



Duel: Terror Stories

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Remember that murderous semi chasing Dennis Weaver down a lonely stretch of desert highway?

Duel, Steven Spielberg's acclaimed first film, was adapted by Richard Matheson from his unforgettable story of the same name.

But "Duel" is only one of the classic suspense tales in this outstanding collection of stories by the Grand Master of Horror, which also contains Matheson's legendary first story, "Born of Man and Woman," as well as several stunning shockers that inspired memorable episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, including "Little Girl Lost," "Steel," and "Third from the Sun."

Like Matheson's previous collection, *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet*, this collection is an indispensable treasure trove of terror from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *I Am Legend* and *What Dreams May Come*.

Duel: Terror Stories Details

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Author : Richard Matheson , Ray Bradbury

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Alondra says

3 Star

I started this book with such anticipation, because it is by one of the masters. humpf. *Duel*, I remember as a cheesy 70s movie put out by Stephen Spielberg, and I loved it. *Duel*, *Lover when you're near me* and *Being* were all pretty good; but the rest fell flat. This book reads like *Twilight Zone* for dummies. Cheesy story-lines; no surprises and no happy endings. *TZ* was a great show, but nothing scary; very "saltine crackers." *Duel* is the Saltines to the buttery-flavored Ritz of *I am Legend*; which is a pure classic. If you like a little cheese with your saltines, you will like this book. If you are a fan of Matheson's *I am Legend*, *Hell House* and even *Stir of Echoes*; then this book is a letdown.

This is just my opinion; no hard feelings, eh?

Raegan Butcher says

Excellent collection of freaky stories from one of the masters. Anyone interested in the art of writing fiction should read Richard Matheson.

Rebecca McNutt says

Duel is an eerie novel full of surprises, a collection of creepy stories that each reflect very heavy themes in their text.

Jordan Anderson says

I know that Matheson is widely regarded as one of the best in the horror/sci-fi short story genre and, of course, he's the author of some of the most well-respected works such as *I Am Legend* and *Hell House*, as well as a plethora of other short stories that have been optioned for films and episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. I know he's one of Stephen King's greatest influences and I also know that *any* fan of either of the genres Matheson writes in, should be familiar with his name and the majority of the books. Unfortunately, all of that fame and overall love just doesn't translate well in the collection of *Duel*.

First off, this book is ridiculously misleading, claiming the entire collection is one of "terror". Not a single story within its pages are really that terrifying. I get that being chased by a crazy big rig driver would be scary, and the thought of being fed to an alien race is also in the same vein, but I would never regard any of the stories here in the true "horror" genre. Aside from the titular tale, in fact, every single short story is easily grouped into the "sci-fi" genre...and the more speculative sub-genre at that, as, once again, aside from "Duel", not one story was written past 1956. In that same argument, "Duel" itself doesn't even fit in with the rest of the collected works here as it's more of a thriller than any others.

Also, the vast majority of the stories aren't even that good. Yes, they are all well written (with the exception of "Born of Man and Woman") and tell decent tales, but of the 18 collected stories, only 4 were really worth my time. "Duel" (duh), "Death Ship", "The Last Day" and "Being", being among the only ones I personally enjoyed.

Obviously, others have heaped tons of praise on this, and other Matheson collections (and I agree that *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet* is a much better example of Matheson's skill), so I understand that giving such a averaged out review for this book might be a little low. Matheson is, like I side, famous for what he brought to the literary table in terms of story and concepts, and we wouldn't have many of the tropes and themes we have today if it wasn't for him, however, I would go forward with saying *Duel* is not the shining example of the talent and skill this author is known for. Take this one with a grain of salt. For its influence and classic standing, yeah, it's understandable, but for actual enjoyment and fun, I'd suggest trying one of the other collections...

Nancy says

When I borrowed this from the library, I was expecting spine-tingling horror stories. What I got instead was a collection of sci-fi short stories with elements of horror from the 1950's, except for the title story which was written in the early 70's. To my surprise, the stories were good to excellent. Matheson is an excellent writer and I'm looking forward to *I Am Legend*.

Bradley says

Brilliant collection of Matheson stories, mostly from the 1950s. Matheson's creative peak was during the 1950s to the 70s and here it shows. Many would consider the stories 'Sci-Fi' than 'Terror' (as stated on the front cover) but ignore the fact that they are tales of terror as well. What I love about a Matheson story is his ability to evoke genuine emotion into his characters, regardless of the situation. That can be felt across all his stories here, particularly *Duel*, *Last Days*, and *Trespass*.

Some of the stories would be considered dated by some but is that really justifiable criticism? I mean, it's a product of the time and he's an author, not a real clairvoyant. As long as the stories have interesting and creative ideas who cares if he didn't predict the I-Pad!

