



The Ghost From The Grand Banks

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It is 2010. In two years' time it will be the centennial of the sinking of the Titanic. Two of the world's most powerful corporations race to raise the vessel but there are other powers at work, and chaos theory comes into play as plans progress - and six preserved bodies are found. This novel incorporates two of Arthur C. Clarke's passions - deep sea exploration and future technology - in a fast-moving tale of mystery and adventure. As operations proceed, the perfectly preserved body of a beautiful girl is found. She was not on the ship's passenger lists. The quest to uncover the secrets of the wreck and reclaim her becomes an obsession ... and for some, a fatal one.

The Ghost From The Grand Banks Details

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From Reader Review The Ghost From The Grand Banks for online ebook

Lara says

.....whaaaaaat?

Well, I was really enjoying all the various elements of this story--the opposing teams working to bring the two halves of the *Titanic* up from it's (perhaps not so) final resting place, the Mandelbrot set, a giant octopus, windshields that repel rain with high frequency vibrations instead of wipers--and looking forward to finding out how on earth they would all fit together. Sadly, though, they just...didn't. At least not well. And then the end happened, and...I mean, huh? I guess maybe Clark was attempting to say that the wreck of the *Titanic* is cursed for all time or something, but that's the only thing I could get out of it, and what a weird and somewhat inept way of saying that.

Maybe I'm missing something?

Rex Libris says

Once upon a time there was a great author named Arthur C. Clarke who wrote some of the most incredible books. Then in the early 80's he was kidnapped and replaced by a moron who was only capable of writing trash. That is the only explanation for this book. A lot science that had nothing to do with the supposed storyline, and details about the sexual deviancies of many of the charaters that did nothing for the story. So sad that Clarke lost it.

Andrew says

Reading science fiction portrayals of a future that is now technically in the past is always an interesting experience. Where the author manages to make accurate predictions, one sometimes has to wonder if the prediction wasn't self-fulfilling, in that it created the idea that inspired the development itself. In this case, though, Clarke was only reaching two decades ahead, from 1990 to 2010, and therefore didn't feel the need to make any extreme extrapolations. As a result, while he missed the mark in many ways, his descriptions aren't shockingly far from reality.

Fans of Clarke's writing will find that this book includes a fair bit of what he does extremely well, namely, the descriptions of speculative technology. Clarke excels in building new technologies on solid scientific principles, so that what he describes seems entirely reasonable, even when it is actually quite incredible. In this book, he presents two different solutions to the problem of raising the Titanic, an incredible feat, if ever there were one, and both seem completely reasonable.

Unfortunately, this book is far more character driven than many of Clarke's other tales, and this is not an area where his talents are at their best. The characters feel a bit flat, and some of their motivations seem weak or contrived. Clarke seems to recognize this, since he draws in a whole sub-plot built upon M-sets that have nothing to do with the efforts to raise the Titanic, apparently in a futile effort to flesh out several of the

characters.

This is a relatively short novel, and an easy one to read. For those who are fascinated by the Titanic or deep sea exploration, Clarke's descriptions might make it worth reading. But if you are looking for a first rate science fiction novel, give this a pass in favor of some of Clarke's better works.

melydia says

It's always interesting to read books that take place in a future that is now the past. Granted, this one has a much shorter timeframe - it was written in 1990 and takes place in 2010 - so things aren't all that far off, but the differences are more noticeable for it. I wonder how the story would have changed had Clarke envisioned smart phones. I was especially amused to read about the couple who made their fortune "sanitizing" old movies by removing all evidence of cigarettes. Anyway, this is about two semi-rival attempts to raise the Titanic using two very different methods. Luckily, they're each content retrieving a different half of the ship so there isn't much rivalry aside from who gets it to the surface first. And honestly, it's really not all that good. The technology is passably interesting but the characters are too thin, the disasters are too convenient, and the Mandelbrot Set theory is jammed in sideways with no apparent connection to anything else in the story. This might appeal to a Clarke or Titanic enthusiast, but if you're new to either, you'd be better off picking up something else.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I consider myself a fan of Arthur C. Clarke, but somehow I wasn't aware *The Ghost From the Grand Banks* existed until I found an ebook containing this and his classic *The Deep Range*. What both books have in common and makes them fitting to be grouped together is that both are works of science fiction dealing with exploration--of the oceans. It seems there are millions of books about space exploration, but I can't think of anyone, other than Clarke, Frank Herbert and Verne who have used exploration of the oceans in their science fiction. That despite that it's as forbidding and difficult an environment as outer space and not much better explored than the Moon despite being three-quarters of the earth.

