



The Surgeon

Salman Waqar

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A prominent politician, and close friend of the Prime Minister, has died during routine heart surgery. Is this simply a case of extreme medical negligence or are more complex events unfolding? The year is 2030. Advanced robotic systems are commonly utilised for surgery in the National Health Service. Mortality and complication rates are non-existent, even in operations that were once considered perilous. Join Professor Dan Ashraf, a prominent surgeon, as he teams up with the General Medical Council, Scotland Yard and GCHQ to stop the culprit, before more innocent lives come to harm. His fast-paced journey will take you through a maze of medical fiction ground in scientific reality, leading to the inevitable debate about the future of medicine and the National Health Service.

The Surgeon Details

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Author : Salman Waqar

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Asmara says

There's a quote by Anton Chekov that I'm particularly fond of using as an answer when people ask me that ghissa pitta question of 'But you're a doctor! Why do you write?!' : well, because, "Medicine is my lawful wife and Literature my mistress; when I get tired of one, I spend my night with the other."

So, for me, nothing brings more spontaneous joy than finding a similarly two-timing physician who takes equal joy in the written word. Contrary to popular belief, physicians aren't just writers of amazing non-fiction (take a bow, Drs Kalanithi, Mukherjee and Gawande) – Michael Crichton was a graduate of Harvard Medical School. Will Dr Salman Waqar follow in Dr Crichton's footsteps? Fingers firmly crossed.

A nifty thriller, The Surgeon has an unrelenting pace from page 1-- characters are introduced and thrown helter-skelter into rapidly shifting sequences of events. Its main character, Dr Danyal, is to surgery what Robert Langdon is to symbology. Except our desi Danyal is happily married but not averse to hunting down non-clinical criminals, all while managing to come home in time for dinner.

Don't get me wrong-- while the pace of the book might make some character agency seem two-dimensional, the bare bones of the plot are well worth your time. You may find yourself recalling 'I, Robot' at points, but the richly imagined world of the novel is a place that hearkens both to a placid past and the unrelenting advent of a furious future.

There are points in the book that may stretch your suspension of disbelief but only for so long-- Dr Waqar's vision of the future of healthcare is both timely and based on well-thought out research. You can doubt the characters but never the world they inhabit. At a hundred odd pages, you can easily finish the book in a couple of afternoons but its real power comes from the questions it raises. In the age of augmented reality and powerful AI, do you really want to hand over the power of a physician to a machine?

Will the Surgeon return to tackle these and other questions? I hope so. Salman Waqar's début novel is an interesting mix of plot and pace, one that sets him apart from many, many long-winded South Asian writers. The questions he raises are valid and timely. Here's hoping for our very own surgical sleuth in the shape of Dr Danyal to continue his adventures in the not too distant future.

Favourite Lines:

"The genie is already out of the bottle and there is no turning back. Humans now know that an artificial intelligence can be created. If we take their advice and clamp down on all research into this area, all that will happen is that someone somewhere else will make one. The threshold has been crossed and the discussion now needs to concentrate not on scaremongering, but how to evolve our thinking to the point that we can accept artificial intelligence systems as fellow citizens."

Trudy Cadman says

I really enjoyed this book, it was fast paced and kept me turning the pages but also posed rather substantial ethical, political and social questions. There were points where I would have liked a little more exploration

of those questions but overall I still really enjoyed the read.

Patricia says

This is a fast paced mystery. I loved it.
