



# One Way

*S.J. Morden*

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**When the small crew of ex cons working on Mars start getting murdered, everyone is a suspect in this terrifying science fiction thriller from bona fide rocket scientist and award winning-author S. J. Morden.**

It's the dawn of a new era - and we're ready to colonize Mars. But the company that's been contracted to construct a new Mars base, has made promises they can't fulfill and is desperate enough to cut corners. The first thing to go is the automation . . . the next thing they'll have to deal with is the eight astronauts they'll send to Mars, when there aren't supposed to be any at all.

Frank - father, architect, murderer - is recruited for the mission to Mars with the promise of a better life, along with seven of his most notorious fellow inmates. But as his crew sets to work on the red wasteland of Mars, the accidents mount up, and Frank begins to suspect they might not be accidents at all. As the list of suspect grows shorter, it's up to Frank to uncover the terrible truth before it's too late.

Dr. S. J. Morden trained as a rocket scientist before becoming the author of razor-sharp, award-winning science fiction. Perfect for fans of Andy Weir's *The Martian* and Richard Morgan, *One Way* takes off like a rocket, pulling us along on a terrifying, epic ride with only one way out.

## One Way Details

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Author : S.J. Morden

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Genre : Science Fiction, Mystery, Fiction, Thriller

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## From Reader Review One Way for online ebook

### Liz Barnsley says

I really enjoyed this one as was shown by the speed at which I read it - One Way is basically a bit of an adventurous murder mystery set on Mars, or mostly so anyway, a tense and claustrophobic tale which benefited from some scientific geekery and a main character who was easy to get along with.

Frank is offered the chance to leave prison behind and be part of a mission to prepare a Mars base for the scientists who will be going to live and work there - it isn't a get out of jail free card - he agrees that he will live and die there. Only he realises that dying there is likely to come a bit faster than expected.

I really got into it - it is both fast paced and often considered - as Frank arrives on the Red Planet, starts losing his "colleagues" and realises there is a saboteur among them. Then it goes all Agatha Christie "And then there were None" as the small compact team starts dropping like flies and Frank becomes determined that he will be the one left standing...

The author does a great job of making it both fascinating and thrilling, the characters are all larger than life (in fact if I had one small bugbear it was that Brack descended into caricature more often than was necessary) and despite them all having a murky past, easy to engage with and root for. The imagined Mars is well described and the fact that even the environment is more likely to kill them than not keeps things interesting throughout.

Overall a great, fun and easily addictive read, I have no problem recommending this one. One to hunker down with on a chilly winter's day.

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### Kate says

Murder in space! Well, on Mars. A very entertaining mix of science fiction and crime with a slight feel of The Martian about it. Review to follow shortly.

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### Danielle Tremblay says

I loved The Martian, but I loved One Way even more. The author knows a lot about what could be done to live on Mars and what could go wrong. And the crime novel inside this SF is intriguing too. I didn't like much the uncaring Frank, who didn't want to know if the deaths were accidental or not until it was almost too late, even for himself. In French, « Braque » (pronounce it "Brack") means: dazed, a little crazy, whimsical. This was a good name for the sadistic character of this novel.

And it would make a good movie.

