From the author of *Disunited* and *The Pauline Conversion*

SOME UNIVERSES ARE BIGGER THAN OTHERS

A ROOM FULL OF ELEPHANTS

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The impossible happens. Now what?

Keith's a superstar software tester – in his own humble opinion. His husband Nick is an army veteran, adjusting to a brand new life with prosthetic legs and nursing a secret obsession with elephants. The uncrowned king of their terraced jungle is their cat, Ziggy.

Theirs is a cosy little universe – about to be shattered in the most extraordinary way.

Enter Cordelia, the mysterious sorta-kinda-girlfriend of Keith's best friend. And then, from somewhere, somehow, enter Eric.

Eric is impossible. Not implausible: impossible. He's seriously, inexplicably, adorably weird. His appearance means Keith's universe will never be the same again – and that's before he finds out the staggering truth.

A Room Full of Elephants is a quirky, page-turning sci-fi mystery tackling the biggest themes of all: relationships, loss, who we are, who we want to be, and whether that animal stain will ever wash out.

A Room Full of Elephants: some universes are bigger than others

A Room Full of Elephants Details

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Seth says

Not much to say. British humor blended with comic sci-fi plotline. -1 Star for waaaaay to many poop/flatulence jokes; +1 Star for the most adorable 10 centimeter tall elephants I've ever had the pleasure to read about.

Wish there had been some sort of intentional gravitas centered on the the literal manifestation of the "elephant(s) in the room" but it never quite gets there. Granted, that COULD feel heavy-handed in a bad way, but it's a risk I would have liked to see pay off. Instead it isn't attempted. The protagonist and his husband seem to be fairly honest and healthy in their relationship the whole way through the novel, which is refreshing, but doesn't provide much satisfaction in terms of character growth.

Beach Books says

Let me get this out of the way: A Room Full of Elephants floored me, just flat out turned me inside out and upside down. It's filled with pithy and irreverent observations about the human condition, with incisive stabs at the bubble of apathy and ennui surrounding our existence, and dripping with laugh-out-loud, belly clutching dialog. This story will take you on a journey of discovery like none you've ever experienced.

Awash in popular culture, rich in characterizations, resplendent with intelligent, jaw-dropping turns of phrase, this Matrix-like 'Verse will stretch your imagination and perhaps even have you racing for your dusty reference books to refresh your take on Cartesian metaphysics.

Keith is the narrator, the lens through which we view the highly improbable and flat out impossible. His is the analytic mind, his specialty finding software bugs. The man is a fascinating blend of big picture thinking shot through with detail-oriented proclivities, honed with the knowledge that no matter how careful one is, no matter how attentive, there will be bugs, in software and in the universe at large.

Nick is Keith's husband, a wounded warrior who lost his legs and now struggles with the harsh realities of adjusting to a world of titanium and limited options. He is also taken with elephant bric-a-brac, books and every other expression of obsession you can imagine.

Part of the joy I found in reading this came from the realistic depiction of a loving relationship between two men who are as different as night and day. They bicker, they love, they accommodate each other's quirks and whims—and underlying all of it is a solid foundation of respect.

Naturally, when Eric appears (and I won't do spoilers, it wouldn't be fair) Nick will be tested in ways he could never have imagined and Keith will rise to those challenges as the mystery of who, what, how and why tests them at every turn.

There's a strong cast of supporting and pivotal characters, clever bread crumb trails, and a plot that unfolds with enough gotcha twists and turns to satisfy the most enthusiastic SciFi & Fantasy fan. The genius of this story is how it snares you in a web of implausibility, how fully you become invested in the characters, and how on the edge of your seat you'll be as events unfold.

The writing is intelligent, the concepts mind-bending and thought-provoking, the characters flawed in deeply human ways. It is filled with dry and sometimes outrageous humor, spot on dialog, and enough gut-wrenching danger and conflict to truly keep you turning the pages.

And with an ending that's perfectly and illogically logical, with most of the loose ends sticky-taped together, your first reaction will be to flip to page one and start again, because… yes, it's just that good.

I give A Room Full of Elephants my highest recommendation. It is truly a Five Star read.

Dave Higgins says

Fusing satire, office politics, and experimental physics, Camber creates a tale that sits equally well beside Tom Sharpe or Douglas Adams without being a copy of either.

Keith works as a software tester for a start-up in Cambridge. When he isn't insulting his colleagues, he bickers with his husband, Nick, and submits to his cat, Ziggy. The biggest niggle in his life is how much the developers can break while he's away from his desk – until the day an elephant, tiny but perfect in every way, emerges from the stump of Nick's leg. Using a combination of rigorous methodology and bloody-mindedness, Keith sets out to track down the cause.

A tiny elephants springing from the stump of someone's leg like some fusion of Ganesha and Dionysus in suburban Cambridge is almost unavoidably absurd; and Camber milks that absurdity for all it's worth. From attempts to scale short distances to experiments in architecture, the elephant in the room is the centre of attention.

However, this book does not rely solely on that absurdity. Interwoven threads of observational humour, dialled up half a notch to hold their own, about software testing and homosexual relationships add (hopefully) exaggerated framework of more mundane social commentary.

While the novel easily stands as satire, it works equally well as a science-fiction thriller. After portraying the absurdity of tiny elephants appearing, Camber then shows the reader the entirely plausible consequences of the implausible having happened.

Camber's portrayal of same-sex marriage is equally based in plausible humanity rather than superficiality or parody. Although circumstances place an extreme, and at times comical, burden on the union, this is very definitely a marriage between two people who happen to be gay rather than a commentary on such marriages.

Keith is a well-crafted protagonist, his almost excessively structured approach to issues a perfect counterpoint for the incomprehensibility of tiny elephants popping out of someone's leg. Displaying both a disdain for deviation in others and a penchant for doing the wrong thing to see what happens, he will be instantly recognisable to readers familiar with quality assurance; yet is in no way a stereotype.

Shaped by his disability – yet not defined by it – Nick is a similarly rounded front-person for a nuanced supporting cast..

Overall, I enjoyed this book immensely. I recommend it to readers seeking high-quality satire or science-fiction that raises questions without losing its lightness.

I received a free copy from the author in exchange for a fair review.