



The Poison Belt

Arthur Conan Doyle , Katya Reimann (Introduction)

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"Nothing could be done. The thing was universal and beyond our human knowledge or control. It was death for young and old, for weak and strong, for rich and poor, without hope or possibility of escape."

Must Professor George Challenger and friends, barricaded in a room, see Earth die? As globe passes through a belt of poisonous ether, terror sweeps mankind; cities riot; communications cease. Novella.

The Poison Belt Details

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Maruf Hossain says

Liked it. I liked author's style. I also liked the character Professor Challenger, though he is arrogant. In fact, his arrogance is the reason of my liking. Also liked the story.

Doreen says

it is certainly an eye-opener for me when i discovered that sir arthur conan doyle wrote sci-fi stories. the professor challenger series has been interesting to me thus far. don't expect any technological mumbo-jumbo considering when this story was written.

Zakaria Mehrab says

Good for light reading.

As I read a translation, some part seemed off to me. Like the reincarnation part was so sudden and even weirder was Challenger's reaction to that. Personally I never like it when a character is portrayed as an almighty omnipotent being.

The humors in the beginning were outstanding.

Sotiris Karagiannis says

Η Δηλητηρι?δης Ζ?νη ε?ναι μ?α νουβ?λα επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας του ?ρθουρ Κ?ναν Ντ?ιλ, συγγραφ?α της πασ?γνωστης σειρ?ς μυστηρ?ου Σ?ρλοκ Χολμς. Πρωταγωνιστ?ς αυτ?ς της σειρ?ς μυθιστορημ?των ε?ναι ο καθηγητ?ς Τσ?λεντζερ, ?νας υπερ?πτης ξερ?λας σταλεγ?κιας με χρυσ? καρδι? και η παρ?α του. Η νουβ?λα αυτ? ε?ναι η δε?τερη της σειρ?ς, εν? η πρ?τη λ?γεται Χαμ?νος Κ?σμος (Lost World) και ?χει να κ?νει με... μαντ?ψτε! δεινοσα?ρους στον Αμαζ?νιο! (κλ?φτη chrichton!!!)

Το τ?λος του κ?σμο πλησι?ζει και ?ρχεται απ? τον αιθ?ρα. ?να μολυσμ?νο σ?ννεφο (?) φτ?νει σιγ? σιγ? στη γη και κοιμ?ζει ?λες τις φυλ?ς, ξεκιν?ντας απ? την Κ?να και την Αφρικ?. Ο προφ?σορας Τσ?λεντζερ καλε? τους τρεις φ?λους του και συνοδοιπ?ρους σε ?λες τις περιπ?τειες στο σπ?τι του, για να γ?νουν μ?ρτυρες αυτ? του φαινομ?νου. Οι δρ?μοι γεμ?ζουν πτ?ματα, οι πυρκαγι?ς καταστρ?φουν ολ?κληρες π?λεις και τα πλο?α μ?νουν ακυβ?ρνητα. ?μως ο Τσ?λεντζερ ?χει ?ναν ?σο στο μαν?κι του και δε σκοπε?ει να παρατ?σει τ?σο ε?κολα τα ?πλα...

Δεν ?ξερα τι να περιμ?νω απ? αυτ? το βιβλ?ο. Μου ?ρεσε το εξ?φυλλο και η υπ?θεση μου κ?νησε

A singularly superb accomplishment!!

Oh, forgive my **loquaciousness**, I don't mean to **prattle** on so (*you certainly never would*), but I just find it so spirited and impressive.

Hmm...pardon? To what am I referring...oh, excuse me. Let me explain.

First, you create one of the most iconic literary characters in all of history and easily the most celebrated detective of all time...namely ~~Batman~~ Sherlock Holmes. You then create dozens of stories featuring *The World's Greatest Detective* that enjoy such incredible popularity that the masses salivates at the mere hint a new story is going to be released.

So what do **you**, the great Sir Arthur, do?

You use that enormous popularity as a spring board to finally publish that novel that's been kicking around in your brain for years. You know the one called *The Lost World* starring that other intrepid genius, Professor Challenger. The character you created after that **petulant** scoundrel **H.G. Wells** called you a "one hit wonder" and wagered that you couldn't produce another sustainable literary character to save your life.

Well, you certainly showed that **smack-talking assclown**, did you not?

Hell, you already had a built-in audience for the novel, especially since the publisher ~~dupliciously~~ cleverly decided to downplay the fact that Sherlock Holmes was **not** the star of the novel. And lo and behold, the book turned out to be fairly popular and the people genuinely seemed to like Professor Challenger, seeing him as kind of a rugged, abrasive mirror to the Great Detective.

Of course, *The Lost World* was certainly not as popular (or as profitable) as Sherlock Holmes. So being the astute businessman that you are, you naturally decided to focus the brunt of your creative energy into producing the next Holmes masterpiece. **HOWEVER**, that certainly didn't mean, in the interim, that the money had to stop rolling in now did it. Of course not.

You're Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for crying out loud! You could wipe your ass and put your name on it and it would be a bestseller.

What to do, what to do....WAIT, you said...how about a sequel to *The Lost World*? Of course, no sequel was ever intended and you didn't have the foggiest whiff of a clue of an idea what the plot for such a story would be. **BAH!!** Details, merely details. A lesser person might have given up, but not you sir.

