



A Matter for Men

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With the human population ravaged by a series of devastating plagues, the alien Chtorr arrive to begin the final phase of their invasion. Even as many on Earth deny their existence, the giant wormlike carnivores prepare the world for the ultimate violation--the enslavement of humanity for food!

A Matter for Men Details

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From Reader Review A Matter for Men for online ebook

Red Siegfried says

David Gerrold is a goddamn genius. Let me repeat that. I want to have a civil union with David Gerrold and have his children. Perhaps then I can convince him to finish the remaining three books for this series that he has had on tap since 1992 or so.

A Matter for Men is the first book in the War Against The Chtorr series, a not-so-class story of alien invasion. This time, the story begins at the end of the world (no, it's not The Stand). After a series of plagues wipes out most of the world's population, mankind seems to be on the rebound. However, sightings of giant pink caterpillars and other equally bizarre animals are being reported and Jim McCarthy finds himself a part of a secret government military operation tasked with fighting the "worms" after being volunteered for biological research in Colorado.

Jim discovers the true extent of the worm problem - that Earth is being rapidly "terraformed" by a much more highly advanced - and hungry - ecosystem from an unknown planet, and man is no longer at the top of the food chain. What are the worms? Are they the invaders or merely a vanguard? How far will the ecological infestation go? Will man survive? And given that after the plagues most of the world is insane or given over to self indulgent nihilism, does he deserve to?

The character of Jim McCarthy is what makes this story really stand out, far more than the unusual twist on the alien invasion story. Gerrold has a talent for crafting believable near-future worlds, but the character of Jim demonstrates his growth as a writer since his early days writing for Star Trek. Having seen most of his family die in his teen years, never making peace with his father or his mother, confused over his sexuality, trying to fit in with the command at his base, trying to understand the Chtorr, and most of all, doubting his own sanity, Jim is a character with MAJOR fucking issues, to say the least. But Gerrold has a brilliant way of making Jim into not only one of the biggest dysfunctional assholes on the planet, but demonstrating his reasons for being one so that you still find him more appealing than any other character in the story. You have to read it to appreciate Gerrold's talent for writing conflicted yet likeable characters. Even when Jim's fucking up the situation once again, you can't help but wish him well. And since he's messed up in so many ways, almost everyone can find something to relate to. "Everyone's crazy," or so the catchphrase goes.

Jim still has a lot of growing up to do, and the Chtorran invasion is truly "A Matter For Men" in several ways, as the reader begins to realize from the state of the world, the state of humanity and its society, as Gerrold describes them.

Wonderful reading, if somewhat horrifying in places. Highly recommended.

Waco Glennon says

I have a long history with this book. Back in the day, I was part of the Science Fiction Book Club and I got a collected volume of the first two books in this series. I was amazed by that set. Gerrold became one of my favorite authors. Later, I learned that he wrote "The Trouble with Tribbles" episode for the original Star Trek series. I wanted to read everything he had written. But the Chtorr books disappeared. I didn't know why, but I kept trying to find the next novel or anything like them.

Several years later, I was at my favorite book store and I started to question the clerk. He had never heard of these books, but he was interested. A month later, I walked in the store and there was a display with books 1 and 2 with previously unreleased material and a notification that the third book would be out in a few months. I grabbed the books, I ran to the clerk and explained these were the books I had mentioned.

I started the books over and got even more story. Book 3 came out as promised. Gerrold announced that his "trilogy" was growing to 5 books or more. Book 4 was released. And that was it. For all these years, I have been waiting for the conclusion.

So, you GRR Martin fans, I have been through this before with Gerrold. I hope that things will continue, but for now, it was great to visit the invasion once again.

I love this book because it is so tightly woven. It has a very plausible "history." The science feels spot on. The politics are great. The action is intense. And it has what I love in my science fiction books: philosophy. What is freedom? What is responsibility? What is insanity? What is love? It is all here. I love this book. It holds up. For me, it holds up very well indeed.

Bill says

WORMS!! Enormous freakin worms from space invade Earth!!! Sounds stupid? Yeah, but boy, was I hooked on this beginning to the War Against the Chtorr! This has it all, suspense, humour, terror. I can't recommend it highly enough. Read it!

Adam says

20 page long lecture about freedom & responsibility from character even author calls "an asshole makes me look make look up other peoples think about this book at Goodreads ...ohhhh joy ... it's a "there's more lecture than book" book.

