



## Chain of Command

*Frank Chadwick*

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**New Military SF from legendary game creator Frank Chadwick.** Lieutenant Sam Bitka finds himself commanding a starship against an alien enemy who always seems one step ahead of him.

Lieutenant Sam Bitka, U.S. Naval Reserve, is getting used to civilian life when he is called back to active duty. Tensions between Earth and the alien Varoki are on the rise, and Sam is assigned as tactical officer aboard the deep space destroyer USS *Puebla*. Dispatched to the distant world of K'tok to protect human colonists, he wants nothing more than to serve out his active duty time and get back to his civilian life.

But when the Varoki launch a crippling surprise attack against the Earth coalition fleet, Sam finds himself suddenly in command of the USS *Puebla*, a job he is far from certain he can discharge successfully. What's more, mounting evidence points to a much larger and more sinister alien plan.

Now, Sam must deal with faltering leadership in the human task force and an alien enemy who always seems one step ahead of them. Time for Sam to step up and rise to the challenge of command.

## **Praise for *Chain of Command*:**

"Chadwick's heavy hitter succeeds at teeth-gritting action scenes, deep psychological portraits of diverse characters and societies, and abundant puzzles and mysteries. All . . . mixed in seamlessly with the vivid tragedies of war and balanced with dark humor."—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"...strong characterization and the briskness of the plot should please. Fans of military sf and of Chadwick, in particular, should give it a look."—*Booklist*

"*Chain of Command* is very smartly put together... Chadwick gets the details right, whether he's talking about the effects of prolonged weightlessness or the intricacies of geo and interstellar politics and economics... a solid piece of Mil-SF writing that pulls from many historical sources and manages to convey a lot of what the Surface Navy is like.... it isn't the steel hulls that make the navy tough, it's the sailors that crew them."—*SFRevue*

## **About *Come the Revolution*:**

"[A]dventure, family secrets and humor. . . . The plot is as hard as the science Chadwick uses. . . . [E]ngages readers. First-rate science fiction; it moves at a fast pace throughout."—*Daily News of Galveston County*

"Chadwick offers an exciting military SF story set on the Varoki home planet of Hazz' Akato in his follow up to *How Dark the World Becomes*...Chadwick, a leading designer of military and science-fiction board- and role-playing games, knows his way around a battlefield...eccentric cohorts are entertaining, and a few surprises guarantee that readers will be seeing more of this series."—*Booklist*

"This sequel to *How Dark the World Becomes* is a fast-paced, action-packed sf adventure. Readers new to Chadwick's series will be able to start here without too much trouble; essential background information is given, and the author leaps straight into an original story set two years after the previous entry."—*Library Journal*

**About *How Dark the World Becomes*:**

"*How Dark the World Becomes* is a crackling debut novel that speaks of great things to come! It's whip-smart, lightning-fast and character-driven—in short it has everything required to be totally satisfying. Highly recommended." —Jonathan Maberry, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Assassin's Code*

"... [a] far off, hard scramble intergalactic underworld ... fast-paced intergalactic adventure full of far-flung alien intrigue."—*Astroguyz*

"... thrilling space adventure ... I was reminded of Jack McDevitt's Alex Benedict novels and Mark L. Van Name's Jon & Lobo adventures."—*SFCrowsnest*

**Chain of Command Details**

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## **From Reader Review Chain of Command for online ebook**

### **William Howe says**

The beginning stumbled a bit, almost like it wasn't sure how to get going, but then it hit the groove and became an excellent novel.

I would pre-order a sequel today. Pre-pay, even. Worth it.

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### **Linda says**

I always enjoy futuristic books as I try to imagine how far authors would go. I liked that Sam took his orders seriously although he sought civilian life, but war was war and he found himself in command of the Puebla his role of inexperience leadership. It is time that Sam take the challenge. I did love the cocky, self assured Lt. Sam Bitka!

