



Prime Suspects: A Clone Detective Mystery

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Upon waking up in a new city on a different planet, homicide detective David Bagini discovers that he is in fact the forty-second clone of David Bagini. He's been created to solve a murder ... specifically the murder of his prime. Standing in the way is the clues point directly at the other Bagini clones and they already know all his tricks.

How do you solve your own murder when you are the only suspect?

Prime Suspects: A Clone Detective Mystery Details

Date : Published August 20th 2012 by EJB Networking (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Jim Bernheimer

Format : Kindle Edition 180 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Mystery, Detective, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Cyberpunk

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From Reader Review Prime Suspects: A Clone Detective Mystery for online ebook

Karsyn says

3.5 stars ~ a fun story. I found it quite enjoyable, reminded me a bit of "Man in the Empty Suit" though I liked Empty Suit more.

The funniest things about this one for me were that their favorite book was "Hitchhiker's Guide" which I JUST read for the first time last week. It was good I happened to read it or I wouldn't have gotten all the references, and there were several. The other thing was the addition at the end of a new character named "Jeff Kafer", who happened to be the narrator. That was neat, haven't seen that happen with any narrator not named Wil Wheaton. :)

Aaron says

Solid sci fi mystery

I picked this up a bit on a lark but I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed it. It's got a good premise, solid pacing, and sensible mystery. Well written and engaging. Only complaint is that its a bit short but that's pretty minor in the end.

Patrick Smith says

Futuristic Clone-Detective a la Noir: Well Done

Ol' Jim did it again. This unique take on classic detective stories was a fun read. I honestly think I'd watch this if it was a TV show. Would highly recommend this to a fellow reader.

Mike says

David Bagini thinks he's a homicide detective who just woke up on a strange planet and is not particularly fond of clones or clone contracts. In actuality he's the 42nd clone of David, created from a sample years old, who's been given life for one reason: to find his original's killer.

Prime Suspects is a neat blend of science fiction, mystery and police procedural. The world Bernheimer set up is imaginative and captivating, with long lines of clones of exceptional people acting as a type of indentured servant. David Forty-Two's struggle to learn about the society he now lives in and his expected role is wonderfully told and nicely balanced with a suspenseful, twisting investigation.

I'm a big fan of all the genres touched upon in Prime Suspects, and really enjoyed the way they were blended. Add in an engrossing story, solid writing and unique characters and ideas and it's one of the most interesting books I've read in quite a while.

Highly recommended.

Steve Caldwell says

I was given this book by the narrator through Audiobook Blast in return for an honest review, so here goes. I really enjoyed this story. David Bagini has been murdered, and it's up to David Bagini 42, the 42nd clone to find the killer. The story is set on a planet where The "Primes" License out their clones for different work. These are based on the specialty of the Prime, such as being a renowned chef, a great cop, or a famous detective. When Prime Bagini is killed, a new clone is created to solve the crime, one who has no conflicts of interest or any possibility of having been the killer. Bagini 42 has to contend with hostile versions of himself, a conspiracy that goes way deeper than expected, as well as his own feeling about what being a clone is all about. The story is well fleshed out, with lots of action and traditional detective drama, as well as cool sci-fi elements that are blended in really well. I thought the characters were fleshed out really well, especially seeing as how they are basically all versions of the same people. The Author manages to create individuality among the clones, with their own strengths and foibles gained through life experience. The ending I didn't see coming, so the twist really was effective. I would recommend this book for anyone looking for a fun sci fi book that will fill you up while leaving you wanting more with these characters.

Erin Penn says

At last, something to go with Caves of Steel on my shelves

Prime Suspects secures a place alongside Caves of Steel by Isaac Asimov in the sci-fi-mystery genre. An extremely well-done mix, mingling the police procedural and the science fiction in equal parts. Keeps one guessing to the end, but provides all the clues. A reader is right beside the detective gathering the clues and learning the world until only one possibility is left.

