



Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body: A Guerline Scarfe Investigation

Simon Petrie , Edwina Harvey (Editor)

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Tanja Morgenstein, daughter of a wealthy industrialist and a geochemist, is dead from exposure to Titan's lethal, chilled atmosphere, and Guerline Scarfe must determine why.

This novella blends hard-SF extrapolation with elements of contemporary crime fiction, to envisage a future human society in a hostile environment, in which a young woman's worst enemies may be those around her.

'Matters Arising' won the 2018 Sir Julius Vogel Award for Best Novella or Novelette, and was shortlisted in the analogous category in both the Aurealis and Ditmar Awards.

Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body: A Guerline Scarfe Investigation Details

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From Reader Review Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body: A Guerline Scarfe Investigation for online ebook

Anna Hepworth says

Disclaimer: I have read this book as part of the judging process for the Aurealis Awards.

This review is my personal opinion, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the panel, the judging co-ordinator, or the Aurealis Awards management team.

I loved this story. The world-building is fabulously detailed, but only trickles out in such manners that it supports the story. The characterisation is controlled, and compelling. The plot and the pacing are finely tuned suspense of investigation of an apparent suicide that becomes so much more. Good hard SF/SF in space fiction, good gritty detective fiction.

Lori says

I enjoyed this short investigative tale set on Titan. I thought the world-building was quite believable, and the world felt real as a backdrop, but also took center stage at times and worked. Scarfe is an interesting character who I look forward to reading more about. The mystery is well thought out and worked for me. I did feel that some of her personal backstory was presented in a somewhat confusing manner, but near the end we did get some relevant information and I'm hoping for more clarity there in future stories.

J C Steel says

Titan is a hostile environment. When people die, it's the job of someone like Guerline Scarfe to make sure that all the details are correctly recorded and all angles are examined to ensure that the future of Fensal's citizens is as safe as it can be. The investigation into the death of Tanja Noor Hainan Morgenstein should have been one like any other – despite her influential parents. However, when Guerline starts asking *why* the daughter of one of Titan's most influential families would have committed suicide by Titan right outside an airlock, her investigation starts sprouting inconsistencies.

Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body is a well-written mystery thriller in a science-fiction setting. Details of terrain and technology add to the backdrop, but the author has resisted allowing them to overwhelm the story. The characters are well-developed, and while Guerline is at first glance the epitome of the harassed separated parent with a spoiled child, her obstinacy makes her the ideal protagonist for the plot. The final plot twist reveal was particularly nicely handled, with enough presaging to make it credible without giving the game away too early. Overall, this was a thoroughly enjoyable read – there's something there for everyone from detective mystery fans through to die-hard sci-fi readers.

Reviewed for By Rite of Word.

Barbara Howe says

In this novella by New Zealand-born author Simon Petrie, hard science fiction intersects with another of my favourite genres, crime fiction. In a mining colony on Titan, Saturn's moon, a young woman, Tanja Morgenstein, walks out of an air lock and takes off her helmet. Psychologist Guerline Scarfe is simply doing her job, as required by the local law, in investigating the reasons for Tanja's suicide. She is not, at first, overly surprised by Tanja's wealthy parents' resistance—they are, after all, in shock over losing their daughter—but her concern grows as she probes deeper and their hostility turns to threats.

Throw in a dead brother, a traumatised boyfriend, pressure from Gureline's boss to drop the investigation, and a nail-biting nighttime flight across Titan's frozen landscape, and you have a classic detective story with a savage, high-tech twist. It's no surprise to me that the story won this year's Sir Julius Vogel award for Best Novella. I look forward to reading more about Guerline Scarfe.

This review was first posted on [This Need To Read](#)

Thoraiya says

A+ intelligent, compelling, hard science fiction murder mystery novella.

I haven't enjoyed something from this subgenre so much since "Caves of Steel" - this is a story Asimov might have written if he'd been obsessed with Titan and Nordic crime instead of robots, if he'd actually been the secular humanist he aspired to be, and if he'd had access to all the fascinating modern research into the solar system.

Very much looking forward to the next one.

Hazel-Anne Nair says

As a detective novella set on Titan, *Matters Arising* straddles the two genres very well. The characters are well fleshed out, and there is sufficient placement of SF elements to remind the reader of its genre, as well as medical talk, without getting too bogged down in a lot of tech talk of either genre - a sure turn off for this reader. When I began to read this novel, I was not in the mood for yet another example of an author's desperate need to show off, and thus I was very happy not to be inflicted with complicated jargon, which is all very well in its place, but not when a good read is all one wants. I am not sure if there is a term for the blending of SF and detective fiction, but I am sure that someone will let me know if there is! This is a very enjoyable novel, one which employs good pace to keep the reader guessing to the end. Recommended for those who want good entertainment with a twist at the end.

