



Love at Absolute Zero

Christopher Meeks

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Foreword Reviews Book of the Year Finalist

"Highly recommended!" - Midwest Book Review

"The book is a hilarious read!" - BookGeeks (UK)

"Laugh-out-loud funny!" -NY Times bestselling author Darcie Chan

"Love At Absolute Zero" is a comic romance about Gunnar Gunderson, a 32-year-old star physicist at the University of Wisconsin who's determined to meet his soul mate within three days using the Scientific Method. As he channels his inner salmon for speed dating, he accidentally steps on the toes of a visiting Danish schoolteacher--and his life turns upside down.

Love at Absolute Zero Details

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Author : Christopher Meeks

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Karielle at Books à la Mode says

Love At Absolute Zero by Christopher Meeks

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Love At Absolute Zero is the story of Gunnar Gunderson, a 32-year-old physicist at the University of Wisconsin. The moment he's given tenure at the university, he can only think of one thing: finding a wife. This causes his research to falter. With his two partners, Gunnar is in a race against MIT to create new forms of matter called Bose-Einstein condensates, which exist only near absolute zero. To meet his soulmate within three days -- that's what he wants and all time he can carve out -- he and his team are using the scientific method, to riotous results.

What Stephanie Thinks: When it comes to the social scene, particularly the female social scene, Gunnar Gunderson has never had the luck. He likes women, he's sure -- in fact, he likes them a lot -- but having grown up a dorky little science geek, as an adult, his charisma is slightly lacking to say the least.

As a character, I absolutely adore Gunnar! He's perfectly awkward and well-intentioned and adorable. I could definitely relate to some of his mishaps -- how his life never plays out the way he imagines it. Just because he's a physics professor doesn't mean he's not imaginative. And in a sad way, I learned, just because he is thirty-two, a grown man, doesn't mean he's not naïve. One too many times, he's had his heart fooled, which may be the bane of his inability to score. But he needs game, he discovers. Call it a mid-life crisis, but he needs game -- he needs a woman -- and he needs her now.

With the help of supportive (even if ludicrous) fellow-science-nerd friends, and a rock-solid mom and sis, Gunnar learns that the true meaning of love cannot be defined and planned accordingly; that the true meaning of love lies subjectively within the individual, and that it never, especially in the beginning, plays out how you will expect it to.

Meeks's writing, I feel, isn't highly laudable. I admire how he can incorporate humor and physics together into a love story (now that I think about it, that feat itself is pretty impressive), but the style is a little stiff, doesn't flow very well. Nothing that keeps me up at night. The story's very readable, though; I didn't have any trouble getting through it, and didn't have to force myself to keep turning pages.

If you're in for a rather untraditional happily-ever-after love tale with a little bit of science geek innuendo and a whole lot of genuine emotion -- something we rarely see from the male perspective, but what I think Meeks does an incredible job at conveying -- then pick up Love At Absolute Zero to give it a try!

Stephanie Loves: ""The most painful state of being is remembering the future, particularly one you can never have."

Radical Rating: 8 hearts-Would recommend to lots of really good friends.

Heather says

Gunnar Gunderson is a physicist with some pretty straightforward ways at looking at the world. While his research delving into the physics of absolute zero is going very well and he's just secured tenure at the university, Gunnar suddenly feels an intense need to find a mate and wants to act on this desire quickly. While on a small hiatus from his teaching and research, Gunnar decides to devote his three day stretch to finding a woman whom he can settle down with. But three days being what it is, Gunnar finds himself in a pickle when his strange preparations for meeting the girl of his dreams don't go as planned. However, he's delighted when a chance encounter puts him in the way of a very attractive woman who is receptive and open to Gunnar in a way that none have been before. From the moment they meet, Gunnar and his paramour are smitten, and when Gunnar agrees to go to great lengths to be with the woman he loves, he has no idea what he's getting himself into. Thus the three day courtship of his imagination takes on some huge permutations, and Gunnar begins to realize there are huge differences between love and science. In this hugely heartwarming and emotionally eloquent saga of Gunnar and the stirring of his heart, Meeks shares with us a most endearing man, looking for love and enchantment in some very unusual ways.

