



## **Domain**

*James Herbert*

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The long-dreaded nuclear conflict. The city torn apart, shattered, its people destroyed or mutilated beyond hope. For just a few, survival is possible only beneath the wrecked streets - if there is time to avoid the slow-descending poisonous ashes. But below, the rats are waiting.

## **Domain Details**

Date : Published 1983 by MacMillan General Books

ISBN : 9780333761274

Author : James Herbert

Format : Paperback 482 pages

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## From Reader Review Domain for online ebook

### Rebecca McNutt says

Once again James Herbert proves his talent for writing in this thrilling conclusion to his *Rats* trilogy. Combining apocalyptic themes with giant rodents, it's an unlikely yet chilling story of man vs. mice.

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### Emma Carrig says

Loved it!!! Best book of the trilogy, non stop, edge of your seat thrilling action and gore....all hope for humanity dwindling with every page turn. I LIKE!

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### Leo . says

Best in the trilogy of James Herbert's horror genre. I like the beginning where the main protagonist; a motor cycle courier; follows a civil servant who calmly walks among the chaos with purpose. Everybody else is running to and fro during a nuclear attack in London and this smartly dressed man nonchalantly disappears down a tunnel and bangs on a metal door. He disappears into a bunker and the courier crashes in behind him...the rest is an epic story which is the last in the Rats trilogy. I really enjoyed this book in my youth.????

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### Randolph says

Rats, rats everywhere, giant mutant rats as big as dogs... If postnuclear London wasn't bad enough, for Steve Culver et. al. there are these giant mutant rats leftover from Herbert's previous two novels to deal with. And rabid dogs, and crazy people too.

Setting the story in a post apocalyptic world lets Herbert free himself from any of the kind of plausibility boundaries that held the previous two volumes in the Rat trilogy back. Herbert can just let his imagination go. In addition, Herbert's prose and metaphor have improved significantly beyond the "see spot run" that marred particularly the first volume: *The Rats*.

Page turning thrills and decently drawn characters (he's still not as good as King or McCammon) make the rollercoaster a fun ride. Throw in a little anti-war, anti-government trashing and you've got a pretty good entertainment here. Herbert also forgoes the salacious matters that caused the earlier novels to wander a little.

This Centipede Press edition follows the original 1985 US text while most versions still in print follow later revisions that, well, have more words, but aren't necessarily better. This goes for the current e-book and Audible editions. The edition itself is beautifully produced with nasty little illustrations here and there and a great dust jacket.

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## Harry Kane says

There is a whole bunch of Brit horror authors, who are more than equal to their more famous American cousins. Ramsey Campbell is like Peter Straub on ketamine, Graham Masterton is the snappier version of ole King, Barker is...Barker, Brian Lumley is Robert Howard meets Lovecraft meet Clancy, Shaun Hutson is like a better-paced John Saul, and James Herbert... James Herbert learned to write like Dean Koontz a decade before Dean Koontz learned to write like Dean Koontz, only James Herbert's structure of the story is closer to King. Imagine it: Koontz's descriptions, King's character treatment, British turn of phrase. Doth your mouth not water?

Domain deals with the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, without the endless soapy introductions that some other books \*cough, Swan Song\* can be faulted at having, and although it has its endearing B film moments, it's also densely populated with sudden eruptions of awesomeness. And mutant rats.

The following quotes relate the highlights of a section where a protagonist waking up in hospital room in an underground shelter which is suddenly being flooded and invaded by mutant rats.

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Bryce was slowly becoming aware that something more was wrong, lying there in the subdued lighting of the sick bay with other ailing survivors, listening to the screams and shouts beyond the closed door, the strange rushing sound, the lapping of water around the cot beds inside the medical room itself. Sharp sounds that sounded like ... sounded like gunfire. Bryce sat upright and others around him, those whose sedation allowed, did the same, all of them confused and more than just frightened. A woman shrieked as water drenched the mattress she lay upon. Bryce pushed himself back against the wall when tiny waves lapped over onto his blanket. He was still groggy, and for a moment the cot-filled room swung in a crazy pendulum movement. Someone splashed by his bed and he flinched as ice-cold water slapped his cheek. Other figures followed and Bryce drew in his legs, crouching there in the gloom between his own

Bryce was thrown from the top bunk and the impact as he plunged beneath the surface dismissed the dragging residual effects of the drug. He rose spluttering and coughing, tangled in other arms and legs, pushing against them as they pushed against him. A double bunk toppled onto him and once more he was beneath the water, choking on its brackish taste, the iron frame heavy against his chest. At first he fought against the weight, but as he struggled a notion sifted through the terror, nudging him in a quiet, stealthy manner. Why bother to fight? the thought asked, why resist when death was inevitable? He tried to heave the metal bed from him, its mattress floating down onto his face as if conspiring with the water to smother him.

