



The Madness Season

C.S. Friedman

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For hundreds of years, Earth has suffered under the yoke of alien conquerors: the dreaded Tyr, a reptilian race in which all individuality is submerged into a single, overarching consciousness. Determined to keep humanity cowed, the Tyr have culled from the captive population the most intelligent, the most curious, the most likely to foment rebellion, and banished them from Earth. As the memory of freedom recedes, humanity sinks into a lethargic subservience. Daetrin, the hero of this tale, is a vampire--not a monster, however, but a man, nearly immortal, who embodies the vanished virtues of a once-sovereign Earth. When his existence is exposed by the Tyr, who are appalled to find a human who witnessed the Conquest, they immediately ship him offworld. Thus begins a journey of self-discovery as Daetrin is forced by adversity to come to grips with the long-suppressed side of his nature and to confront the ancient horror of a bloody heritage.

The Madness Season Details

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Author : C.S. Friedman

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From Reader Review The Madness Season for online ebook

Kat Hooper says

4.5 stars

Originally posted at Fantasy Literature.

I am quickly becoming a fan of C.S. Friedman. Audible Frontiers has recently produced all her novels in audio format, so I snatched them up and I'm happy I did. Her science fiction is original, imaginative, and super smart.

In *The Madness Season*, a man named Daetrin is old enough to have fought in the last battle when the Earth was conquered by the aliens of Tyr. That was three hundred years ago and the Tyrians want to know how Daetrin is still alive. So they've captured him, just like they've rounded up all the humans who they think they can learn something from. The Tyr have been genetically engineering the humans who are left on Earth -- breeding out creativity, intelligence, and rebelliousness in the hopes of making them more biddable -- but some humans have found ways to resist their captors' plans. Daetrin is worried about what they intend to do with him. If he cooperates with them, will he doom the future of his own people? Should he try to find some allies and fight back? Or is it possible that there are values more important than survival?

The Madness Season showcases many of C.S. Friedman's admirable skills: inventive and perfectly leak-proof plot, excellent character development (this book contains some of my favorite Friedman characters so far), elegant writing style, a nice balance of tension and release, a touch of understated humor, and a foundation of science (math, physics, biology, comparative anatomy, neuroscience, evolution, sociology) that informs without being at all teachy.

Perhaps what I appreciate most about C.S. Friedman is that she creates wonderfully inventive worlds, species, languages, and cultures that truly feel alien rather than just variations on humanity. Friedman's aliens are so alien that they're frightening. They have different language processing equipment, different sensory systems, and completely different ways of thinking. All of their physiological and psychological details are different from ours, but Friedman uses her scientific knowledge to construct them so that they make sense. Friedman also has interesting insights and ideas about human behavior -- again, backed up by research findings about memory, perception, consciousness, sleep, etc.

Jonathan Davis, as I've said so many times before, is one of the very best audiobook narrators. As usual, he gives a terrific reading of *The Madness Season*. Even though he speaks a little too slowly (I had to increase the playback speed), Davis has perfect cadence and makes it possible to forget that we're being read to. If you see Jonathan Davis' name on the cover, you can be sure it's a good production. I highly recommend *The Madness Season* -- especially in audio format!

LenaLena says

3.5 stars

Very good up until 80% or so when the urge to fit everything neatly into a perfect little puzzle must have become too overwhelming for the author. When there is such a vast array of creatures-with-special-rules-

that-the-author-made-up, it feels really contrived if they all just *happen* to fit together so perfectly. Bow-on-top epilogue didn't help.

Still, enjoyable overall.

Crystal says

I never read the blurb for this book. So imagine my surprise when the abilities of the main character, Daetrin, were revealed. I found this book to be a real pleasure. It seems to have a quest-like storyline that is more common in fantasy novels, so that probably helped my enjoyment. I found the actual science in the book much better left unexamined, like how the Tyr communicate. But it's a really good story, and it does what science fiction should do - it makes you forget about what you think is possible and stretch your imagination. I thought there were some parts of the book that were unclear, and I'm not sure whether or not that's on purpose or because I wasn't reading carefully enough.

I am also a little surprised at the ending. (view spoiler) I also thought the book could use more humor. But overall, I really enjoyed the book and it made me want to read more of Friedman's work.