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## **Bandit says**

Mars. One of my all time favorite travel destinations which for practical reasons is currently undertaken strictly in fictional (and occasionally) nonfictional form. I was very excited to see this book come up on Netgalley and read it almost as soon as my request was approved. Sadly, this trip to Mars turned out to be not exactly excitement worthy. Although still infinitely more pleasant than it did for the book's characters, seven convicts who exchange one prison for another as they sign up to serve out their sentence building a space camp on the red planet. Turns out life expectancy on Mars is considerably lower than in Earth's prison and soon the bodies start hitting the floor as it were. Frank, the book's main protagonist decides to figure out why. So far a decent premise, right? And it is, really, it's the execution that leaves a lot to be desired. The author is a real deal scientist, with degrees in geology and planetary geophysics, so presumably the science specs are right on the money here, it's just that the book gets buried under them. I mean, if you're after finding out what it would take to set up a space colony, this might be an informative read, the details are exhaustive and meticulous. But then again I've read nonfiction on the subject that was far more exhilarating...and educational. This is meant to be a work of fiction, with all the concomitant things like character development and so on and it's just nonexistent. Somehow you're supposed to care about a bunch of convicts you barely get to know. Frank is the only one you sort of do, but he's pretty difficult to like...serving a life sentence for murder, he shot his kid's dealer, another kid, in broad daylight with witnesses. Seriously, what sort of an idiotic crime is that? Why not admit one's failure as a parent and try something productive instead? And if, inexplicably, murder does seem to be the only solution (because sure there can't be another dealer around, right? because surely what young junkie's life wouldn't improve by his father becoming a murderer and being put away for life? Because what greater example to set for one's child?) why not do a proper murder, smartly, and at least try to get away with it? And that's Frank, the moral compass of the story. And then, of course, it's also a murder suspense, which is, all things considered, possibly the best thing here, it's a locked planet mystery, how neat, but then again execution doesn't do the concept justice. The sweater of logic here will definitely unravel if you start playing with the threads. So it's basically an underwhelming science fiction book, heavy (oh so heavy) on the technical details and very light on the actual story. The writing was serviceable enough, this would have been solidly mediocre, but insult to injury, the ending is just sort of to be continued and (surprise, surprise) sequel ready. Another one? Why? Mars deserves more. So do the readers. The next one is titled No Way, appropriately as in no way you should be reading it. One Way disappointed enough. Thanks Netgalley.

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## **The Captain says**

Ahoy there me mateys! I received this sci-fi eARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. So here be me honest musings . . .

This book was a fun and entertaining read. To save money, a corporation decides to train convicts to be the first exploratory crew on Mars. It is a one way trip. Their purpose is to build and set-up the living quarters for the NASA scientists that follow and then be the maintenance crew for the station. Except that once they get to Mars, they start to die one by one and it doesn't seem to be an accident.

The good:

- Frank – I very much enjoyed Frank as the primary perspective. He does not always make the best decisions (i.e. why he went to jail) but he is intelligent and likeable. I was certainly rooting for him.

- Concepts- I loved the idea that the subcontractors are trying to save money and use the convicts and other horrible ideas to stay under budget.
- Characters – In general, I liked all the other convicts. They are not really fleshed out at all but I enjoyed all of them in various ways.
- Mars – I liked the descriptions of the planet and the science of the set up of for the dwelling fabrications. It makes me realize, yet again, that I am not meant to ever be a space explorer. I will stick to the sea!
- Build-Up – this is a slow build-up book with a lot of training and introduction. It takes a decent amount of time to even get to Mars. Now I love this kinda start but others may not. It was a fast read even with the slow build-up.
- Writing Style – I enjoyed the author's writing and manner of speech.

The not as good:

- Mystery – The book claims to have one. It is no mystery. Even though I didn't know it was supposed to be a who-dun-it tale, the bad guy and the set-up were obvious from the start.
- Bad-Guy – A boring cookie cutter two-dimensional figure. So very stereotypical.
- Characters – I would have liked more insight into each of the characters rather than just seeing them as generic “types.” But as they are only seen through Frank's eyes, it wasn't a major problem.
- Mars – There is not much description of the planet itself or really what it feels like to live there. The danger of oxygen loss is the most prevalent danger. Besides murder of course!
- Epistolary Prologues to the Chapters – These were short segments like transcripts, documents, etc. from the XO Corporation that were interspersed between chapters. I enjoyed some of them but they didn't appear to be in order and were such small snippets. Many were just confusing. I did want the information about why and how XO made its choices but don't know if it would have been better served in their own chapters or as an appendix or short story or something.
- Ending – an abrupt set-up for the sequel. It annoyed me that it stopped there but I still want to know what happens next!

This is a light thriller read with very little mystery but is fluffy good entertainment. A very quick, likeable read but nothing earth-shattering (Hardy har har!). I will likely pick up the sequel.

So lastly . . .

Thank you Orbit!

Check out me other reviews at <https://thecaptainsquartersblog.wordpress.com>...

