



Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain

A. Lee Martinez

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Emperor Mollusk.

Intergalactic Menace. Destroyer of Worlds. Conqueror of Other Worlds. Mad Genius. Ex-Warlord of Earth.

Not bad for a guy without a spine.

But what's a villain to do after he's done . . . everything. With no new ambitions, he's happy to pitch in and solve the energy crisis or repel alien invaders should the need arise, but if he had his way, he'd prefer to be left alone to explore the boundaries of dangerous science. Just as a hobby, of course.

Retirement isn't easy though. If the boredom doesn't get him, there's always the Venusians. Or the Saturnites. Or the Mercurials. Or . . . well, you get the idea. If that wasn't bad enough, there's also the assassins of a legendary death cult and an up-and-coming megalomaniac (as brilliant as he is bodiless) who have marked Emperor for their own nefarious purposes. But Mollusk isn't about to let the Earth slip out of his own tentacles and into the less capable clutches of another. So it's time to dust off the old death ray and come out of retirement. Except this time, he's not out to rule the world. He's out to save it from the peril of THE SINISTER BRAIN!

Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain Details

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Author : A. Lee Martinez

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From Reader Review Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain for online ebook

Ed Nemo says

That's right, I gave it 5 stars. I loved the main character. I completely understood his motivation and the story unfolded beautifully. I found myself reading particularly funny segments to my wife. I love books written from a different perspective. The anti-hero has been done to death. This is the story of the unapologetic former conqueror of earth, Emperor Mollusk. And I love him for it.

Bradley says

Totally satisfying. :)

I was just saying to myself... I need something hilariously funny SF filled with an extra-heaping dose of a tentacled-monster-crazy-mad-scientist-genius in a tricked-out exo-suit. Hell, I needed a huge dose of quick-fire funny SF tropes skewering all the old Flash Gordon and 30's adventures, and I needed it all from the PoV of the mastermind villain. :)

I didn't even know that I needed this so much. But I did. And it filled my soul right after it removed my brain and added a few modifications to it before returning it safely in my meat-suit.

I mean, what else can you expect? Ennui after successfully conquering earth?

Screw that. Earth is too much trouble. I mean, sure, I've grown a bit fond of them after the years and my younger clone wants a shot at them, but no, they're MINE. :)

And that's just how it starts. :) What we actually get is a rip-roaring adventure of Emperor Mollusk of Earth finding him in the unenviable position of having to become a *gasp* hero and save the terrans from The Sinister Brain. (That happened to come from the future knowing everything that the Emperor would do and spoiling his every move.)

Ennui? Hell, no time for that! No one is smarter than the Emperor Mollusk!

But don't worry if you would prefer not to stay on earth. Every planet has their race of Alien Monstrosities and death rays and galactic empires, and can't they Just Stay Out of his problems? No, no, of course not. Enemies become friends, and smart adventure abounds. :)

Totally popcorn. Totally delightful. I read this with a grin plastered across my face the entire time. :)

jiggledance

I think, perhaps, that A. Lee Martinez might be one of the smartest, most delightful B-Movie humorists out there. Just a pure entertainer. :)

carol. says

It's been a stressful month and I've had a challenging time finishing the 'serious' books malingering on my shelf. I recently picked up my Kindle (after charging it—I really prefer paper) and discovered this little gem hidden near the end of my title list, one of those bargain purchases I was saving for a rainy day. Or snowy day. Whichever—I think we're going to have both tomorrow—thunderstorms and eventual snow. At any rate, I rather enjoy A. Lee Martinez' books, but I recognize they work best for a certain kind of mood, the mood that wants fun, clever, and even silly, with feel-good endings. *Emperor Mollusk* perfectly fit my mood, and to my surprised, proved almost impossible to put down. Think every sci-fi/horror pulpy trope of the 1960s. They're here, and they're hysterical. But what's even better is that Martinez takes this beyond parody by exploring evil, ethics and science through very human inhuman characters.

Poor (former) Emperor Mollusk. He's been exiled from his native watery planet of Neptune, Saturnites hate him, and "the Venusians had had it in for me since I'd tried to conquer their planet after falling short on Neptune. I hadn't really come close to subjugating Venus. Only claimed a couple of continents for a few weeks. No reason they shouldn't have been over that by now." Luckily, he conquered Earth Terra, so he still has somewhere to live. But even an Emperor of a world can get a little dull after you've solved a few of humanity's larger problems.