Wasn't this a better way to die? the inner voice said slyly. Wasn't this preferable to madness and pain? The cot rose a few inches then slumped back as though another weight had been added to it, perhaps someone climbing onto it to keep free of the flood. One or two minutes of unpleasantness before drifting off to sleep, a sleep deeper and more peaceful than you've ever known, one that could never be interrupted, never infringed upon. Never again tainted with living. Yes, it was good, it was desirable. But the pain now; how can I accept the pain now? Easily. Don't resist, that's the secret, that's the way. A few bad moments and then you'll drift. You'll see. Am I already mad? Has the disease struck so fast? No, no, not mad. Dying so effortlessly will be the sanest thing you've ever done. My lungs are tearing. It hurts, it hurts! Not for long. Breathe in the water, one large swallow, then no more pain. I can't. I'm afraid. It's easier than you think. Who are you? I'm your friend. I'm you. Will you stay with me? Always. For ever...

No longer to be a refugee from the holocaust with no certain future, no longer a victim of the disease which spoiled the mind as well as the body. No grief now, little sorrow. A fading sadness. Peacefully, softly drifting. His inner voice had not lied. The weight from his chest gone. Floating. Upwards. Rising. Upwards. Something pulling? Hurting him? Hands on him? No, not that, not now! It was settled! It was accepted! Leave meeeeeee ... He burst through the bubbling surface, water jetting from his lungs, and tried to free himself of the hands that had yanked him from the restful peace. The choking muffled his protests as the two men held him; the pain returned, racking his muscles.

The second engineer, Thomas, was helping the woman who had fallen onto the bunkbed, the added weight that had pinned Bryce to the floor. He dragged her towards the door, the deluge less violent now that the water level inside the sick bay matched the level outside. Yet it was strong enough to make them stagger and fall. Encumbered by the dead weight of the hysterical woman, Thomas flailed around in the gloom beneath the waterline, tugging at the arm that hugged his neck. He broke the hold and pushed himself upright, the woman rising with him. She clung to him, a hindrance that could drown them both. He changed his mind about rescuing her. Thomas pushed her away with a hand around her throat, then smashed a fist into her upturned face. Teeth broke under his knuckles and she fell away from him, sinking, a spasm of bubbles breaking the uneven, choppy surface. Aghast at what he had done but nevertheless relieved to be rid of her, Thomas headed for the door, ignoring the shouts from behind.

Farraday had witnessed the incident and he raged inside, unable to help, his own hands full with Bryce, who was sagging as though eager to drown, unwilling to help himself. To Farraday's surprise, the woman blustered to the surface just a few feet away, her eyes dazed but still pleading. Still helping Webber keep Bryce on his feet with one hand, Farraday reached out for the woman with the other, grabbing one arm as she began to sink again, and pulling her over to him. Her head rested against his chest and she seemed momentarily calmed, as if trusting him to save her. 'Let's get out!' Farraday shouted to Webber. 'We can't help any more!' He called for the others to follow, hoping they would hear, averting his eyes from the rear section of the sick bay, afraid of seeing something that would compel him to wade down there and help. These two, Bryce and the woman, were enough. They began moving towards the door, a tightly packed foursome, fighting the undertow, careful not to trip over unseen loose objects.