Every time I discover that Chris Meeks is putting out a new book, I get unusually antsy about getting my hands on it. It's always a pleasure to discover the way in which he will capture my attention and immerse me in the lives of characters that are so complex and concrete that they are difficult to separate from their real life counterparts. Meeks is always upping the ante and outdoing himself with each successive book, growing and stretching as an author whom I've come to trust and admire. This latest book was different for Meeks in that he explored the human comedy and tragedy of love in a perfect arena, juxtaposing it as he did with stone cold scientific fact. It was lovely the way the immutable played against the transcendental, and the way Gunnar emotionally slid from his staunch and scientific opinions on love to a more refined and relaxed attitude when it came to taking a chance and letting the desires of his secret heart be fulfilled.

Gunnar was one interesting dude. While he's a very successful physicist and not a bad teacher, there's a component of his life that's lacking, and it takes a wave of success to realize that he needs someone to share it with. He's funny and self-deprecating, but unrealistic about love because he doesn't understand it or how it works. Gunnar is very comfortable looking at love as a scientific problem, and because of this his attempts to solve it as such are usually impractical and don't make a lick of sense. And when you stop to analyze what Gunnar thinks about love, it's enough to make you question what love is and wonder if there are any universal rules that apply to love at all. Meeks subtly proposes these questions by putting Gunnar through his paces, and as the reader laughs at the improbable notions of his protagonist, there's an element of perplexity as to why it shouldn't be so. Discovering love isn't like discovering a new isotope or element, but there is the same flush of initial recognition and the same enthusiasm to share your discovery with the world. For all that, love will not and cannot react in an explicit and time tested manner. For Gunnar, this is a realization that comes to chafe at him. While I could sympathize deeply with Gunnar's plight, I could also laughingly relate to what he was going through at times. He had an uncanny knack in his humanness to be thoroughly affective and involving, his confusion and beliefs both charged with the spark of genuine humanness that is a hallmark in Meeks' writing.

When Gunnar decides to immerse himself in the experience of love and to let go of the safety of some of his ideas and his world, he's in for a rude awakening. This new twist to his love affair baffles and untethers him. Once again, Gunnar tries to insert himself into science, but this time, the results are different. One of the most elegant things about this novel was the way that science and physics were more than ideas. Not only

were they solid and sculpted plot elements, they gave the narrative a push/pull between two very different ideas and schools of thought that Gunnar tried to apply to his life. When leaving science behind to venture towards love, Gunnar becomes lost and directionless and finds himself fervently wishing to be ensconced in a world he understands and feels safe to him. But unfortunately, these new directions cannot be reversed so easily, leaving him feeling unmoored and angry. Always at the back of his mind is another opportunity for love that has passed him by, and as Gunnar grows less and less comfortable with the situation, his mind wanders to places where it's painful for it to go. It was here that Gunnar loses himself and loses his way. The tenderness and confusion of his heart was on full display, and there was an element of hopelessness and melancholy that effused this section of the book and drew me deeper and deeper into Gunnar's heartache and grief. But no matter how deeply shattered he felt, there was a glimmering light to his personality that clued me in to not counting him out of the game just yet.

While the first sections of the book were lighthearted and comedic, the middle was more somber and reflective. Towards the end, there's a measure of redemption for Gunnar, and there's a sense that the time has come for this man. Gunnar's plight is the path that will take him from the safety of ideas he can hide behind to the raw and uncharted territory of the unknown, finally landing him in a place where he doesn't need to have all the answers and can let his heart soar. I was rooting for this man to extricate himself from the mire he had unwittingly gotten himself into, but was also appreciative that Meeks gave his character a heart that was truly ardent and that I could relate to without difficulty. As a character, Gunnar grows exponentially, and that's something I love to see in the books I read. Plot, character and motivation combine into the perfect confection of a book that sees its readers cheering along for the underdog: a specimen who seems to have it all figured out but is repeatedly shocked when his hypothesis doesn't lead to the desired outcome. Gunnar and his life go from looking into the yawning maw of hopelessness to landing in a harbor of contentment and fulfillment with a satisfying and well deserved conclusion. There are elements that are left up in the air, but one has the feeling that this new Gunnar will react with with a precision of the heart that has eluded him before.

