



# Seven Forges

*James A. Moore*

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## **Seven Forges** James A. Moore

Captain Merros Dulver is the first in many lifetimes to find a path beyond the great mountains known as the Seven Forges and encounter, at last, the half-forgotten race who live there. And it would appear that they were expecting him. As he returns home, bringing an entourage of strangers with him, he starts to wonder whether his discovery has been such a good thing. For the gods of this lost race are the gods of war, and their memories of that far-off cataclysm have not faded.

The people of Fellein have lived with legends for many centuries. To their far north, the Blasted Lands, a legacy of an ancient time of cataclysm, are vast, desolate and impassable, but that doesn't stop the occasional expedition into their fringes in search of any trace of the ancients who had once lived there... and oft-rumored riches.

## **Seven Forges Details**

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## From Reader Review Seven Forges for online ebook

**XX Sarah XX** (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

*A message from Sarah from the Future (SftF™): lots of digressions to be expected here. Must be the alcohol. You're welcome.*

**You know it, I know it: my Fantasy non-reviews suck.** Glad we cleared that up.

Okay, so **Epic/High/Whatever Fantasy is for the Brainy People**, which I clearly am not, since I only have two grey cells (or one and a half, depending on the weather). So if you are looking for serious, in-depth, super clever Fantasy reviews, **you've come to the wrong place**. The right place being Evgeny's, Eon's, Markus' or Gavin's. Wait. They're all guys, that can't be right. What happened to **chicks rule, men drool** and stuff?! Bloody hell! I'm supposed to be a freaking feminist and shit, women power and all that crap, I can't send you to read guys' reviews!! **This will not do! This cannot be!** Hold on for a sec, I'll be right back!

Okay, okay, here I am again, with some **pretty awesome chicks** for you to check out (okay, so some of them read also Romance crap, but not all girls can be as perfect as I am, so please cut them some slack. Thank you): Robin, Choko, Athena, Jessica & the French Frowner that Shall not be Named (tFFtSnbN™).

**Oh crap.** I was supposed to be reviewing a book here, wasn't I? Damn, I keep forgetting about these things. No wonder the trolls love me so much, and think I'm full of ~~shit~~ **wisdom, good-sense, love and kindness and understanding and stuff**. Wait. Am I digressing again? Oh well. You did know what you were in for when you started reading this Piece of Crap (view spoiler), weren't you? So don't come complaining now.

**But anyway.**

I might have only two grey cells on good days, **Despicable book Taste** (DBT™), and a brain mostly enabled for **UF and PNR Crap** (UaPC™), but I can still read and appreciate Fantasy, my Little Barnacles. *Please try and refrain from fainting. Thank you.* And now I have a question for all of you **Self-Confessed Fantasy Freaks** (SCFF™): **why the Bloody Shrimp aren't more of you reading this series??!!** I mean, seriously, people, why are you all fan girl/boy-ing about silly series like Greatcoats \*waves at her Minion in Training\* when you could be reading Seven Forges?! **Dumbfoundation** (yes, that is a word) is me.

*How do you like my wig/beard combo? Pretty hot, huh?*

What I am ever so cleverly trying to say is: this book. **THIS BOOK. Read it, my Little Barnacles, READ IT!** This thing here pretty much has it all:

✓ A **cover** so gloriously delicious I want to lick it **until my tongue falls off**.

✓ **Stupid-enabled Fantasy story**. Despite the multiple plot lines. Wow.

✓ **Great, original, intriguing world.** It's pretty wondrous stuff, really.

✓ **Awesome cast all over.** Cool guys, brilliant girls. Deliciously cunning characters galore. Multiple POVs that are never boring and keep the story going. Even when it comes to the \*takes a deep breath\* **disgustingly youngish characters** in the story. Mostest awesomest stuff, to be sure.

✓ **Awesome, strong, ass-kicking, blood-shedding, take-no-bullshit, harem-worthy uber cool chicks.** Yes yes yes. Yum yum yummy yumminess. ☒ *Super private, personal message to Swech: will you marry me?* Pretty please? Okay, so you might be slightly spoiler spoiler spoiler and Spoiler Spoiler Spoiler (not his real name) might be **against our blissful union** but who the hell cares? We are perfect for each other, **love conquers all**, and all that crap. So please marry me. And if you don't want to, no problem. I am, as you would expect, an understanding kind of gal. So if you answer by the negative, I'll just do the "poof! Gone!" on you, and **lock you up in my harem**. Such a lucky girl you are.

