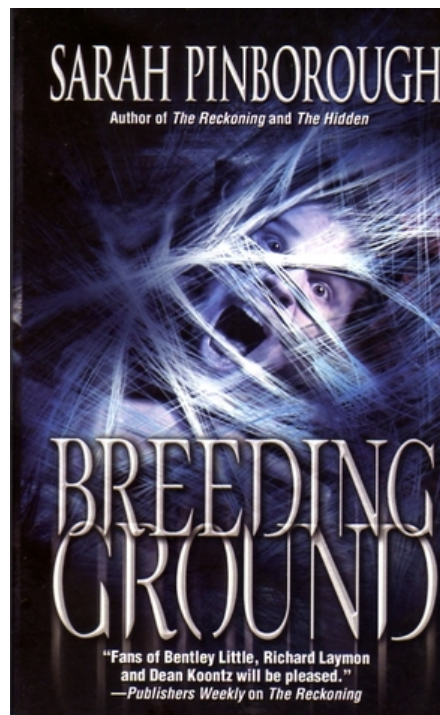




Breeding Ground

Sarah Pinborough

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Life was good for Matt and Chloe. They were in love and looking forward to their new baby. But what Chloe gave birth to isn't a baby. It isn't even human. It's an entirely new species that uses humans only for food and as hosts for their young.

As Matt soon learns, though, he is not alone in his terror. Women all over town have begun to give birth to these hideous creatures, spidery nightmares that live to kill and feed. As the infestation spreads and the countryside is reduced to a series of web-shrouded ghost towns, will the survivors find a way to fight back? Or is it only a matter of time before all of mankind is reduced to a *Breeding Ground*

Breeding Ground Details

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Author : Sarah Pinborough

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From Reader Review Breeding Ground for online ebook

Brian says

During the past several years, apocalyptic horror novels have been filled with zombies, zombies, and more zombies. There have, however, been some exceptions -- Brian Keene's *The Conqueror Worms* is one, and this book, *Breeding Ground*, is another.

It's the end of the world, and the planet is teeming with...well...take a look at the cover, and you'll figure it out pretty quickly. While the leading theory as to how this particularly nasty infestation came about is a bit far-fetched, Pinborough's entertaining writing style and interesting characters allow the reader to stay engrossed in the story without too much of a distraction.

It's no profound piece of literature, but *Breeding Ground* is a fast-paced, high-action, entertaining read. I'm definitely looking forward to reading *Feeding Ground*, Pinborough's sequel to this book.

Chris says

Apocalyptic creature feature involving very nasty spiders taking over the planet. This book is quite a bit of fun--I started it one evening and stayed up the next evening to finish it which means I read it just a little over 24 hours. I have already purchased the sequel and plan on reading that one too.

However, it does struggle under the common weaknesses of stories of this type (creature features specifically).

First, the good. Well written. Plot just hums along with no lags in pace. Ms. Pinborough knows how to build the suspense and let the story develop. Dialog is well done and this book is just well written all around. I am interested in reading more of her work.

The not so good. Maybe I have seen/read too many of these things, but this one has several of the common weaknesses:

(1) The WHAT and WHY: there is no real attempt to explain the origin of these awful creatures---what they are or why they exist. This is a sci-fi sort of monster tale so we need explanations, not just some sort of "well we must have done too much genetic engineering on plants and animals that we set off some chain of events that resulted in these spiders overtaking the entire world overnight." Seriously?

(2) There were several stereotypical characters that were so much so that I could anticipate plot developments. Remember the egocentric lawyer in Jurassic Park that is only out for his own survival? Well he is here and acts just like he did in that movie. We also have the brilliant but clueless scientist who was part of what caused it all.

(3) The spiders' weakness/vulnerability is odd in the extreme and with no explanation nor do I think there could be. I will just leave it at that.

