



The Three Body Problem

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Cambridge, 1888. Miss Vanessa Duncan is a young schoolmistress recently arrived from the countryside. She loves teaching and finds the world of academia fascinating; everything is going so well. But everything changes when a Fellow of Mathematics, Mr. Akers, is found dead in his room from a violent blow to the head. Invited to dinner by the family of one of her charges, Vanessa meets many of the victim's colleagues, including Mr. Arthur Weatherburn, who had dined with Mr. Akers the evening of his death and happens to be Vanessa's upstairs neighbor. Discussing the murder, she learns of Sir Isaac Newton's yet unsolved 'n-body problem', which Mr. Akers might have been trying to solve to win the prestigious prize. As the murder remains unsolved, Vanessa's relationship with Arthur Weatherburn blossoms. Then another mathematician, Mr. Beddoes is murdered and Arthur is jailed. Convinced of his innocence and with a theory of her own, Vanessa decides to prove her case. But when a third mathematician dies, it becomes a race against time to solve the puzzle. . .

The Three Body Problem Details

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Sherrill says

I got this book from the beach house we rented and it proved to be a sweet read. The girl in the book was so innocent and nice and she was so intent on solving the case for Arthur whom she cared for and she took on a motherless child while doing this and all in all I found her to be thoroughly good and kind. She wanted only the best for everyone. I appreciate people like that and hope to be like that in my life.

Cheryl says

Rating 3.5: I quite enjoyed this mystery. I found it daunting at first with the mathematical discussion (only 5 to 10 pages, so please continue reading!). I rather enjoyed that the book was written by using the main character's letters to her sister as the whole of the book. Quite ingenious really. Overall, once I got past the mathematical discussion, the book took off and became very interesting and also became very fast paced. If you like mysteries, then this highly recommended by me. I will be reading other books from this author.

Terence M says

B for boring ... DNF for ... you know what :)

Bridget says

So, this book is a bit of an odd one for me, and my decision to read it was something of a mistake. I read an article a little while ago about Obama's taste in books, and he noted that he had filled a kindle for his daughter when she left to go to university. He had only a few titles that he noted, and fewer still were in genres that interested me, but one was The Three Body Problem, a scifi story. Since it was in one of my genres and recommended by a president, I resolved to read it, and didn't bother looking up any other information about it. I looked through the TPL website for The Three Body problem, and this book was the only result that appeared. So, I read it.

Eventually I realized that it was a mystery set in the Victorian period rather than a scifi book (though that took a surprising amount of time, because I had heard that The Three Body Problem was epic in scope, and I thought maybe that this was the start of some immense work about the ancestors of space explorers). Because of my very different expectations, honestly all I could think of was my surprise, and "how long until they start building rockets", but that said I enjoyed it.

I like the Victorian language, and the protagonist was very sympathetic. I don't really care about the riddles that the book was focused on, but they were not so much the focus as to be really annoying. The link between the riddles and the plot was a bit contrived, but it also didn't really bother me. It was all in letter format, and while I am slightly skeptical about the degree of recall in the letters (mine are always inaccurate and much more introspective!), I didn't dislike the medium too much. The best part of it was the commitment

to the world, which I saw in the language, the characters, their views, and the descriptions of the scenery. I thought it was done consistently and well, and really appreciated.

So yeah, basically a surprise, but not a bad one.

Kirsten says

Great historical whodunit with math!

Laura Hannaway says

Excellent mystery! I liked the protagonist very much, and the mystery kept me guessing throughout! I would think I'd figured it out and then more details would be revealed changing the picture again!

The mathematics stuff was interesting and explained in lay and terms, however I must admit I found myself skimming a lot off those paragraphs as mathematical theory just isn't my cup of tea no matter how it's presented.