I didn't expect to like this as much as I did. This wasn't a book that got a lot of attention. Published in 1990 it's set in its near future of 2012--it's near future, our recent past. As might be expected, a lot of what Clarke predicted in terms of sociological and scientific developments turned out off the mark. Science fiction dates fast in that respect, even though Clarke has had a good record of imagining a future come true. (He's sometimes credited with the idea of geosynchronous satellites; he did popularize it in his science fiction.) But his misses didn't bother me much at all. Mentally shift the setting decades hence and much of this story about attempting to raise the *Titanic* still seems plausible and ingenious. And Clarke is a pleasure to read. Striking lines, elegant prose, and he's such an erudite writer. Who else can write of the glories of both the ocean and space, of Rachmaninoff and Elgar and the esoteric mathematics of the Mandelbrot set? The story itself was surprisingly poignant and bittersweet. So while I wouldn't put this at the top of Clarke's fiction along with works such as *2001* or *The City and the Stars*, it's certainly worth the read. Especially if you're a fan of Clarke or marine exploration.

Brendon Schrodinger says

A speculative fiction book written in 1990, set on the 100th anniversary of the Titanic sinking. I should have read this last year!

Apart from Rama, this is the only Clarke I have read and I like them. They are by no means masterworks or well-written but I love the science and speculation of his style. He is a great logical dreamer.

The characters are merely pawns to tell the story and put forward great ideas. The story itself is just a "wouldn't it be great if...". But I loved learning about the Mandelbrot set and even checking if his ideas would be feasible (pycnocline + water phase diagram check out). I'm a sucker for scientific, mathematical or historical info-dumping.

I see that a lot of people were disappointed with the ending of the novel as well as the pacing, and I did find these unusual. A big dose of a scientific investigation reality shot at the end made me laugh. Not everything can work out perfect and predictable.

Jake says

It pains me to give this novel two stars. I wasn't expecting a masterpiece, but I was hoping for more than I got. I had greater difficulty getting into *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* than any other stand-alone Arthur C. Clarke novel I've read. There is a certain dryness to all of Clarke's books. However, as I scribbled in the margin, this is "a chronically dry novel steeped in anticlimax."

This book has several good moments, a couple of great ones; however, I can't think of any character, subplot, or theme that is fully developed or satisfying. Whenever a twist or revelation occurs, it is hastily tied off so the next underdeveloped subplot can take center stage. The slightness of this novel is most apparent in how little direct attention or exploration is given to the R.M.S. *Titanic*. Too much of the story is spent at the surface dreaming, scheming and bantering about hypothetical technologies. Only in the last few pages does the story begin to feel meaty.

I do recommend this novel to diehard Arthur C. Clarke fans, if only because even average novels bring you closer to your favorite author. I especially enjoyed the Sources and Acknowledgments section at the back of the book. Clarke's wry wit and galactic sense of irony come out crisp and clear when he doesn't have to filter his ideas through characters. Below is one of several great lines where Clarke the storyteller reckons with reality.

"I would prefer not to know too much about the events of that distant summer, so that I am not handicapped by mere facts."

Brett Ortler says

A pretty awful book in almost every respect. Profoundly bad pacing, indistinguishable characters, a nice dash of sexism here and there, and some moments that make the old Batman movie's "Shark Repellent" look

entirely plausible. Other than the cockamamie plans to raise the Titanic, which are absolutely absurd, there's also a lot of bad science scattered here and there. For instance, there's the notion that the Titanic is draped in weeds, even though she's located at 12,500 feet. In short, ugh.

Ade Couper says

Ok , a good rule of thumb for sci-fi is you can't go wrong with Arthur :pretty much holds true for this....

