



Zodiac Station

Tom Harper

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Deep in the Arctic, the US Coast Guard icebreaker *Terra Nova* batters its way through the frozen sea. A gaunt figure skis out of the fog on the pack ice. He says his name is Thomas Anderson, and that he's the lone survivor of a terrible accident at the research outpost Zodiac Station, located on the ice-bound island of Utgard.

Ten days earlier: Tom Anderson arrives at Zodiac Station looking to resurrect a career destroyed by scientific scandal. But things quickly go wrong when the man who hired him, brilliant biochemist Martin Hagger, turns up dead at the bottom of a crevasse. The base commander insists he fell. But footprints in the snow suggest a different possibility.

As Anderson tells his tale of sabotage, suspicion, and paranoia, the mystery only deepens. Then other survivors are discovered—adding their stories of human greed, jealousy, oil company trickery, Russian espionage, and global warming. But the truth is something no one on the *Terra Nova* could have imagined.

A fast-paced, gripping thriller that marries science and adventure, *Zodiac Station* is as chilling and unpredictable as the fierce Arctic landscape.

Zodiac Station Details

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Author : Tom Harper

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From Reader Review Zodiac Station for online ebook

Ronan McDonnell says

I wanted something simple for holidays, and I got it. Spies, danger, deaths, mysteries in Arctic Ice, its a Boy's Own / Alastair MacLean tribute. Each chapter puts in a twist to a story which is plausible (at a stretch) up till the end. Still, in spite of my reservations, I enjoyed returning to my teenage reading self for a few hours.

Kate says

Not published til June, I read my review copy far too early simply because it's by Tom Harper, a writer of superb, clever thrillers. Zodiac Station is completely different from the last, The Orpheus Descent. This time the novel is set in the Arctic and presents a science station's path to disaster and tragedy through the words (often teasingly conflicting) of the few survivors. This is a great story and puzzle, set in such a hostile environment, told in the most compelling and intriguing manner and if it isn't one of my very top reads of 2014 I'll be most surprised.

Erica Ravenclaw says

Negalley, y u no want US readers? I want.

Jill Kenna says

This was a great fast read. I didn't figure out the mystery until the very end! I'm excited to read some more of his work.

Carol says

I am so angry!! I enjoyed the book, and became very invested in the characters and their situation. And then.... there is not even a tiny modicum of closure at the end! Never read Tom Harper before, and I was thinking I should check out his other stuff. NOT NOW. Hell will freeze over before I pick up one of his books again. When I say no closure, I mean ABSOLUTELY NO CLOSURE. Not one plot line or subplot was resolved. Grrrr. It was like the author just got up and walked away at a random point. When I first started the book I asked a question to the general community about whether it ended with adequate resolution of the plot. No one answered me. Hopefully lots of folks who are thinking about reading this book will read this review first. DON'T DO IT!! I am so let down and so disgusted. Obviously not recommended.

Rosie Claverton says

I loved about 80% of this book. Multiple, conflicting POVS, a healthy list of three-dimensional suspects, the "locked room" of the Arctic...

And then it all went down the rabbit hole.

I like crime novels where you can guess how and who and why. This is not one of those books. The ending is always a deal-breaker for me, and this one totally broke. Disappointing.

But a brilliantly crafted book, no doubt. I would definitely read more by the author.

Kemper says

You'd think the biggest danger in the Arctic Circle would be freezing to death or being eaten by a polar bear, but as always it turns out that people are worse than anything Mother Nature can throw at us.

It starts out with a Coast Guard ship on patrol in the Arctic when a man on skis approach the ship over the ice. He says his name is Thomas Anderson, and he's the only survivor of a disaster at a research outpost called Zodiac Station. Anderson tells a story of how he was a lowly lab tech whose once promising career had been derailed when he gets a sudden offer to come to Zodiac and work with his old mentor on a project. Unfortunately, right after he gets to the station they find his mentor dead after apparently falling into an ice crevasse, but the circumstances and several of the people at the station seem suspicious to Anderson. After the Coast Guard discovers other survivors at the station they hear other viewpoints that cast doubts on Anderson's version, but when the tale involves possible conspiracies that might be related to climate change, oil companies, and Russian espionage it becomes impossible to know who to believe about what.

Overall, I was impressed with how well written this was. I thought it might be a pure airport bookstore type, but this is solid writing that builds up interesting characters and an increasingly puzzling scenario. The descriptive stuff about living and working at an Arctic research station was exceptionally well done, and it showed what a hard and dreary existence that would be spiced up with the dangers of living in such a harsh environment. So it's a very solid thriller told in a unique way with an ending I never saw coming.

However, I very nearly didn't read it.

This book popped up as a recommendation from Amazon after I read another cold weather tale of survival recently, and since I'm fascinated by the idea of scenarios involving polar research stations I thought I'd give it a try. (I blame *The Thing* for biting me with that particular bug in my teens.)

It was a quick skim of reviews I did before getting it nearly waved me off. A whole lot of people on Goodreads complained about an ambiguous ending that doesn't resolve anything and some other problems. So I had doubts, but tried it anyhow since I already had it reserved at the library. I'm glad I did. Frankly, I thought the ultimate wrap up was very clever, and if I was a different kind of asshole I might say that those people who hated the ending missed the point.

In fact, I'm kind of shocked that not one of the reviews I read mentioned a key point, and I think it's this factor that is going to shift your perspective a lot as to how you view the ending. Here it is. (view spoiler)

Having said all that I understand if a reader knew all this and still was angry at the end because it does take a spectacular leap that might leave someone feeling blindsided. Or if you didn't catch what I discussed in the spoilers it's still understandable that you'd feel like you got bait-and-switched by this book. Those are legitimate views that I wouldn't argue with if you felt like you had been burned.

