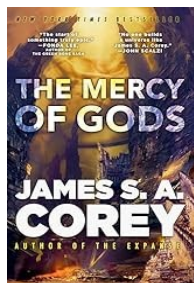




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Mercy of Gods
By James S.A. Corey
Discussed September 2026

Characters

The Research Team

- Dafyd Alkhor
- Tonner Freis
- Else Yannin
- Jessyn Kaul
- Campar
- Rickar Daumatin
- Irinna
- Synnia
- Nol

Other Humans

- Jellit Kaul
- Urrys Ostencour

Aliens

- Carryx, large aliens with mantis-like “feeding arms”, conquering and either absorbing or destroying all species in their path
- Sinen, a cross between a goat and a cuttlefish, a subservient species used as messengers
- Slow Lothark, humanoid with long limbs, fur, and wide mouths; a subservient species used as soldiers
- Rak-Hund, centipede-like, a subservient species used as soldiers
- Night Drinkers, a monkey-like captive species
- The Swarm, a system of networked nanomachines, used as a spy by the Enemy
- The Deathless Enemy, the unknown enemy at war with the Carryx

Discussion Questions

Tradition

- Did you finish the book? Did you like it?

Power and Subjugation

- The Nature of Empire: How does the Carryx empire’s bureaucratic and pragmatic approach to conquering species differ from traditional “evil empire” tropes in science fiction?
- Survival vs. Morality: Dafyd Alkhor starts as a low-level research assistant and is forced into impossible choices. At what point does compromise for survival turn into active collaboration with an oppressor?

- **A Series of Betrayals:** Multiple characters/groups sacrifice others' well-being for their own advantage, with increasing consequences. As the stakes/betrayals grow in scope, did it change how you felt about the characters and/or groups involved?
 - Rickard betraying the research team to secure
 - The Swarm destroying its hosts in order to infiltrate the Carryx's territory
 - The Carryx sending troops to die to gain advantage against the Enemy
 - The Enemy planting an entire species as a trap for the Carryx
 - Dafyd betraying Urrys's rebellion in order to save the other humans of Anjiin and help the Swarm
- **The Burden of Utility:** The Carryx value species only for their specific utility or biological advantages. How does this instrumental view of life affect the characters' sense of personal identity and human dignity?

Resistance and Agency

- **Micro-Resistance:** When faced with an overwhelmingly superior alien hegemony, how do human characters find avenues to exert agency? What forms does resistance take when open rebellion is suicidal? Were the actions here believable?
- **The Role of Knowledge:** The narrative highlights the ironic terror of academic and scientific research being weaponized by alien overlords. Intellectual labor is reframed as both a shackle and a potential tool for liberation - are they going to outsmart the Carryx?
- **Allies and Factions:** Discuss the introduction of external entities like the Swarm or covert elements within the captive moieties. Can these alliances ever be trusted, or are humans merely pawns in a larger cosmic war?

Potpourri:

- **Power Imbalance:** Can individuals and entire species maintain a sense of agency, identity, and personhood when subjected to an overwhelmingly powerful and indifferent alien hegemony like the Carryx?
- **Pragmatic Survival:** Dafyd Alkhor is forced into making deeply compromised, utilitarian choices to ensure humanity's literal survival. At what point does the compromise required to survive destroy the very culture or humanity you are trying to save?
- **Medical and Physical Vulnerability:** The authors weave intimate struggles—such as Jessyn running out of essential medication—into a galactic-scale conflict, reflecting real-world “just-in-time” supply frailties. Does this work for you?
- **Sexuality:** The only sex we know of at this time is Dafyd and Tonner with Else, and Rickard with one of the other survivors; Compar is clearly gay by our standards, and Jessyn flirts with same sex attraction. What did you think of this post-earth sexuality milieu?
- **A Matter of Perspective:** The book primarily uses several third-person POV characters (Dafyd, Jessyn, the Swarm) but includes other characters on a limited basis. Did you find the shifting of viewpoints helpful or confusing?
- **The Nature of the Enemy:** Considering fan and theoretical discussions regarding the Carryx's own mysterious, unseen adversary, how does the dynamic change if humanity's ultimate salvation—or hidden past—is intertwined with the very force the Carryx are fighting? Is that just *Deus ex machina*?
- **Last But Not Least:** Would you read the rest of the *Captive's War* trilogy?