Bryce allowed himself to be carried along, neither helping nor hindering. His mind was in a peculiar turmoil, a jumbled mixture of regret and elation. He knew what it was to die and it wasn't so frightening. Not actually scary at all, was it? Perhaps just a little bit. But infinitely better than living with excruciating pain. Oh yes, anything was better than that. And let's not forget the gross indignity of madness. No, let's not forget that. Ah, pleasant death. Yes. With no true oblivion. No. Then where are you going? I... don't know. They're help... Do you want to be helped? Is that what you really want? More torture? Would you welcome insanity, would you enjoy it? I... Would you? Leave me alone! But I am you, how can I leave you? 'LEAVE ME ALONE!' 'It's okay, Bryce, we've got you. There's another way out of the shelter. We can make it.' He stared into the face of Farraday, barely recognizing the senior engineer. He tried to speak but did not know what to say. 'It's all right,' Farraday told him. 'Just try to help us, try to walk.' He did as he was asked, closing out the distant inner voice that was no longer soothing but angry, telling him what a fool he was being. 'I don't want to die.' 'Save your breath, man.' Farraday's own breath came in short, sharp groans, the effort beginning to tell on him. 'We can't hear you, so don't try to speak. Conserve your energy.'

He just had time to observe flames licking from the test room area when the complex rocked with thunder and searing white light rushed towards him, melting the protective film over his eyes, stripping the skin from his face. He fell back, carried by the blast, and water smothered his flaming hair, steam rising in a brief cloud from his burnt face. He shrieked and black water eagerly raced in, reducing the sound to a bubbling gurgle. The others had fared no better and, to Bryce, it was just the continuation of the long nightmare. He had been

partly protected by the senior engineer who stood directly in front of him and who had taken the full brunt of the explosion.

Farraday's weight had been thrown against him, forcing him down, away from the flames, extinguishing the burning bandages on his mutilated hand, instantly soothing the scorching white heat that had exposed all the nerves on one side of his face, vaporizing the fire that had gristled his right ear. The water welcomed him back. The tidal wave that followed, tightly packed into the narrow corridor, picked up all four of the burnt survivors and hurtled them along in a boiling stream, catching Thomas as it went, scraping their bodies along the walls, smashing into the machinery that finally blocked the tidal wave's path. His neck was broken and other bones had snapped, yet Bryce could hear the voice again, homing in from a distance, soon drawing near. Are you ready now? it asked, just a little sulkily.

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### **Carl Timms says**

A brilliant final part and a real twist in terms of setting. London is hit by a nuclear strike wiping out most of the characters it introduces in the first 20 or so pages. Its an audacious leap from The Rats and Lair to say the least. We then get a combination of terrific post-nuclear apocalypse story with all the usual tropes; underground government bunkers, irradiated "mutants", the military, groups of disparate survivors trying to make their way underground and into shelter. Then the rats arrive, bigger, hungrier and meaner than ever and things go downhill for the survivors very fast!

This book is better in every way than its predecessors and could be read in isolation in truth. However reading all three gives you the ongoing story of the evolution of the Rats and the twists this takes are genuinely shocking.

Herbert's style may be a bit pulpy for some and some of his characters nothing more than stereotypes but like many great Hollywood films, what it lacks in depth it more than makes up for in unrelenting thrills. You may have guessed, but I loved this book.

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### **Tony Talbot says**

I have to say DOMAIN is the only book that made me physically ill while I was dipping into it - I've never found the nerve to read it all the way through yet.

Not because of the rats (or The Rats?) but because of the nuclear war premise.

I was a teenager of the Cold War, and expected never to make it to 1990 without going up in nuclear ash. Programmes like THREADS by the BBC and my research into fallout and the effects of nuclear war still tell me the best way to go would be quickly {shudder}.

Which is where DOMAIN comes in with its Nightmare Fuel. There's a section where a doctor explains - in calm, clinical terms, speaking normally and without emotion, exactly the effects of radiation sickness.

I nearly threw up.

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### **Dan says**

What's worse than a nuclear strike on one of the most densely populated cities in the world? What's worse than one of the most densely populated cities in the world being terrorised by mutant man eating black rats?

How's about one of the most densely populated cities in the world being terrorised by mutant man eating giant black rats after a nuclear strike?!!

Herbert ended a great trilogy in one of the most devastating horror novels I have ever read, combining two nightmares to create one in which desperate survivors don't have a hope in hell. A bad writer could write this story a million times and never get it right but Herbert nails it from beginning to end with a premise that is not as far fetched as it would otherwise seem.

Domain provides everything you need in a horror novel and serves it with a decent helping of human drama until, well, the blood and guts have to have their moment. The last pages of this novel had my heart pounding!

