



An Exaggerated Murder

Josh Cook

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How can you solve a murder when the clues are so dumb?

Private investigator Trike Augustine may be a brainiac with deductive skills to rival Sherlock Holmes, but they're not doing him any good at solving the case of a missing gazzilionaire because the clues are so stupefyingly—well, stupid.

Meanwhile, his sidekicks—Max the former FBI agent and Lola the artist—don't quite rise to the level of Dr. Watson, either. For example, when a large, dead pig turns up on Trike's floor in the middle of the night, none of them can figure out what it means.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking as the astronomical reward being offered diminishes drastically every day.

That, plus the increasing reality that their own lives are in danger, lift this astonishing debut beyond its hilarious premise—a smart man befuddled by the idiotic—and turns it into something more than just a smart homage to Sherlock (with maybe a touch of early Jonathan Lethem thrown in). It becomes a compelling and compulsive thriller . . . with the added bonus that the prose is often as breathtaking as the tale.

An Exaggerated Murder Details

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From Reader Review An Exaggerated Murder for online ebook

Debbie says

too much style not enough substance and by next week I won't remember what happened at all.

Colleen Foster says

This was really different. The writing is convoluted and metaphor-heavy in the extreme, but it was definitely a style. Because most of this clutter comes from ventures inside the mind of the main character (basically a modern Holmes), I was much more tolerant of it than I would have been otherwise. It did feel like the author had a strong creative handle on his language and imagination, so much so that it reminded me of the kind of stories I wrote as a kid. The evident joy of just writing what he wanted and knowing that HE got all the inside jokes even if no one else did was so evident that it kept me reading. The best parts of this novel were brilliant and occasionally funny. The worst parts were when the thought processes and trajectories became so foggy that I stopped caring due to incomprehension. Also, don't hold your breath waiting for anything to be explained. Including Trike's soliloquies. Including the case the entire novel is based around.

Kaye says

I received this book from the publishers, free of charge, at the OLA Super Conference because I'm a librarian

I really enjoyed this book! I'll say right from the start that I love mystery and detective novels (and Sherlock Holmes is a badass) so I was pretty sure I was going to like this one.

It's not a book that can really be read casually since the main character can be difficult to follow (he's supposed to be), but I also found most of his foibles and quirks to be endearing.

I laughed (slightly maniacally) at the first reference to "a Mary Tudor in a frame on the wall" because I actually know exactly what that is and felt super-smart (don't worry, I felt less smart at other points, haha).

People who like their endings all neatly packaged up and tied with a bow will probably not like the end of this one. There are a few unanswered questions, but I liked it and would look forward to another book featuring Trike, Max, and Lola if the author chooses to write it.

Brendan says

This is a great debut novel. A plot designed to keep you guessing, interesting characters, all paired with extremely quirky and erudite writing, not to mention more James Joyce references than you can shake a stick at. I look forward to Josh's next one.

Ryan Sanders says

I recognize that the author was attempting to craft something unique that had never been done before in the literary world. He tries to drop you into the erratic mind of someone with a disassociative personality and an eidetic memory. While trying to re-imagine Sherlock Holmes in such a way could have been inventive, it came off as eccentric, hard-to-follow, and difficult to find likable and relateable characters within the novel. The most interesting character who I will simply identify as HR to avoid spoilers, is featured all too little and the bizarre syntax of the protagonist creates an agonizing narrative. Perhaps I am not part of this authors target demographic. I surely hope so, because this was a trudge through a discombobulated story and I recommend it only for stalwart fans of the Whodunnit mystery genre, and even then, tread with caution. As this isn't your standard mystery story.

Linda says

A novel novel, unlike any book I have ever read. It is a mystery but the physicality of the manuscript can be very different and possibly need instruction on how to read it. I will read this again because I'm sure I missed a lot. Needs to be read with a very clear unmuddled mind. I knew it was time to put the book down at night when I would forget where I needed to read next. Baffling? Good. Maybe I've confused you enough that you will pick it up and try to solve the mysteries yourself.

Craig Kingsman says

From the printing layout of some chapters to the numerous sentence fragments and then the long, drawn-out, big word heavy dialog from the main character, this book is a mess. Loose ends are not tied up. I don't feel any satisfaction. I figured out the "mystery" in the first few chapters.

Jackie says

Clearly I am not nearly clever enough to understand the various James Joyce references throughout this novel, and while disheartening, it was not the reason I was unable to enjoy this detective story.

The run on sentences and stream of consciousness narrative used to represent Trike's formidable brains sent me over the edge.

