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Daily Nebraskan

ewest collaboration has a 'Flare' for the fantastic

"Flare" Roger Zelazny and Thomas T. Thomas **Baen Books**

By Sam Kepfield Staff Reporter

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One of science fiction's old hands, Roger Zelazny, and one of its newer lights, Thomas T. Thomas, join forces for "Flare," their second collaboration.

quasi-fantasy tale. This one is straight from any Irwin Allen disaster movie The Towering Inferno," "Earthquake" or "The Poseidon Adventure."

The book starts off a bit slowly for anyone not familiar with subatomic physics. Briefly, due to a one-in-sevcral-millions fluke, the sun lets off a huge solar flare, after being relatively quiet for nearly a century.

Today, in 1992, this would mean

when humankind has planted a foothold firmly in the solar system, it means disaster.

Those unlucky enough to be out-side are given lethal doses of gamma rays. Space stations built with no safety margins in their low orbits, come crashing down through the suddenly expanded atmosphere (remember Skylab?).

disrupted, causing financial panic. live in the sun's upper atmosphere. Those using Virtual Reality equip- Are they intelligent? What is their electronic overload caused by the with humans? flare, and so on.

Probably the only problem is that Zelazny and Thomas attempted a grand-scale disaster novel, a la Lucifer's Hammer," but fell short.

Some aspects of the novel are never

Their first, "Mask of Loki," was a munications for a week. But in 2081, tronic communications network is notion of "Plasmotes," beings who ment are sent into a coma by the society like? Will they communicate

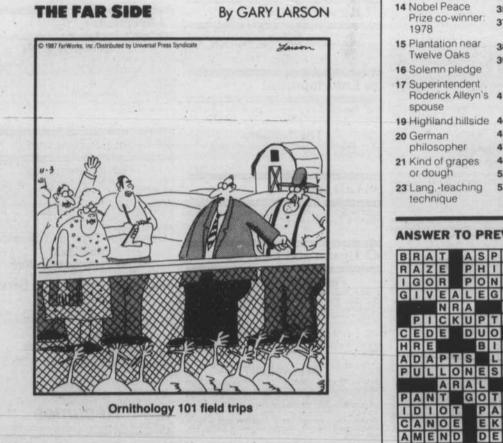
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Some focus is put on scientific efforts to predict and then confirm the flare, but not nearly enough. The book does a superb job of showing how widespread the societal chaos from such an occurrence would be, and for that, the book redeems itself, making an interesting weekend read.



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