There was also too much emphasis, in my view, on gender roles. The main character (Matt) is male and the story is told from his first person point of view, using the cliché form of a diary supposedly written to whatever survivor comes upon this writing and reads it. Matt is constantly defensive about his actions and

even his thoughts and is forever apologizing, claiming that we need to understand that he is male so that is why he thinks/acts that way. I can't imagine a guy doing that. All it did for me was to constantly remind me that the author was female and was having a bit of trouble with a male voice.

I am a fan of creature features and I enjoyed this book and plan on reading the sequel. I am also interested in reading her other books because I feel that she is a talented writer and writes a compelling story.

Terry says

Not a bad read. An interesting story, although I had issues with the timeline. Overall, it was ok.

Justin Holley says

Oh, yeah, this is the good stuff! This is horror fiction at its finest, in my opinion. Sarah writes with a fierce, yet tight, prose that are both riveting and terrifying. Like holding onto an electric fence and not wanting to let go. I will definitely be ordering more of her work.

Karl says

This is copy 30 of 75 signed numbered copies.

Kimberly says

Great descriptive moments! I'm looking forward to following up with the sequel.

Randolph says

Okay, let's just get this out of the way up front: this was *the* worst book I have read in a long time, which was really disappointing since I like Pinborough's The Hidden. Really bad.

There are so many problems with this it's hard to know where to start and it isn't worth your or my time to go into it in depth. I guess to get started it is a post-apocalyptic novel. The women have mostly turned into giant "widow" spiders (how anyone knows this is beyond me). The science behind this is so ludicrous and preachy it would have better been left out entirely.

Onward to the more serious issues. First, written in a language that would make a sixth grader cringe. Second, so many plot holes you just cannot suspend your disbelief that much. Third, two dimensional idiotic characters. A grade-schooler could figure out how to survive better than these fools. A main character that throws off his first pregnant girlfriend, then his post-apoc. girlfriend, then shacks with a deaf woman and knocks her up with as little grief and feeling as a mole. Let me make it clear, these women all die a terrible death within six months. His grief lasts about a week each time, and this is supposed to be the main

sympathetic character. And on and on...

This is the sort of shabby book that smells of fulfilling a book contract. I know authors get screwed, but then they screw us without warning. I have seen authors disown a book like this, written to fulfill a contract, but they usually warn potential readers. The shame of it is there is no reason for Pinborough to write a book this bad. I've read her stories and one other novel and this almost smells like a bad case of writer's block.

Dylan says

I love this book! The best horror novel about the apocalypse ever. It's a little adult, but still very good. It's kinda like the Alien movies only the aliens are spiders. Don't let that put you off though the author writes it very well. Look this up online for a complete summery. I highly recomend this book! :D

Sarah says

You don't find a lot of books about giant killer spiders. Anyway, obviously, you have to suspend your disbelief pretty seriously to enjoy this book. It's a leisure harbor, which means you can expect lots of blood and gore and also a lot of fast-paced excitement. Overall, I really enjoyed this – it's hardly Shakespeare, but it's a fast-paced story and it's easy to put yourself in the lead character's position as he tries to survive themonsters as well as the other humans that survived the initial attack. The spiders start growing in the bodies of women, who begin to act moody and strange and put on a great deal of weight. It happens all over the world. Then, in one horrible night, the alien creatures burst out of their hosts, killing them, and begin to devour everyone in sight. Only a small number of people survive. As Matt, the main character, find a safe place to hide out from the spiders along with a small group of fellow survivors, it is only a matter of time before the creatures figure out how to get to them, and so the people begin to turn on one another, until resources run out, and more people begin to change as the spiders begin growing inside them. The only thing I didn't like about this book was its open-ended ending, though it left quite a bit of room for a sequel and I believe there actually is a sequel out there which I will have to look up. This was a fun and fast-paced novel that was very gory and dark but which definitely held my interest through the end. It was definitely a far-fetched novel – a true dark fantasy with little relation to reality, but it was still an enjoyable read.