Annie says

This novella is a great short read that combines both science fiction and crime fiction, so appeals to readers of both genres. I have not read any of Petrie's works before, but I really enjoyed reading this. His description

of Titan's atmosphere, transport system, technology etc., are excellent. I am hoping that there will be more novels featuring Guerline Scarfe in the very near future – I will also be checking out what other books Petrie has published.

Guerline Scarfe, is a licensed forensic psychologist and is investigating the death of 21year old, Tanja Noor Hainan Morgenstein. Tanja, is the daughter of wealthy parents - Joshua Hainan and Yrsa Morgenstein. Hainan and Morgenstein are not happy about being interviewed by Scarfe. Scarfe explains that because Tanja's death was an apparent suicide, it is normal procedure for Scarfe to be called in to investigate.

According to her parents, Tanja was a quiet solitary girl, who liked engineering, literature, photography and had even taught herself piano. She was happy and they cannot understand why she would take her own life. Hainan and Morgenstein went on to explain that they are still coming to terms with the death of Piotr, Tanja's older brother. Eight months ago, Piotr had a brain aneurysm whilst diving, was put on a life support system, unfortunately they had to make the very difficult decision to turn his life support system off. Piotr was 3 years older than Tanja, but they got on well together. Tanja's parents went on to say that there was no suicide note, but perhaps Tanja had left something with her boyfriend Chaim Uchida. The parents had not asked Chaim about a note, because they didn't get on with him. Scarfe asked if Tanja had friends and was told that there were three that were close – Dorothy Singh, Zeera Kwan and MacKenzie Chavez. Scarfe, having nothing else to ask Hainan and Morgenstein, drew the interview to a close and the couple left.

Back in her office, Scarfe starts to look for info on the family members. She asks her slate to bring up info on Piotr Aymeric Morgenstein Hainan, but found nothing of real significance, apart from his death. She also looked through images of the family and noted that Joshua Hainan now looked ill and older and wondered if he'd gone off the rejuvenants. Yrsa Morgenstein on the other hand didn't look any older. Scarfe tries to get the coroner's report on Piotr's death, but finds that the report is inaccessible to her level of access. She thought this very strange because she is investigating Tanja's death and as Piotr and Tanja are brother and sister, the records should be available to her. She could petition for the records, but it's probably not worth the trouble. Scarfe decides to get in touch with Tanja's friends. She finds that Singh is currently off world at a research institute. Chavez and Khan are currently at Woltjer and Uchida stationed at Jeffreys. Scarfe could contact them remotely, but decides to interview them face to face. She contacts Chavez, Khan and Uchida via avatar calls and schedules meetings with each one over the next few day cycles. Scarfe also configured an interactive text transmission to Singh.

Next Scarfe decided to go and see Kim N'Diaye, the forensic medical officer. N'Diaye tells her that Titan air because it freezes, had, when Tanja took off her helmet, frozen her internal organs very quickly as soon as she started to breathe in the Titan air, resulting in her death. He found nothing untoward on the body except for a few bruises and scratches. Tanja's T.suit and helmet were in very good condition, clean and well maintained. Scarfe noted that even though the suit was high end, it must have been around ten years old. N'Diaye showed Scarfe a storage token that was found in Tanja's pocket. She showed the token to her slate and the location of the locker was identified as being adjacent to the airlock where Tanja died. Scarfe borrowed the token so that she could investigate the locker.

Titan smelt differently to each person and to Scarfe it smelt like bleached sewage. She went to examine the locker, found very little in it – a pair of black shiny shoes and a resealable envelope containing some clothes. She put these back in the locker and left.

Runag Fischetti was one of those who went to Tanya's aid. Scarfe had contacted her earlier, but Fischetti said to call back in 70 minutes as she was busy. Passing close to the hospital sector at the nominated time, Scarfe decides to get her slate to enquire whether she can meet face to face with Fischetti. Scarfe learns that

Fischetti firmly believes that Tanja had said there was a note. She was sure Tanja had said “make sure she gets the note”. Fischetti went on to say that Tanja had changed her mind about dying. Scarfe left and called N’Diaye to check on the note, but he confirmed again that there was no note on the body. She checked the locker again, but found no note.

Kwan and Chavez had confirmed that they were available the following day. Scarfe arranged for her son Nikita to stay with her ex-husband for a few days whilst she made the long trip to Woltjer. When she eventually arrived in Woltjer the next day, she had a couple of hours to spare before her meeting with Chavez, so she stopped at a restaurant to eat. Arriving at Chavez’s residence, she found that Khan was there also. Chavez and Khan thought that they might as well do the interview together, Scarfe reluctantly agreed. Scarfe found out that Tanja’s parents were very controlling of their two children and that Tanja hardly ever left Trafton. Tanja’s parents wouldn’t even let her have a T.Suit, but yet Tanja was found wearing a suit? They decided that the suit must have been a rental, but Scarfe realised that it wasn’t. With the meeting now over, Scarfe had quite a few hours before she was due to catch the rail pod back to Trafton. Scarfe contemplated what she had found out and sent a message to N’Diaye telling him to keep hold of the T.suit.

