



The Fifth Man

John B. Olson , Randy Ingermanson

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Valkerie Jansen is tough, beautiful, and being pursued by every man on the planet. Literally. The planet in question is Mars, with a total population of four.

Days before a giant dust storm is projected to strike their camp, Valkerie is attacked by an unseen assailant.

Fortunately, there are only three suspects.

Unfortunately, all three of them . . . are innocent.

This is the second edition of The Fifth Man, released in May, 2012. This “Writer’s Journey” edition of The Fifth Man contains three bonus appendices (over 60 pages!) for fiction writers and anyone interested in getting the inside scoop on how John and Randy develop their stories. Learn some of their most powerful techniques, including story drivers, high concept, and scene structure.

The Fifth Man Details

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From Reader Review The Fifth Man for online ebook

Timothy Bateson says

A great finish to a two book series

This book is almost as good as "Oxygen", the first in the set. Having reached Mars the crew must now overcome a new set of challenges associated with their mission, living in a remote planet, and try to remain sane when their company consists of just the four of them.

Just like "Oxygen", "The Fifth Man" builds on the suspense and mystery from start to finish, with twists and turns of fate that are sometimes hard to predict. I regret to say that I worked out the ending ahead of time, but only because the clues were laid down early enough. I would have preferred it to remain a surprise. But on the whole this is another winning book.

Marissa says

I didn't like this as much as Oxygen, which was surprising since after Oxygen, I was really excited to read it. It just seemed like too much of the same plot from Oxygen. Kennedy might have been the bad guy again and they were in life or death situations way too often for me to be shocked every time it happened. I liked the characters in the previous book but in this book they fall apart for me.

Coryann says

I had pretty high hopes for The Fifth Man after loving the first book, Oxygen. However, much to my dismay I was disappointed in this book. It just didn't really seem to go anywhere and where it did end up "going", I didn't really care for. It was just okay. If I could I would give it 2.5 stars. I really struggled to finish this one...

Lawrence says

I read Oxygen and enjoyed it as a suspenseful sci-fi story. I thought this one moved at a break neck pace with elements of sci-fi, suspense and mystery combined nicely. Found myself literally holding my breath at certain moments in the story. Might not be the story for you if you're paranoid about things that go bump in the night.

Art Lueder says

The sequel to Oxygen, we pick up the story with the astronauts on Mars six months or so later. The story races along at a fast pace giving the reader little chance to catch their breath. The crew discovers evidence of life (bacterial) and suddenly Valkiri and Kennedy fall ill. Mission control is seriously considering making

them stay on Mars to prevent them from bringing back any Mars bugs to Earth and suddenly strange noises and an attack on Valkiri by an unknown assailant has everyone on edge. There are only 4 people on the whole planet and none of them could have done it!

A good action filled yarn.

D.M. Dutcher says

It feels more like a technothriller ala Michael Crichton than true SF, but the plot's confusing twists and lack of real action make it average. A direct sequel to Oxygen, but you can read it without reading the first book.

The mars team has made it safely there after the events in Oxygen, and are busy with the hard work of research. A random cave-in nearly traps Valkerie, and provides a surprisingly discovery: evidence of bacterial life on mars. Unfortunately that comes with a price, the possibility of a disease that ravages the crew. And of course, many of them weren't that stable to begin with, and oh, what's that weird thing poking around outside the living area?

It starts out okay, but the plot gets confusing, and I'm not sure how grounded it is in reality. The science is good, but the characters, especially the male ones, seem to oscillate between sane and crazy depending on need, and as the twists pile up I'm not sure they continue to make sense. There isn't that much action overall, as opposed to the drama of a few characters in confined spaces. It's an okay book, but towards the end I kept getting puzzled why things were happening.

Kerry Nietz says

I'll admit, I've been a distracted reader lately. Too many things pulling for my attention. Consequently, "The Fifth Man" took me much longer to complete than I expected. Even so, it was an easy book to pick up and read a page or two at a time.

Starting out where the preceding book left off," this tale finds the crew of the Ares 10 now on Mars and well into their first calamity. The action takes off, and goes from one tension-inducing situation to another—all the way until the end. It is an enjoyable ride.

I give the authors credit here for adjusting the speed of the main romantic relationship back a few notches from where it ended in the first book. I think the characters needed that readjustment to make that portion seem believable.

I also credit them for their authenticity and attention to detail. The habitat on Mars, the lingo, the technology, and control procedures seem very NASA-like. I also quite enjoyed the action and intrigue on Earth this time. Probably more so than in the previous book. There are a lot of fun mysteries there, and some really great twists.

I only have two caveats with this book. The first is—as someone who used to dream of travel to Mars—I could've used a bit more of the scope and grandeur of Mars early on. I mean, you took me there, now show it to me! A little more exploration or even some sweeping vistas would've been neat, I think.

The other thing that I wondered about is the ending. Though there is enough closure, there is also a bit of ambiguity lurking too. I liked the idea of “Fifth Man” and I even liked the identity of that “Fifth Man”, but I also could’ve used a few more pages of conclusion.

Regardless, “The Fifth Man” is a fun book. If you enjoyed “Oxygen” then you have to read this too. It is a worthy addition to the story. Not to me missed!

rjp316 says

Liked this book - a little mystery, a little romance and a little sci-fi. However parts of the book tended to be too computer techie for me but overall well worth the read. I liked the first book in the series a little better. The book ended well but I was disappointed that there is not a third book in the series. Would recommend this book to friends and even have my husband started on the series. Might be hard to find this book as it is out of print and my huge local library only had the first book – but I was able to find this book on amazon for a really reasonable price. Definitely worth buying to be able to read the entire series.