Jim N says

I just listened to the audio version of A Matter for Men, a novel I've previously read 3 times. This book and the rest of the still unfinished War Against the Chtorr series owe a debt to the work of Robert Heinlein (and Starship Troopers in particular) but Gerrold's take on alien invasion is fresh and original (even though this novel first appeared decades ago). The great twist of these novels is that the very nature of the invasion itself is a mystery. There are no massive spaceships hovering over cities. There's no advanced weaponry wielded by a hi-tech alien civilization, no contact or negotiation with an intelligent, technologically advanced alien race. Instead, Earth is being invaded by an alien ecology that slowly reveals itself and grows more complex. Its source is unknown but it is voracious and dangerous.

Much of the groundwork for subsequent entries in the series is laid in this first novel but A Matter for Men tells a satisfying story on its own too. The main character, Jim, goes through an emotional and psychological grinder almost from the very beginning and is well-developed. Some of the more philosophical and political aspects of the book may put a few readers off but they're an important part of the character development and

they help explain the form humanity's response to the invasion takes. There's even a nod to a memorable scene in King Kong!

The audio version is well-narrated by John Pruden.

I can't recommend this series enough. It remains unfinished to this day but Mr. Gerrold is still working on the rest of the series. Hopefully, those books will see print soon but even if they don't, The War Against the Chtorr is worth your time.

Ubiquitousbastard says

I first read this book when I was fifteen, and I was instantly in love. Unlike many other things in the last fourteen years, that hasn't changed. I can actually pinpoint the moment when my political leanings turned away from the Democratic party and towards libertarianism: it was reading this book. It seems silly to get influenced on politics by a sci-fi book, but the concepts of responsibility and rights as described here completely changed how I viewed government. Enough of that.

I absolutely love the way Gerrold writes. This book's subject matter could easily go into the ridiculous or cheesy, but somehow he pulls it off perfectly. His protagonist is capable, but very flawed, and the supporting characters are all very dynamic. Unlike many authors, Gerrold makes each of his characters an individual, and extremely human. Dinnie, I had forgotten about Dinnie. A minor character, but she's just fantastic.

Then there's his sarcastic sense of humor that keeps the story going even when nothing is actually happening. I never found myself bored reading this (including on my tenth re-read) because there is a good balance of character development, plot development, humor, philosophy and drama.

There are a few tiny issues, like repetitive word choice occasionally, but the flaws are so insignificant compared to this book's strengths that I couldn't give it anything but five stars.

SIDE NOTE: There is an abridged and unabridged version of this book. I've read both. The abridged version takes out most of the homosexual content (there isn't a lot), which then makes Ted's story arc a little inconsistent, and also those parts do have bearing on future books, so I actually recommend reading the unabridged version.

StoryTellerShannon says

CONCEPT: Earth has been invaded by the Chtorr culture; a mix of especially nasty and powerful beings that make up this alien ecological chain. First, 75% or more of the humans were wiped out by the plagues and now gigantic worm like creatures are further slaying people while they infest the American lands.

SCORING: **Superb (A), Excellent (A-), Very good (B+), Good (B) Fairly Good (B-) Above Average (C+), Mediocre (C), Barely Passable (C-) Pretty Bad (D+), Dismal (D), Waste of Time (D-), Into the Trash (F)**

DIALOGUE: A STRUCTURE: A HISTORY SETTING: A- CHARACTERS: A MONSTERS/ALIEN

DEVELOPMENTS: A DEEP THOUGHTS: A EVIL SETUP/ANTAGONISTS: A EMOTIONAL IMPACT: A SURPRISES: A- TECHNOLOGY: A- PACING: A LITTLE THINGS: A OVERALL STYLE: A FLOW OF WORDS: A CHOICE OF FOCUS: A TRANSITIONS/FLASHBACKS/POV: A COMPLEXITY OF WORDS/SYMBOLISM/THEMES: A

OVERALL GRADE: A

WHY IT WORKED FOR ME: First off, I was drawn in and I usually don't go for sci fi books. That simple. The means of describing such a disastrous infestation would turn most people off who don't want to read such a gloom and doom story. I have to admit that at times things seem bleak when they think of coexisting rather than eradicating the Cthorans. But the story kept driving forward and you're compelled to follow with it. Great characters, great dialogues and great writing style (see below for the latter point). This story works best for people who appreciate investigate stories and aren't afraid to read about the tumultuous emotions raging in this novel. A lot of these people are on the edge or still carrying anger around. For me, that was pretty fascinating. Gerrold revealed it no only from a scientific viewpoint (as most sci fi authors do), but also from an emotional viewpoint. Flashbacks, for the most part, connected with the current story in scope or belief. Thus, it was an easy flow. The class taught by Whitlaw was totally new to me. Now that's the way a class should be taught; not with the drones we have now in the education system.