Now on the rail pod, Scarfe had a call from her supervisor. Kalinda informed her that Tanja’s parents were exerting pressure for the investigation to be stopped. Scarfe said that she didn’t like leaving things unfinished – Kalinda said “then write a report, that’s how we finish things”. Kalinda asked her if she was on her way back, Scarfe said she was, but in fact had decided to travel to Jeffrey to interview Uchida.

When Scarfe eventually caught up with Uchida, he told her that in the last few days Tanja was not herself. He told her that Tanja was worried about her body and wanted to know what was wrong. Tanja was not allowed to travel to Jeffrey and he always had to travel to Trafton whenever he wanted to see Tanja. He told Scarfe that Morgenstein was the most controlling of the two parents. After leaving Uchida, Scarfe as she made her way along the corridor to the elevator, she saw Hainan. He physically grabbed hold of her and was quite aggressive in his tone, telling her that the investigations had to stop. Hainan walked away leaving Scarfe thinking over questions about Tanja’s suicide and her domineering aggressive father.

Scarfe caught a skyrider back to Trafton. However, the journey was perilous and somehow seemed as though the skyrider’s power had been sabotaged. Can Scarfe make it back to Trafton alive to continue her investigations into Tanja’s death?

Many thanks to Simon Petrie for sending me a copy of this novella via the Goodreads giveaway scheme, in return for the above review.

Dawn Meredith says

you can read my full review here:

<https://speckfick.blogspot.com.au/201...>

Loved it! Simon's worldbuilding is awesome. The character is engaging.

Tsana Dolichva says

Matters Arising From the Identification of the Body by Simon Petrie is a science fiction crime novella set on Titan. It follows a public investigator looking into the suicide of a young woman who opened her own helmet and exposed herself to Titan's atmosphere.

Scarfe's job is investigate the suicide and the reasons leading up to it. It's told as a police procedural with a solid science fictional setting as a back drop. Petrie has written several stories set on Titan (see my reviews of his short story collections, *Rare Unsigned Copy* and *Difficult Second Album*) but I got the impression that this version of Titan was more populated and hence the story is probably set a bit further into the future than those other stories.

As expected, the scientific background is something Petrie gets spot on in this novella. As well as a well-developed setting, I appreciated the additional layers to Scarf's life. She wasn't solely focussed on her job, she also had a family and a back story that wasn't directly related to her job or this particular case, which I appreciated. *Matters Arising From the Identification of the Body* was fully fleshed out, for all that it was a novella and didn't take me very long to read.

As far as the crime aspect went, I pretty much only read speculative fiction crime so my opinion is a little coloured by that. This ticked all my boxes though. The mystery elements were intrinsically tied to the science fictional setting and the "solution" followed logically from what the reader had been presented with. I did guess one aspect of the resolution, but not the full explanation, which was handled well, in my opinion.

I highly recommend *Matters Arising From the Identification of the Body* to fans of science fiction and mystery/crime stories. It is both a procedural and science fiction, but I expect it will appeal more to fans of the latter genre than the former. This was also a more series story than Petrie's other mystery series set on a space elevator, which is significantly more tongue-in-cheek. I am looking forward to reading more stories about Scarfe and set on Titan.

4.5 / 5 stars

You can read more of my reviews on my blog.

L. S. says

A detectives job is always significantly worse when the investigation involves those of wealthy backgrounds. For one reason or another, there just always seems to be something sinister and off about them. Tanja Morgenstein's apparent suicide is causing Guerline Scarfe a serious headache, mostly because nothing is as it seems on Titan.

Okay, first of all, awesome setting for a detective story. Titan, and I assumed it's the one we all know and love as Saturn's moon, was where all of this took place, which makes this a sci-fi detective story. And the science fiction aspect is wonderful. Technical, without being overwhelming or jargon-heavy, so that casual sci-fi fans could also enjoy.

As far as the mystery genre goes, another point for this novel. The pacing seemed right, and the reader was drip-fed enough information to let them draw their own conclusions without holding their hand.

Scarfe was a wonderful protagonist to follow. She didn't really follow many of the stereotypes present in

either the mystery/detective genre, nor much in science fiction, either. I also can't say that much stood out with her—she wasn't a super-genius, a "hero", or anything like that—she just was. And I think that's what made her so appealing to me. She was well-suited for the nature of the novel.