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**Roy says**

Part murder mystery, part scifi, part thriller and part prison cell drama on Mars. It was a very easy and flowable read. The thrills were well placed and timed, although the story was a little cliched. The murderer was predictable and you pretty much knew who it was before the big reveal. I really enjoyed Frank as the main character, I think he's someone that a reader can cheer for and really engage with. The science was well handled, although not very overly technical. I read this over a few sittings but never really got that addictive feeling. So overall, plotting was pretty simple, characterisation was solid even if the murderer was a little simple, simple world building if any with good popcorn writing style.

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### **Richard says**

7/10

It's "The Martian" meets "And Then There Were None" in this sci-fi thriller that hits a number of right notes but not quite enough of them to merit being compared to either of those two novels. There are plenty of good ideas here and it's well written but it never hit the heavy heights it could have done and I can't put my finger on why.

There are plenty of character's to introduce but only a handful feel fleshed out but the main character is one of those and you get a sense of him being a criminal but a good guy too. Who wouldn't shoot someone in the face if they were a good guy... The novel is split into two really; the setting up of what is to come with all the training and the reason why it's happening, then the happening. Everyone in space and "accidents" happening along the way.

I liked the titbits that were interspersed at the beginning of chapters which documented the company and owners viewpoints on the mission and what was required. It put what the astrocriminals were going through in another perspective.

This was an enjoyable ride without ever been totally memorable. I'd recommend it though to anyone looking for something a little bit different in the sci-fi genre.

### **Thanks to NetGalley for a copy for review, this was my review**

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### **Ruth says**

Totally awesome! Morden came up with a great premise and absolutely delivered. It was a solid fun read from end to end. It isn't as sophisticated as Martian but I think Martian fans will still find it to be a great read.

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### **Mish says**

One Way is a futuristic, science fiction novel, it's not a genre I would normally read but I'm glad I did and thought it was pretty good with a unique concept. Set in 2047, NASA contracted a company called Xenosystems Operations (XO) to construct a base in Mars for their NASA astronauts. But with budget being an issue, XO decided to use prisoners serving a life sentence, who have a certain specialized skill set and knowledge that XO could use for work on Mars – which would ultimately cut costs.

Combining killers, sociopaths, and thieves all in one place, using tools and machinery is a dangerous mix. Even though they seem to be getting the job done and working well together, but at the back of your mind you're skeptical; wondering if or when someone will snap. Yet I don't believe the characters – prisoners – were fully developed. We got to know the narrators life story up front. The narrator is the leader of the crew, Frank Kittridge, a former builder and architect who's serving a life sentence for murder. We hear details of family life, job, and what made him commit murder. I trusted and liked Frank but the details of other prisoner's were touch upon briefly, so I hardly knew them nor didn't feel anything for them when something major happened.

The vigorous training in the first half of the book was interesting. You get to see the dynamics with the prisoner, how they worked together and in Franks POV who he didn't trust. I kind of expected something more in the second part when they landed on Mars. It went slightly overboard with the technical details and I felt that the pacing was slow. And I didn't feel suspicious about any of the incidences that took place so I was generally laid back for most of the book waiting for a surprise twist to occur. It was only in the last couple of chapters where it lifted its game and was touch and go for one of them.

I thought it was a good read. The ending does make you want to find out what happens next, so more than likely I will be reading the book 2 when it's released.

*Thanks to Hachette Australia for my review copy.*

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### **Figgy says**

Morden's debut has some serious vibes that call The Martian to mind, complete with having to make long treks across Mars to gather resources that they need to survive, with some murder mystery and corporate conspiracy thrown into the mix for good measure.

Though certain big events and twists might be predictable for readers familiar with the genres, the writing itself and the reveals of said twists make for an enjoyable and engaging read.

Despite the serious events (life sentences and people being killed off on Mars) the book doesn't take itself too seriously, with some great one-liners, observations, and friendships developing between the members of our Martian chain gang.

**The rest of this review can be found [HERE!](#)**

Also... THERE'S A SECOND BOOK PLANNED FOR NEXT YEAR.

I can't even right now.

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- Pre-read -

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OMG YES YES YES YES YES YEEEEESSSSSS!

I am SO excited to read this one!