But enough about me. Let's talk about this fabulous book and include some funny quotes. And while I know A. Lee Martinez is the farthest thing from a badly-behaving-author, Gramazon remains a badly-behaving corporation. So I continue my full and undeletable review at:

<http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2014/0...>

AND

<http://carols.booklikes.com/post/7956...->

David Katzman says

Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain is silly, charming and fairly amusing. It's an easy, light-hearted read that I enjoyed a bit more than the other Martinez book that I've read Helen and Troy's *Epic Road Quest*

The premise is an entertaining one. Our anti-hero Emperor Mollusk is an evil genius from Neptune who conquered the Earth with ease. In fact, it was so easy and his rule was so undisputed that he became bored. He retired as ruler but craves challenges so instead of more conquering (which is messy), he turns to exploring diverse mad scientific pursuits just for shits and giggles. As well as occasionally defending the Earth from other invaders because he feels a sense of responsibility for the world he once conquered. And well...(view spoiler)

In EMVTSB, Mollusk teams up with his former foe, a lizard warrior from Venus, and his pet, an unkillable

giant centipede, to fight another evil genius who has some extra *extra* evil plans in motion. Can this “Sinister Brain” be stopped. Well, duh, what do you think?

EMVTSB has a few laughs and is a bit of modest fun. *Shrugs*

Meg says

This review has minor and thematic spoilers, though nothing is spoiled overtly:

A Lee Martinez is trying to walk a fine line in this book, writing an incredibly intelligent, egotistical villain on one hand and a likable character on the other hand. He doesn't always succeed. Intelligent and egotistical villain? Always. Likable character? Shiftier ground. Still, he does better than most authors with the double bind of trying to write a story from a villain's point of view that is both likable and NOT a redemption arc.

The problem is ultimately that the book doesn't go anywhere. We end right where we started, at least as far as earth and the characters are concerned. There are subtle differences, but none of them are enough to really matter, which leads the ending to fall a bit flat. I feel a bit like we got the part of the story before the part of the story where the characters actually have to make choices and evolve.

I think the reason it never goes anywhere is that the book never lets Zala shine. She is mostly set up as someone for Emperor Mollusk to talk to, sharp enough to ask questions and keep running sarcasm, but not nearly smart enough to be in the same league as Emperor Mollusk. She fills a role in the story and it's a good role which she fills well, playing off of Emperor Mollusk like a champ. But she never gets to come into her own. She has some good moments, yes, but Mollusk quickly walks all over them. And because Zala is kept to the sidelines and not allowed to develop into a character, the story falls flat, since so much of the subtext in the story is about their relationship.

Instead of real character, their relationship and the changes in it are left to subtlety and nearly lost. Yes, things are a bit different at the end. Mollusk has become very fond of Zala. Zala has come to better understand Emperor Mollusk. But fundamentally, they are both in the exact same place. And it can't change until there is genuine respect on both sides. Not just respect for Zala's skills as a warrior or for Mollusk's braininess. But genuine respect for each other as people first.

Also, by the end of chapter four, we've already fought a giant biomechanical gelatinous squid beast in Atlantis and once you've jumped that shark, nuking the fridge just doesn't have the same charm.

Still, the book has some fun moments and if you want a ridiculous romp through a pulpy comic-esque world with some charmingly gray characters, give it a read.

And I kind of want a Snarg.

Gregor Xane says

This book was kind of cute, kind of funny, kind of clever. It had a lot of good comic-booky, pulpy gags and

settings. It had battle mechs controlled by disembodied brains, lizard people from Venus, a lost world-type island with ridiculous dinosaurs, the lost city of Atlantis, etc, etc.. You get the idea.

It moved along at a fast enough clip, but it wasn't a page-turner really. Because it was a farce, and all of the characters were cartoonish, and because you never got the sense that the villain/hero would ultimately do anything but triumph, there was little, if any, real suspense or emotional investment to keep you *compulsively* flipping the pages.

I can certainly respect this writer for the quality of the writing and for what he was trying to do here, but it was pretty clear that he wasn't doing it for *me*. I'm just not the target audience.

Why did I pick this up, if this isn't my cup of tea?

Well, I've heard a lot of good things about this author and he dedicates the book (in part) to Victor von Doom.

I do love Doctor Doom.

Cherie says

ha ha ha. I think the ending went on a little too long, but I loved the story!

A guy you can love to hate and a cast of characters that had me grinning from ear to ear as they were introduced. The narration is not to be missed and five stars to Scott Aiello.