Speaking of, the nice ended on an excellent cliffhanger. The author crafted their book to keep the readers turning pages, and it worked like a charm. I'm so looking forward to the next installment of the series.

Cindy says

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

I'm a big nerd when it comes to space. I don't know a lot, but I love stories set in space, science fiction stories, and stuff like that. I also love mysteries. When I got asked to review a book that had both, I couldn't resist.

Guerline Scarfe - what a name - is the equivalent of a police officer sometime in the future. She's been asked to investigate a suicide. It looks like a pretty straightforward case, but she is a thorough officer and figures that any death deserves an explanation.

Lorese says

I really enjoyed this science fiction crime novella, 'Matters arising from the Identification of the Body'. I have always admired the ability of science fiction writers to create a believable extra-terrestrial world with a vocabulary of technology as yet unknown, but perhaps not un-dreamed of by our current time in history, and this book did not disappoint. The plot was straight forward and easy to follow, not multi-layered, so I had worked out the circumstances about 'who did it' quite early on, and I found this a little disappointing. For this reason I think it would best suit teens and young adult readers rather than older and/or more sophisticated readers. This book would also be an excellent resource for adult learners of English, where the uncomplicated plot and clear, easy to follow language would be a distinct advantage.

Faith Jones says

Matters Arising is a detective procedure story in an extra-terrestrial science fiction setting. There's an apparent suicide and there's someone whose job it is to find out why.

It appeared to me to be heavily weighted toward the detective mystery elements, as if you had gone to a time a couple of hundred years from now and doggedly followed a detective's investigation because that's what you're interested in, how they do their job, without spending much time thinking there was anything worth talking about or being impressed by in the panoramic cosmic and techno-marvel context. The flying vehicles, interesting sports like methane diving and the futuristic jobs are all there in the scene, so that's good as it's the main attraction to delight sci-fi enthusiasts, but you have to admit that this is first and foremost a crime investigation mystery. Agatha Christie readers would like this a lot, Carl Sagan readers would like it

somewhat, for the engineering, and those who prefer the rainbow allure of high description imaginings in the fantasy future style coloured by emotion and alien cultural fizz will probably think the flat-foot case elements are not for them because no one morphs into a telepathic octopus.

There's logic to this – and reality. I liked the flight over the dunes and the argument with the computer, which was a device to show the investigator's determined character and refusal to be sabotaged within sight of the answer. This is what our future in space might genuinely turn out like, but don't expect escapism because that's not the message. This is a series of steps to answer a puzzle. Future advances have been built into the fabric of these characters' lives, but the story normalises that and focusses on the people and the conundrum. This is sci-fi for crossword solvers.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald says

Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body is a hard sci-fi crime novella. It starts off with the suicide of a wealthy heiress, but the book is as much about the author's vision of Titan's settlement as it is about the mystery.

Usually, I'm not particularly fond of hard sci-fi and there were elements of the genre present in Matters Arising that didn't appeal to me. In particular, I found the language more academic than emotive, which created a distance from the characters. However, the story went some way towards mitigating that by giving the main character a family life of sorts. Seeing her struggle with her personal relationships helped humanise Guerline. Her focus and dedication to her work is shown as both a virtue and a character flaw.

The details of daily life also helped make Guerline relatable. We get to see her make long commutes, grouch at missed flights and travel delays, and engage in online research and recreation. These details also do a clever double duty, showing what it's like to live on Titan in a way that feels natural. It also fits in with the detail-oriented nature of procedural crime.

The drawback to this approach is that it can feel a bit slow-paced. There's no real sense of urgency until Guerline's final trip home. However, the short chapters help to counterbalance this.

Another thing I was pleased to see was how diverse the cast was. It's something I'm not used to seeing in hard sci-fi... though it should be said my experience with the genre is very limited, especially when it comes to modern examples.

All in all, Matters Arising from the Identification of the Body was a solid read and while not exactly my cup of tea, I'd definitely recommend it to lovers of hard sci-fi.

Disclaimer: I was provided with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. The author is a friend. I have done my best to give an unbiased review.

This review first appeared on Earl Grey Editing.

Dion Perry says

Guerline works as a death investigator. She is investigating the death of a young woman who committed suicide in spectacular fashion. Why did she do it? The story follows Guerline as she interviews her family and friends and it takes an interesting turn when she is threatened. Is this a murder case? I have to say, despite all the clues, I did not predict the twist until the end.

Matters arising is a science fiction thriller with incredible intrigue. It is sufficiently paced to keep you reading, but the real hook is the mystery of what happened to the dead girl. It is a plot driven story with good range of characters, an unusual off-world setting and sprinkle of future technology. I couldn't stop reading it. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys thrillers. Even if you aren't a SciFi buff, you'll still enjoy this book.
