the work of writing the real history of the Universe and the return of pain to it. Only Orson Scott Card can describe so vividly this passage to maturity. Then a bunch of short stories revisiting the main facts of the novel. As I said, a good combination

Loved it! How could I have missed this? Ok, so first off is a long story, then multiple short stories that cover the same people or the side characters that were mentioned in the main story, but you didn’t get a lot of background on them. Great story, really interesting, funky twist. My one complaint - He originally wrote this as many small stories and one largish story that wasn’t published, then some were published, then he went back years later and re-edited, made changes to fix problems, and published this way. So, some of the short stories don’t quite match up with what you are told about those characters in the long story. Not the end of the world, but one of those little things that annoys and picks at the back of the brain.

Another great read from Orson Scott Card. The book contains a novel and a bunch of short stories that center on different elements of the novel, but are a great read on their own. The Saga in Worthing saga stands for the time-span that the story covers. The bigger story begins on the planet Capital (very similar to Asimov’s Trantor) and with a man named Abner Doon who wants to destroy it so that to force human expansion and evolution (again - similar to Harri Seldon and Foundation). A boy named Jason Worthing has telepathic powers and is taken-in by Abner Doon. The Worthing Chronicle (which is the novel within this book) tells a story of a distant planet where nobody knew any pain or suffering. Then came a Day of Pain when people experienced pain, sorrow and reality that we know today. Shortly after came a man and a woman (man is Jason Worthing) who ask a village boy to write down their story. And thus starts the Worthing Chronicle. Saga spans several

planets and thousands of years, introducing ideas such as human evolution, political stability, telepathy and other mental abilities. Card is a master storyteller and succeeds in telling a story within a story within a story. Another cool concept here is *somec*, a drug that allows people to sleep for years (or centuries) only waking occasionally, thus allowing one to exist for centuries in real time (ex: one can sleep for a year and wake for a week, expanding their lifetime 50 times, but they are only living the same lifespan as a normal person). This allows author to have main characters skip centuries and generations. Great read all around and the inclusion of short stories is a nice bonus. "Skipping Stones" in particular is a beautiful and sad story that is not to be missed.

I have yet to find an Orson Scott Card book I didn't like. The *Worthing Saga* doesn't disappoint. The story is intriguing, creative and well written. The book, Card's first, began as several sort stories that became this book. Other than some slight overlap in some chapters this story is seamless. I highly recommend this book, the first in a long line of Orson Scott Card's successful efforts.

Orson Scott Card is perhaps the greatest living science-fiction writer still writing. This book is prime evidence. The "saga" weaves together two series of short stories that Card developed, in parallel and in tandem, over several years and in several incarnations. The core series concerns an interstellar human empire (loosely modeled, as Card freely acknowledges, after the First Galactic Empire in Asimov's "Foundation" series) that revolves around the drug "somec," which lets one live life a few years or a year or a day at a time, skipping over the intervening years. (The "somec" stories were originally published in earlier collections, "Capitol" and "Hot Sleep.") One's economic and social status depends on one's level of somec, which determines how quickly or slowly one moves through not only life, but history. The first "somec" story, "Skipping Stones," sets the scene: two boyhood friends take two paths, one becoming an artist who lives out his life in ordinary time, the other an entrepreneur who spaces out his life for as long as he can afford. The artist pictures himself immersed in life: "I like to swim. It gets me wet. It wears me out." But his wealthy friend dips into the world only from time to time, and the world moves on without him; when he dips back into the world, it is for him as if only a moment has passed since he last landed there, but his friend has been living a full life and the world has been living a whole history between his awakenings. The other series concerns the "Forest of Waters," home of a community exiled from the stagnating somec-driven universe, guided at first by a godlike ancestor with paranormal psychic powers. While the somec stories are subtle parables, these other stories are much more direct inquiries into pain, suffering, and their role not only in human society but in a universe watched over by an aware

deity. Card describes this book as "the most structurally complex yet thematically unified of my works of fiction." The "thematic unity" that weaves together all the book's multifaceted stories is indeed masterful, easily surpassing Card's "The Folk of the Fringe," a masterpiece in its own right. "The Worthing Saga" is a compelling read, one that will grip your imagination and intellect long after you have finished it. I reread it every few years, and enjoy it just as much with each reacquaintance.

The premise of this book really gives one pause. And then you think. Would I really want someone else to be "looking after me" and taking away all of the pain and suffering from my life? If you don't ever have the bad things can you ever really appreciate the good? Even though the ones watching thought they were doing the right thing and making everyone happy and taking their pain away, were they really helping and doing the right thing or were they stunting the people's growth and making it harder for them to grow and develop and become the best they could be? It's really a thought provoking story and one that would be worth a second read.

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