OVERALL STYLE: Loved the dialogue (see above). Also loved the metaphors and similes . . . " . . . her head blossomed in a sudden flower of red." Or "I turned in time to see the Cthorran falling forward through a shower of glass fragments. They glittered around it like tiny sparkling stars. In one smooth movement, it poured through the glass and flowed down off the stage and into the shrieking audience. It hit the front rows like an avalanche." His play with words are magnificent. I really could feel the story flow as I read it and it never ever ever dragged (typo intended).

Matt says

Heinlein style soapboxing help mar this otherwise interesting novel about an alien invasion through xenoforming the Earth. When I read the synopsis of the this book years-ago, I was intrigued by the idea of aliens trying to change the Earth by introducing invasive species. I never tackled it though because of the length. I was surprised to see the xenoforming concept in H.G. Wells book, The War of the Worlds written in the late 19th century. This did not make it into the famous George Pal film, but it was in the more recent Spielberg/Tom Cruise movie.

The alien invasion part of the story is very good, but the novel could be about 100 pages shorter.

I was also surprised by some soapboxing about intimacy that can possibly exist between two men, and while there's nothing offensive about it to me, I have to admit it caught me off guard because the other soapboxing the novel was very Heinlein-esque, but I couldn't imagine Heinlein writing about this, although he did usually promote other types of alternate lifestyles in his work. And again, I felt this would have been better worked into the story without the soapboxing.

Also, I felt there were too many minor characters introduced throughout which just hampered getting through the novel's narrative.

Mark says

Earth is being invaded -- not by Martians wielding laser guns but by an alien ecology. The Chtorrian plants and animals are rapidly replacing Earth's native habitats, and the huge Chtorrian worms are happily munching down humans. Jim McCarthy may only have two years of biology but at least he knows which way to point a flame thrower, so he gets the job of investigating these worms at close range.

This is a great start to a series that has yet to live up to its potential. Still, this book is worth reading in itself. It is one part about the Chtorrian invasion, one part about Jim dealing with his life and trauma, and one part homage to Heinlein writing about the individual vs society (but done a bit better than Heinlein (not that difficult, of course)).

Hilmi Isa says

The cover of this novel attracted me to purchase it. As a result, after finish reading it, I'm glad and not disappointed of doing so.

The setting or background story of the novel took place in an alternated history of our world. United States of America (USA) is no longer a superpower. Due to *Moscow Treaties*, US is obliged to pay compensation to all countries affected by a devastating war which started first in the Middle East. US received a hard blow by signing the treaties, especially her military power. US armed forces has to be re-organized accordingly, which turned it into nothing more than a defense force, as the treaties dictated. Even worse, US is also struck by a deadly plagues which toll large number of its population, more than half of its population counted dead. The plague is actually an initial strike, not only to the US, to the Earth. It's a preparation for a more dangerous invasion of extraterrestrial alien called the *Chtorr*!

The main antagonist is *James McCarthy*, a.k.a., Jim. And, from his perspective, readers take a look of humans' reactions and countermeasures toward the Chtorr's threat, and also efforts to continue their survival after plague disaster. Interestingly, the author also add a political perspective on the story plot. It shows through other countries suspicion toward the rearmament of US against Chtorr. They viewed it as an excuse for US to re-establish her status as a superpower.

As a whole, this novel is an interesting read. I'm looking forward to buy sequels of the series in the future.

Kris says

I could not even finish reading this book. The author has a lot of opinions about life and he seems determined to shove them down your throat at every possibility. I love a lot of books with moral lessons or observances about life as long as they are blended into the story, but when there are entire chapters with instructors preaching about freedom and responsibility it completely ruins the story. I even happen to agree with the author about almost everything he says. It just makes for terrible fiction writing. Maybe the book eventually gets better, but I wasn't able to read past the first third of it.

Jack says

Others have more than adequately described this book, so rather than repeat them, I want to toss in one

comment that most people will probably find pedantic in the extreme. Sorry.