This book was another winner for Meeks, and decidedly so. It was in scope and emotion a very different book than *The Brightest Moon of the Century*, but in some ways, the concern I had for Gunnar both rivaled and matched the concern I had for Edward in *Brightest Moon*. This is a story that is fundamentally original and inventive. It forces its reader to ask pressing questions about not only the state of the protagonist's heart and mind, but their own, and proves to both that the ideas we sometimes hold dear may limit us in imperceptible but very life altering ways. A deeply resonant read that manages to be funny without sacrificing its gravity. Highly recommended!

Christopher says

First, I'm in awe of Goodreads this second. I'd been so deep into writing this book that something had to give, and that something was learning more about Goodreads. I could probably burn up my day with email and Facebook alone, let alone adding something new like Goodreads. Yet friends kept mentioning this place, and so I found my password and have decided to really explore it. I just found my profile, and two things surprised me here. One is that I didn't have to add my new novel; it was already here. So was my blog. I'm impressed.

I'm proud of this book. I pushed myself, diving into making a physicist likeable even loveable and, along the way, slip in a little quantum physics. Poor Gunnar has so much come down on him. At the start of the book,

he's given tenure at the University of Wisconsin, and he and his research team are taking a short time off from their research into matter as it gets extraordinarily cold--billions of a degree from absolute zero. Gunnar wants a wife, and he's going to use the Scientific Method to find one. He's also giving himself three days to find his soul mate. He doesn't know the chain of trouble he's about to start.

It's fun.

L_manning says

Gunnar Gunderson has a lot going for him. His research is exciting, and he's just gotten tenure. He feels like something is missing though- love. Gunnar decides the best way to find a mate is to take a scientific approach. If it's good enough for physics, surely it will work equally well for love too? From Wisconsin to Denmark though, he learns that love isn't as easy to figure out. Even with some major missteps, will Gunnar be able to find love? Can finding love coincide with good research?

This was a very interesting book. Gunnar was a pretty funny character. Being a somewhat of a scientist myself, I've known lots of guys like Gunnar. Super smart but not so great with social situations. Naturally, once Gunnar decided he needed a wife, he threw himself into the process as readily as he would any experiment. His friends and fellow scientists were also great characters. They seem like they'd be pretty fun to hang around. Gunnar makes rash decisions when it comes to love, but luckily he learns and grows from all his trials.

I found the scientific approach to love to be hilarious. Gunnar was endearing, and I found myself cheering him on. I definitely wanted him to succeed in his attempts at finding love. The book could read as a bit choppy and clinical at times, but I felt like this fit the atmosphere of the book. It helped me get a real feel for Gunnar's character. This book is very fun, and you get a great sense of how science and love can combine to make magic.

Book provided for review.

Debbie Smith says

Thank you Goodreads for giving me the chance to discover this delightful book by choosing me as a winner. I was intrigued by the description of "Love at Absolute Zero" when I saw it listed in the giveaways. Having known men like Gunnar I was eager to see what Christopher Meeks had in store for this scientifically adept but socially inept "hero". From the beginning I was captivated by Meeks main character Gunnar. I found myself pulling for him to succeed and wishing I sit him done and clue him in on how the world really works. His highs and lows became my highs and lows and I enjoyed the surprisingly romantic ending to a book that was filled with scientific information. Who would have suspected that a novel about science and romance could be so charming? My only reservation in regards to this novel was the rather over descriptive "bedroom" scenes, but I am rather conservative in this area. Overall I would recommend this book as a delightful read - a romance novel that teaches about the world of scientific discovery.

Karen M says

I have to say I loved this book. It was both funny and a romance. Sometimes you read a book and it reminds you that you are not the only one whose history has a chapter on being broken hearted or put more plainly, being dumped but it is followed by a chapter on being hopeful and not giving up.

Our sweet scientific thirty-something year old Gunnar has reached certain goals in his life. He owns his own home, check. He just reached tenure at his university, check. He's working on a project with his two friends that could bring him fame in his field, check. Now what could be missing for our hero? A wife, children, someone with whom to share his life, no check and this is where our story begins with Gunnar's realization that he needs a woman in his life, immediately. His last girlfriend was years ago and she moved across the country to get away from him, so how to find someone now.

After finally realizing that scientific method isn't really working for finding true love, Gunnar goes with happenstance, again and again and finally fate does step in in some very odd ways but when something is meant to be you just don't want to fight it. The search for love has Gunnar traveling not only out of the country but completely out of his comfort zone and we get to take both trips with him. I enjoyed the read.