Mike says

Recently I reviewed Mr. Martinez's tale of how a seven foot tall battle robot was able to win friends and influence people all while suffering from a chronosynclastic infundibulum. Okay, I am bending the truth a bit, but "The Automatic Detective" was a good yarn, even if the hero wasn't suffering from his equivalent of a virus cold. But don't take these few words for it, go ahead and read the review – or – better yet, read the book.

When I stumble on a new author (did I mention that I saw a reference to "TAD" on goodreads, which is why I read it) there's always the chance that they are the literary form of the "one-hit wonder". I was very pleased to discover that our author has a quiver full of arrows and knows how to put them down and write! I wasn't sure when or what my next book by Mr. Martinez would be, but then I saw this book, "Emperor Mollusk Versus the Sinister Brain" and knew that this was the one. In fact, I jumped it ahead of several others just to discover how many notes our wordsmith could command.

I quite literally could not put it down. That's right folks, the book shot out tentacles made of words and affixed itself deep within me. Like fresh-squeezed orange juice, it is refreshing, pulpy, and good for you!

This book (we'll call it, "EMVTSB") is inventive, fun and very quickly-paced. So was "TAD", but this book also feels "campier". Yes, there was a race of aliens and a spaceship in "TAD", but in "EMVTSB" everyone that counts is an alien. (That is except for the council of egos, which is full of humans. Well, human brains that is.)

The interplay between the Emperor and his Venusian (or as Isaac Asimov once proposed (to follow proper Latin forms, "Venerian") sidekick/antagonist/protector is priceless. Here's an excerpt from page 30. (So many passages, so little space.) Snarg by the way, is the one who actually *likes* the Emperor.

By the time I checked on Zala and Snarg, the situation was well in hand. My living room was sliced to pieces, but neither was harmed. Zala didn't have a scratch on her. Snarg has a few wounds, but nothing significant. The augmented armor of an ultrapede was made of sterner stuff.

"I kept one alive." Zala ground her heel into the assassin's chest. "For questioning."

Snarg brought a soldier's head, dropped it at my feet, and clicked sweetly at me.

"That's a good girl." I patted her on the thorax, took the head. "You can keep this one." I tossed it across the room. She scampered gleefully after it, where she devoured it in loud, crunching bites.

Zala scowled.

"I didn't think you Venusians had such delicate sensibilities," I said.

"The dead deserve more dignity than to be fed to your pet."

"Hopefully, the dead are past concerns to their dignity."

See, the prose could almost be described as "lurid" (in the non-sexual way. Sorry, folks.). But wait, there's more!

This is a short book and it reads as if it is shorter still. And yet, there is character development: ideas are discussed, insights are found, and points of view (for the characters) shift, blend and evolve. Even the inarticulate have depths that receive some daylight. (Snarg does a lot of emoting, shown by drooling on people, chirping, rubbing its carapace against someone, and mostly by not biting your head off.)

The book jumps around interspersing episodes from when the Emperor was the conqueror and Warlord of Earth with his present-day self. I could see how that might make some readers think the book is too choppy, but it didn't bother me. In fact, I can't see how the author could build up our perspective (and sympathy) for our hyper-intelligent, but all-too-fallible tentacled protagonist in a better manner.

Here's another excerpt (from page 140) to illustrate that character growth I was talking about.

Zala drew her scimitar and practiced a few swings to see how her arm responded. "He had that before. It didn't seem to bother you before."

“That’s because I assumed I was smarter than him.”

“Are you saying you’re not so certain now?”

I didn’t answer, and she lowered her weapon.

“Emperor, are you telling me you think he might be smarter than you?”

“I don’t know,” I said softly.

“This can’t be the first time you’ve considered the possibility there might be someone capable of outwitting you. There are billions of intelligent life-forms in the system. I’m no scientist, but I would think it would seem statistically unlikely you could be smarter than all of them all of the time.”

I stroked Snarg’s antennae. “I’m aware of that. Intellectually.”

But now you have indisputable proof. For the first time in your life, you have to admit that someone was smarter than you. No way to deny it, is there?”

I didn’t answer, which was an answer in itself.

“I thought you were made of sterner stuff, Emperor.” She pushed the smile from her face and joined me at the window.

“You were beaten. Humiliated. Your defeat was devastating and total. You failed on every level.” She stifled a smirk as she smoothed her feathers. “It happens.”

“Not to me.”