The story is set in 2012 , & concerns ambitious plans to raise the Titanic . Sir Arthur C loved his diving & underwater expeditions , & his enthusiasm for this - & working out the theoretical answer to "just how do you raise the Titanic?" shows through .

Reminds me quite a bit of "The Fountains of Paradise" , as it's the story of the engineering project , which is really the main "character" in the book . There is a digression at times into fractals & the Mandelbrot set , which was "in" when this was written .

Worth a go.

Maureen says

all about the beauty of fractals...

Jennifer (Jen/The Tolkien Gal/??????) says

I was thinking about this book today. It's not a well Arthur C. Clarke, but it was my first. I remember not being blown away by it, but it stayed well within my consciousness for months on end. This book was my introduction to science fiction despite being a mediocre read - and I'd like to thank Mr Clarke for sucking me into this fantastic world of science fiction.

Courtesy of Jen's mini reviews

Mark says

At this time of year, towards Christmas, I find myself wanting to read some Arthur C Clarke. It's a boyhood thing: Sir Arthur's books were one of my first loves of SF, and I would eagerly read and reread his tales as the nights drew in.

These days the nostalgia is further tempered with the sad fact that I am unlikely to read new material – unless there's something hidden away in the Clarkives. There's been nothing since his death in 2008, and no solo material since 1996 to my knowledge. His last novel, The Last Theorem, was co-written with that other

legendary veteran, Frederik Pohl.

I still do like to read ‘the good stuff’, though. *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* was one of his later and perhaps lesser works, though I’m pleasingly surprised that the echo of Sir Arthur resonates throughout its pages.

Those who know a little about Sir Arthur may know that one of his passions in his later half-century was for scuba diving, though sadly limited by his ill health. His move to Sri Lanka in 1956 was evidently partly due to this. This interest in the undersea world was first made prominent in his novel *The Deep Range* (1957), though it was based on a short story first published in 1954.

In the Sources and Acknowledgements of the book, Sir Arthur explains his love of the sea and the ‘haunting’ (his word) of his life by the sinking of the Titanic. The actual title, ‘*Ghost from the Grand Banks*’ was mentioned very briefly in an earlier Clarke book, *Imperial Earth*, which mentions a recovered Titanic placed on display in New York.

It is therefore no surprise with such a personal passion that he returns with *Ghost* to the mysterious world of the Earth’s oceans.

In *Ghost* it is 2010. The first part of the book, which takes up about half of the novel (‘Prelude’) sets up this world of the future and introduces us to our main characters. Jason Bradley is a world-famous (and very rich) oceanic engineer who as part of the International Seabed Authority is overseeing the attempts by two salvage companies to raise the two separate sections of the submerged wreck of the Titanic from the Grand Banks it sank on for the centennial of the sinking of the ship in 1912.

The first salvage group is to raise the stern of the ship, the last part to sink, and will be paid for and filmed for Nippon-Turner, a company who has also paid for a revised version of the film *An Affair to Remember* to be created by Edith and Donald Craig, whose tale we are also told here. At the same time we hear of a rival salvage company, led by millionaire entrepreneur Roy Emerson and the UK company Parkinson Glass, who wish to raise the larger forward portion of the wreck to retrieve now-priceless Venetian glass artefacts believed to be preserved in the ocean depths.

The second part of the book, (‘Preparations’) tells of the laborious arrangements that have to be made before any salvage can occur. The discovery of a mysterious yet well preserved corpse in one of the sealed cabins is an intriguing development, and perhaps reflects Sir Arthur’s interest in rational explanation for the unusual at the time. Though in the end the reason for this ‘ghost’ is fairly mundane, it does provide a hook to create interest.

In the third part (‘Operations’), we have the events up to the attempt to resurrect the Titanic.

The fourth part (‘Finale’) deals with the attempts to raise the wreckage. It is a dangerous task and the explorers have to face many hazards, malfunctioning equipment and seaquakes included.

If the appearance of a ghost didn’t already suggest it, *Ghost from the Grand Banks* is perhaps nominally science fiction, and certainly less science-fictional than many readers would expect from the author of *2001 A Space Odyssey*. Though mainly set in the near-future (at least from a 1990 perspective) the trappings of technology and science are not too fantastical and there are some hot science ideas of the time involved, although the Epilogue, set in the far future, is more typical Clarke grandeur.