Here's hoping it fares better than some of my other most anticipateds so far this year... but... come on. Criminal astronauts on Mars, and someone's killing them off???

DUUUUUUUUUDE.

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### **Carlos says**

I want to thank the folks at Netgalley for giving me an ARC of this book, I will be posting the review of this book as the release date gets closer in the US. I will say that this is more a thriller rather than a technical book, I enjoyed the whodunnit sense of it .

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### **K. says**

Trigger warnings: murder, incarceration, violence.

3.5 stars.

In the interests of full disclosure, I won a copy of this through the Dymocks Gold Booklover Program. But that doesn't change my opinion in any way.

So this premise of this book? Is AMAZING. A company works out that it's cheaper and more efficient to send criminals to Mars to construct a base than it is to send robots. A group of criminals are recruited and travel to Mars and start construction. But once they're there, they start dying. It looks like accidents. But is it??

Like...that is a GREAT premise. Kind of like a cross between *And Then There Were None* and *The Martian*, you know?

And for the first half of the book, I thoroughly enjoyed things. We have a protagonist in his 50s, which is rare enough in itself. He's being put through brutal training sessions on Earth. And then we periodically get documents recovered from the shady company's records in between the chapters that give you an idea of what's really going on. And all of that I liked.

Buuuuuuut once they actually got to Mars? I wasn't mad keen on it.

(view spoiler)

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## Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum [https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/04/10/...](https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/04/10/)

Given the choice between a one-way trip to Mars and life imprisonment, what would you choose? For Frank, who committed murder in order to save his son, he knows that whatever happens he will be getting a raw deal. But rather than rot in jail for the rest of his life, he figures that maybe, just maybe, he can accomplish something before he dies that will help him be remembered, something that will make his kid be proud of his old man. So, when the representatives of a company contracted to build a new Martian base approaches Frank with the offer to send him to space, he said yes.

But just because he's an astronaut, doesn't mean he's not still a prisoner. Frank had known that he and his fellow inmates recruited for the mission would be watched and guarded at all times, but the situation turns out to be much worse than he thought. The construction company in charge of the project has been cutting corners, and using convicts to build their Martian base is just one of a number of shady practices they don't want anyone to find out about. Mars is already dangerous enough without having to worry about faulty equipment and strained resources or supplies, and it's just a matter of time before the accidents begin to mount up, resulting in the crew's first death. But as more of the inmates start dying, Frank begins to suspect foul play. Signs point to a killer among them, and finding out who it is becomes Frank's only chance for a ticket home.

I enjoyed *One Way* for the most part. The first half including the introduction was perhaps my favorite section, in which we got to meet Frank, a former architect serving a life sentence for shooting a man in the face in broad daylight. Far from being a cold-blooded killer, however, we discover that our protagonist did what felt he had to do for the sake of his son. While nothing changes the fact that Frank committed a terrible act, the narrative eventually reveals why he felt he had no other choice. Whether or not I felt Frank's crime was justified, the author did an admirable job helping readers connect with his character and provided a convincing reason why he would agree to sign up for a mission that's insanely dangerous and possibly fatal.

The novel then segues into the next phase of the story, in which Frank finds himself in a training program to prepare for life on Mars. This section also serves as a reminder of all the things on the Red Planet that can kill you, ensuring readers understand how high the stakes are. Inevitably, there's going to be a lot of technospeak as well, going through the science and process of building a state-of-the-art facility on harsh and uninhabitable planet, giving me some serious flashbacks to my time with *The Martian*. In fact, if you enjoyed the hard sci-fi aspect in Andy Weir's novel, there's a good chance you'll like it here as well in *One Way*, especially since as an actual rocket scientist, author S.J. Morden knows what he's talking about.

Where the novel started to falter was when we were introduced to the supporting cast, made up of the other convicts who were offered the same deal to go to Mars, as well as their handler. While Frank was well developed and written, the other team members felt more lightly sketched and stereotypical. I also felt there was a missed opportunity to explore their backstories, as the story seldom went beyond a glossed over description of what each person was in for. As a result, none of the other characters felt all that fleshed out, so when the prisoners started dying, the impact was muted.