✓ **Super uber hot veil-wearing, hands-of-steel endowed guy** who might or might not be one of the good or bad guys. Not sure yet. Which makes him even hotter. Especially since his **Super Special Endowments** (SSE™) are not limited to his silver/steel/whatever hands. ← *no, this is no digression, people. These are facts. Just ask Wallace. He's seen Drask (aka My Man, aka Harem Recruit #4589) in the buff, it was pretty traumatizing for him, and I'm sure he'll be more than happy to tell you ALL about it.* Oh, and by the way, that's my Big Bad Baby (BBB™) up there on the book cover. No wonder I fell in love with him/it at first sight, and thought he/it looked **good enough to eat**.

*Am I referring to the book cover, my BBB™, his SSE™ or all three? Ha! Wouldn't you love to know!*

✓ **Twists and turns and oh no's and Bloody Hell I didn't See that One Coming Stuff** (BHIdStOCS™). I'm rarely ever surprised when I read books (Daisy, my sentient crystal ball, tells me everything), but this one had quite a few **God Dammit Mr Moore, I wasn't Expecting This Moments** (GDMMIWETM™).

✓ **Super cool pets.** Not sure I'd want to adopt them all, because some of them are a little bit too freaky, even for me (which should tell you something). But hey, Fleet Admiral DaShrimp tells me I should be more of an equal opportunity kind of ~~nefarious breeder~~ gal, so I'll give them all a chance. **Welcome to the Nefarious Zoo, you lovely beasts!**

✓ My all-time favourite : **blood and gore, yay!** And super cool fight scenes, too! With blood! And gore! And stuff! **YAY!**

**And not to spoil it** for those who had the misfortune NOT to read this book but: **IT'S WAR!! Aka: I'm in**  
♥

**Oh**, and by the way, I listened to the **audio version** of this book. While I was coloring and stuff. And **David de Vries is a pretty cool narrator** and stuff. I mean, I understood everything that was going on, and didn't get the colors in my masterpiece mixed up, so I'm thinking that makes him **kinda sorta reasonably somewhat awesome**. And stuff.

» **And the moral of this Crappy Non Review is:** hey you, Fantasy Freaks, stop pestering me about Silly Sanderson and Yawn Yawn Yawn Greatcoats and stuff! **Follow my two-grey-celled advice and...**

↘ **Book 2:** The Blasted Lands ★★★★★

↘ **Book 3:** City of Wonders ★★★★★

↘ **Book 4:** The Silent Army ★★

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## Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.blogspot.com/201...>

I really, really liked Seven Forges. Still, I'll admit the book had me rolling with the punches for most of it. It left me cold for a long time, waiting for something awesome to happen, something to make me perk up and say, "Hey, now we're onto something."

A lot of this has to do with the book's pacing, which is probably slower than I'd have preferred. I noticed while reading, for example, that even at more than halfway in, I was still treading in territory already covered by the blurb in the back of the book: a group from Fellein makes first contact with the mysterious warrior people of the Seven Forges mountains called the Sa'ba Taalor, and the expedition leader Merros Dulver brings a small entourage of them home with him.

Of course, there were other developments along the way, but not many that helped me tease out what was supposed to be the main conflict, even as I was well into the book. The world James A. Moore created here is highly imaginative and the characters and cultures are intriguing, but I still wasn't seeing what all the fuss was about.

And then, all of a sudden, everything changed. Unexpected plot twists, shocking revelations, total chaos. Everything I thought I was signing on for when I picked up this book, I got. The only catch is? All this only started occurring in the last fifty pages or so.

The question is then, can the final 10-15 percent of a book be so incredibly awesome as to impress me enough turn my opinion completely around? I struggled with this question and as a result also struggled with my review, but in the end, I have to say yes. And I don't come to this decision lightly; very rarely does a book redeem itself in my eyes simply for having an extraordinary ending, but somehow this one manages. I went from feeling generally unaffected to being completely absorbed.

I don't want to make it sound like I wasn't enjoying myself at all before this point, though. I felt the book took its time getting to the meat of the conflict, yes, but even so, all the while I had the sense that it was there all along, just building up in a slow burn. Looking back now, I see that the bulk of this book reads like a very long introduction, all leading up to the point where the conflict finally ignites. And when it does, it happens in a very powerful, explosive way.

