



The Legend of Adam Caine

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In *The Legend of Adam Caine*, the title character is a former Marine who has taken up the mundane life of a London theater usher. It's 2006 and Caine is on his way to work, peacefully reading an action-adventure novel taking the "tube," when he finds himself immersed once more in the world of combat. Among Adam's fellow commuters—a medal-bedecked retired veteran, a pair of lovers, two Royal Air Force officers, two police constables—is an "Operative," an agent from a far-off world who transports the occupants of the subway car to a domain ruled by creatures that look like human-sized birds. The Operative has time-traveled from the future, sent to find humans to examine.

Author John Charles Scott's story moves quickly. By page thirty, the kidnapped humans are the subject of grotesque experiments, some physically barbaric, others involving virtual travel to the past. The frail old veteran is transported back to D-Day and Operation Overlord, while the two air force pilots are transported to the Falklands War, a battle from before their time. Confusion reigns.

Fans of *Star Trek* and other fabled alien-world adventures will find all the familiar genre elements. There is an alien race whose mission is to kill, conquer, and rule. There are laser and plasma weapons, tractor beams and holograms, and energy shields and teleportation. There are *Linkways* and cloning. There is every manner of creature, device, and battle foreseen by the likes of Robert Heinlein or Isaac Asimov.

The Legend of Adam Caine isn't bedtime reading. The battle scenes in particular are rendered within the same "fog of war" confusion apparent in a real war. In fact, keeping track of the various ships—*Plior Runner, Enterprise, Wolf Brother, King's Herald, Wisconsin, Atlantis—and the battles fought might require a scorecard. This book is science fiction amplified, with freeways of time travel, creatures with assorted attributes, and esoteric references: "...mercenary ship out of the Spider Galaxy...dropped out of FTL speed...planet Fayde, an independent star system on the edge of the Andromeda galaxy."

While requiring close attention, the book will appeal to genre fans and readers who enjoy extraordinarily complex plotting and heavy exposition.

The engineer had only a few seconds to take this in when one of the red-armoured aliens raised its rifle, and shot him with a bright pulse of energy. It hit him in the chest, and vaporised a large chunk of flesh, bone, and internal organs.

The Legend of Adam Caine isn't book-club literature. And it doesn't pretend to be. It is science fiction, packed with more action, more aliens, more laser battles, more victims, villains, and heroes, and more time travel than any ten episodes of *Star Trek*. At more than 700 pages, it will keep a science-fiction fan busy for weeks.

GARY PRESLEY (June 2, 2011)

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