And while I don't consider myself a prude, the repeated use of the "f" word grated on my nerves. Surely the brilliant mind of PI Trike Augustine could find other words to use?

I thought the other characters in this story, particularly Trike's sidekicks, Max the ex-FBI agent and Lola the artist/inventor/knitter/athlete, were much more interesting characters than the tedious (part of the point, but still) Trike himself. Another fascinating minor character was Trike's nemesis on the police force, a tough homicide detective "Horn-Rims", with a surprisingly kind heart.

Melissa says

I didn't get it. I didn't like it and I definitely wouldn't recommend it.

Paul says

I am not sure exactly when it happened but somewhere in the last 10 years it became acceptable if not a guiding principle of writing that you don't need a story, or real character development as long as you use a number of creative writing techniques, in your book. I think this happened because reviewers needed something different. An Exaggerated Murder s another example of this development. The book uses multiple different creative style to tell a story, that was not the interesting. Can the author write? Yes he can, but based on this book he didn't write anything worth reading. The main character Trike, is a detective who narrates as a long stream of consciousness and I guess is a genius, but not someone you are likely to find likable. The two characters who sort of work with him Lola, and Max are not developed at all, in fact if you didn't read the back cover of the book you would have no idea why they are even part of the story. The first 100 pages were painful for me to grind through, and the rest of the story was boring and a letdown. Why so much creative attention is used on Trike, and none on anyone else in the book, adds to the lack of any real story, and the continued references to James Joyce's Ulysses just makes the author appear to be showing off how smart he thinks he is.

Nina says

An Exaggerated Murder was the book I never knew I needed. I first chose it at the library because of the clever synopsis, and eventually bought it after renewing it over seven times to read it again and again. I found it incredibly hilarious, and be as it may an unpopular opinion, I adored Trike in each and every way, just as much as his sidekicks Max and Lola. Although the constant need to focus to keep up with a high-functioning sociopath is irksome at times, Trike kind of just grows on you. Sherlock fans will love his quirks and genius brain, the way he sees every clue and points out every detail about the world around him - not to mention his absence of basic social skills.

I realized that this was my new favourite book when I began limiting myself to only one chapter per day so as not to finish the story too quickly.

However, you cannot read this novel without a clear, concentrated mind. The unique writing style, along with various obscure references to popular works (including Ulysses, Lord of the Flies, and Edgar Allen Poe's Purloined Letter) was surely not intended for light coffee-table reading. After all, entering the mind of a genius is no simple feat!

A last point to make was that although this is generally a humorous, intelligent novel, it is also the one that made me want to become a Private Investigator. One really emotional chapter literally made me cry (in Ikea, the first time I read it!) and it continues to do so with each read.

Do not discount this novel because of people who berate it for being "too showoff-y" or "distached". The contemporary feel really makes An Exaggerated Murder an entertaining tale indeed.

Sarah says

Very Dirk Gently, perhaps more so than the original.

Kat says

The book is a bit of a muddle. If you are looking for a straightforward mystery, run away. If you are looking for meta-fiction, read the also annoying but at least with a comprehensible concept- "House of Leaves."

This book has something in common with Joycean fiction which the author is apparently enthralled with. I can only imagine why he doesn't attempt to create his own language to emulate his idol. His thesis seems to be that there is a distinction between how different kinds of brains process information. Lola's style is "artistic," (for lack of a better word) whereas Trike is "Holmesian logic." He is unhappy with inductive logic in the style of Dupin, which he presents a speech about. (It seems likely that this is the author's BA or MA thesis "cunningly" inserted into a work of fiction.) So Trike will solve the mystery, while Lola will understand it. Pity the reader who is allowed to do neither.

Some readers on determining that the book doesn't make sense will decide that it is because they aren't smart enough. The other perhaps, equally cogent option is that the writer or the book isn't particularly that good. "Finnegans Wake" could be the work of a genius, understood by no one but the author, or it could be an incoherent mess. Let's free ourselves of the delusion that literature which is difficult must be the work of unrestrained genius.

Emily says

I don't think I'm smart enough or familiar enough with some of the references to really "get" the whole book, which I knew going in since Josh is brilliant. And the ending frustrated the crap out of me, again probably because I've never read any Joyce and was hoping for more answers. But I really liked the character development and the general rapport between Trike, Lola, and Max.

Stacia says

A super-fun mash-up that might be best imagined as if Thomas Pynchon met Sherlock Holmes & they had a few too many beers while sparring with Edgar Allan Poe & James Joyce. An entertaining, untraditional, & modern noir detective romp with excessive usage of nicotine patches. Thumbs-up.