Speaking of which, James A. Moore is in his element when he is writing scenes with fighting and big battles, and his strength is definitely in crafting very realistic, frenetic action sequences. On the other hand, areas I felt needed more attention included character development and dialogue. For example, Desh Krohan the

emperor's sorcerer was someone I was very interested in, but would have also loved to see more exploration into his character. He talks a lot about what his powers are capable of, but even now, I'm not entirely sure what sort of magic he does and what the nature of it is.

I suppose all that will come in time, in subsequent books in this series. There's a lot of untapped potential when it comes to the characters, but at the same time I see things moving in the right direction. Even now I think a hero is emerging in Andover Lashk, a character whose place I wasn't sure of at the beginning, but now I see the author is actually raising him up in a very unique and unprecedented way, one I think I'll enjoy watching.

Mission accomplished, Mr. Moore, you have me practically on pins and needles for the next installment.

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## **Solseit says**

And finally I have enough time to work on a better review!

I really enjoyed this book. Let's start from the beginning.

When I looked into the books I had available, I was drawn to the Seven Forges again and again. So I looked into some reviews and I read some comments stating that the book was good but was lacking a plot. Yet, I wanted to read it and I started.

I was a happy camper for three days - and I think I will continue with the following books in the series. Yes, the book might require some time to understanding where all is going but it is just so interesting and fast paced that it did not bother me at all.

I liked all the characters, someone more than the others. I liked the story, interesting and twisted enough to keep me longing for more. I liked the Sa'ba Taalor (view spoiler) and their fierce and violent society. It was an interesting contrast to the "other" perspective brought by the empire.

Talking about the empire, I liked the emperor quite a bit (view spoiler). I also loved his relationship with the wizard, it sounded like an old couple bickering at all times!

There are a couple of other elements that are worth mentioning. I loved the fact that the attractive woman is (also) the muscular one, the one that does not have the traditional looks (and this type of woman is present in the series too) and still is the center of men's attention. And the lead of her own group. I loved the gender equality that transpires from the Sa'ba Taalor so much that it appears that the only relevant element is the ability to fight.

Another aspect of the Sa'ba Taalor I loved was their relationship with their mounts. Despite their terrifying description, it also sounds like a mount of fur and I would not mind spending the day cuddling with the beast!

There is so much left hanging that I cannot wait to start The Blasted Lands!

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## **Robin (Bridge Four) says**

**Sale Alert** 14Mar18 the entire series is on sale for \$2.99 per book. amazon

As an **AVID** fantasy reader, *seriously it doesn't matter epic, urban, grimdark I love it all* this falls into a sorta category for me. It is sorta epic, it is sorta grimdark, it is sorta urban (<--Just kidding on that last one) so I'm going to call it **epigram lite**.

I'm a details girl. I like to know enough about the world to feel like I'm in it. While this did a semi-decent job of that there was still so much more I wanted to know about some of the religions, cultures and character motivations. There is a little but sometimes I felt like it was just told to me instead of the author showing me why certain characters acted a certain way. But there is enough to give it a good plot line and world to work with.

I struggled a little since none of the characters are particularly loveable. Probably the most noble of the characters is an aged Wizard that had been alive for centuries and epic/high fantasy has taught me not to trust in wizards unless they happen to be Gandalf the Grey.

*Little known fact: sometimes wizards do things just because it amuses them. At least they do if their name is Desh Krohan. There were many rumors about the sorcerer, quite a few of which were blatant lies he'd created himself, but one rumor that was true was that he'd been around for centuries. Sometimes that meant he had to find ways to drive away boredom.*

But all the other main characters were terribly flawed and so sometimes I was attached to them and other times they could have been killed off and I wouldn't have cared.

Still there are some very interesting things going on. There is a warrior culture the Sa'ba Taalor who have found a way to interact with metal and sometimes use it to meld into their bodies. I found this part of the world pretty exciting. Everytime there is a warrior culture I do find myself comparing it to the Doth'raki from Game of Thrones and they do share a few basic similarities in that whole 'Might is Right' mentality and most of their disagreements are solved with fighting and they also have a fierce devotion to their gods. *"All gods offer blessings. All gods demand sacrifices. All gods demand a price, yes?"* They have cooler semi-horselike (only in they have four legs and carry people) mounts that are almost as scary as they are.