Jim Bernheimer's trademark snarky main character gets a little old in this particular book because, well, it is the distinguishing characteristic of so many of the characters, an inherent aspect of a clone story. I am pleased to see the clones remain close in personality, yet each develops as a unique person as well. The delightful comedic snarkiness of Confessions of a D-List Supervillain takes on a Noir overtone in this novel.

Worldbuilding - Oh, the sociological worldbuilding in this story is absolutely awesome. Identical twins raised apart will each develop along similar patterns; identical twins raised together will deliberately work to differentiate themselves through dress, hair and hobbies. Prime Suspects' world shows what happens when an individualistic person suddenly is faced with dozens of twins.

And Jim takes the worldbuilding to a second level. For psychology - the struggle for ego in the detectives is worse than the waitresses because the police must work closely together instead of in isolated restaurants. For sociology - In a society without children and without elders, rampant college behavior dominates as the clones struggle to define themselves. For Social-Psychology - In a world without advancement or dreams, the clones face years of therapy, depression, and escapism.

Prime Suspects works well a police procedural, and the mystery is solid. But the story truly shines as a science fiction speculation about how a clone society might function.

(bought at a Convention from author's booth at full price)

Hpstrangelove says

Audio book review. Narrator: Jeffrey Kafer

Audible says this book is just under five hours long, but it seemed much longer. It was a great 'read'. I loved this clone world and thought the plot was clever. The narrator did a great job of voicing Bagini 42, and thankfully did not overdo the female characters with that falsetto voice I despise so much. I would love to read more with these characters.

Karlyn says

Interesting twists and turns. I've not read many clone book lines and was pleasantly surprised with this one. It was a quick read. Didn't take a lot of brain power invested. Glad I read it. I'll look out for others in this world.

Chibineko says

If I can be honest, I'll say that most sci-fi is wasted on the likes of me. I'm not a huge sci-fi buff, my experience with the genre peaking in high school with my lust for all things Star Trek. As a result, I'll openly admit that I'm really not the target audience for what I call "hard core sci-fi" (ie, anything on the level of Blade Runner), but my experience with Bernheimer has shown me that he's a rather clever author. So with that mindset, I had to give it a whirl. That this was partially typed on a phone keyboard was pretty neat as well.

I have to admit that I was fascinated by the technology in this and some of the implications of the clones' treatment was something I could sink my teeth into. One thing that specifically intrigued me was that the original person (AKA Prime) could take a portion of each clone's pay. For some of the wealthier clones this might not automatically seem like a lot, but for the ones making less money this could mean the difference between living in a garbage dump or living in a place where muggings aren't the typical way of greeting someone. Is it right to do this, considering that each of the clones are a copy of you and your memories, especially since so many in the book's universe and IRL consider clones to be lacking souls? The concept of a clone's humanity is a reoccurring theme here and despite this being somewhat of a well-used theme in fiction overall, it's always one that can set up a story fairly well. Especially since the gist of the mystery is that one of the clones of David Bagini Prime supposedly killed him. Does this mean that the capability of murder is always there or is this something brought out by the situations the clone was placed in? No spoilers, but again- the discussion points for something of this nature are pretty endless. I could write an endless review just based around this idea and believe me, I was awfully tempted to.

Now for the story: like I said, I'm not a huge reader of anything beyond the lightest and fluffiest sci-fi stuff, but this was pretty good. It took me a while to kind of catch up to speed on all of the technology, but the idea behind a lot of this was pretty interesting. Clone therapy? I bet that could fill a book to itself. I also liked how detached 42 was at times, despite others thinking he might not be as such in the case with him discovering his Prime had a wife and daughter. What really sets this apart is how well the ending was. I could sort of predict what was ultimately going to happen to a certain degree, but that didn't make it any less fun. After all,

isn't one of the goals of mystery lovers is to try to guess the whodunit, sometimes almost like it's a contest? (If you're curious, I was only half right, so point to Bernheimer on this one.) I still couldn't get the nagging feeling that I wasn't the right audience for this out of my mind, though, as I hit points where I kept wishing for a leather wearing witch or a vampire to jump out from somewhere. Fans of sci-fi will undoubtedly love this, though.