My favourite stories are *Duel*, *F-*, and *Last Days* however most in this book are top notch.

Andrea Blythe says

I loved *I am Legend*, which was an amazing twist on the vampire genre and had an ending that wasn't happy, per se, but had me grinning from ear to ear. This collection of short stories, however, was not so great. At best I will say they were okay. Most of the stories were written in the late fifties through the sixties, which explains the old fashioned style of the stories, most particularly the reliance on withholding important information to deliver a "surprise," which is not so surprising because you're looking for it. The stories rely heavily on idea, rather than character, which is not so much my cup of tea.

The title story, "Duel," is interesting because it was made into Stephen Spielberg's first film of the same title. The story itself, about a salesman driving cross country and getting into a life threatening situation with a nameless truck driver, was just okay. I haven't seen the movie, but I am curious about and want to see it so I can make the comparison with the story.

"Return" was the first story in the collection I really enjoyed. It involves time travel, and a man who desperately wants to return to his own time and his pregnant wife. The twist ending works here, because of its emotional impact (as opposed to intellectual impact).

"Lover When You're Near Me" was a disturbing tale about a man managing work on an alien planet. An alien woman is assigned to help him as a kind of maid. She communicates via telepathy and becomes like a grasping leech, trying to dominate the man's mind and make him her lover. While this story is sufficiently disturbing to be entertaining, one of the most disturbing aspects of the story for me was not what happens to the poor man, so much as it's the way the female aliens have turned the men of their planet into mindless drones. The female aliens are seen as grasping, desperate, manipulative, man-devourers, sucking out a man's freewill to make them theirs. And while these are alien women, there is no doubt that this is a not so subtle commentary on women in general, which I find unsettling.

"SRL AD" was a funny story about answering personal ads from aliens. It made me smile.

"The Last Day" was great. It was a bitter sweet story of returning home before the end of the world.

The last story in the book, "Steel," was kind of fun and reminded me a bit of the movie "Real Steel," mostly because they both have fighting robots with an owner desperately trying to make just a tiny bit of money from whatever fights he can. The similarities story and movie end there, however.

There were many other stories interspersed with the ones I mentioned, and none of them stood out in my mind for particular note. I am not put off Matheson, however. I think I just shy away from his short stories and stick to his longer works. I'm rather interested to read *Hell House*, or *What Dreams May Come*, or *A Stir of Echoes*, for example.

Becky says

I think it's a bad sign when I feel like my own rating is unfair to the book. =\

The first book of Matheson's that I had ever read was *I Am Legend*, which to this day is still my favorite. The stories in that book were wonderful, and quite a few have stayed with me to this day. Then I read *What Dreams May Come*, and while I didn't necessarily agree with the ideological aspect, the writing was great. So, coming into this book, I had pretty high expectations, and I feel like I was let down, a little.

These stories are definitely more science fiction than horror, which was another little let down. Don't get me wrong, I love science fiction too, but I was hoping for *horror*, and I didn't really get it.

That being said, the stories here were mostly good, with some that rose a bit higher, and some that faltered. The only one that just did not work for me at all was "When The Waker Sleeps". This one was written in second person narrative, and you tried and tried to get into the story, but no matter how hard you tried, you couldn't get past the personification of "you" being a brown-haired male wearing a tunic and tights getting

into a car to go fight off some *thing* that was supposedly endangering your machines. Yeah. Really. I think this one was probably an experiment for Matheson... Second person narrative is extremely difficult to do right, even by someone as talented as Matheson is. Tried three times, then I moved on.

If I had to choose a favorite, I would probably have to pick either "Return" or "One For The Books". Oddly enough, both of these are halves of two story related sets. "Return" and "F---" both featured the same main character and same theme, although they are very different stories themselves. "Trespass" and "One For The Books" have the same theme and... "purpose" I guess you could say, although there is nothing else similar in the stories at all.

Actually, now that I'm thinking about it, I'd have to add "The Test" to my list of favorites. This is a kind of "Death Panel" story as elderly people are given a set of memory, aptitude, physical and mental tests in order to determine whether they are high-functioning enough to be allowed to live another 5 years until the next test. It deals with the sociological issues that might arise from that kind of situation, or the lack thereof. It could be quite prophetic, you never know.

"Born of Man and Woman" is rather short, and a little bit haunting. There are no real details given, but from what we're able to deduce from the narration, our narrator lives a cruel existence. I found it to be very sad, and actually wished that the story was longer so that I could understand better. I felt like this one was rushed, not fully fleshed out. But, maybe that was on purpose. Our narrator only told what they knew, little though it may be.

"Brother to the Machine" was an interesting one, and was kind of similar to "Steel" (which I believe was made into a Twilight Zone episode), but I am not sure if they are actually related. Could be. "Brother" is about a robot who feels human, and examines what humanity really is.