Drask was my favorite of these Sa'ba Taalor and by the end of the book I still liked him, mostly (which is better than most of the characters faired) but I'm just not sure what his culture is really up to. Things get a bit crazy there at the end.

Merros is another would be hero in our story. For some reason the Sa'ba Taalor have come to find him specifically. This is a pretty huge deal since they are a culture of myth and mystery and no one has seen them before. I enjoyed getting to know the Sa'ba Taalor through Merros's exchanges with them. Still he also is a flawed character so sometimes I thought I could really get behind him and other times I grew to really hate him. Still I can't say he was ever boring and there is that whole prophecy about him we get at the beginning.

*"You will lose your hand, find your fist and gain an ally. You will also meet your enemy face-to-face."*

This was a pretty good introduction to the world and even though a few of the reveals I totally saw coming there was the one I totally did not that made the twist at the end well worth waiting for and made me question a few of my assumptions earlier in the story.

This is one of those books that you don't really have to love the characters to enjoy what is going on but I hope that as the series continues I find someone to really start pulling for. This was a little fun towards the end as I developed a few theories about the possible connections between events and a few of the directions that the characters and plot can go from here. I really hope to find a little more in the next installment.

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### **Sh3lly (grumpybookgrrrl.com) says**

I tried. I wanted to like this, but every time I pick it up, I read a page or two and am like...

It's just not working for me. DNF 23%.

:(

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### **Lee says**

3.5 Stars!

A fairly solid start of a series with potential is how I would describe Seven Forges.

Whilst there are some promising character development and nice world building, there are a few holes in the plot and the magic being used really has not been explained **yet**. I expect that to change in future books though, so it is not worrying me at the moment.

As mentioned above, the characters are showing promise. The lead men Merros and Worris have a great rapport and the introduction of the Sa'ba Taalor certainly took the book to another level as they are a fascinating people, who are hard not to like. But like all religious zealot stories, leaves you slightly nervous. Given that they take their instructions from the gods who speak directly to them, then your plans to work with them or deal with them can change dramatically.

I do want to see more explanation of the magic on hand, just saying, it comes from the sprites and it costs you won't cut it if that is not developed further in book 2. Plus the Seven Forges gods need some detailing, but you can pretty much tell that is going to happen.

I felt this book was a little hurried, there were many parts of the story where more time and development would have improved the story, but was instead a quick 'and that's that'. I am pretty confident though that the pacing will settle out in future books.

One of the other areas of eyebrow raising, is Moore's writing of female characters. Every. Single. One. Of. Them is drop dead gorgeous. Not a plain woman in sight. He sounds a bit of a perv in his writing as dirty old men (kings) fantasize about shagging with nieces and the lead man, Merros, wins hands down the award for the character most in need of getting laid. I think the entire reading group gave a sigh of relief when he got that happening. But it must be said; the female characters are not simpering, beautiful playthings. There are lot of strong roles here, Swech is one that gets the blood going I can tell you ;)

I do like Moore's writing and it has me thinking just what is exactly that makes me enjoy one story over



another. Those that know me, know that I recently struggled big time with Gwynnes series The Faithful and the Fallen, which is getting great reviews and happy campers, but I was utterly bored with it and i'd love to know what is the difference in the writing that has me enjoying one story and really not liking another. It has to be in the writing style, because both books have a solid storyline and characters that have potential.

Anyway, I will certainly carry on with this series and I am very positive that it will be one that i grow to enjoy much more.

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## Choko says

\*\*\* 4 \*\*\*

### **A buddy read with the Fantasy Fanatics at BB&B! Because there will be blood!!!**

OK, so the first book in the series "Seven Forges" is not perfect. In fact, it is a bit thin in plot lines and a bit sketchy as far as magical system goes, but by the end of the second chapter, I didn't really care. Because despite the smaller scope of this work comparatively, this hits that spot in my reading schedule where I can get a fun, creepy, bloody, and mostly imaginative story in a more simplified and shortened fashion, which can be refreshing when all I have been reading has been monumentally Epic as of late!!! A more simplified but still entertaining story was just what the doctor ordered.