YOU are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

So you let your mind go blank and clamped onto the first thought that popped into your noggin. Suddenly, it hit you. What was it that the **homeless opium addict** was ranting about the other night when he passed you on the street? You think back...right before you pushed him down into the gutter and beat him with your cane for asking you for some change. It was something about the air being poisoned and Judgment Day and the world's pending destruction.....and you think PERFECT!! All I have to do is play with that and throw Professor Challenger into the mix and it practically writes itself.

Or course, a lesser writer might have delayed putting ink to paper until they had researched the science thoroughly in order to make the plot as accurate as possible. I can see you now Sir Arthur, staring at such a cad with a long, perplexed look before finally shaking your head in bewilderment at the naivete of some

people. Without further delay, you sit down, begin to write.....AND THE POISON BELT IS BORN!!!!

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Okay, while the above was just me being playful, it was inspired by the kind of thoughts that kept occurring to me while I was reading this. Don't get me wrong, the story is not BAD and I have no complaints about Doyle's prose as he was a good writer. I just didn't find the plot or the characters (except for Professor Challenger) very interesting or compelling. He just seemed to have phoned this one in.

The story basically involves a poisonous belt of "aether" (the substance that a century ago was believed to have occupied all of space and acted as a physical medium for other substances) passing over the Earth from space and apparently killing everyone except for Professor Challenger and his three cohorts from *The Lost World* who are protected as a result of Challenger's foresight and preparations. The four people are stuck inside a room while the event occurs and eventually come out into the world to see the effects of the tragedy. THAT...IS...BASICALLY...IT!!!

Overall, I just wasn't that interested in the story and so give it a passing great for quality of prose and an interesting main character but can't go so far as to say I like it. It was just okay. 2.0 to 2.5 stars.

Adrian says

As short stories go, it was quite good, but despite it being well written, I felt the story didn't really go anywhere. I think once you read it you will realise why it couldn't really go anywhere in short story format. Having said all that I still enjoyed it, especially meeting up with Challenger again.

Spirou says

Δεν ξέρω π?σα αστερ?κια του αξ?ζουν. Δεν το τελει?ωσα. Ξεκιν?ει καλ? και με αρκετ? χιο?μορ. Ε?ναι μικρ? και θα μπορο?σα να το τελει?σω, αλλ? υποσχ?θηκα στον εαυτ? μου να μην πι?ζομαι να διαβ?ζω βιβλ?α που δε με "κρατ?νε" και το συγκεκριμ?νο ?ταν ok, αλλ? προς το παρ?ν το αφ?νω στην ?κρη. ?σως στο μ?λλον να το συνεχ?σω...

Evgeny says

The story itself is less than 100 pages, so the plot description and the review itself will be short. Professor Challenger discovered that the Earth will pass through the belt of poisonous ether (whatever that is).

Being a genius he was the only person who realized this and made some preparations. And thus the same four people who traveled to the Lost World plus the professor's wife got to see the end of the world while getting ready for their turn to die.

Despite my gloomy plot above the first third of the story is quite humorous and this saved the book from 2-

star rating. Before killing people the poison made them behave very strangely (or amusingly depending on how you see it). We are talking strange behavior from the point of view of people living in Victorian Britain. One act of Challenger and his reasoning for it made me laugh out loud.

People began dying off and the book became very boring with the survivors brooding for the lack of anything meaningful to do. This went on for the major part of the story with the very end of it being philosophical musings about the insignificance of the humanity in the overall picture of the Universe - not a big improvement over the brooding, but the latter overstayed its welcome, so the former still was better (and shorter).

The end.

So there are two things that decided the rating:

1. I already mentioned the humorous part; Professor Challenger saved the day as usual.
2. I also mentioned the length: the book is short and you can get past the boring part on pure momentum you gather initially; see above.

I will read the next book just for completeness sake, but I strongly suspect it will be DNF.

fenrir says

Non particolarmente coinvolgente, e decisamente non all'altezza di Conan Doyle.

Il professor Challenger è irritante a dir poco, la sua teoria si basa sul niente (come giustamente in molti gli fanno notare) ed infatti Conan Doyle non riesce mai a darci spiegazioni logiche sul perché una cosa come la nube avvelenata sia potuta succedere lasciandoci effettivamente con un grosso punto di domanda sulla testa. Come è arrivata questa nube? come ha fatto Challenger a capirlo ed a capire anche come contrastarla? perché poi sono tutti (quasi tutti, non quelli dei treni che si sono scontrati chiaramente) magicamente risorti? Una storia del genere ha senso solo se viene spiegato tutto o quasi, così non funziona.

Christopher says

It's hard not to be intrigued by a book about the apocalypse written by Arthur Conan Doyle. This is the second adventure featuring the genius and arrogant Professor Challenger (the first being the funventurous tale of dinosaurs in the Amazonian rain forest, *The Lost World*.) Neither of the Challenger novels have held up well in the scientific sense, but *The Lost World* was ridiculous in the best possible way, emitting a joy of discovery and the unknown. *The Poison Belt*, however, fails in everything it tries to accomplish.

The premise is that the earth is passing through a "poison belt" of aether and slowly but surely poisoning every breathing thing. It first affects the "less developed races" in South America and Africa and makes it's way to North America and then to Europe (yep, this story is super racist.) Challenger is the only person who is able to detect it, of course, and takes the precaution of sealing a drawing room completely and filling it with oxygen from several metal canisters, hoping to live a few more hours than the rest of the world.

It sounds like a very bleak idea, yeah? But it never comes across that way. Just as the wife of a murdered

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