Bandit says

[so in the end Rebecca is genuinely happy she gets pregnant?and so is the guy? SERIOUSLY? the world has gone to shit, the odds of survival are microscopic and she's glad to be bringing a baby into this world? that just strikes me as idiotic

Melissa Helwig says

Matt and Chloe are expecting a baby, but instead Chloe gives birth to a creature which looks like a giant spider. The spiders (later named "Widows") use women as hosts, killing all females in England. After the death of his beloved Chloe, Matt goes in search of other survivors. He finds a few men and, surprisingly, a few women. Together they seek a safe haven, away from the Widows.

The story moves along quickly, gripping you from page one (as I've already mentioned) and keeps you wanting to read on to see if Matt will discover more survivors and if they will live through encounters with the Widows.

The apocalyptic plot isn't anything new, neither is having aliens use humans as hosts, but having the alien-type-thing be a big spider is unique. And the explanation for how the Widows came into being is interesting and all too realistic. But killing off almost the entire female population in Britain is pretty anti-feminist. I understand that it had to be women, because men can't give birth, but maybe Pinborough could have developed an idea which didn't involve all the women dying. There are a few women survivors, but there is no explanation why they survived while every other woman died. Also, there is no talk in the book about whether the Widows are terrorizing the whole world, or just England. You would think that's the first thing the characters would want to find out, so they can escape the Widows (like in *28 Days Later*), but I guess they never thought of that.

The worst part of the novel is unfortunately the most important part: the characters. *Breeding Ground* is told from the perspective of Matt, who is kind of a douche. Immediately after the love of his life dies, Matt starts sleeping with one of the only female survivors. No one else trusts her because, well she's a woman and they just assume she will become pregnant with a Widow. But of course Matt trusts her, endangering all the other mens' lives, just because he hopes to bang her. And she's only 21! He even keeps mentioning how young she is compared to him. I never warmed to any of the characters, but Matt was the only one I really hated.

I haven't read the sequel, *Feeding Ground*, yet but I heard it doesn't have any of the characters from this novel, so maybe it will be slightly better. *Breeding Ground* isn't a bad novel, I love apocalyptic stories and this one is interesting and well-written, but all the women dying, the characters not trying to find out what's going on in the rest of the world and jerky Matt bothered me.

Read more of my reviews at <http://littlemisszombie.blogspot.com>

Robert Beveridge says

Sarah Pinborough, **Breeding Ground** (Leisure, 2006)

I can be stubborn at times. My local library has a selection of Sarah Pinborough's more recent novels, but since *Breeding Ground* was the first one I heard about, I wanted to start there. So I've held off on reading Pinborough until I could get my hands on a copy of this one, which has been out of print since about five past forever (despite a sequel having been released last year). That finally happened, and as with most genre horror, once I sat down with it, I ended up tearing through it in about a day. I liked it well enough, but I ended up wondering if I shouldn't have started with *The Reckoning*. There was a blurb for it in the back of this one, and it intrigued me. While well-written enough, *Breeding Ground* was a bit derivative for me, and a bit on the too-clever-by-half side at times (having your characters read John Wyndham books when your own book directly descends from John Wyndham seems a touch, well, twee).

Matt and his girlfriend Chloe have what may be the best relationship ever. (If you've ever read Melville's *Pierre*, I couldn't resist drawing a parallel between the opening chapters describing Pierre's relationship with his mother.) Well, except that Matt's a bit of a doormat. You can easily imagine him in the pub on open mic night strumming Sufjan Stevens tunes. That aside, however, things turn kind of nasty when Chloe suddenly starts gaining weight, and we find out how horribly shallow Matt really is. Which is its own kind of horror novel in itself, though it's not the kind we have here. A trip to the doctor proves entirely unfruitful until Matt runs into the guy at a local pub, and is brought back to reality: it's not just happening to Chloe. It's happening

to every woman in the town... and, says the doctor, the world. They're all pregnant. And what they're carrying inside them is not human...