Honestly the only bit of the story that jarred for me particularly was in the final third of the book. The protagonist Vanessa is a schoolteacher. At the beginning of the story she states that she has a room at a guesthouse but she cannot afford board as well so she eats toast or soup a lot for her evening meal. However in the final third of the story she feels that to solve the mystery it will be necessary for her to travel across parts of Europe. She somehow has the money to travel to France, Belgium and then onto Stockholm. And to stay at hotels en route and afford food and clothing for the travelling companions she acquires on the journey. This just didn't ring true as there was no one bankrolling her journey and no explanation offered with regards to savings. She doesn't even call at a bank before leaving, just apparently has enough money on hand to do the journey! This doesn't detract from the story itself, it just niggled at me which was a shame as the rest of the story was consistent and extremely well written.

Kat says

Bien, remontemonos al 1888 donde Vanessa Duncan es una jovén que tiene un pequeño colegio donde es tutora y la situaciones de la vida la ha llevado a conocer un grupo de matematicos en donde tres han muerto y su gran curiosidad y la implicación de un ser querido la hacen que viaje por medio mundo en busca de respuestas.

Una novela sobre que sucede cuando estamos en el lugar equivocado, en el momento equivocado.

Siento un gran alivio al poder terminar este libro finalmente y se que mi fuerza de voluntad solo es por esos puntos extras, este no es el tema sobre los cuales me interesa leer y me resulto realmente dificil entender muchas cosas.

Deanne says

Would have liked this more but for the way the story is narrated. Our heroine writes letters to her twin disclosing the story, but we only have letters going one way, so we have one point of view.

Did find one annoyance, our heroine mentions the lack of fingerprints on a bottle of the prime suspect. The book is set in 1888, fingerprints weren't used until at least 10 years later. So after a snort of disbelief I decided to carry on whilst disengaging the part of my brain which knows trivia and gets annoyed at such things.

I've already picked up the next book in the series from the library, have to see if the next one in the series is better.

Jeanine says

<https://wateleestjeanine.wordpress.com...>

Rachel Francis says

The book, though enjoyable to read, did assume that the reader would be rather slow to work things out; especially in the earlier pages, I found myself discovering things that had not yet occurred to the protagonist. However, as the plot developed, I began to lag a little behind, and though I came up with the solution before the Big Reveal, it was far after Miss Duncan had figured it out - in fact, it wasn't even while I was reading the book, but rather when in the shower, amongst much shampoo and excitement. The conclusion was most satisfactory, and though the plot did often threaten to become quite fanciful, I had much fun in reading it, and will endeavour to read further books in the series. In short, don't expect a masterpiece or a highly complex murder mystery, but do have a read if you want an entertaining book - it helps to enjoy the occasional mathematical conundrum, too!

A.M. says

Epistolary style - Miss Vanessa Duncan writes letters to her twin sister about what's happening at Cambridge. We don't get Dora's responses, or indeed anything much about her twin.

Dr Geoffrey Akers, Fellow in Pure Mathematics, has been killed and the last person to see him was her upstairs neighbour Mr. Arthur Weatherburn. The maths world is trying to solve Newton's n-body problem and there is a lot of money and prestige at stake with a prize offered by the Swedish King.

When a second mathematician, Mr Beddoes, is found dead in his yard, it doesn't take the police long to find out that he walked home with Arthur after eating dinner together.

A third man, Mr Crawford, dies of digitalis poisoning.

Arthur is arrested and put in front of a Grand Jury for trial.

But Vanessa can't believe it. She sits through the trial powerless to help him and becoming more concerned every day.

I thought I was borrowing another novel with the same title. Once I realised my mistake, I was walking... usual story.

The court scenes are a little dragging. Okay... a LOT dragging.

The mention of a Grand Jury threw me - I had to go look it up. UK law abolished them in 1917 because they didn't work. It's arguable they aren't working here. I'm an ex lawyer and they have no evidence at all; not enough to charge him with the three murders. The last death even occurred when he was in police custody. (view spoiler)

2 stars

Daniel Finlay says

I picked this up meaning to pick up the popular Chinese science fiction book. This is more of a Victorian era science-mystery, something like if Jane Austen were writing epistolarian mysteries around the time of Mary Shelley. It wasn't bad, but really not my cup of tea.