We have regular Humans and many kingdoms and cultures among them, wizards, witches, and now the Sa'ba Taalor, the new humanoid people the Mercenary Captain Merros Dulver and the expedition he is leading into the Seven Forges mountains encounter on their way. The humans had no idea the mountains were inhabited by people, since everyone ever sent on expedition to the Seven Forges has never returned and thus there has been no information at all... However, it is quite obvious that the road to the mountain is full of feral creatures who just loooooove human flesh:):):) Also, we have a prophesy!!! Yey!!!

*"...“You will lose your hand, find your fist and gain an ally. You will also meet your enemy face-to-face.”...”*

So, our hired swords meet the Sa'ba Taalor people and together decide to return with a large group of representatives to introduce their culture and make friends, hopefully beginning a long and prosperous friendship. Let me just insert here that the Sa'ba have 7 gods, thus the Seven Forges, and all of those like to give weird orders to their followers, and the Sa'ba listen and obey!!! Very much the zealot and religious extremists those grayish folks turn out to be... They are introduced in the Emperor's court and the clash of the cultures becomes obvious, at times hilarious, while at others dangerous for one or the other's lives. Tension and diplomacy go hand in hand and it is very amusing to watch the characters trying to understand each other and make friends.

*"...“Swech tapped the table. “Let me explain my people. Let me explain how they believe all matters should be handled. If I were to offend you, Desh Krohan, your recourse is simple. You attempt to punish me. If you succeed, you have made clear your stance on my actions.”*

*“That’s it?”*

*“Yes. That’s it. You attempt to administer your punishment. I attempt to defend myself against your punishment.”...”*

Merros was the main Human character and Drask Silver Hand is the lead representative of the Sa'ba crowd. And what a representative he is!!! Strong, gray, skilled with weaponry, and not in the least slowed down by his metal prosthetic hand or the need to keep his face veiled. The face veiling thing is practiced by all of his hard and also predominantly gray people. Swetch is the Sa'ba warrior woman who stole and broke my heart, so I count her as a very strong and memorable character the author should be proud of here!!! Also, they ride these horse substituting monsters, which I would not mind keeping one as a pet:) They sound adorable, in that scaly, scary, murderous way...

The creatures are all very interesting, the humans are a bit flat as characters for now, but the biggest problem the book has as a whole is that the Sa'ba Taalor are such imagination stealing creatures, that the humans have no chance at claiming the readers' attention, maybe apart from the Hugh Hefner like Wizard Desh, who has a live-in bunny harem of gorgeous witches and performs some magic of which rules we have not yet been privy to... The rest of the cast feels one dimensional and more like place-fillers than actual beings. However, I see promise for some of them and I have faith that the author will bring them to their full potential as we go along with the series!!

*"...**"Little known fact: sometimes wizards do things just because it amuses them."** ..."*

Overall, the book was a very entertaining way to start a series and I for one am looking forward to reading the rest of the books! It is not for the faint of heart and the writing style is not as engaging as I hope it will become, but the potential is there and I want to BELIEVE!!!

I wish you All Happy Reading and never leave your sword at home when visiting monsters!!!

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**Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

**First off let me just go ahead and put my big ole spoiler banner up!**

Now let me get this out of the way; I freaking love Drask Silver Hand and he does have a metal hand that feels like a regular hand. He's one of my new book boyfriends and he's bad to the bone!

He can soothe my itch any day - okay so you get the point!

Captain Merros Dulver (loved this character too) is sent on a mission to try to find what is beyond the Seven Forges. Turns out he finds more than he was thinking he would. Most people don't even come back from this journey through the Blasted Lands, it's just too harsh. Oh and there are these big ole monster things called the pra-moresh that will kill and eat you and your army.

On this little journey Merros and his people are attacked by a bunch of those creatures and it doesn't go well for some. They manage to kill a few with all of them fighting but they see this massive man on a beast reptile thingy that take down a few of them on his own. Merros wants to know who this man is and this is how we

meet Drask Silver Hand. The Emperor's Sorcerer sent some women with the group and they make it so Drask and Merros can understand each other as Drask has a different kind of language.

Drask wants to take the group back to the Seven Forges and his home so Merros can meet one of the kings. It all goes well and they send some warriors back with Merros along with one of their kings and of course, Drask.