She shook her head. “It happens to everyone. So for once, just this once, you were not in charge of your destiny. You weren’t the one making the decisions. You overconfidently blundered into a fight you couldn’t win and learned a hard lesson. No matter how gifted you are, no matter how smart and powerful and capable, you’re going to lose sometimes. You can’t win every battle. Even you, brilliant as you are” --- I appreciated that she refrained from using any sarcasm in the word *brilliant* --- “will make mistakes. And, yes, that was a big one.”

“But you’re still alive. You’re still a genius who can build a doomsday device out of wool, coconuts, and cardboard. So maybe the Brain is smarter than you. So what? So what if he handed you a crushing defeat. And I think we can both admit it was crushing.”

“You’re really enjoying this.”

“It was almost worth getting killed to watch,” she admitted. “Almost.”

She said, “Do you want to know why I laughed at the cave, Emperor?” She clasped me on the shoulder and smiled, without malice. With perhaps a smidgeon of genuine affection.”

I could go on from there, but I wanted to call your attention to three points.

First, “Zala” is a sworn enemy and sworn protector (at least for the moment) of the Emperor. She and her planet (in fact every planet in the solar system does) have a deep grudge against the Emperor.

Second, she’s a warrior (one demoted because of a prior run-in with you-know-who) and so such practical, battlefield psychology would be part of her stock-in-trade as a commander. And in this passage she gets to rub it in while trying to bolster his confidence (in her own rough-hewn ways) which you’d think would be pretty standard for this little scene (and yes, the defeat really was a whopper.)

Third, instead of just keeping it pro-forma, she lets her anger go long enough to show that she really means it (oh, the fun resurfaces very quickly, mind you) which isn’t strictly necessary to keep the action and plot rolling. Instead, it will continue to grow to the point where the Emperor and Zala have mutual respect if not admiration.

Without giving up the witty repartee for a moment, he adds a little soul-searching. Elsewhere, he even puts in a bit or two of morality, just as he did in the previous book I have read. It’s inventive even when he’s wholesale stealing clichés, ideas, or plot lines. Maybe practice really does make perfect. This book is a gem and so far he’s 2-for-2.

The end of the novel is a bit of a wild romp. I mean, more so than the rest of the book. The plot, villains and future of Planet Earth get wrapped up very neatly indeed, in a cheesy sort of way. But that’s just what this book is: a big chunk of cheese that might be smelly to some, but heavenly to others. Here’s looking forward to my next book.

Note: After reading “TAD” I confess I looked up the author’s website to see if there was a sequel to “The Automatic Detective”. Apparently sequels are not something Mr. Martinez does, but I did see some further adventures of “Mack” that I will be getting around to someday.

Wiebke (1book1review) says

This was a fun listen. The Story was entertaining, the characters had a sense of Humor I appreciate very much and the Narration was very well done.

seak says

"But, history is written by the winners. Especially winners with access to global mind control devices."

This line toward the beginning of the book is just one of the many lines from Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain that had me chuckling to myself.

Emperor Mollusk is a Neptunan who has done it all when it comes to defeating and subjugating races, ruling in tyranny and oppression, and downright being evil. Neptunans are the most intelligent of the solar system,

at least according to them (and that's really all that matters right?), but kind of all look the same, in fact they can barely tell each other apart, let alone who their clones are, and they are mollusks (think octopus for those like me who didn't love biology classes).

Of course it gets boring after a while being the mad genius and having everyone around you worship the ground you allow your mechanical suit to walk on. That is until someone tries to assassinate you. I guess that's not all true because one of the things I found hilarious was how Emperor Mollusk keeps walking into dangerous situations because he actually thinks there's no way for anyone to outsmart him.

Then there are the different societies based on which planet they are from. Minor spoiler warning for this sentence: Those from essentially Earth are highly litigious (of course) and there's a great scene where they save the day and in going to help one of the wounded, a law suit is threatened.

This was a really fun book and my first by the author, I will definitely be going back to A. Lee Martinez in the future. There are some authors who can just go from one line to the next and keep you not only amused but chucking from time to time. A few I can think of are Terry Pratchett and Douglas Adams and I'm in awe of their talent. Martinez may not be quite to their level, but he's right up there.

Here's another where Mollusk is attacked by a group of Venusians who are a highly honor-bound society who won't give up no matter how difficult the task or how much they are injured:

"The female did give me a kick. Considering she could barely breath that's probably worth a commendation or something. 'Bravery in the face of foolish short-sightedness' or something. I assume there's such an award on Venus though it probably has a less accurate name."

