

Through the Eye of a Needle

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Time was running out for Bob Kinnaird. Without much warning, the Hunter - the green protoplasmic alien that lived inside him and cured all his ills - had suddenly become his destroyer. Day by day Bob grew weaker and weaker, but only specialists from the Hunter's distant world would know what was wrong with him and, more importantly, how to save him. But the only way searchers from his planet could find him was to locate his missing spaceship . . . a spaceship that had crashed beneath the ocean years before, its location still very much a mystery. Once again leading an investigation against time - as he had done so many years before - the Hunter knew he had to find comrades and find them fast . . . before someone murdered his best friend.

Through the Eye of a Needle Details


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Author : Hal Clement

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From Reader Review Through the Eye of a Needle for online ebook

Rachel says

This book concept was unique, but the delivery was poor, honestly. It was a continuation of another story, about a man who entered into a symbiotic relationship with an alien being, named the Hunter, who basically could absorb himself into the tissues of hosts and speak to them through their eardrums. This book (and I admit I've only read part 2, because part 1 is out of print) focuses on the Hunter's attempt to contact his people to get help curing Bob's (the host's) dying body.

I felt it had been rushed to press. It has multiple conversations that were summarized rather than played out, other conversations that were repeated with no new details revealed, and action that was blunted by narrator intrusion (sentences like, "It would have been an uneventful drive if it hadn't been for the bad thing that was about to happen.")

There were places in the story that moved so slowly that I thought about putting it down without finishing it, and now that I have, I wish it had ended better, or at least that the ending had been more dramatic. I am disappointed.

Steve Joyce says

I would have enjoyed Through the Eye of a Needle better as an adolescent.

Lis Carey says

Audible Frontiers, February 2013 (original print publication 1978)

Seven years ago, Bob Kinnaird, high school student, encountered Hunter, a green protoplasmic glob of an alien, and became his host. Hunter is a police detective chasing a criminal, and he and his quarry have both crashed on Earth and are stranded. Since the quarry's crime is callous disregard for his hosts and placing them in danger, tracking him down and stopping him on a planet full of suitable but wholly unaware hosts is even more important.

That problem was resolved, and now, a college graduate with an engineering degree, Bob is coming home to the Polynesian island he grew up on. He's got a job as well as his family waiting for him. Unfortunately, he's also, quite possibly, dying, due to the same friendly alien symbiont who for years has protected him from illness and injury. His immune system and his blood clotting ability and other systems are simply failing, and Hunter, a cop not a medical specialist, has no idea how to fix it. He needs to contact his own kind and get the right specialists on the job, or Bob will die.

This is a difficult problem, but relatively straight-forward--until strange and dangerous accidents start to happen. Or rather, not accidents. One of Bob's trunks of books and possessions being shipped home is tampered with at the dock. His bike is tampered with repeatedly to cause dangerous accidents. The tiny group of trusted friends helping him and Hunter search for the wrecked ships and the means to contact Hunter's people also have accidents.

And they're running out of time, as Bob grows weaker and weaker, and more and more of his body systems start to fail.

The characters in a Hal Clement novel are never deep or complex; they're likable. If really strong characterization is essential for you, no Clement novel is ever going to satisfy. But his characterization isn't bad, either; it's just not very complex. Likable, smart characters are what he does.

What Clement is really all about, and what makes his books a joy, is clever, interesting ideas well grounded in science, along with good plotting that moves the story along. This is a satisfying, enjoyable read, and definitely worth your time--although you'll start off a step up in understanding Bob and Hunter if you read Needle first.

Recommended.

I borrowed this book from a friend.

Margaret says

Hal Clement can certainly spin a thumping good yarn! At the same time, Mr. Clement is as hard sf as they come. (Meaning that he tries to be as accurate with the science as he can and still tell a good story.)

Through the Eye of a Needle is the sequel to Needle. Bob and Hunter have been together in a symbiotic relationship for some years now. Unfortunately, Bob is beginning to fray at the edges. (Meaning that Hunter has not been able to maintain Bob in good health, despite his best efforts.)

In fact, Bob is slowly dying.

Hunter's only recourse is to try to contact his people (who would have come to Earth to investigate why he never reported back from his last mission) and get help from his race's specialists for Bob.

Fortunately, Bob has graduated from college now and has returned to the island to work off his debt (the company paid for college, including his books, asking only that he come back and work for them for six years in return).

Hunter & Bob decide that the first step is to locate his quarry's starship (Hunter is only too aware his own starship was smashed to pieces when he crashed). The alien investigators would have started with this ship so he and Bob need to do the same.