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### **Jim Cunningham says**

A traditional rip-snorting space opera, but with a twist: science! Spacecraft follow physical laws and must maneuver for hours at a time, deal with gravity, and more. Very refreshing. Chadwick's background in military history and wargame design is very prominent, as well-- battles, strategy, and tactics are very real in this story and are not devices merely to move plot elements where he wants them (readers familiar with games he has worked on such as Traveller or Imperium will recognize some aspects of those in the book). As for characters and plot... they are also well-detailed and full of surprises.

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### **Felix Laventman says**

I had a chance to read several sample chapters of this book on Baen.com and ever since then I was hooked. I am not familiar with any of Mr Chadwick previous books and board games have never been of any particular interest for me, so Chain of Command was a "clean slate" for me. Damn, but that is so good on so many levels! Its what you call quality military sci-fi and don't get me started with "why in yet another space opera always fighting and other pacifistic nonsense" , yes its future and yes humanity gets to go far and yes galaxy is a big place, but whenever you got individuals you got ambitions and thus clash of interests...

As for the book without giving any spoilers - everything seems to be authentic a solid: military procedures + science (keep in mind its sci-fi after all). Characters are believable and "real", not some sketchy stereotypes or flat-liners that been going around lately.

Highly recommended!

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## **Kevin says**

### **Amazing**

Frank, I've played your games and adore them and love the history they impart. Now this! Crisp character development. Speeding arc of story. Action packed, and a plausible viable science fest and universe. Thanks. Kevin from bigboardgaming

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## **Online Eccentric Librarian says**

*More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>*

Chain of Command is a well written military sci fi with a heavy emphasis on military. Taking cues from a notable World War II battle, it's clear the author has done his homework in both the military lingo/attitude as well as the physics of space battles. But as with so many of these types of books, the science often bogs down the story and there is a lot of explaining/description/pontification on the physics or on the military aspects - enough to sometimes drown the characterizations and plot.

Story: Sam Bitka is a reservist doing his time in the Navy when the unthinkable happens - a surprise attack on human forces by alien allies. As the casualties mount, Bitka will have to deal with incompetent superiors, timid subordinates, and aliens who may have developed a technology that will change the tide of battle in their favor. As he rises in position, the situation becomes worse and worse for those serving on his ship, the Puebla.

I have to first start with the frustration - that once again all superiors in the navy are useless - either incompetent or hollow attention/position seekers. It was a bit frustrating, especially since our protagonist is the typical middle aged man with a good heart and conscience having to deal with a bad situation/superiors. For once, I'd love to see a competent and non political admiral in a position of power in a military sci fi book. The rare admirable admiral.

As well, we have the usual NCOs providing our offices with the real lowdown on how to run a ship. If there is a Sargeant or Petty Officer in a military sci fi, they are going to always be underappreciated and always perform under pressure when the captains and admirals buckle. It gets a bit old, to be honest, but it is what it is.

Our protagonist is, of course, a humble man thrust into greatness and rising to the occasion. He'll ferret out the enemy plans, find surprise attacks, and always put his men in a position to outfox or outthink the enemy. All the while, he'll have to fight the stupidity of his superiors or backstabbing by peers. Ironically, the only people of power who do well are the women - they are able to understand the politics and rise above them. That, in itself, can be a bit of a cliché but better than have them be sex/lust objects as in a John Ringo novel.

The plot moves well when not focusing on the science too much. The author looks to have taken great pains to really research his subject and though that slavishness to historical detail is appreciated, it can also bog down the story a bit too often. But some fun twists and turns as well as the joy of seeing our main character triumph make for an engaging story. Because our lead is so humble and good, it's impossible not to root for

him.