They meet with the Emperor and they find out this race of people are called the Sa'ba Taalor. They are a sort of grey people and I have already said they are huge, even the women. They are all muscle and kick ass and they live by their gods. They start training when they are little kids on how to forge their own weapons, farming, fighting, etc. They are cool and I love them. Well, I did in this book, who knows what will happen later on.

The Sa'ba Taalor want to be friends with the people of Fellein. They even go and help one of the Emperor's mates down the way that have some other people getting ready to attack them. Drask sends 10 of his people along with Merros to show what they can do. Most of them were women warriors and they basically take out 1000 or more men, although the majority were asleep in their tents. But still, that's some sh\*t! And the leader of this little band is named Swech and she's bad to the bone too, they all are, every single one. Swech and Merros get a little something going on, but it's not graphic. The only graphic parts are the blood and guts and bashing of bones, ya know - that stuff =)

**He looked at her more closely and saw the bandages on her left arm and on both legs, as well as across her neck. She had received several injuries to his one scratch. Then again, he had only killed one man. Who knew exactly how many she was responsible for?**

**"Will they go back to their people and say they were attacked?"**

**"There are none to go anywhere."**

**"What do you mean?"**

**"There are no survivors." Her words were calm. Merros felt a deep chill creep through him.**

**"All of them?"**

**She reached out and touched the wound on his arm. "You should tend to that. There is always a risk of infection."**

**"You killed all of them?" He had to ask a second time, had to make sure that he had heard what he thought he'd heard. Madness, it had to be.**

**"They cannot go home and claim they were attacked by King Marsfel and his people They cannot go home and report anything to anyone." Her logic was flawless, of course.**

**Oh, and terrifying. Absolutely terrifying.**

So a bunch of other stuff goes down and - wait- I forgot to mention the Sa'ba Taalor can heal themselves with metal. I don't know the whole story behind that yet but it is cool as hell! So the bunch of other stuff goes down and then the Sa'ba Taalor decide they are going home. Merros sees his new friends off and thinks he's going to have a normal day.

Some woman creeps out and kills the Emperor and pushes him out the window. Really? Then some @sshat

that's over the whole army thing whatever sends soldiers after the Sa'ba Taalor. Dude, what part of your dumb as hell don't you understand?

Merros finds out and freaks clean out and pretty much tells him he's an idiot and he watched them leave way before the Emperor was killed. And of course nothing goes well for the soldiers that went and attacked them. Hello? I mean is anybody home? NO! And you know what these means . . . a freaking war that doesn't need to be, at least from all I read in the first book. There may be stuff we don't know in the other books. But still!

I hope everything turns out okay in the other books. Now I have to go on Amazon and buy all of them and worry! Damn it all!

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

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## Emma says

Well I experienced a complete turnabout this book. I enjoyed the first 20% then really struggled until about 40%. Was literally about to call this as a dnf and thought I'd read one more chapter....and then devoured the rest of the book pretty quickly!

This was slow to get going and to my mind, the writer gained confidence and found his voice and the story about halfway through. I enjoyed the world building but think I struggled with the sketchy character building.

I enjoyed this in the end. It turned out much better than I expected from the first half and I am glad I stuck with it.

Will definitely read the next one.

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## Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

My rating is 3.5 stars.

*Seven Forges* is a tantalizing fantasy. The tale begins with one, Captain Merros Dulver, leading a small group of adventurers toward a range of unexplored mountains called the Seven Forges. The country the group must transverse is a frozen wasteland, wind blasted, and devoid of life; facts that have made it an impenetrable barrier for anyone from the Empire of Fellein – which controls the majority of the known world

– to have ever reached these legendary peaks, let alone, explore them. But, naturally, someone offered Merros a lot of money to come out of his well earned military retirement to do just that, so here he is freezing his butt off and wishing he was anywhere except where he is.

Naturally, things are not what they seem, and the uninhabited barrens are not quite so uninhabited. Soon, Captain Merros finds himself confronted not only by horrible beasts but also by an unknown race of people. A race which seems friendly and inviting, but which also obviously has far more secrets that they hide than that they reveal. And even as the good captain finds himself becoming a very rich and very famous explorer, he wonders if this mingling of the Sa’ba Taalor people with his own is a historic event or a horrible mistake.