Yet I find a lot of what's done in genre fiction cliched at this point, and to be completely surprised by something coming out of left field like that was a pleasant surprise that I enjoyed. So if the setup sounds like something you'd be interested in I'd just say that you should be ready for the story to go off in a wild direction at the end.

Comments referencing the ending that aren't hidden by a spoiler tag will be deleted.

Amy says

I listened to this book, and found myself sitting in the driveway or parking garage at work just a few moments longer... I was intrigued from the beginning and it kept me interested the entire time. This is the first book I have read by this author, and will most likely look at some of his other works.

David McCaleb says

Very well researched and written. I am excited to have found this author. Well-paced, plenty of plot twists, high suspense that pulls you through the story, thoroughly woven plot threads. The quality of writing is first-class. I enjoyed the beautiful, creative metaphors, aptly fitted.

If it weren't for the acknowledgements, I would have thought this author was a genetic biologist that had spent a lot of time in the Arctic. Tom, you did a great job on this one. I look forward to reading more of your work.

Stacy says

I felt like I was playing Arctic Clue and each chapter was another role of the dice and a card reveal.

Except that when I made it to the end and looked in that little envelope, there were cards that I didn't even know were in the game. I call foul. Author cheated.

Rosiemae Burton says

I loved about 80% of the novel. Multiple viewpoints, fast-paced, exciting, a great setting and various suspects was brilliant but the ending was insane. A plotline that seemed to come out of nowhere from about 50 pages until the end and abrupt last few sentences. This was so frustrating and disappointing. I hate abrupt and crazy endings so much :(

Jenny says

ARGH. This book is so clever... but the ending is frustrating, as many other reviews cautioned.

It's like a Dan Brown book (I think he even wrote a thriller that focuses on water/ice bergs, if I'm not mistaken) but smarter. There are five main perspectives: 1) the captain of the USCGC Terra Nova, Carl Franklin, and his search for the truth upon their discovering Tom Franklin in the snow one day, 2) Tom Franklin's account of what happened in the days leading up to the explosion at Zodiac Station, 3) scientist Bob Eastman's story, 4) doctor Sean Kennedy's perspective and 5) Tom Franklin's journal that is mostly written post-explosion (which also doesn't read like a journal AT ALL, but that's my own personal gripe - journals in books are always full of dialogue and exposition; that's never how I wrote my own journals back in the day and I'm sure I'm not the only one who shorthands things).

Chapters don't alternate between these men, but rather we are with each character 75-100 pages at a time. This makes it fairly easy to keep track of who is narrating and I think it keeps the momentum building at a good clip.

It's also fun to read the same scene but in different voices - like, oh, now we know why Eastman is behaving strangely, for example. It's also interesting to note any discrepancies. (I always think with these styles of books, authors could go crazy with one character's lies and deception, though that might make for a confusing book in the grand scheme of things).

I don't know much about the Arctic, but the scientists at Zodiac Station are learning about glaciers and ice melt, and Tom Harper (the author) seems to have done a good amount of research. The sense of the cold and lonely plains of the polar region is conveyed well. Tom Franklin is mysteriously summoned to Zodiac to work with his old professor, Martin Hagger, but Hagger turns up dead, and Tom thinks it's murder. Other clues lead him to believe someone is a mole and trading information to a drilling company working on the same Arctic island. As things unfold, other people at Zodiac also find some strange things - Eastman discovers (view spoiler)

However:(view spoiler)

Overall, this had a great set-up, but I'm not sure the ending was resolved very well. I know a lot of readers were pissed by the ending in that there were threads we didn't know were a factor that had an impact on what happened, but that didn't bother me so much as other things that didn't make sense. I'm still glad I read it,

though, because it was entertaining and kept me guessing.

"I want to help, but I'm petrified of being thought intrusive. A very English problem. I've always envied the people who can just throw their arms around complete strangers without analysing it from twenty different angles."

Cheryl says

Zodiac Station, a scientific research station at the frozen end of nowhere

"The Antarctic is a continent surrounded by oceans. The Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents."

I am a sucker for adventure/thriller books that take place in the Arctic or Antarctica. This scientific thriller takes place on the fictional island Utgard, an island in the Arctic Ocean.

Part of the story takes place in or around Zodiac Station, a scientific research station on the island and part takes place on the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker cutter Terra Nova near the island in the Arctic Ocean.

I enjoyed most of the book very much, with a possible murder, freezing cold, and all kinds of side action going on - in a deserted Russian coal mining camp, a drilling operation, and more.

But, as the book heads into the home stretch, it just becomes too fantastical for me and too abrupt.

So I liked most of the book but the ending - not so much.

Stephanie says

A solid way to spend an afternoon, though the slow pace of the writing bogs down the thriller element, and the ending, which comes up in a rush, is best described as ridiculous.

Faith says

This book is told in alternating chapters by the survivors of a disastrous event at an Arctic scientific exploration station. Each has a slightly different perspective and may or may not be a reliable witness. It is reminiscent of both Michael Crichton's thrillers and also of classic whodunits set in a closed or isolated community.

The author seems to have done a lot of research on the Arctic and also on the various scientific disciplines represented by the inhabitants of Zodiac Station. I thought that he explained the science well and I didn't have a problem following it. This was a suspenseful and intelligent thriller. I liked the characters, ordinary men and women thrown into extreme circumstances.

The solution to the mystery was a little abrupt and I would have preferred more closure at the end of the book. It's possible that the author is setting things up for a sequel but that isn't necessary. Everything is

answered in this book. Things just are not tied up as neatly as I expected. However I enjoyed this book and I also liked The Orpheus Descent by the same author. I'll probably read more by him.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.