I'm not going to go into all of the stories. I liked most of them, but I never really felt compelled to read this one as I felt compelled to read other Matheson, and other authors' works. I would definitely recommend it to science fiction fans, as Matheson is a must-read, in my opinion, but this is not his best, again in my opinion.

Kirstie says

Originally posted on my blog:
<https://catladyreviews.wordpress.com/>

I have just started reading *Duel* and have found myself pleasantly surprised by how sci-fi focused it is. I have previously read *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet* and *I am Legend* and find myself growing ever fonder of Matheson's work and particularly like his sci-fi writing. I just finished *Third From The Sun*, the second story in the collection, and can't stop thinking about it so thought I would write a short review.

Third From The Sun is the story of a man trying to escape earth before a world war breaks out and the human race is obliterated. He plans to use the ship that he often works with to fly him, his family and their neighbours to a planet in a different solar system where they can carry on the human race.

There are two key factors of this story I particularly like. The first is the sense of urgency but also uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of war. This story was first published during the Cold War and the fear of nuclear destruction is clear in Matheson's characterisation of the husband who clearly sees leaving earth as not only

their one chance but also the only chance for mankind. The uncertainty surrounding this comes from the lack of information given about the war he is theorising about and his wife nervousness about leaving. He doesn't know when war will break out he is just sure that it will. I don't know about anyone else but when I read this I immediately started to think that he had somehow been brainwashed into thinking that the destruction of mankind was imminent and that it was his mission to save his family and his species.

This man on a mission vibe was also given by the second element I liked about this story, which was the emphasis on how cold and calculating he was being. No names are referred to in this story everyone is either "the children", "his wife" or "the neighbours", which really gives the feeling that these are simply the people who will carry on the human race. This is particularly clear in the case of the neighbours whom they don't seem to know that well, as they are worried that their cover story of going to his work to see him off on another test flight won't hold up with them being there. This means they aren't even close friends with the people they are traveling to another planet with. Matheson shows that the neighbours are only coming to be bred with and create the next generation of humans. This cold way of thinking is also shown by the fact they don't even name the planet that will be becoming their home, it's simply referred to as the planet "third from the sun".

I think this little 10 page story is a great example of how much depth Matheson's writing can have and how he can always leave you wanting more. I rather wish that there was a prequel or a sequel to this story perhaps about how his fear of another war became so great or what happened once they left earth. I plan to watch The Twilight Zone Adaptation of this one as they tend to be pretty good, Nightmare at 20,000 feet being my favourite so far.

Jordan says

Christmas gift from Sarah. An excellent collection of eighteen short stories. My favorites:

“Duel”—A man on a business trip through remote California desert finds himself in an inexplicable, violent struggle with a trucker.

“Steel”—In a future (1994) in which human boxing has been outlawed, a has-been boxer, now owner of a has-been android boxer, becomes desperate when his only bout in months threatens to fall through.

“Lover When You’re Near Me”—A representative of an intergalactic trading outfit is slowly creeped out, smothered, and finally driven insane because of his telepathic alien housekeeper. Probably the ickest plot twist in the book.

“Trespass”—A man returns from a six-month expedition to South America to learn that his wife is one month pregnant. Not only does she insist she hasn't committed adultery, she immediately develops strange symptoms that suggest this baby is not what it seems. The genuinely creepiest story in the whole book. Read at midnight and was afraid I wouldn't be able to sleep.

“The Last Day”—On the day the world is going to end thanks to some unexplained astronomical disaster (Matheson seems to hint that the sun is going supernova), an unbelieving young man leaves the aftermath of an orgiastic party to reconnect with his devoutly religious mother.

“Being”—A blend of *The Blob*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (although it

predates all of those). A young couple traveling through the Arizona desert are kidnapped by a grieving WWII vet who has been forced to serve a ravenous alien intelligence.

“Little Girl Lost”—In the middle of the night, a couple hear their toddler crying and get up to check on her, only to discover that she has inadvertently fallen out of bed into another dimension. Adult fear? And how.

“Srl Ad”—An epistolary short story. How often do you see those? A smart aleck college boy answers a personal ad from a woman claiming to be from Venus and gets more than he bargained for. The outright funniest story in the book, although it still manages a striking degree of pathos.

“Shipshape Home”—A couple begin to suspect that their apartment building and their creepy janitor may be up to no good. They turn out to be horribly right.

These are just my favorites. All of them are good.

All of the stories come from the period 1950-56, with the exception of “Duel,” which was published in *Playboy* in 1971. One wonders if anyone actually read it.