I think these lines were even better because of the great job Scott Aiello does in this audiobook. He's got Mollusk's sharp, but oblivious character down pat. One of the signs of a great narrator is when you stop noticing he's even there and that's Aiello all the way.

Emperor Mollusk is a hilarious character, this book kept reminding me of the movie Megamind with Will Farrell and I'm sure you can guess why if you've seen it (highly recommended btw!). Again, this will not be my last Martinez book, I'm looking forward to jumping into the rest.

4 out of 5 Stars (highly recommended)

Lea says

I've read other A. Lee Martinez books and enjoyed them, but this one just missed the mark for me. Likable characters, but disjointed and meandering, trying too hard for a The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy tone, but failing -- I found this to be a real slog, and could barely force myself to finish it. On the plus side, if I ever get another pit bull, I'll have no choice but to name her Snarg, after the protagonist's pet ultrapede.

Mitticus says

"Intelligence is neutral. Application is everything."

I see the universe as a grand mystery," I replied.

"One that you can exploit as you see fit," she said.

"I prefer to think of it as experimentation for the greater good."

She spit out a harsh laugh. "Define the greater good, Mollusk."

"I can't. That's one of the mysteries I'm working on."

I projected an equation on a viewscreen on the wall.

"I thought I had a passable proof for a few hours. Then I found I dropped a seven, and the results became meaningless. But I'm optimistic enough in my own brilliance to think I can still crack the problem."

"You can't honestly view morality as an experimental process."

"Why should it be any different than anything else? At least I'm honest enough to admit that I haven't found the answer yet instead of arbitrarily declaring X is dishonorable while Y is not."

-RTC_

Shanshad Whelan says

A delightful bit of pulp fun. Such a pleasure to read after slogging through a few urban fantasies that took themselves too seriously and "cerebral" SF that, IMO, was just tedious. Just a word of warning up front. The title should give readers a clue of how truly over the top this novel is, but in case it hasn't: Giant jelly monsters, transdimensional catpeople, Venusian warriors, giant insects, invasions from Saturn and mysterious death cults. Those are just a few of the things readers will run into in this story.

Emperor Mollusk is a villain who has achieved his goal of world domination . . . and has become bored with it all. But retiring isn't really an option when assassins are targeting you and bringing your own evil creations into play against you. Now Mollusk must defeat his enemies and win the day . . .

This was a romp. I enjoyed it far too much to consider putting it down and read it straight through. I will admit the plotting got a little . . . twisty at the end. Though that usually happens when time travel is involved. If you're a fan of B movie SF and pulp fiction about monsters and mad scientists, this will probably be worth your time to read, especially if you need a break from all things serious.

Seems like I may have to look up the author's other works and read them!

Jennie says

I think I have a new crush... and it's on a mollusk. Yes, you read that correctly. This book is a mix of humor, science fiction, space saga, alien invasion, and deliciousness that I savored as the pages clicked by. Emperor Mollusk is a narcissistic, obsessive, compulsive, dry-humored, slimy, squishy, straight-talking mollusk that doesn't beat around the bush. He. Is. Amazing.

His other companions are loveable as well, just not in an encompassingly awesome way as Mollusk. In some ways I wanted them to get together, but realized this would be impossible. Love does not conquer all... and

that's ok. This is a coming of age story of sorts. It is a fun, quick read that will at times challenge your views on things but in an inconsequential way. At times I felt the story was rushed or that I'd read this storyline somewhere before; however this does not take away from the experience. Overall this is a highly enjoyable read and I have a new crush. Read this book!

Peter Tillman says

Pretty seriously over the top, but worked for me. Martinez basically used every world-domination superhero comic-book cliché he could think of, and maybe even invented a couple of new ones. You know you're in good hands when, on the first page, the Emperor remarks that he could have programmed his ship's autoguns for louder explosions, but that would have "cheaped the experience".

OK, on to my notes. You never know with humor, and this is my first Lee Martinez. I hope he has some others as good.... I'd place Emperor Mollusk as the book "Ready Player One" was trying to be, if wossisname could write characters I cared about and/or a believably absurd plotline. Martinez effort has the other one beat all hollow, IMO. *Very* cool book.

I think the way to try it, if your public library doesn't have a copy, would be the Kindle sample. If the first couple of chapters don't grab you, go read something else. Mind, there are some (pretty minor) sags along the way, but Martinez comes back strong at the wrapup! 4.4 stars.

Carol's is the long review you want to read:

<https://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2014/...>