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### **Nick Raines says**

This sequel has major changes for the series, the first being that is an apocalyptic tale featuring the rats, but not starring them, the second is that this sucker is twice as long at 482 pages and honestly it shows. Too much of the book is a lot of boring characters hiding in a secret government fallout shelter and becoming angry at one another. I refuse to categorize the main protagonist, Culver, as a protagonist as he is a nothing character, the worst in the series. the things I liked about the first are barely here, no social commentary, barely any rats until the end, and a minimal amount of side characters who are doomed but had great backstories. I didn't hate this book, but I didn't care much for it either.

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### **Dreadlocksmile says**

First published back in 1984, James Herbert's novel 'Domain' formed the third and final full length novel to his classic 'rats' trilogy (although a graphic novel entitled 'The City' was later released in 1993 which followed on with the storyline).

Incorporating a formula that should have guaranteed to produce nothing short of a classic splatterpunk novel from the godfather of the subgenre; not only was Herbert laying down the long-awaited third part to his hugely successful 'Rats' series, but he was also once again visiting the post-apocalyptic setting that was so well realised within his 1975 novel 'The Fog' (and then later again in his 1996 novel '48).

The tale begins with the unleashing of five nuclear weapons upon the busy streets of England's capital city of London. With the city now reduced to rubble and the highly toxic fallout dust still in the air, a small group of survivors have found refuge in one of the many underground government bunkers that are dotted around the city.

Steven Culver, a helicopter pilot before the long-dreaded nuclear conflict, is one of the few lucky survivors to be within the protective underground walls of the bunker. Outside of government personnel and telecommunication maintenance workers, Culver is one of the only civilians to find himself within the bunker's confines, after helping Alex Dealey (a government official whose job it is to inspect the bunkers).

Upon locating the secret entrance to the underground bunker, Culver and Dealey encounter a horde of giant black rats lurking in London's underground subway. Culver manages to help the temporarily blinded Dealey into the safety of the secret bunker, whilst also rescuing the sole survivor of the recent rat's massacre, a young female by the name of Kate Garner.

Inside the bunker, the survivors wait out the following weeks, until finally, now that the radioactive fallout dusk would have dissipated somewhat, an exploratory team is sent out of the bunker and into the deserted streets above. What they are greeted by is a world that has been torn apart. The streets that confront them are little more than rubble, littered with the rotting corpses of the dead. The only signs of life are from roaming rabid animals or the dying remnants of people suffering from exposure to the radioactive after effects of the nuclear fallout.

However, lurking in the shadows, with the knowledge that humanity has now been brought to its knees, the giant black rats are ready to take their revenge on those that have oppressed their lives for so long. The black rats are hungry for human flesh once again...

From the very first pages, Herbert throws the reader head first into the chaotic and terrifying final moments before London is hit by a devastating nuclear attack. Herbert switches viewpoint a number of times, showing these final moments through a host of different characters eyes, until we finally settle upon the characters of Culver and Dealey. These intense first pages hit the reader like a sledgehammer, setting down the whole apocalyptic scenario with an unrelenting barrage of devastation.

Herbert maintains the pace, unleashing the first of many rat attacks that are equal in scale to those found in the previous two novels. Carnage continues until our principal characters have made it into the relative safety of the underground bunker, where the novel sadly begins to lose its thrust. When the exploratory team first look upon the ravaged streets of London, Herbert paints a haunting post-apocalyptic picture that screams with an eerie and tense atmosphere. However, with this over, the ensuing flooding of the bunker simply drags on, with page after page of supposedly desperate action that ultimately begins to become dull and monotonous. The rat attacks, although each one is utterly savage, somehow begin to become almost as repetitive as the constant 'flooding' scenes. Surprising as it sounds, the novel finds itself at this stage seriously slipping towards becoming a tedious read.

With the numbers of survivors cut down to an easy to handle grouping, Herbert now takes the tale to the ravaged streets of London which successfully injects a much needed shot of adrenaline into the storyline. Although the threat of the rats is still quite present, Herbert plays more with the post-apocalyptic scenario to bring a new threat to the small survivors; in the way of a marauding gang of survivors, happy to take what they want without any retribution.

The pace once again picks up here, with Herbert stepping on the throttle until the final scenes are acted out within another governmental secret bunker.