Robynn says

I haven't read Randy Ingermanson before, but I know he's the Snowflake Method guy, so I wanted to see it in action. I'm hoping this book isn't the norm. I'm thinking I picked this up during a Kindle promotion, so it may have been .99 or free.

This story has failed to engage my interest, I'm 80% done, and I'm not sure I'll finish. I've read this far because I kept hoping it would get better (like Jonathan and Mr. Norrell, or The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest that took 150 pages to get to the interesting part). I have no issues with the writing style, which is clear and organized and mercifully free of typos and spellcheck wrong words. I just don't find the story compelling, or the characters believable. There's a lot of time spent inside people's heads thinking the exact same things as the last time I was inside their heads because nothing has happened in between. I don't know if he needed to meet a word count or what, but this could have been a shorter story, and I would have given it 3 stars.

I may try another of his books to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I will wait for a Kindle sale. I'm glad I didn't spend more.

Jeff Tonkinson says

This was a difficult book to read because it was so ridiculous I kept putting it down. But the predicament of being stuck on Mars with a mysterious sickness, possible life on Mars, and saboteur at mission control had too much potential. On top of that it was a "Christian" novel.

Neither the characters nor the story are believable. Apparently NASA's vetting process allows psychotics and Phd's with the maturity of a 13 yr old. Too much time spent on puppy love. And they go from one life-threatening predicament to the next. As if living on Mars wouldn't be hard enough they had to invent all

kinds of human-induced calamities.

The only place you see "faith" is when the characters are about to die - they pray. It really makes me wonder what little box the author confines God. They don't pray before meals, read their Bible, ask God for direction, or otherwise include Him in their decisions. Even when 2 people discuss marriage they don't even ask about the other's belief system. (But I guess that's consistent with their 13 yr old maturity)

Early in the book the author does introduce the potential for theological issues related to the origin of life. But these are only mentioned here and there and there is no presentation of an intelligent Christian view of life outside of Earth.

The book was disappointing from nearly every aspect. I only gave it 2 stars because there was so much potential.

Monica Rodriguez says

A terrific thrill to read, even better than the first, Oxygen. The tension remained high through most of the story, with few points for a breather. Best of all, I really didn't know who the culprit was until the reveal, a true surprise. This story has the added bonus of being set on Mars, an ongoing fascination of mine.

And the appendices hold a bonus for new writers, with excellent advice I've already applied to my writing.

Kyle Pratt says

The Fifth Man takes up the story where the first novel, Oxygen, left us--on the surface of Mars. Both novels would be considered hard science fiction in that everything in the stories is within the realm of science and technology.

This novel, published in 2002, is a sequel to Oxygen. Both are well-researched and crafted, near future, Christian science fiction novel. Oxygen begins in the year 2014 just before the first mission to Mars. Microbial ecologist Valkerie Jansen is assigned to the Ares 10 as late replacement. This alone would cause strain for the crew but her faith and the mutual attraction between her and another member of the crew adds multiple new layers of tension. That novel takes us to the Red Planet. The Fifth Man then shows us there struggles to survive in the harsh and cold environment.

Booklist called the plot convoluted and to some extent I would agree. Believability is strained when you have sabotage, NASA plots, paranoia and one life threatening crisis after another, but that is what the science fiction and action genres usually provide. All too often Christian fiction is second-rate fiction but this is not the case with John Olson and Randall Ingermanson. This is excellent superior science fiction. The authors made me believe the science, terminology and NASA jargon that were spread throughout both novels. These realistic fine points make the story much more compelling. As I said earlier, both novels are hard science fiction. The events are possible with what is known about the science and technology.

The best fiction writers present their stories through setting, action, thoughts, and description. Many Science Fiction stories suffer from lengthy paragraphs of telling. While both Oxygen and The Fifth Man have some

telling, the writing is generally well-crafted with much of the story told through dialogue or shown through actions.

Oxygen is the best of the two novels but as a Christian and a lifetime reader of Science Fiction, I can recommend both to fans of the genre.

Vincent Bernhardt says

A solid sequel, and that's not always easy to do.

This guy can write science fiction, and he doesn't throw in a lot of fantasy (which is okay with me). Pure, well-written sci-fi is hard to come by. This one is based on solid science (mostly - the eco-niche is sort of questionable, but possible, so you can let it slide).

AND they know the Houston/NASA area pretty well. I like that. A lot.

Good pace. Good characters. Good story.

Shanna_redwind says

I enjoyed reading this. It wasn't the most exciting book, but it was still satisfying to read. I did have a few issues with the characters and their decisions, but perhaps that was on purpose? Everyone doesn't always make the best decisions.

This reminded me a little bit of The Martian.

Carol McClain says

Phenomenal. My only criticism is: do not read this if you have obligations that need to be tended. As in the first of the series (Oxygen), every time you think the novel's conflicts have resolved, they get worse. Tension builds until nothing matters to the reader other than you turn the page and find out how the mess is resolved.

As the novel opens, we find Kaggo, Hamster, Lexy and Valkeryie safe on Mars, and they begin to live their dream until...illness, strange happenings, attacks from nowhere begin and their lives break down. As you read, you're there...in a hostile environment and you see it all, feel it all. Romance, jealousy, friction, friendship all intertwine to create a work everyone would love.

And although this is book 2, it could stand alone.

I started reading The Fifth Man on the day Curiosity landed on Mars and the space station flew over my house. I couldn't have picked a better time to read this book about life on Mars. And now cannot wait for the third in the series to come out...how long Randy? John?