Legsoffury says

I must say, I really enjoy C.S. Friedman character creation. This is certainly not a sci-fi book, despite the "space" exploration and the picture of the spaceship on the front. It doesn't focus on science nearly enough to be a sci-fi....and actually that is part of what I like about it. So if you are a sci-fi fan, you may be a little peaved by some of the logical contradictions.

I enjoyed losing myself in the context and the characters and tried not to pay too much attention to the fine details. If you do that, you will be on the right track to really enjoying this read.

I just finished it before this writing and my mind is divided. I want more...yet I'm afraid more would inevitably make the inconsistencies difficult to ignore.

In the end, I suppose it's a good thing this story comes in a single novel.

Kaydee says

Boring....

???

I tried really hard to find a heart beat in this story. It's this month's book club selection and I pushed myself to halfway through it and then skimmed the rest. It had such great potential to be something but it lacked substance. The main character is emotional unavailable and monologues 90% of the book. Good grief! He is an individual that can't express himself if he got a paper cut.

Rae says

What can I say about a vampire book where the one and only time the word "Vampire" is used is on page 157. This is one of my all-time favorite books in the SF-Vampire category.

Melinda says

This is one of my all-time favorite sci-fi books. It's been read many times and it always stands up. I don't think this author has written a better one since this came out. That good!

Dirk Grobbelaar says

I drank it in until the last glimmer of twilight had faded, and the light of a thousand alien stars blazed furiously against the stark black backdrop of the [] night. A thousand brilliant points of light that burned my eyes as I stared at them, and filled me with the wonder of their power and beauty—as well as my own vulnerability.

This is one of those Space Opera novels that is predominantly character driven, with some philosophical and anthropological aspects. A curious marriage of golden age space opera and new wave sensibility. Despite the overarching themes of conquest and insurrection the military action is kept to a minimum. The focus is on subterfuge and strategy. So: even though the book isn't **immediately** rewarding, once it starts giving up its revelations (a little bit here, a little bit there) you will find yourself unable to put it down.

And frankly, some of these revelations are quite astounding:

"No." My voice was a hoarse whisper, emotionless. Divorced from the turmoil inside me, the rage and despair and indignation and fury all combined, all mixed up and burning inside me until I lowered my head and shook like a leaf in a storm, overcome by the force of it.

As the story develops, additional POV characters and locations are introduced, creating the very real sense that the story is expanding and expanding. This forms a parallel to the protagonist's character development as he learns more and more about himself and his place in the universe.

Also: **Aliens**: the ones featured here are truly interesting, in particular the *Marra* who is described, at one point, as "no more than sentient chaos" (in order to truly understand this in context you would have to read the book). Fantastic stuff all round.

He tried not to remember the green fields and open skies of his native planet. There was too much pain in that, in knowing that he could never go home. Transfer him they might, but never to Earth. That was the Law.

So, in conclusion, a remarkable story, and one that I enjoyed a lot more than I initially expected. I didn't think I would enjoy the folklore / monster mythology elements that are pretty much at the heart of the book

(given the drivel churned out in the last few years, dealing with similar themes), but in the context of the story everything comes together quite well.

An easy 4 stars.

You are the unknown. The alien. Their nightmare, come to life.

Cait says

This book is just amazing; every time I re-read it I am just as invested in the characters, their growth, and their individual pieces of the whole story as I was the very first time, if not more so. I would love for there to be *more* of this book, but at the same time I could never give up the perfect ending.

I'm also caught between the urge to do a thorough thematic review and talk about this story's use of gender, religion, memory, civilization, etc., and the urge to spoil you for *nothing*, so I will say no more today.

J. ʘ_ (?) _/ says

From the "so crazy it just might work" shelf.

I loved this book. I've been busy so it took me far too long to finish, but every time I came back I fell right back in. I liked the style, the story, the characters and the narration was excellent. Most sci-fi is plagued with flat characters, it's something sci-fi fans have learned to live with. This is not the case with Friedman's characters, they are lively, well rounded and you learn to appreciate even the ones you don't like.

You can't tell people you're reading a book about a vampire in space, because they assume you're 14 years old, but the book is so much more mature than that. It is very beautifully written.