From there, it becomes pretty standard last-band-of-humans-vs.-the-monsters fare with a genderific twist that allows testosterone to run free. The John Wyndham implications are obvious, of course, but Pinborough is following a grand old tradition in British horror fiction. (Stirling Silliphant and Wolf Rilla obviously had a hand in birthing this baby as well.) Given that, you have to turn to whether the book delivers as promised, and I think this one does; despite Matt's reactions being just unbearably boorish every once in a while, he's a well-rounded character who makes sense, even if it's not the kind of sense I'd like, and a number of the other characters are fleshed out well, if not as well as Matt is. The ending is a touch unsatisfying, but that, again, is in the grand British horror tradition, as well as setting the book up for a sequel (though not the one we currently have, which I am told is contemporaneous to this book). If you're a fan of icky monsters, you should like this one. ***

Jay Massiet says

This is a book that I found interesting at times but largely unbelievable. It's a work about giant spiders destroying mankind, which was the interesting part. I had a very difficult time immersing myself and getting involved in the story, however. Whenever I teetered on the edge of forgetting the world around me, something on the page would yank me back to Earth. Sometimes it was a situation that didn't seem plausible, or an explanation that seemed awkward and forced. An example of this would be that Matt, the lead of the book, says he is writing the story, that it "may be the last thing" (225) he leaves to the world, yet the very next page divulges in the sex he had with Rebecca for three pages. I couldn't find it realistic that a person would write something intending for it to be read and then write every detail of the sex he had with his lover. There may be some people who would, but in a world utterly destroyed I don't think documenting every stroke of the hand during sex would be high on the author's list. I won't say that *Breeding Ground* was horrible, it's a book that I didn't mind reading, but its not one that I will read again any time soon.

Breeding Ground begins with a happy couple and this could only mean something bad would be occurring shortly. Chloe tells her boyfriend, Matt, she's pregnant and it is here the story becomes interesting; Chloe's pregnancy begins to have problems. She is gaining weight (stones as the British Pinborough puts it), but the weight is not where it should be and how it should look; instead, her flesh is lumpy and leaning towards grotesque. The images Pinborough painted here were solid and easily imagined. Shortly after this scene, Matt finds out another person he knows has a wife with the same "fat" problem. Chloe and Matt go to the hospital after this and it is at this point where the facts of the story begin to make little sense.

The Doctor knows something is wrong and has seen it with many of the women in the town. The doctor doesn't want to say anything about it, but this seemed strange. The doctor tells Matt "no one in the whole world" (25) knows what is happening to the women. This brought up the first issue I had with *Breeding Ground*: if the whole world's doctors can't figure out what's going on, then this means there are, at least, thousands of people trying to study the issue, yet no one knows that a problem exists until the spiders begin erupting from the women. It seems highly unlikely that so many people could know of the problem but the media or other sources of news never hear of the story to report it. I had trouble digesting the fact that no one knew what was going on until late in the book and that was only one man. From here on out I kept running into roadblocks that derailed my mind from fully enjoying this book.

There is a scene contained in the pages that as an avid horror reader I found both horrific and disturbing. It happens when the thing growing inside of Chloe alongside of her baby decides that the fetus is food. Chloe

miscarries and the fetus is seen by Matt on the kitchen floor half-formed, but even more disgusting, half-eaten. Pinborough didn't leave anything to the imagination. Matt sounds genuinely horrified. Even if this scene was included for its shock value, I liked the uncomfortable feeling the scene gave because most horror works are unable to produce that feeling within me.

Farther into the book, the spiders are finally "birthed" and begin to decimate the area Matt occupies. They are eating people and have covered large portions of areas in webs. Matt begins to gather a group together with various people he runs into. One of these persons is Katie; Katie manages to "control" one of the giant spiders. Matt doesn't know how, exclaiming, "something was stopping it, and that something was Katie" (104). This seemed like Pinborough was attempting at making the reader question what was going to happen, making the reader keep reading. Instead, it was easily seen that she would be pregnant with a creature because of the earlier mention of telepathy by Chloe. Knowing so far in advance of a character's outcome makes that character boring. Knowing too much information makes the story boring. There needs to be a balance and I don't feel the balance was struck here. The mention of telepathy was only hinted at earlier in the book, but to the reader it should be easy to pick up. It's much later that Matt realizes the link and so much later that it can be off-putting. It's these kinds of details that made this work difficult to get lost in.