If you're looking for something nice to snuggle down with and read, give this one a try. Despite it not being my thing, I liked the mystery and I loved the questions it brought up.

3.7 out of 5 stars

(Reader copy provided by author)

Lukas Lovas says

Pretty enjoyable and well written....enjoyed this book a lot :)

Susan says

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel. In a world where clones are dispensable and are little more than slave labor, David 42 must muddle his way through with less than cutting edge tech. He's a copy of a younger, still idealistic David Prime, and hence doesn't have some of the moral flexibility as some of his other 'brothers', such as the partyer, the drug addict, or even the religious commune dweller. For every clone working, the Prime gets a piece of their paycheck, allowing him or her to live in luxury. The clones live and mostly work in this section of the city, in low-rent crappy housing and eating at cheap, vomit-inducing diners. The Primes live and play in Prime City, serviced by mask-wearing clones (makes it easier to ID them as 'servants'). Most clones have to take on second jobs to have the money to upgrade their living arrangements, such as working as a mall cop. Yes, the quality of life for clones is not all that for the vast majority of them.

A great mix of humor, nitty-gritty, and tough cop makes this an exciting mystery adventure. David Bagini was once one of the best detectives in the galaxy. Not only does 42 have to go up against swamp thugs, a therapist, bureaucracy, and a steep learning curve, he also has to be far more clever than all the other Bagini clones; they all know the tricks of the trade – how to catch a murderer, but also how to avoid being caught.

Since clones are dispensable, they tend to have lots of casual sex. With that statement, you might think there was plenty of that in the book. Nope. Well, not in detail. The orgies are referenced just often enough for the reader to understand that is not what David 42 is looking for. Sadly, he is stuck in a society where casual sex is the norm and long-term, in depth relationships is a deviation. Not like the guy needs that added frustration to his already full agenda of catch the murderer(s) of David Prime and quickly before Those On High decide to scrub the entire Bagini line. Every. Last. Bagini. Clone. Yeah, gone for ever.

While the pacing of this adventure was pretty quick. David 42 was a multi-tasker, such as interviewing a potential suspect while taking the time to learn the latest police-issue firearm at the range. I really liked that 42 didn't simply wake up and know everything; he had to learn, and learn quickly, as he went. The guns, the hoppers (flying vehicles), the scroll (kind of like a PDA but much, much cooler), and even all the things clones do to individualize themselves. There's tats, piercings, constantly changing hair colors, etc. David 42 had a whole culture to learn.

Of course, 42 is a nod to Douglas Adams and there are some jokes through the book that fans of Adams will get. Towel!

All that goodness in less than 5 hours of reading time. My one minor criticism, and it is small, is that I would have liked to see a few more female cops. The novel has female lovers, waitresses, therapists, and finally, 1 female cop. Most of the ladies had well rounded characters and individual traits and the main character did not treat them as sex objects. Yet, it is far future SF and do like to think that certain jobs will balance out in the future – like lady cops and house husbands. Still, minor negative comment on an otherwise very worthy novel.

The Narration: Jeffrey Kafer was a treat to listen to, pulling off the sarcasm, the asshole remarks, the tough cop that is secretly lost and trying to bluff his way through this freaking mess. Yeah, Kafer delivered.

Commentary says

I really enjoyed this story. The premise is really interesting and well executed. Needs a better copy editor, though.

C.T. Phipps says

Prime Suspects is an homage to Ridley Scott's Bladerunner without being a rip-off. The premise is Dave Bagini wakes up in a genetics lab, hating clones and remembering he's one of the universe's greatest detectives.