I will definitely be reading more books by C.S. Friedman.

Side Notes: I can usually tell fairly quickly whether an author is male or female, I was sure this author was male and wouldn't have second guessed myself had I not seen otherwise in someone's review. I hope that isn't sexist, I don't mean for it to be and I'm not really sure what it says for the author's style, but I really enjoyed it.

Christ's name was taken in vain several times. I hope I never reach a point where I'm not repulsed by that. Religion in general is also made light of, but welcome to science fiction.

Update: Second listen. Great book.

Tammie says

2.5 stars. This was our book club read for September, and this book is not something I would have picked up

on my own, although the idea behind it sounded a bit intriguing. The main character, Daetrin has a secret that he is keeping from the alien race that conquered earth 300 years ago. He's a vampire type creature who has been alive for centuries. One day the aliens come and take him and he realizes he's been found out. This sets into motion a whole lot of events. I won't go into what they all are in my review, but I will say that at times I found this book interesting and likable, and at other times it was a dry and boring read. There were points where I skimmed text that did not further the plot.

I like the addition of the other alien races, especially the Mara. They were interesting to me and I kept reading, wanting to know more about them. I also wanted to know more about Daetrin and whether he was really a vampire or if his origins were from another alien race. To be honest I don't know if this was ever really answered in a clear concise way, but maybe I missed something. I did find myself zoning out a few times as I read and listened to this. I did like the resolution to the problem of the other aliens who had conquered earth, but was also a bit horrified by something that happened after that.

The most annoying thing about the book was the way the story jumped from one perspective to another, or back in time with no warning. There were characters I wanted to like and almost did, but unfortunately I never really felt much of a connection to any of them like I wanted to. I liked the very end, it even employed some humor, which was a surprise since this book was not a humorous book. I think that's what the book is missing though. It needed some humor thrown in here and there to lighten it a little.

Overall this was just an ok read for me. I feel like there was a little too much going on in the story with the dystopian type world conquered by aliens, the vampire-like creatures, and plotting by other aliens.

Review also posted at Writings of a Reader

Fantasy Literature says

4.5

I am quickly becoming a fan of C.S. Friedman. Audible Frontiers has recently produced all her novels in audio format, so I snatched them up and I'm happy I did. Her science fiction is original, imaginative, and super smart.

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<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

Andrew Zink says

I'm not a vampire/werewolf nut by any means but I was intrigued by the cross-over idea of mixing in a true

sci-fi element. This was a surprisingly engaging read. The plot in short--several centuries after Earth has been conquered by an alien race they find a long-lived human they can't explain. Turns out he's a vampire, but one who understands his genetic condition and has tamed it with science, until he is banished off world and has to deal with his body and needs returning to their normal state.

There really isn't a lot of action in this book, which normally I need to stay interested in something... sooner or later **something** has to happen to somebody beyond conversation. But there isn't much of that here, and it didn't stop me from gliding through the whole story pretty quickly.

The vampire lead character knows what he is and scientifically *why* his body needs what it needs, and has developed supplements to satisfy those needs without killing. But when he's kicked off Earth he no longer has access to those things and he begins to regress. You feel bad for the guy, and get drawn in by how he copes.

And then of course there are a small group of humans remaining who actually have a chance to reclaim their freedom (scientists working at the leisure of the alien conquerors), and eventually our hero finds a way to help.

In the end I really enjoyed this somewhat casually paced tale.

Stephen says

4.5 stars. Excellent blending on science fiction and monster mythology (don't want to say more and give away the surprise). Another superb novel by a terrific writer.

caracal-eyes says

Not my favorite book ever, but I give it many, many points for originality. Somehow, the author combines hive-mind aliens; more aliens; non-embodied entities; shapeshifters (more than one type, at that); vampires; Earth's takeover, and the aftermath; a fight for the salvation of the human race; a multiple-planet, interstellar setting; and probably several things I've forgotten. And, somehow, it works. It works well. All these things are mixed together and an intriguing, actually coherent story comes out of it. I mean, a book involving humanity's enslavement by aliens and a vampiric protagonist is either going to be an enthusiastic mess or well worth reading. Obviously, this is the latter.
