

Invasion: Eris

Penny L. Samms

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Humor, especially witty alien dialogue, adds a nice counterpoint to the tense drama and action of this science fiction showdown.

The second book of the Chuck, Yu, and Farley series, Penny L. Samms's *Invasion: Eris* blends action, drama, and comedy for a lighthearted young adult science fiction adventure story rife with dancing aliens, interdimensional travel, and tense interspecies diplomacy.

After the events of *Invasion: Earth*, humanity struggles to survive ongoing attacks from a relentless race of starving aliens. An emotional funeral for a close friend prompts Chuck, Yu, and Farley to gather the colonists of Eris to formulate a plan of attack.

A small rescue mission to Earth goes awry, losses stack up, and a bigger battle looms on the horizon as the aliens shift tactics. Fortunately, stragglers from the aliens' previous battles attempt to align themselves with humanity and offer a glimmer of hope.

World building is strong, especially for alien races. The evil aliens start out as blatant monsters who blindly attack humanity. Over the course of the book, their backstory and connection to humanity is fleshed out, making them almost sympathetic. The reasons behind the attacks and the devouring of humans play heavily into the plot.

Humor adds a nice counterpoint to the tense drama and action. Dialogue between aliens benefits from witty remarks. Slapstick antics also prevent the story from becoming too dark. In an especially funny moment, a small group lands on Earth and dons exaggerated mustaches, concocting an elaborate ruse to cover their search of a local house.

Human characters aren't constructed with as much depth. Most offer little emotional connection. Their dialogue tends to be awkward and forced, despite the thrilling action unfolding around them.

A few glaring plot holes strain the story, as with the readiness with which the "bad" aliens respond to their captives' requests for food and clothing. Their seemingly endless supplies raise the question of how it is that they are starving, when so much seems available to them.

Invasion: Eris works best within its series; as a standalone, it is harder to understand. Without reading the previous book, the large cast of humans and aliens is difficult to follow. Pivotal events are mentioned briefly, but not within context of current events.

The adventure in *Eris* stops abruptly, without a decent resolution. Rather than reading as a cliffhanger for the next book, the story feels unfinished.

Invasion: Eris contains strongly developed adversaries, thundering action, and surprisingly moral conflicts. Aimed at young adult audiences, there is enough drama and action here to appeal to readers of all ages.

JOHN M. MURRAY (July 18, 2017)

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