



One Great Book: Volume 1, Episode 7 *Sleeping Giants* by Sylvain Neuvel

[Show Notes](#)

[00:00]

One Great Book Volume 1, Book 7: *Sleeping Giants*

[UPBEAT INTRO MUSIC]

Hey readers, I'm Anne Bogel, and you're listening to One Great Book, where each week I pull one stand-out selection off my personal bookshelves and tell you all about it.

[MUSIC]

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[01:22]

Readers, I like to consider myself a reader who reads broadly. And I do—to a point—but the truth is, like most readers, I do gravitate towards some genres more than others. Yet I *adore* the experience of finding a book that, on the first—or even second or third—look, I wouldn't think was for me. Not my genre, not my style, not the kind of book I'm interested in. But then I end up giving it a try, and I LOVE IT. And I'm so glad I took a chance on something outside my comfort zone.

That's exactly I feel about *Sleeping Giants* by Canadian novelist Sylvain Neuvel. I never—and I mean *never*, would have picked this up on my own—it's a science fiction novel whose premise is pretty out there. Had I come across it in a bookstore I would have seen it was science fiction, and the premise wouldn't have caught my attention. But it would have been my loss, because *Sleeping Giants* is one. Great. Book.

Neuvel has said that all his books begin with an image that he can see in his mind, perhaps this process accounts for the cinematic feel of *Sleeping Giants*. This story begins when Rose gets a new bike for her eleventh birthday. She can't wait to give it a try and *races* away from home and through the neighborhood. But at the edge of the forest near her home, the ground suddenly disappears from underneath her while she's on her bike. She could never tell you exactly what happened; she didn't wake up for hours after. Her father showed her the pictures later: when they rescued her, she was a tiny little thing at the bottom of a strangely-lit hole, with hieroglyphics on the wall, lying in the palm of a giant metal hand.

[03:05]

I told you the premise was out there.



Flash forward nearly twenty years. Rose is now a renowned physicist—and this is no accident, her encounter with the hand ignited a scientific curiosity in her—and she now heads a secret team tasked with determining where that hand came from, and what it means for us. Is it an alien artifact? A piece of art? A weapon of mass destruction? All possibilities are on the table.

Years have gone by, but the mystery hasn't been solved. The more her team learns about the hand, the stranger it gets: the carbon-dating makes no sense, and it's puzzlingly light—it doesn't weigh nearly as much as it should, given its composition.

Then it keeps getting stranger, as scientists begin to find *other* body parts, buried in *other* parts of the globe. The military becomes increasingly involved, and as word leaks out about what Rose's team is up to, uncovering these strange parts on foreign soil, tensions between nations escalate. It may be fair to call this as much a political thriller as anything.

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As someone who doesn't habitually gravitate to science fiction, I COULD NOT WAIT to find out what happens next.—and the way Neuvel tells his story really amps up the “unputdownable” factor. The narrative is made up entirely of documents from the fictional case file: there are interviews, diary entries, military mission logs, there's even a surveillance report. Right now a lot of readers are going ga-ga for the oral history format of *Daisy Jones and the Six*, I know these books sound wildly disparate, but trust me here: if you like that writing style, give *Sleeping Giants* a try.

The characters here tell the story in their own words, from their own points of view—and they're not always reliable, which keeps you, the reader, on your toes. They're real people, which means they're flawed people, but they're risking their own lives for the greater good, facing the unknown and a boatload of tense and highly readable situations.

[05:08]



If you're a science fiction fan, this book is for you—and you'll be happy to know that since this is book one of the Themis Files trilogy, you can enjoy speeding through all three titles, one after another. If you are NOT a science fiction fan, you should know that legions of readers have begun their rave reviews with the phrase, "I don't usually read this kind of thing but I'm so *glad* I did."

In short, if you're intrigued by the idea of a political thriller meets sci-fi novel for readers who don't usually read either genre, with a wild premise, interesting structure, and great narrative drive, *Sleeping Giants* may be the next great book you're looking for.

[MUSIC]

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Readers, I've got LOTS of great books coming your way with my summer reading guide, coming May 16. To make sure you get your copy, make sure you're signed up for the free newsletter updates at modernmrsdarcy.com/newsletter.

Thanks to Kellen Pechacek for his sound design on today's episode.

[06:29]

And make sure you check out our sister show *What Should I Read Next*, where each week a reader tells me three books they love, one book they don't, and what they're reading now, and I recommend three titles they should read next.



Readers, that's it for this episode, thanks so much for listening.

And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading."
Happy reading, everyone.