The problem is he's NOT Dave Bagini, or at least he's not the original. Dave is the forty-second clone of Dave Bagini. In the future, the best at any profession can have themselves cloned and live off the proceeds from taking a tithe from their offspring's salaries. In the three years from when the original Dave had his clone sample taken, he learned to get over his hatred of clones and learned to love money more.

Which sucks for Forty-Two.

Dave doesn't have much time to adjust to the fact he's the latest in a small army of clones before he's sent to solve his first murder. Someone has killed Dave Prime, the original Dave so to speak, and all indications are that it was one of the previous forty-one models. Dave has to outwit himself as many times as it takes to solve a case which, literally, endangers them all. After all, if a clone line is defective, there's nothing to do but cancel it.

That is a premise.

The definition of high concept.

Clone Detective solves his own murder.

Congrats to Jim Bernheimer for coming up with.

There's nothing new about gritty Noir Detective stories set against a science-fiction backdrop. However, there's nothing new under the sun period and Prime Suspects manages to make a maximum use of its

Chandler-meets-Dolly the Sheep premise. It's a good example of speculative fiction, which is something I don't get to say very often. It takes the premise of cloning technology, examines how it would impact society, and then draws much of the story from how it had radically altered the lives of people in society.

We not only get the perspective of society on clones, which is to treat them as subhuman cheap labor, but also the perspective of how the clones feel about their situation. All clones are sterile from birth so they have nothing to spend their money on but self-indulgence. Clones also try to individualize themselves in ways both big and small. All of them are enslaved to their contracts, though, and every Dave is a police officer whether he wants to be or not. The fact all of them are genius detectives with some stuck behind desks or serving as patrolmen leave more than a few frustrated.

There's always more clones than opportunities.

Really, this is my favorite part of the book as we get plausible but wild changes in how society alters with such a set up. Forty-Two is unsettled, for example, by the fact one of his alternates is shackled up with a trio of female clones of the same model. The reverse being true for other clones of his. Also, that newborn clones often end up set up with clones from models the rest of them have gotten with because they "know" they get along. The clones all have a reverence for the Prime's wife and child, too, as if they're somehow all of their line's chief priority. Dave, due to having an earlier memory source than them, is less than convinced of this.

I liked everything about this book, which is something I don't often say about works. The mixture of Noir and science-fiction just gells for lack of a better term, though. The fact Jim Bernheimer remembers to establish something like the fact the colony smells vaguely like rotten eggs and it coats everything comes up just often enough to remain a persistent setting detail. It's a seamy universe, this colony, and we get insights into how all of it works. We even get an understanding why revolts or civil rights campaigns don't happen often.

But don't take my word for it, check it out yourself.

10/10

Kristi Shelton says

A fun, light sci-fi book

All in all, the sci fi elements made much sense. The book didn't dive into deep scientific theories, and it kept the plot light but the story fast paced. Character development was interesting as most of the characters were all clones from the same person. This made for some good interesting dynamics between them. This read like a murder mystery but with a sci fi twist. Very enjoyable.

Michael says

Got this book by Jim Bernheimer via the courtesy of a post on Facebook by C T Phipps (author of a number of GR books) advertising that this short story was free for a limited time.

This isn't my usual genre but I found it to be to my liking anyway. (I will likely be re-visiting the genre in the future).

As the title suggests, this is a futuristic clone detective mystery. David Bagini number 42 is a clone. He is put into service to investigate the death, (possibly murder) of his Prime, the real David Bagini. With the suspects being various numbered clones of Bagini's line, this story is very amusing at times. Just consider waking up and finding that you are being charged with investigating versions of yourself as murder suspects.

It's well structured and well written and has a little bit of everything that most people would want from the genre. And, unlike one or two short stories I've read in the past, it has a proper ending.

I urge people who like this type of story to give this a try. Roughly 180 pages of enjoyable reading.