This book was supplied by the author in exchange for an honest unbiased review which is exactly what this is.

Jessica says

In an effort to be as thorough with my exploration of the romance genre as possible, I decided that the last book I'd subject myself to peruse would have a male author. It seemed only fair, really, ...even a tad bit scientific. So after a quick spin through some Goodreads recommendations I landed firmly on 'Love at Absolute Zero' by Christopher Meeks, a title where the scientific method is called out by name in the synopsis. The premise seemed lighthearted enough, promising a splash of comedy and the plot seemed to consist of more than "girl meets boy and girl drops panties." To say the very least, it appealed to my substance-demanding side, and apropos given the summary, so I gave it a whirl.

So what were my findings? Well, some of you may be a sight bit disappointed to learn that it hasn't managed to make a romance genre convert out of me but it did help to reinforce a very important lesson, a lesson that's taken a few titles to truly solidify: Not all romance novels are bad. The trip through "Romance Land" also helped me to identify a couple of titles, and authors that I may actually seek out in the future.

But enough about the genre as a whole and more about this work by Meeks, eh? It's a solidly written work that kept my interest up until the very end, rooting for Gunnar and his mission to find a soul mate from right around page one. And let's just say that while focus of the story does eventually stray from this ludicrous three-day soul mate discovery, it shifts to a much realer, soul searching exploration that still managed to keep me chuckling. It has a diverse cast of supporting characters that never feel superfluous to the plot and a wonderful sense of place and honesty that I haven't come across particularly often.

Bottom Line: If you're a fan of books like 'Flat-Out Love' by Jessica Park this one will resonate with you. With its offbeat sense of humor and brutally honest depictions of the kinds of people that can make up a life, it's well worth the time spent. If, however, you're more of a "girl meets boy and girl drops panties" kind of

reader, well, it's probably not your cup of tea.

Eric says

This book is a funny look at love through a scientist's hypothesis/experimentation model of dating. It's not at all my typical kind of book, but that made it more of a breath of fresh air.

There were, however, two aspects I didn't like.

- 1) The beginning of the first chapter flashed forward four months with unnecessary and heavy-handed foreshadowing.
- 2) The book's description, which implied the main character -- Gunnar Gunderson -- would have three days to find his soul mate. This set up an expectation that the book would take place over three days, where it actually took place (as the flash-forward makes clearer) over many months. But this was likely the editor or publisher's doing, and not the author's, as the author does not often write their book's jacket description.

Lisa Hura says

Gunnar Gunderson is having his midlife crisis a little early. He's just gotten tenure and suddenly he decides he needs a wife. Gunnar's a scientist, not a romantic, so he decides to play to his strengths: he's going to use the scientific method to help him find a wife. Even better, he's going to find her in three days.

What follows is a little over-the-top but definitely funny. If Gunnar and his wingmen can find a study or a research paper on what attracts women, Gunnar is going to try it out. Braces, eye surgery, speed dating — he'll even talk to someone in the theater department.

He's got just a short time to devote to his hunt for love. Gunnar and his colleagues are involved in very competitive research on Bose-Einstein condensates, which exist only at temperatures near absolute zero. Due to some logistical issues at the university, they have this little window of opportunity and they are determined to take advantage of it. Imagine a couple of the geeks you went to high school with, hanging out in the basement rec room, plotting ways to get girls to make out with them. Age them about 15 years, give them a couple of advanced degrees (but no advanced social skills) and you have Gunnar and his friends. They try to help, in their own way, but Gunnar is determined to make every step in the book.

I loved the speed-dating part of the book. The urgency, trying to make an instant good impression, reading all the scientific studies to wear the right colors and say the right things...and still managing to say the wrong thing, every time. Dating is horrible! No wonder he wants to get it over with in three days.

I could also relate to his experiences in Denmark. I've talked about my travels here before, and while I love seeing new places, it can be mentally and emotionally exhausting. Trying to deal with a simple thing like ordering dinner when you aren't 100% positive you know what you're ordering? Scary stuff. But he digs right in and gives it a try, instead of slinking home a failure.

All in all, it's a fun book about the crazy stuff we do to find love. I could applaud Gunnar's efforts even as I

was thinking "this is never gonna work!" It's tough to try and connect with someone and it's scary to put yourself out there, so you can't help but root for him, even when you think he's nuts. Using the scientific method isn't any crazier than buying cologne with pheromones or counting on your zodiac sign to determine your compatibility. Gunnar should give hope to geeks everywhere.