Ironically, for a mystery-thriller, the "mystery" and "thrills" part of the equation also felt a bit lacking. The book struggled to build atmosphere and suspense, and while this may have been a side effect of my inability to connect with any of characters other than Frank, I think Morden also made a few missteps in timing. There were several examples of scenes where the plot would be moving along nicely, only to be sidetracked

moments later by a bout of techno-jargon. I can appreciate the author wanting to keep his readers abreast of the logistics and complex operations behind the building a Martian base, but at times it would wreak havoc with the pacing.

That said, I ultimately found *One Way* to be an entertaining read. Could it have been better? Yes, though the book's issues didn't take much away from my enjoyment. I understand a sequel will be forthcoming, and I look forward to what's next in store for Frank.

Audiobook Comments: William Hope's narration was satisfactory, though there were times when his reading would be fairly bland and I would find myself wishing for more emotion in his performance. It could have helped add more tension to the story, though his dialogue delivery was decent and he was also able to make the more technical sections sound fascinating and thus easy to listen to.

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### **Adrian says**

Woo hoo, I won this on a GR Giveaway, seriously I really did ?

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### **Hiu Gregg says**

*One Way* is one of those books that will make you think about the way that the world works.

This is a hard sci-fi book, and for those unfamiliar with that term, it means that the science in this science fiction leans more towards the plausible than the fantastical. In this context the word "hard" could also allude to the hard look that *One Way* takes at the concept of colonising Mars

Let's be completely honest with ourselves here. Nobody who has tried to colonise anything in the past has ever done so with completely selfless motives. No colonisation has ever taken place without excessive pain, cruelty, and suffering. Colonisation has, historically, been motivated by greed.

So why, when we think of colonising Mars, do we think that things will be any different?

*One Way* explores this concept with a cynical eye; the book is painfully aware of the brutal, profit-driven society that we currently live in.

Our main character, whom we follow through a third person perspective, is Frank. At the very beginning of our story, Frank is serving a life sentence for the murder of his son's drug dealer. In the first chapter, a representative of the conglomerate known as Xenosystems Operations (or XO for short) offers Frank what is essentially a prison transfer. In exchange for better food, a meaningful job, and a bit more freedom, Frank would help construct the first ever base on Mars.

Why would XO want a convict to build their ridiculously expensive space base? Well... because convicts are cheap. In fact, this ridiculously expensive space base isn't anywhere near as expensive as it should be. XO have cut corners at every opportunity to decrease their costs, and this is the source of a lot of the conflict in this story.

Frank is one of eight prisoners who will be part of the first construction team on Mars. Their job is to construct the base, and get everything ready for the arrival of the Very Important NASA astronauts — including the growing of food, and the set-up of very fancy science equipment.

Quite a bit of the sciencey stuff is explained, but if you're looking for something akin to Mark Watney's witty and hilarious analogies from *The Martian*, you might be a bit disappointed. The stuff is interesting enough, if you're a nerd like me, but it's described in a much more serious tone.

? The tube is connected to the... Air-lock ?

Some of the members of Frank's team are pretty interesting characters. There's Alice, a doctor with over thirty illegal mercy killings on her conscience. There's Zeus, an apologetic ex-Neo-Nazi who was recently found religion. Then there's 5 more, all with their own pasts and demons.

It should be noted that this isn't really a character-driven story. Nor is it a story defined by its plot. The concept of space colonisation in a capitalist society is at the heart of what *One Way* is, and it's the exploration of that concept which is — in my opinion — the best part of the book.

At one point the prisoners have to make the decision to prioritize their air, their food, or their water. It's little touches like that which really caught my imagination. There is very little sense of wonder because our characters are too busy trying to Get Shit Done, and more importantly, survive.

The following (paraphrased) quote sums up the book for me:

“We're not tourists, and we've got deadlines.”

And oh yeah... on top of all the above, there's also a murder mystery.

If you're looking for a high-action adventure-filled romp in space with explosions and laser beams and romance... this isn't the book for you. But if you like books that offer interesting and insightful commentary on society, then *One Way* might be something you'd enjoy.

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