As ever, in the later Clarke books, the chapters are short, rarely more than a couple of pages, but each one

throwing out clever ideas – the ever-clean car windscreen, the Y2K computer bug, the idea of the Mandelbrot set, all fairly new ideas at the time of the book's original publication but without too much relevance to the plot.

It is quite strange reading it now, concerning matters that were originally set in the near-future but now are in the past.

The characterisation is what you expect from Sir Arthur. It is brief, and some would say functional. A Clarke novel usually works for its ideas, if not for its characterisation. At its basic it's a tale of clever, highly-motivated people with means, which makes them a little interchangeable.

When we do get background details of the character's lives, they can be quite odd. It was a surprise to find a Clarke novel involving a high-class brothel in London, bondage and lesbianism! However, the focus is primarily on the attempts by the two competing salvage teams to raise the wreckage, one who aim to raise part of the Titanic by using glass bubbles, the other by freezing the debris in ice to raise it to the surface.

It is a book whose plot is pared to the bone, with characters to match. Superfluous detail has been removed, though there is throughout Sir Arthur's characteristically dry humour. Those used to hefty trilogies creating a complex, detailed environment will find this a shock and perhaps be disappointed that there is clearly more to tell that is untold here.

However, in truth, this is not Sir Arthur's best book. There is a little bit of a feeling that, despite the enthusiasm of Sir Arthur to write an ocean-based tale around the Titanic, in the end it seems somewhat half-hearted. The book was written at a time when Sir Arthur had, to most intents and purposes, pretty much retired from writing fiction, and it comes across as one of those great ideas that, in the end, may not have been worth the effort. As already mentioned, the plot is pretty basic. It lacks the broad scale of the *Odyssey* books, the inventiveness of *Rendezvous with Rama* or even the fresh enthusiasm of his early books. The ending is a little ambiguous, though its respect to exploration is clear.

At times it seems to be little more than a jumbling of Clarke's interests at the time of writing, with a little less cohesion than we normally expect. Some parts of the plot are rather conveniently shoehorned together. Initially Edith and Donald Craig and their gifted daughter Ada seem to be there for little else but to allow a discussion of the Mandelbrot set, although in the end there's a link to the ghost that seems a little convenient. An edited transcript of a speech given by Sir Arthur about the Mandelbrot Set in 1989 is also given as an eleven-page Appendix to the book, reflecting perhaps that the author's interest is there rather than with the telling of the Titanic tale.

This does not sound great, and there are many who will no doubt feel a little shortchanged by this rather predictable tale. But what we do get, surprisingly strong to me on this reread, is an adventure tale suffused with that Clarcean signature tone, a combination of astute knowledge and wry observation. It is unique, and I was surprised to realise how much I miss it. It was this that made the book an engrossing read. For me, spending time with a Clarke novel is like spending time with an old friend, even when that friend can ramble a little!

In the end it is perhaps charitable to say that it is a readable tale which respects and highlights the importance of stoic heroism, the danger and the thrills involved in deep sea salvage, as well as serving to remind readers, should they need reminding, of the tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic. As we approach the centenary in real life, this makes an apt means of remembrance, as indeed it does reminding us of the legacy of Sir Arthur C. Clarke.

Ravindu Thimantha Gamage says

Dry and anticlimactic, but I loved it! Some of my bias might have been fuelled by my love for Titanic, but nevertheless, I enjoyed reading this book and blew through the pages in a couple of days.

Your mileage may vary.

J B Angell says

While not Clarke's best work it's interesting to see the technological predictions. The book was written in 1991 and is set in the present day. This was before things such as twitter or skype and yet Clarke mentions very similar things with startling accuracy.

Kay says

I wanted to read this because it involved the Titanic and I was going through 'that kind of phase' at the time. It involved more than just that of course and I enjoyed it very much. It was a new type of idea for sci-fi for me that didn't involve spaceships and aliens, more a near-futuristic feel which I appreciate more :)