Virginia Campbell says

With some books, you can sense in advance that you are in for a reader's treat, that you will be taken outside your normal reading zone and sent on an involving and entertaining journey through words. "Love at Absolute Zero", by Christopher Meeks, is just such a book. I knew that I would love the hero, Gunnar Gunderson, and that I would be captivated by his adventure of self-enlightenment. What I didn't know, since this was my first read from Chris Meeks, was that the author would blow me away with his skill as a storyteller. Since Gunnar is a physicist, his thought processes center around science and logic. He even uses physics to rationalize human behavior and sexuality. For Gunnar, this is not just his profession, it's the very air he breathes. It is also very much a coping mechanism. Gunnar is not just a brainy geek. He's also a man with a good heart and a longing for love and companionship. We could not really empathize with Gunnar if we didn't understand his physics-patterned psyche, so Chris Meeks makes the science reachable for the reader. When Gunnar lectures his students, gives a speech, or discusses physics with anyone who will listen, the voice you hear is really the author making his hero more accessible to the reader. You cannot read Gunnar's misadventures without finding him endearing, admiring his intelligence, and hoping that he will finally get it right and score his happy ending. When Gunnar reaches a career and life milestone, his university tenure, he decides it's time to bring his personal life up to speed and find his perfect mate. Through scientific rationalization, Gunnar decides that he can make himself over and secure his soul mate in just three days. What he puts himself through to achieve his goal is both alarming and hilarious. I laughed out loud while reading this book, and I truly enjoyed the sense of self-ironic humor which pervaded the story line. While Gunnar was sure of his science, he often stumbled in his personal life. He was a successful man, attractive in his own way, and he was not without sexual experience. However, he was vulnerable, and when he was hurt and acted in ways totally unlike his true persona, then we hurt with him. There is a wonderful underlying wisdom in this book, an understanding of human nature and how it continually shoots itself in the foot when it is already on crutches. I very much look forward to reading more works by Chris Meeks so that I can learn things like this: "Don't dismiss the one-armed librarian." A highly recommended read.

Review Copy Gratis White Whisker Books

Richard Derus says

Rating: 1.5* rounded up because he's a Goodreads author.

The Book Report: Gunnar Gunderson, physicist and dweeb, looks for love and finds it.

My Review: "It is impossible not to like Gunnar Gunderson," says **critic Sam Sattler** of *Book Chase* (pulled directly from the back cover of the book). I am here to tell you that it is indeed possible, nay incumbent upon, the critical reader to dislike dull, nerdly, clueless Gunnar. A Candide manqué, a feebly drawn Bertie Wooster sans Jeeves, Gunnar elicited in me no strong desires. He made me laugh exactly once: The author describes Gunnar in the throes of his errrmrrrrm crisis of completion as seeing **A CHECKERBOARD** ! I

split my sides. A *checkerboard!* Fountains of feathers, explosions of fireworks from deep oceans of perfume, celestial travel...I've read some fun and funny descriptions of what folks see when aaahhhmmm arriving at the station after the choo-choo ride, but this one...!

But most of the book is just a litany of Gunnar's ghastly gormlessness. His own mother can't be bothered most of the time. His father's death brings forth in Gunnar only the desire to see if he's got a hospital gown on in the deathbed. The charming lassie who ends up, inexplicably to me, responding to this wet mass of protein with favor got the strongest response of anyone in the whole book from me: "NOOO! Save yourself, you're too good for him!"

Which, come to think of it, was also my reaction to my daughter's first husband. Are all straight women this sucky at choosing men?

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

In Love At Absolute Zero by Christopher Meeks the plot is really quite simple: boy wants to meet girl. In this case the boy is 32 year old Wisconsin physicist Gunnar Gunderson. Gunnar gets tenure and decides he needs a wife. He consults with his research partners and they chart a course of action for him to find his soul mate in three days - which is all the time they are able to devote to the search while keeping to their research schedule.

The premise behind Christopher Meeks's novel Love At Absolute Zero intrigued me right from the start. I know scientifically inclined geeks rather well and will admit that I could totally see one of them seriously consider using the scientific method to find a mate. Their seriousness and ability to immerse themselves in their research combined with taking a similar approach to finding a wife is where I imagined the hilarity would ensue. I was not disappointed.