Breeding Ground ends with new spiders and people who have genetically caused deafness have blood that is acidic when sprayed on or eaten by the "widows." This was unique. I don't think I have read a book where a genetic defect caused the blood of a person to be weaponized. As for the new spiders, all the previous spiders were born of women and now a new breed can be born of men. Although the spiders were only able to be incubated in a woman (because of "hormones" and such, as the book says), I had the mindset that the spiders would always be born this way because of the way they entered the world: genetic manipulation by scientists who shouldn't have been messing with certain things. I liked my idea and then it changed in the end. The spiders seem to be perfect monsters and then they are made less scary now that they will have nests and mates. In the future, the spiders will be able to be seen coming instead of also being an invisible horror that can attack anyone at any time. I would have liked to have seen it end with males becoming infected because of whatever was infecting women have adapted to the male body. Reading is subjective, however, and what I would have preferred to see in the end may not be the same for everyone.

As for the protagonist, Matt: it is hard to connect to him. He recently lost the love of his life and their unborn child, but immediately ogles other women. When Katie and her sister make their first appearance in the novel, Matt immediately thinks how "pretty" Katie is (86). In a world where every woman is capable of bringing forth creatures that want to eat people, his first thought should have been if she's a carrier. If it had been a year, or even just months, since he had last seen a woman it could have been more understandable; he did this, however, shortly after the world went down the toilet and, what should have made him think even more about the spiders, watched his girlfriend birth one. Matt supposedly loved Chloe but moved on to other women rather quickly making him, I think, extremely flat and disconnected.

I think Pinborough's *Breeding Ground* was interesting at times, but there were more issues with plot and character than the typical reader may be willing to hurdle. This work was not too horrible and worth the read to escape time but not something I will be picking back up.

Rich says

In this day and age, Zombie madness has swept through horror, and while that may be a good thing, *Breeding Ground* struck me as a breath of fresh air. Giant spiders have taken over the world, especially in UK, and the survivalists are not the gun-toting types one normally sees in American post-apocalyptic fiction.

Kat says

Breeding Ground has been on my TBR since October 2011 and was on my wishlist for several months before that. And yes, this is a horror book about spiders - arachnophobes beware.

The story begins with a young couple, Matt and Chloe who discover that, although unplanned, Chloe is expecting their first child. Their lives are typical of a couple in their early thirties, and although unexpected, both are excited about the prospect of their new arrival. It's only as Chloe's pregnancy progresses that things start to take a turn for the unusual, as she puts on weight rapidly and becomes moody and unpredictable.

The realisation that things are not normal comes slowly to Matt, and that's the first part of the plot I had an issue with. I get that he was caught up in his job and Chloe's difficulties, but he doesn't notice that something unusual is happening in his town and indeed around the country until the shit hits the fan late one night and it seemed unrealistic that he hadn't seen anything unusual on the news or even within his town.

In some parts of the story I liked Matt, at others I would have greatly enjoyed slapping him - he moves from woman to woman without much show of emotion (OK, he's a man but do we really need to be so stereotypical?) and he isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer - he misses vital clues when another woman falls pregnant that are exactly the same as Chloe experienced only a short time before.

There's a cast of other survivors, some interesting, some completely annoying and a whole bunch that kind of melt together into one person rather than having individual personalities and I kept getting confused as to who exactly each of these characters were and I couldn't tell you their back stories by the time I reached the end of the book. It's fine to have unlikable characters, and it's even something I enjoy, but none of them were particularly memorable.

When it comes to the horror level, this is gory and scary - what the spiders do to the humans they capture is truly gruesome and nothing is held back in the descriptions. Killer spiders were never going to be anything else, and these spiders are particularly horrendous.

There isn't a full explanation of how the spiders came to mutate and invade, and exactly what their intention is other than nom-nom humans, but there is another book so I assume at least some of those questions are answered. The premise of Breeding Ground is chilling, but the execution lacks characterisation and enough background for me to have really enjoyed it.

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