In all, I enjoyed Chain of Command. Yes, there were a few military sci fi cliches in there and we could have used more nuanced characters. But I don't think there's much else to complain about, especially since we have a solid ending. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

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### **Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says**

Another very good addition to the Space Opera/Military Science Fiction world. Lieutenant Sam Bitka, U.S. Naval Reserve, is one step down from regular naval officers but finds that he has to step up to a command position. What happens is no surprise but it is very well presented. There are several very tense moments as an unexpected attack takes place and Sam and the fleet have to do the impossible. As fun read with interesting characters, good backstory and great world building.

I received a free copy of the book in return for an honest review.

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### **deep says**

PW Starred: Military game designer Chadwick returns to his 22nd-century galaxy, where humans uncomfortably share the stars with the multiple races of the alien Varoki, with an excellent standalone set aboard a human-crewed spacefaring destroyer. Sam Bitka, previously comfortable in his life of civilian corporate employment, has been recalled to duty as a reserve tactical officer on the USS Puebla after rogue Varoki launch a surprise war against humankind. Once circumstances force Sam into the captain's chair, he must figure out the moves and motives of the Varoki's overwhelming forces ahead of time, all while bucking the old boy network and infighting within his own military. Chadwick's heavy hitter succeeds at teeth-gritting action scenes, deep psychological portraits of diverse characters and societies, and abundant puzzles and mysteries. All are mixed in seamlessly with the vivid tragedies of war and balanced with dark humor. This story, modeled on the history of the Solomon Islands campaign of WWII, goes far above and beyond standard military SF and should appeal to all speculative fiction readers. (Oct.)

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### **Bryan says**

This is HARD military sci-fi, down to the details of who manufactured each missile and the number of gigajoules emitted by each laser. If you love exhaustive minutiae on navy ranks, communication protocols and duty rosters, then this is the book for you. But if you're looking for innovative thoughts on the future of society and humanity, look elsewhere.

The basic plot is serviceable enough, but (as the author admits in an afterword) is not really much different from an ocean-based WW2 naval battle, with the Japanese replaced by alien cartoon villains. There's a touch of sexism, in that every woman who enters the story has their facial and other physical attributes described in detail, while the men could have two heads and it wouldn't note a mention. Everyone is a bumbling fool except for our brilliant hero, people explain the obvious to each other out loud, and the triumphant happy ending is never in doubt. Overall gives a good sense of real life in the navy, but otherwise pretty forgettable.

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## **Michael says**

### **Great military scifi**

I really enjoyed this, the first book by this author I have read. The story was exciting and the characters were interesting. The author managed to avoid two common flaws in this genre. He kept the data dumps to a minimum and he was able to describe the ship to ship action simply and clearly enough that I could actually follow what was going on. I look forward to reading more books by Frank Chadwick.

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## **David Hyder says**

This great. Chadwick grabs you and drags you at breakneck pace through the leadership development of a junior naval reserve officer dumped into a war he didn't expect. I've learned more history from science fiction than from histories. Somehow its more engaging. Chadwick re-tells the history of the Solomon Islands campaign including the slow motion sense of disaster that pervaded the naval struggle there. As a bonus he uses the Principles of Naval Leadership as a plot device. Google and download those. They apply to most leadership positions.

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## **Jeff says**

Eveloution of people through combat, time tested method of stripping the non-essentials away from people while bringing to the forefront all that really matters. Amusing to see someone's else's problems in command

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## **Andy Simmons says**

First off, I've played a quite a few of the Roleplaying games that Frank Chadwick has written but this is the first of his fiction novels I've read. I had expected a novel based on the Traveller RPG setting and, whilst there are some similarities to the T2300, this novel has its own unique universe. And a very good one at that.

On the whole, the book is similar to other space opera adventures where our protagonist finds himself rising to the challenge of commanding a "boat" in an interstellar war. However, there is a lot detail that adds a touch of authenticity to the story including issues with the prolonged effects of zero gravity environments and the Naval procedures/terminology. Sam Bitka is a well thought out character as he develops excellently as the story continues.

All in all, this is an excellent hard sci if space opera novel. I hope that the series continues.

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