A number were later adapted into episodes of “The Twilight Zone,” including “Little Girl Lost,” “Third From the Sun,” “Death Ship,” and “Steel.” (Matheson also wrote the original short story and teleplay for the famous Shatner episode “Terror at 20,000 Feet.”) It’s easy to see why Matheson was a good fit for the show—his stories show a thoroughgoing interest and trust in science with an honest acknowledgement of its limitations, and therefore a certain kind of reenchantment of the world through the uncanny and unexplained. I liked that, very often, he doesn’t bother with internet nerd-style explanations of the phenomena in his stories.

Matheson had an outstanding command of atmosphere, especially considering how lean and spare his style was. While most of the stories in this volume aren’t horror, really, they’ll all get their hooks in you in one way or another—whether by upsetting, surprising, or disturbing.

Highly recommended.

Joe says

Forget the "Terror Stories..." subtitle on this book. It is primarily a collection of science fiction stories of a distinctly 1950s character. With the exception of the title story, "Duel", which was the seed for Spielberg's first film, it could all be called sci-fi, though in some cases sci-fi of a scary nature. Some are quite charming to read as period pieces that highlight themes popular in science fiction at the time

Many of these may read like old episodes of The Twilight Zone for reasons that go beyond the fact that at least three of them did become episodes of The Twilight Zone. Teleplay-like seems to be the nature of Matheson's writing style. It is almost as if he wrote them with the intent of eventually having them filmed. It's a style that treats the reader to a very smooth and professional feeling story, but which tends to lack that occasional raw edge that good thrillers sometimes have. If you prefer slick and well-polished to edgy Matheson is your kind of writer. If it's raw you want look elsewhere.

I most enjoyed the two stories that drifted furthest from this style, "The Last Day" and "The Test", in which

the characters exhibit very human reactions to very extreme conditions.

Kylie Abbey says

Personal Opinion:

This book had a very interesting collection of suspenseful tales, each one better than the last. Most are snippets from known books. I think that this was a very good collection, and enjoyed reading every page.

Plot Summary:

(This was tricky to do, so I did the plot of the first snippet.)

Dennis Weaver was in his car driving back to his motel, when a semi pulled up beside him. Dennis drove slower, thinking the trucker wanted to pull ahead. Instead, the semi slowed down and followed Dennis. Gradually, the semi picked up speed forcing Dennis to also pick up speed, or be run over. This then issued a chase along a stretch of lonely desert highway. Dennis was frightened and pulled over at a truck stop, grabbed a bite to eat, then panicked. The trucker was in the truck stop watching Dennis and the semi was parked outside. Dennis left immediately, but the murderous semi followed, and so it began again.

Recommendation:

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys short stories of horror, and sci-fi. It is a great read for those who get bored reading a FULL story/book. It will keep your mind and eyes open.

Lauren Stoolfire says

I've seen a lot of Richard Matheson's work in movies and tv, but this is the first time I've actually read his short stories. I primarily picked up this collection because it includes "Duel" which is Spielberg's first movie and one of my favorites. It's great to see how it originally appeared even if Matheson adapted the screenplay a little differently - I can't believe that Mann (with two Ns) actually sees the trucker's face. I really enjoyed both formats and seeing the differences in them. Some other favorites from this collection include "Third From The Sun", "F-", "Shipshape Home" (Peter Lorre gets mentioned!), "The Last Day", "Little Girl Lost" (adapted into a great *Twilight Zone* episode), "Trespass" (pretty sure that baby was a little Time Lord!), and "One For The Books".

Aaron says

A man is stalked while driving cross country by a mysterious semi driver. The foreman of a galactic factory is harassed romantically by his alien housekeeper. A woman discovers a hidden engine room in the basement of her apartment building. Three astronauts explore a crashed spacecraft and find their own corpses. A man questions whether his unborn child is of human origin. A married couple are attacked and held hostage by a dangerous man forced into twice-weekly sacrifices to a gelatinous monster. In the future, the population is controlled by eliminating any elderly who cannot pass a written test and physical.

These synopses are the descriptions of just seven of the absolutely incredible stories in this collection by

Richard Matheson. Matheson is probably best known for his television work (namely, "Star Trek" and "The Twilight Zone"), but he left behind a remarkable catalog of horror and science-fiction (including the books upon which "I Am Legend" and "What Dreams May Come" are based). If I have a complaint, it would be that the subtitle "terror stories" is misleading. Only three of these stories are straight horror stories. The rest are hard science-fiction with minor elements of horror.

That complaint, though, is very small. If this collection alone is any indication, Matheson has earned the accolades and praise bestowed upon him after his death.

Rob says

This is one and a half hours of heart pumping adrenaline.

One car with a driver and one truck, driver unseen. That's all there is folks. Add to that Road rage on the extreme. One and a half hours later and I was exhausted.

This was the story that Stephen Spielberg used for his first feature movie.

If you haven't already, read the story and see the movie. Doesn't matter in what order as Spielberg replicates the story exactly.

A classic

5 stars all the way