One surprising inclusion to the novel is the small short stories that show the final days for a number of unrelated survivors. These miniature tragic tales are snippets of pure post-apocalyptic fiction that are sure to please any fan of the subgenre. One such story details the final days of a loner, who in his very own personal



underground shelter, comes to an ironic death. Laced with black comedy, this short tale remains one of the surprising highlights of the book.

Although action packed from early on, Herbert seems to have lost his nerve for the gut wrenching nasty moments that were so predominant in his earlier work. The carnage is still there, but of a more watered-down fashion.

The love interest between Culver and Garner is also too wooden and predictable. Although Herbert avoided the inclusion of his usual pointlessly graphic sex scene, the relationship between the two characters is still too cliqued and downright cheesy.

The final section of the books plays out like a cross between Gregory A Douglas' 1980 novel 'The Nest' and the final sequences from James Cameron's 1986 blockbuster 'Aliens'. However, Herbert keeps up the pace, delivering a final set of chapters that are sure to keep each and every reader perched on the edge of their seat.

All in all, the novel was set to be another splatterpunk masterpiece from the godfather of the subgenre. However, somewhere down the line, Herbert seems to have lost track of the passion for this work and instead has produced a weaker final installation into the 'Rats' trilogy. This said, 'Domain' does still deliver a number of impactful scenes and ultimately concludes well.

The book runs for a total of 421 pages and was originally published by New English Library.

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## **David Brian says**

3.5 stars.

Okay, so I loved James Herbert's first two excursions into a land being overrun by nightmare rodents. Herbert's *The Rats*, and its follow up *Lair*, concerns a plague of giant black rats sweeping through southern England, and they are wonderful examples of genre fiction. They were both written, and set, during the nineteen seventies and yet, other than the odd reference to wearing a 'tweed jacket' and driving a 'Ford Capri', both hold up remarkably well. *Domain*, which was written some eleven years after the first rats book, really doesn't manage the same timeless quality. This may be because Herbert chooses to take us away from a regular world setting, opting instead to unleash his rodents upon the survivors of a first wave nuclear strike - although the nineteen eighties were doubtless a time when people contemplated such catastrophe, and this story would have been perfectly fitting in the time it was written, it just didn't sit quite right among certain other dated aspects of the book.

Incorporating the same formula of marauding rodents which had previously worked so well, you would expect success based on a heady mix of bloody carnage and desperation. The main protagonist is Steven Culver, a pilot who, after the bombs start to drop, finds himself holed up in a secret underground bunker, after he aids Government man Alex Dealey.

The initial opening section of the book covers different points of view leading up to, and as the missiles rain down. This is powerfully done. Even the early periods of getting to, and surviving in the underground bunker are executed well. But a range of fairly stock characters are soon enduring wave after wave of rodent attacks, and it just began to feel a chore getting through to the end.

It is not a badly written book, and if you were to pick this up never having read one of its predecessors, then

in all likelihood you'll quite enjoy it. But, at least for me, book three is the weakest of the trilogy.

Footnote: I say trilogy, but there is a further continuation of the saga in graphic novel format.

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## **Andrew says**

And so my journey through James Herberts' early works continues (all be in through the night which may in hindsight might not have been the smartest thing).

This concludes what is often seen as the Rats trilogy (as I have said before there is a short graphic novel set in the same universe - which is actually the 4th part) and of all of them this is the bleakest - I guess Mr Herbert wanted to go out on a high note.

By now however the power of the first two books had started to wane (a little) the book still was full on visceral (the first part of the book which deals with the world situation and it's incredibly powerful and considering the times it was written in and the mood of the media it captured the fears perfectly. I remember reading it in silent disbelief only to be shocked how plausible it could be). However giant killer rats, hadn't we been here before?

And this is where the impact starts to wane, the story material had obviously been presented in the previous books, the blood and guts had all been described before and so on, if anything this book was a victim of its own success. Now do not think that the impact is gone, far from it you just need to read the stats that say that we are all only feet away from a rat ay any time. However rats have only so many modus operandi so options are rather limited. However when used along sides the horrors of the new world James Herbert has created in these pages it takes on a whole new level.