Since readers of She Treads Softly know I like science in my science fiction, you will understand my curiosity when I wondered how would Meeks approach incorporating science in an purely entertaining novel. (Be sure to come back tomorrow for a guest post by Christopher Meeks where he addresses my question about the research he did to get the scientific details down pat in the novel.) I applaud Meeks for doing an admirable job keeping the science real while at the same time not bogging down the entertaining aspects of the novel with too much information about the science.

At the opening of each chapter is a quote or law that relates to physics or science in some manner. Pay attention to them because they enhance the humor in Gunnar's search. Chapter Five opens with: "If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" -Albert Einstein. Chapter Seven: "The great tragedy of science: the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact." -English Biologist Thomas H. Huxley. Chapter Twenty-one: "An expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field." -Neils Bohr. (As many of you know, I love good quotes!)

I found Love at Absolute Zero a very quick, entertaining, and enjoyable novel. He's also quite grounded in the real world, for example mentioning the RateMyProfessor.com site, and, of course speed dating. While I will admit to one minor quibble with the novel, the sheer humor and originality more than made up for it. My minor criticism is that the scientific geeks I know also all have very well developed vocabularies that they use without hesitation. As a character Gunnar was rather plain spoken in comparison to some real life counterparts.

However, my minor complaint was all but erased when yet another funny scene occurred. My absolute favorite is in the quotes below and concerns the physicists visiting the Humanities department. Not that the novel is all humor. It is actually quite serious at times, but Meeks is a clever writer and has perfect timing - he knows when the reader needs a bit of levity to lighten up the mood. Actually, *Love At Absolute Zero* should be adapted to a screen play. The timing in the novel would perfectly suit a romantic comedy.
Highly Recommended; <http://shetreadssoftly.blogspot.com/>

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book for review purposes.

Patricia Rockwell says

Not sure if this is romantic fiction or just light fiction. The author manages to mix philosophy into the plot seamlessly and as the story is told from the point of view of a research physicist, there's lots of commentary.

Gunnar Gunderson is a young physicist with a good teaching/research job at the University of Wisconsin. He and his team of two like nerdy guys are searching for a supposedly non-existent particle that might show up if they manage to get it cold enough (absolute zero). The particle is somewhat like Gunnar's love life--zero. His knowledge of women is woefully lacking--and his Ph.D. doesn't help in this area at all. His research companions encourage him to try some of the modern inventions designed to bring the sexes together (somewhat like the particles in those atoms he studies). He tries a round of speed dating but with disastrous results. Accidentally he finds a woman and falls hard. Unfortunately, she's Danish and just as their romance starts to bubble, she has to return to her homeland. Not to be deterred, Gunnar maintains contact with her and even secures a position at a Danish university.

However, when he arrives in Denmark, the relationship has changed. Not only are his romantic hopes dashed, but he finds himself in a foreign land unable to communicate. But being the scientist he is, Gunnar is not one to let such experiences pass him by, and he begins to observe the events and people around him in an attempt to try to learn how he got himself in such a predicament and how he might improve his lot.

More catastrophes (big and little) occur before Gunnar manages to put his life together again. If this were simply a book about these life events, this probably wouldn't be much of a book, but as it's told through the eyes of this delightful, naive young physicist--we see a love story (actually several love stories) presented and dissected scientifically.

For me, the charm of the book were Gunnar's rambling mini-talks on all aspects of life, love and science. I especially loved his lecture for non-science majors and his address to the convention in Denmark. The writing is sharp and intelligent and the characters are unique. The sex scenes are probably a bit too graphic for me, but I like cozy mysteries, so that shouldn't deter too many readers.

Grady says

'Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future.' Niels Bohr

The concept of marrying science and passion as the topic for a novel is a challenging one at best. And that is exactly what Christopher Meeks has succeeded in meeting in his latest novel LOVE AT ABSOLUTE ZERO. Meeks seems to mature literarily by leaps and bounds with each new book he pens. This reader became enamored of his short stories but then that little contagious virus mutated into the novel format, and where most writers begin with the big works and then distill to short stories later (if they are able to move into that challenging realm at all), Meeks appears to have gleaned the technical virtuosity of creating characters in a minimum of space and then unfold those characters in response to the movement of the landscape of a large novel with such aplomb that he is likely to continue on his climb to one of America's more important writers this decade.