The premise of the book is that Earth's ecosphere is being remade, presumably by extraterrestrial agents although neither the agents, the transport and delivery systems, or any other alien technology are ever found - just lots and lots of alien biology. A nice mystery to wrap a book around.

But then the characters start talking about why the invasion is so successful - why the alien life overwhelms the native stuff in every environment. They decide, based on finding that the "Ch'torran" thingys seem to like their light a bit more red than yellow, that the answer is that the aliens are from an ecosystem that's *older* (it's got a sun that's had time to age and turn reddish, something that won't happen to our sun for a long, long time). The alien critters have had, like, a *billion years more competition* and are therefore way tougher and more macho and stuff.

This is bogus. Evolution does not work that way.

Evolutionary adaptation means adapting to local circumstances. There's no generic progress toward being more "competitive". Invasive species only succeed when they're put in an environment that's equivalent to their native habitat, minus the predators and parasites that keep them in check.

I never saw any sign that Gerrold understands this. The characters doing the speculating are supposed to be biologists, and over the course of four books no one ever corrected them.

There's a very easy handwave Gerrold could have made at that point in the story, which would be to say that all these critters must be specifically engineered to take over the Earth. No impact on the story, as far as I can recall. But he didn't, and that single fact just gets under my skin whenever I think about this book and its sequels.

Fiction State Of Mind says

This is volume One in a series 20+ years in the making! The future of an Earth recovering from the ravages of war is further imperiled by an alien invasion! Giant worm like creatures named the Ctorr (ktor) have invaded earth. This invasion not only includes attacks on the human population, but also a bizarre form of terraforming.

Every day Officers in the Special forces fight to protect the human race on a planet that is becoming more alien every day. Biology Student James Edward McCarthy is commandeered from his classroom to the front lines of the Chtorr invasion.

David Gerrold has created a wonderful SCi-Fi epic in this series. James McCarthy is our eyes in ears in this ever changing world. The Chtorr are monstrous and alien, but there is an element to them that is fascinating. As the humans learn the invasion may not be solved with guns alone they begin to investigate the living patters of the Aliens with shocking results.

The great writing and character devolpement in this book make it a timeless read. Twenty plus years later this book still has the power to move and etertain me.

For more information about this author and my 20 year journey with this series check out :

Michael says

Yeah...no. I only made it about a quarter of the way into this book. It is far too derivative of Starship Troopers. It may get better as it goes, but life is too short to spend reading shitty novels.

I do like when space aliens eat people, though.

Tripp says

I finally got my hands on a Matter for Men, the out of print, but much loved start to David Gerrold's unfinished War Against the Chtorr epic. I am quite mixed on this book. On the one hand, the sci-fi ideas in the book are great. It is an alien invasion book, but the tack Gerrold takes is novel. Rather than land in ships with tanks ablazing like World War 2 from space, this war is approached more in a guerilla fashion. The aliens impose their ecosystem on earth, slowly taking over niches so that become integrated into the ecology and that much harder to uproot. Its a neat metaphor for insurgency warfare and it isn't surprising that the initial forces sent to deal with them are Special Forces.

The political world he creates is equally fresh. In his world, the US is the 21st century Weimar, held down by the other nation's who fear its use of military power. The other nations have come, as was the case in the 1930s, to resist any call to use military power, which causes conflict in how to deal with the Chtorran invasion.

The story itself makes for great scifi reading, but the characters and the dialogue made me grit my teeth. Gerrold dedicates the book to the Heinleins and he is clearly emulating Heinlein in the book. He shows the growth of a young man into a key leadership position, but I didn't find this character development terribly convincing or interesting.

Gerrold devotes long chapters to Socratic dialogues where, for example, the main character receives his political education at the canny hands of a grizzled vet teacher. Later his gains knowledge from a series of military and political figures where he goes through the cycle of FNG rejection, to grudging respect, to eventual team membership. More than once the "I don't know whether to shoot you or promote you" cliche is rolled out. Our hero doesn't want to listen to the Man's rules or orders you see, yet he is in the military.

Then there is the depiction of women, rarely a point of strength in science fiction, but pretty bad here. We have the ice-cold leader types and the screaming hysterical types who can only speak in stream of consciousness self loathing emotionalism. The latter are particularly annoying. To be fair, the main character is given to emotional outbursts himself, but he also has a bit more nuance.

So this is a tough one. For those who can look past the warts, there is some great stuff here. Just beware.