I think the time of this books writing Herbert was about to embark on his next part of his career where blood and guts would be replaced to a certain extent with implied terror and paranoia. He still could return at a moments notice but now he started to mess with peoples heads in other ways

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## **Keita-Eiri Kettlewell-Scarbro says**

So, I seem to make a massive mistake when it comes to James Herbert books, specifically ones to do with his "The Rats" trilogy...

Me being the stupid idiot I am, took "Domain" with me to London and read it on the train. No, not a good idea. I don't know if anyone remembers the incident of me reading "The Rats" on the way to London before but, lets just say there was a bit in the tube and then rats happened and in real life with me, the tube actually stopped in the tunnel and I genuinely freaked out.

I guess the difference here is what happened in the beginning will not happen to London, at least not while I am alive. But to be frank with you, this book REALLY did shit me up and that is putting it bluntly what with lack of better wording to describe that particular feeling.

That being said, this was my favourite of the three books. In the past, I did have issues with the lead characters not having much depth to them, they were kind of boring, but this time round, each character had depth and intrigue and they were a pleasure to read. So yes, a vast improvement.

Description and describing of certain things were also impeccable to the point my stomach was badly

churning at some points and I would have to throw the book down for an hour or so to re-remember how to breathe.

Even the ending was decent, but that was probably because I spent the majority of the time wondering how the hell it was going to end, because there honestly seems to be absolutely no hope for the characters at all. Herbert is a brilliant writer and certainly knows how to keep you on the edge of your seat, as well as being able to pull a multitude of emotions out of you that you weren't sure you could ever express. I can see why people may feel sickened by reading this, but hey, I like a good end-of-the-world book and this screams that all over. And it really is sickening... rats eating your eyeballs? That is not the worst of it in all fairness and total annihilation of the capital of England is going to be destructive and gut-wrenching. In all fairness, this book is a story of two halves that do ultimately meet together, one being the rats themselves and the other being the nuclear warheads... but it pulls together nicely in to a story that can only be described as absolute hell.

Which means I loved it.

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## **Siobhan says**

Domain is the third book in James Herbert's The Rats trilogy, and it is safe to say it is my favourite. The first book, The Rats, was an interesting read but it wasn't quite what I had anticipated. The second book, Lair, was a lot more enjoyable. This third book, Domain, hit even more spots.

Domain has a very different atmosphere to the first two books in the series, and I believe this is what left me to enjoy the book so much. Throughout the series we have been dealing with the fear of something in the real world, a creature made nightmarish. The first two books added something more to make the creatures more grotesque, yet the story was told in a real-world setting. With Domain, we deal with the monstrous creatures following the end of the world as it was once known.

Domain may be considered dated by some, as it deals with what was a fear in the past. The idea of nations hitting the red button, countries being blasted out of existence. There was a time in the past where this was an everyday fear, and James Herbert takes this and then adds in further fears. Some may find it hard to connect to the story, as many of the elements are based upon past fears, but I felt as though it simply added new layers to the story. It may have been dated in some ways, yet it still reaches many very real fears.

A lot of the book does focus on the fears of a destroyed world. The collapse of society, the horrors of radiation, the fears of what has happened to others, and many other end of the world elements are prevalent throughout. These elements of the story are focused upon, yet throughout the knowledge of the rats remains. They appear slowly, creeping in to add additional layers of horror to the story.

Moreover, James Herbert continues as he has throughout the rest of the series – with each additional book, the rats become more. There is more horror to be found, the creatures having developed even further. By the end, we get to see what the series has been building towards throughout, we get to see just how creepy James Herbert can make the creatures.

Without a doubt, Domain was my favourite of The Rats trilogy. Although there is a graphic novel as well, a strange book four, I doubt I will be reading it. I rather like the way things ended here (and, to be honest, some of the reviews I have read have put me off reading the 'fourth book').

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## **Jesse L. says**

I used to be able to say I had never read a horror novel that made me want to stop reading because it was so dark until I read this novel. James Herbert is, quite simply, the most effective horror author to ever come down the pike and "Domain" is the grimmest arrow in his quiver. Describing the book to a friend, I told them: "Well, it starts off with World War III, and then things get worse from there." Radiation poisoning? Check. Burn victims? Check. Suicide and despair? Double check. Flesh-eating giant rats who love to lunch on homo sapiens? Oh, check, indeed.

Don't say I didn't warn you. Hail James Herbert, the true king of horror.

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