Highly recommended!

Will Boncher says

Great followup to Needle. I wasn't sure if he'd be able to keep it as interesting as the first one, since we're already well-introduced to his companion, but he made it work.

Eric Herboso says

Great mystery novel, but such horrid sexism! Sure, Clement does a moderately good job of insisting that the alien be completely fair to both sexes, but the human characters (male and female) are all horribly in need of taking a few feminism classes. Then again, the story is set in 1949 and was probably written not long after that date, so at least the author is portraying the humans in a more or less realistic way, even if they don't garner any respect from me.

The setting, story, and mystery in the novel is all quite good, though. This is a proper mystery tale, where the reader has a real chance of figuring out the mystery by the end, and nothing "unfair" happens like an introduction of an as-yet-unseen technology or surprise that clever readers could not have seen in advance. Nevertheless, the mystery is still obscure enough to make it difficult to figure out by the end. Not many mystery novels follow the rules as well as this one does, especially when it comes to scifi settings. Thankfully, Clement is a master of hard science fiction, and so knows how to write this kind of book fairly well.

The biggest drawback (other than asshole sexist characters you'll dislike) is that Clement does not write relationships between humans very well. But that's not the focus of this novel, and so is not that big a drawback. Clement does well in almost every other respect, and the result is a very good hard scifi mystery. I definitely recommend it to any who like science, scifi, and mysteries.

Curtiss says

A Sci-Fi murder mystery where both the detective and the criminal are shape-changing symbiotes capable of occupied and taking control of a willing or unwilling human 'host'.

Hal Clement was a master at exploring extreme physical conditions through the medium of science fiction, but with a hard science rationale to support his speculations. In this case the extreme condition is the human metabolism and psyche - enjoy!

Benjamin Thomas says

This sequel novel to *Needle*, was written and published in 1978, some 29 years after its predecessor but takes place only a few years later. The main character, Bob Kinnaird has completed his college degree and returned to his Polynesian island home to confront and get help for what has become all too obvious: his alien symbiont and friend (the Hunter) has lingered too long in his host body and is leading to the complete deterioration and breakdown of Bob's body. What follows is a concerted effort by Bob and his friends to contact the aliens to obtain some form of cure or reversal of this process. It can best be classified as a science fiction adventure/mystery novel.

The author, Hal Clement, is known as a "hard" science fiction writer of the golden age, meaning he used a solid basis in actual science upon which to frame his stories. He majored in astronomy and also obtained master's degrees in education and chemistry and, in fact was a long time professor of both astronomy and chemistry. This book was a little less science oriented and a little more focused on the characters and their interaction. However, Mr. Clement will never be known for those parts of his novels. The plot seemed to plod along, with the solutions and final resolution being quickly revealed in the final three pages or so, much

like detective novels of that era. The science is intriguing, as it always is in a Clement novel, especially how a symbiotic relationship can both heal and cause life-threatening problems for the host.

I wonder if there was meant to be a third novel. None was ever written but the ending to this one is rather abrupt and there are several loose ends for the characters that could be explored further. Overall, this was an enjoyable novel but not one of Clement's best.

Norman Howe says

Sequel to Needle.

Greta says

A fun, quick read with a sudden resolution. Reminded me very much of the "weird happenings explained all at once" tendencies of gothic and noir. Gotta find the first one now!

Raja99 says

Rating: 9/10

Elaine says

[At one point Andre booby traps a road with a wire so Bob flies off his bike, breaking his arm and rending him unconscious, and then precedes to shove a metal rod through Bob's chest, impaling his heart. When they confront Andre about it, Andre explains that he knows about the Hunter and wanted to tes

Charl says

I love Clement's writing, and this sequel to needle is as good as Needle.

Simon Ford says

Another disappointment, this had the potential to be a cracking story but was let down by the authors repetitive plot, a search for others of its kind, so as to cure his host of an illness this time and not a criminal, that he has caused and can not cure.

Robert is now 22 and 7 years have passed since he first encountered the Hunter, on a Polynesian island.

He has returned to his home to work for the company that has paid for his degree but first he needs to recruit help finding either one of the star-ships that crashed off of the coast so as to make contact with Hunters people in the hope of a cure.

There is trouble ahead as somebody is causing more and more serious accidents that eventually culminate in the attempted murder of Bob, only the Hunters presence prevents his death.

More people are told of Hunters existence as the search for the ships and culprit continue.

The ending is weak and a bit of a let down, it could have carried on, first contact is made between humans and the protoplasmic race of green jelly, Bob is saved by another jelly and the story ends.