There are many things one could talk about with *Seven Forges* but the star of the show is the land of the Seven Forges and its people, the Sa’ba Taalor. For that initial desolate environment where Captain Merros’ journey of discovery begins is very symbolic of where Mr. Moore intends to take you. The mighty tundra is the border between two different worlds in more than just a physical way, for as a explorer transverses the post-apocalyptic wasteland he finds himself also abandoning the norms of ordinary humanity. The world of the Sa’ba Taalor is a unique land unto itself, where – cut off from the rest of human civilization – these people have evolved along a much different evolutionary track, gaining unique idiosyncrasies in both their physiology and societal makeup; changes which makes them just as inhuman as any intelligent alien who might descend from the heavens. And soon, one finds themselves eager to see more of these wonderful people, learn more about their differences, and hear more of their history. Indeed, they steal the show.

But like all novels, there were problems with this tale, and the main one was simple the Sa’ba Taalor themselves.

How can I rave about how interesting these guys are but then say they are the main problem in the book?

Simply put, the Sa’ba Taalor are so interesting they overwhelm all the other elements of the story. Once they appear, the rest of the story just seems to pale in comparison to their creative brilliance. Honestly, who cares about Captain Merros’ homeland, the Fellein Empire, or its Emperor and his devious counselor and sorcerer Desh when you could read some more about the Seven Forges and its mesmerizing people?

I didn’t, unfortunately.

To summarize, *Seven Forges* was an okay book. The Sa’ba Taalor people themselves and their history was unique and compelling, but the normal humans and their empire fell flat. The characters outside of the Sa’ba Taalor were only mildly interesting, and until the last few chapters, the story dragged except when the Sa’ba Taalor were actually the focus. However, the novel was interesting enough that I will be returning to Mr. Moore’s world – if for no other reason than to visit with (Yeah, I’m going to say it one more time) the Sa’ba Taalor again.

I received this book from Netgalley and Angry Robot in exchange for a fair and honest review. I’d like to thank Netgalley for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

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**?Luna? says**

Hate the audio so much, nothing against the narrator I just have the attention span of a goldfish and can't

listen to audiobooks. Gonna finish when I have ebook :)

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## **Sam says**

It's a good thing I read some reviews about this book before I started reading it or I think it would have hit the DNF pile or at least taken me a lot longer to finish. Even still, since I have an ebook copy, this book ended up one I picked up here and there when I found myself stuck somewhere with nothing to do but my phone. I am glad I kept with it though, as this book definitely picks up steam, although it continues to have some weak points throughout.

The weakest part of the book continued to be pacing. It feels like mostly solid progression throughout with the occasional bump of action, and then the last couple of chapters hit you like a brick wall of plot and story. It's not that I don't like twists. I just usually like them to come with a bit of foreshadowing or anything really to make it feel like the twist is somehow consistent with the rest of the book. Instead I just felt like I'd been clothes-lined by the story and I was lying on the ground unable to tell if I liked it or not because so much had just happened so quickly.

The characters are also inconsistently developed. There are a few I liked by the end of the book, but a lot of them felt pretty one-dimensional and then suddenly they'd be given a POV section. I think it was just an easy way to show the reader everything that was happening even if you're only in that character's head for a couple of pages. I'm just not sure that was a great way to do it with how many character POVs there ended up being and too many of those characters feeling flat.

Overall though, I'm intrigued by where the story is going and I've read some reviews that the later books get a lot better. Some of the reviews I saw for the most recent addition are what encouraged me to pick up this book. I also liked that there's a well-developed culture that seems a lot different from standard fantasy fare and I'm curious about a lot of the mystery elements that were introduced in this book. I might not be picking them up immediately but I intend to get to the rest of the series eventually.

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## **Gavin says**

This was one of those fantasy stories that was entertaining enough without ever being anything special or memorable. It was grimdark epic fantasy.

Mercenary Captain Merros Dulver is leading an expedition into the hostile Seven Forges mountain range when his group encounters the Sa'ba Taalor, a long forgotten race who dwell there. One of the Sa'ba Taalor, Drask Silverhand, tells Merros that the Gods have sent his people to meet with him. Merros is taken before a Sa'ba Taalor king before being asked to lead a group of Sa'ba Taalor warriors to meet with the Emperor of his native land.

The story was OK. The culture clash between the Sa'ba Taalor and the regular humans lead to a bit of tension at times and a bit of humour at others.