Gunnar Gunderson is a cerebrally elite physicist who at age 32 has already gained tenure at his University of Wisconsin Madison campus, teaching and immersed in a research project with partners Carl and Harry beginning with the Bose-Einstein condensate and moving toward reaching the ultra cold - Absolute Zero. Gunnar Gunderson is also relationship challenged, hopelessly naïve about affairs of the heart - an unpracticed but very sweet nerd whose preoccupation with physics has subsumed his filling out his life with love. Yet when confronted by his partners, 'He knew the way to find the right person. He should use the same approach that had always served him well: the scientific method. Use the scientific method for love.' His supportive partners disagree; 'Attraction and connection can't be explained anymore than sunspots....It's about chaos'. But Gunnar's hypothesis is that to attract someone he had to emphasize the laws of attraction: sending physical, mental, and genetic healthy signals. And from there the book takes flight on Gunnar's concept that he has three days in which to find the girl of his dreams. He decides to try ScurryDating and in order to physically become everything a girl would want he gets his teeth cleaned, then orthodontia, then hair styling and a wardrobe change and he is off to a social media convocation where he will be paired with potential dates - surely in time for his three day deadline.

But fate enters the picture and he is sidetracked by finding an attraction to one of his students, in seeing an old girlfriend Ursula who though paired at the moment might just be the one - until he meets (steps onto) Kara, a Danish redhead bombshell visiting her old girlfriend. Gunnar experiences passion and in the two weeks that Kara has before her flight back to Denmark they have a passionate affair, fall in love/lust, and make plans for Gunnar to move to Denmark where he will do a sabbatical at the highly touted Physics Institute there. Kara leaves, Ursula returns from a nursing stint in Arizona now free of her prior boyfriend and ready for Gunnar, but Gunnar is committed to his Danish pastry - until of course he flies to Denmark and discovers that Kara has fallen out of love with Gunnar and into love with another. So Gunnar is stuck in Denmark sans Kara and faces more and more alterations to his scientific hypothesis about love. The carousel keeps rotating and Gunnar seems destined to miss that golden ring and when Gunnar returns to Wisconsin he reconnects with Ursula and comes to the realization 'I tell my introductory students about certain laws of physics....They are the rules except when it comes to quantum physics, especially at absolute zero, when things change. I talk about Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. We cannot know, for instance, where an electron is at the same time in knowing how fast it is moving.' And so Meeks drops us off at the gate of life wondering how things will resolve for Gunnar. And the magical thing is that he makes us really care about this strange bright naïve nerd.

It is a given, now, that Christopher Meeks is a master craftsman as a writer. What surprises us in this novel is just how much research he's done to get the scientific part of it right. Where does all of this passionate knowledge of physics lie, knowledge that allows him to write so comfortably, opening every chapter with a scientific quote, that we novices stay on board with him? It is a gift - and one of the many that continue to emerge from the pen and mind and brilliant trait for finding the humor in life that makes him so genuinely fine a writer.

Sharayah says

I was really disappointed with this book. I thought the interplay between romance and science would be fun in a nerdy sort of way. I think part of the purpose of this book was to compare what happens to people in love to what happens to atoms at absolute zero--they lose their individuality and have an identity crisis. This was definitely true of the main character, a thirty year old professor and researcher who can't figure out how to date, but I didn't find this character compelling, interesting, or even likable whether he was being himself or going through the identity crisis. He falls hopelessly in love with a woman he hasn't seen since high school after talking to her for 5 minutes. She's the One! He gives himself 3 days to win her over, three days involving lasik surgery, braces, and other fixes that are imperative to finding a mate. It has to work; it's science! Then he moves to Denmark to be with another woman he is hopelessly in love with, only to find that she is living with another man. Eventually we discover that his taste in women can basically be boiled down to if they groom their bikini line.

Maybe I missed the point, and the story was supposed to poke fun at using the scientific method for love (<http://xkcd.com/55/>), but the whole thing just felt painfully unrealistic. I was hoping for nerd humor and didn't find anything satisfactorily quirky about the book. And I sort of feel bad for this review because the author was kind enough to sign my firstreads copy, and I hope this book is not at all biographical, but I was just disappointed by this story.