Amalia Frontali says

Grazioso e sicuramente valido dal punto di vista della trama, ambientato a Cambridge nel 1888, con una vaga tonalità romance, che non disturba. Da lettrice abituale di romanzi vittoriani, rilevo qualche imperfezione nella cornice storica, quale ad esempio la mole di impegni e lo stile di vita di un'istitutrice (la protagonista ha decisamente troppo tempo libero) e in generale la mancanza di formalità e la compiacenza con cui la sua figura (di lavoratrice e di donne nubile) viene accolta un po' da tutti, muovendosi con un'indipendenza, materiale e morale, un po' eccessiva.

La forma epistolare è un pretesto, perché spesso la narrazione perde le caratteristiche di "lettera" e diventa una prima persona passata "narrativa". In tal senso ad esempio le udienze "stenografate" in aula dalla protagonista non si riescono a inquadrare come materia di lettera. Anche la scelta, comprensibile, di non inserire le risposte del destinatario, ma solo lettere della protagonista, contribuisce a far perdere l'illusione epistolare.

Molto convincente l'atmosfera della Cambridge vittoriana e le figure dei matematici, con un campionario di caratteri significativo e un'ottima coerenza di azione.

Le 4 stelline le merita perché, pur con la consapevolezza dei difetti di cui sopra, la lettura è coinvolgente e si chiude il libro con la sensazione di aver letto un romanzo gradevole e ben confezionato. Come dire che l'autrice, solo per la qualità di scrittura e il potenziale di trama e personaggi, riesce a far sembrare i suoi nei non un difetto fisico, ma un vezzo cosmetico.

Anna Catharina says

Dieser Krimi zeichnet sich eigentlich durch zwei Punkte aus:

- es ist ein mathematischer (!) historischer Kriminalroman
- er ist komplett in Briefform erzählt.

Die Briefform fand ich anfangs etwas irritierend und offenbar konnte auch die Autorin diesen Stil nicht wirklich durchhalten, denn die meisten Briefe (von Anfangs- und Endfloskeln mal abgesehen) lesen sich doch eher wie ein Ich-Erzähler. Normalerweise spricht man ja in einem Brief den Adressaten immer wieder an, nimmt auf gemeinsame Erlebnisse Bezug oder fragt nach. Dies fehlt in diesen Brief fast komplett, weshalb sie sich eben nicht wirklich wie Briefe lesen. Ich denke, die Autorin wollte etwas anderes (und zugleich ganz klassisches) ausprobieren, gelungen ist es hier leider nicht wirklich.

Die ersten hundert Seiten fand ich etwas langatmig, ich dachte schon, das Lesen dieses Buches würde sich endlos wie Kaugummi ziehen. Aber als der Gerichtsprozess begann, wurde es plötzlich sehr unterhaltsam (auch wenn die Handlung kaum voranging). Über die Befragungen vor Gericht konnte ich mich sehr amüsieren und auch danach flog ich geradezu durch die Seiten. Von Langeweile keine Spur!

Die Auflösung der Mord war wirklich sehr interessant und doch anders als der übliche Einheitsbrei. Nach dem etwas langweiligen Start war es dann doch eine schöne Lektüre.

El says

If you like 1) Maths with every minute detail given, 2) the epistolary style and 3) suspending your disbelief totally in the face of all the odds then you will like this book. Sadly, I don't so this novel was not for me. There was way too much detailed Maths exposition which was not needed for the storyline and the letter-writing was just one way so we only ever learned the narrator's viewpoint. Added to this was the very unbelievable plot line of the narrator's travels abroad which would more likely have seen her arrested on her return rather than the actual events in the work. We were also expected to believe that the narrator had total verbatim recall of every conversation and every utterance in the courtroom so that she could "write to her sister" (relate the plot). I kept imaging the poor sister receiving these huge missives and having to read them – not to mention the cost of the stamp to send all these pages! And the final courtroom scene where she constantly used "maybe, perhaps, I imagine, probably, possibly, could have, might have", etc would have been laughed out of court by the Prosecutor and Judge. At times this book made me laugh out loud – and it's not a comic novel! I won't be reading any more in this series.