The big flaw for me was the writing. It was a little stilted and simplistic. It felt a bit like reading YA grimdark fantasy! I think it also did not help that I never really warmed to any of the main characters. Merros

was OK but not enough on his own to make me become emotionally invested in the happenings. The other thing that annoyed me was that pretty much every female character was a sex object. I'm not sure we met a single female character in the story that did not have the guys in palpitations of lust. It was so bad the Emperor was even eyeing up members of his own family!

On the plus side the Sa'ba Taalor were mildly interesting and the world building was decent enough. There was not a ton of magic but what flashes we did get of it were quite intriguing. The Sa'ba Taalor reminded me a bit of the Aiel in Jordan's WoT series. Mainly because of their veils, warrior clan ways, weird honor code, and their use of sign language to communicate when they wanted to do so unobtrusively. Though in fairness they were definitely Shaido style Aiel rather than the likeable type!

The book ended in a fairly exciting fashion with a few predictable twists and a few less predictable twists. I liked it well enough that I'll read the sequel.

Rating: 3.5 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by David de Vries. He did OK. He has a decent enough voice but has no real talent for performing.

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## **Dan Schwent says**

Charged with mapping the land beyond the Blasted Lands, a frozen wasteland devastated by a cataclysm centuries past, Major Merros Dulver encounter the Sa'ba Taalor, the denizens of the Seven Forges. The Sa'ba Taalor are a society of warriors living in a fertile valley amid the Seven Forges, seven volcanic mountains. A small group accompany Merros back to the empire. Can they co-exist with the Empire in peace or will war destroy them all?

### **I got this ARC from Angry Robot. All hail our ill-tempered robot overlords!**

Much like Three, I initially became interested in Seven Forges because of the cover. The cover is pretty impressive and the book beneath it is even more so.

While it seems like a pretty straightforward fantasy tale at first glance, it's a lot more than that. It's the tale of two very different cultures coming together and trying to co-exist. However, the people of the Empire have gotten soft after years with no enemies and the Sa'ba Taalor are a race of fighters living in the most inhospitable habitat on the planet, trained to fight from birth. Yeah, this meeting isn't going to go well.

Moore does a great job contrasting the warrior culture of the Sa'Ba Taalor and their seven gods with the politics and religion of the empire. The warriors are frighteningly competent but still well-rounded characters, particularly Tusk and Drask. Merros and Wollis know they're out of their depth most of the time but keep trying to hold up their end of things. Desh, the emperor's wizard, was also quite interesting, forever scheming behind the scenes. I thought Andover would wind up being more important but his thread was also an interesting one and served to reveal more of the Taalor culture.

Speaking of the Sa'Ba Taalor culture, Moore does a hell of a lot of worldbuilding in 330 pages without bogging down the rest of the book. The culture is fleshed out quite a bit but still remains mysterious enough for further books. Hint!

Without spoiling the ending, it reminds of an episode of the Twilight Zone or the Outer Limits with a kick in the crotch twist right at the end. Richard Matheson would have been proud.

James A. Moore's writing was a notch above what I was expecting, although I shouldn't have been surprised. Where does Angry Robot keep finding these writers?

That's about all I have to say. James A. Moore entertained the hell out of me with Seven Forges and also made me think. If he writes more books in this world, I'll definitely read them. Four easy stars.

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## **Luke Taylor says**

So what is Seven Forges?

With easy to digest prose and a fantastic cover, James A. Moore's Seven Forges enters the sovereign literary territory of the epic fantasy with the blunt crash of a silver metal fist, ingeniously upgrading snack-food fantasy to cinema worthy exploits. Drusk, Tusk, Swech and every single Sa'ba Taalor in the book dominate scenes with a pragmatic martial enigma displayed in mastery of combat and the code of its permanent conduct and a deeply religious lore backed by the mysterious titular mountain homes of their people.

Whilst this book is riddled with nearly whimsical fantastical elements and flat characters, Moore's tastes of combat shine in bone-rattling clatters of confusion and chaos, and the Sa'ba Taalor serve up memorable moments to any who choose to buy this satisfying Angry Robot tale with sure guarantees future books will be as good if not better than Seven Forges.

Recommended for those who want a classic but still very accessible fantasy splashed with blood and smeared with dirt, leaving your fingers numb after an all-night read.

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