


The Moon Tunnel

Jim Kelly

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Crawling on elbows and knees, a man slowly inches forward, making his way through a cramped space and suffocating darkness. He doesn't know that someone is watching, and in a flash of light, his journey is over.

Now, fifty years later, small-town newspaper reporter Philip Dryden is on-site at a former World War II POW camp observing an archeological dig. The archeologists are looking for buried Anglo-Saxon treasure, but the excavators have found something even more interesting---the skeletal remains of a man trapped in an underground tunnel. The dead man's intent seems obvious, but there are two things no one can explain: The bullet hole in his forehead and the direction of the body. This prisoner was crawling in, not out.

It's a puzzle that intrigues Dryden far more than it does the archeologists or the police. Meanwhile, he continues his nightly visits to the hospital where his wife, Laura, is emerging from five years in a coma. Laura can sometimes communicate through a computer now, though the process is painfully slow and erratic. When it turns out that Laura's father was involved with the POWs during the war, Dryden begins to wonder if the key may lie in long-buried family secrets. And then a second, more recent, body is discovered....

The Moon Tunnel Details

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From Reader Review *The Moon Tunnel* for online ebook

LJ says

THE MOON TUNNEL (Unl. Inv-Philip Dryden-England-Cont) – VG

Kelly, Jim – 3rd in series

St. Martin's Minotaur, 2005, US Hardcover – ISBN: 031234922X

First Sentence: The man in the moon tunnel stops and listens to the night above, shivering despite the sweat which trickles into his ears, making the drums flutter like the beat of pigeons' wings.

Journalist Philip Dryden is doing a story on an archeological dig at the site of a WWII PoW camp. More is found than artifacts when a tunnel is uncovered containing the skeleton of a man who had been shot in the forehead. What makes it more unusual it that he had been traveling toward the camp rather than escaping from it. This embarks Dryden on a story of murder, artifacts and family secrets, including this own and his wife's, a woman in a Locked-In Syndrome for the past five years.

There was a harder edge to this book than the previous in the series. Kelly does a wonderful job of conveying the emotion of his characters which gives this book great impact. For Dryden, it is the frustration and fatigue of caring for this wife, along with the guilt and love that still exists. There is also his antagonistic friendship with Humph, his driver and all the fears and nightmares with which Dryden lives.

I love learning from books. It was interesting to be at Dryden's shoulder as he wrote and filed his news stories. Not only did I learn about the PoW camps in England but about Seahenge, the artist Richard Dadd and chariot burials. All fascinating stuff and I am so grateful for the existence of the internet. More importantly, these things added strength and veracity to the story.

It's not the easiest book in the series to read The story is a complicated one, aided by narrative from the past (unfortunately written in long passages of italics). Where it begins down one path it ultimately turns and goes down another path entirely. I was never able to anticipate when the story was going but allowed it to take me with it to a very satisfying end.

Damaskcat says

Journalist Philip Dryden is interested by the discovery of a skeleton in a tunnel which led from a former prisoner of war camp . The body seems to have been using the tunnel to get into the camp rather than escape from it and it seems to have met its death by shooting.

The archaeologists excavating the area seem uninterested in the body and the police are even less interested. But Philip believes there is more to it than appears and his hunch is proved right when a much more modern body is discovered in the same trench.

I found this a totally absorbing story and I was interested in all the background information about prisoners of war in England. I love the setting of this novel, and the series - in and around Ely - and the author writes evocatively about it. I like the characters - the enigmatic Dryden himself with his tragic private life; Humph -

the taxi driver who loves junk food and language tapes and Dryden's fellow staff members at The Crow - the local newspaper for which he writes.

If you like crime stories with interesting backgrounds and believable characters then try the Philp Dryden series.

Elaine says

These books are getting better.....I really hope Laura makes a full recovery, if only to see if their relationship has withstood the test of all that time lost. I get the feeling she's a feisty character, just love the way bit by bit we are getting insights into who she is.

Shonna Froebel says

Dryden's wife even more involved in this one.
Archaeological excavation yields remains of World War II prison camp tunnel and many questions.
Garbage dump fire and ecological questions.

Tara Plumley says

I really enjoy Jim Kelly's writing the fact that it is set in an area of the UK that I know really well is a huge bonus. This is gripping writing , real can't put it down have to do it in one sitting stuff. More people should read him ; up their with the likes of Rankin and Stuart Macbride

Alistair says

Once again I found a book by Jim Kelly hard going.
However I must say "The Moon Tunnel" is a vast improvement on the previous two Dryden books.
This time it was not *all* doom and gore, The story was well pieced together and held my interest.

I will attempt the next in the Dryden books, but need to read something else first.

PS/ If you suffer from claustrophobia, this is not the book for you!

Deb says

A skeleton is found buried in a tunnel with articles that had been stolen from a local mansion back in the 1940's, and curiously, the tunnel was adjacent to a former POW camp for Italians and Germans. The

skeleton also has a bullet wound in the skull. Dryden starts investigating which prisoner it could be and why was the skeleton crawling towards the camp versus away from it. This investigation leads to an Italian family that owns a local restaurant, to a group of people stealing from archeological sites, a man from the local museum, and an owner of the local dump. Great writing and weaving of a complex story with an ending that wraps up everything.

Julia says

I love Jim Kelly's books and this doesn't disappoint. Another great mystery set in the Fens.

Carol says

"The man in the moon tunnel stops and listens to the night above, shivering despite the sweat which trickles into his ears, making the drums flutter like the beat of pigeons' wings." This is the opening sentence in the book that serves to beckons the reader to move further into the Moon Tunnel.

Journalist Philip Dryden is doing a story on an archaeological dig at the site of a WWII POW camp. More is found than artifacts when a tunnel is uncovered containing the skeleton of a man who had been shot in the forehead. What makes it more unusual it that he had been traveling toward the camp rather than escaping from it...thus beginning the story of murder...artifacts... and family secrets. Where the plot line was intriguing, the story was difficult to keep up with as there was so much back story written in italics that seemingly went on page after page. If the reader can preserve it does come to a satisfying conclusion.

Mona Harrison says

eloquent.

Karen says

Ely is a small town, deep in the Cambridgeshire Fens. It's situated near low lying marshes and the canals that formed the trading routes of old. Current day Ely is slow and quiet. It's also deeply shrouded in heavy smog – part mist / part smoke from the local dump. The dump is a huge pile that's been building up for decades, and it's burning, deep in its centre, pumping pollution out to mingle with the mist.

Philip Dryden is a reporter with the local small newspaper. Philip was a bigger fish in a bigger newspaper / reporting pond until a car accident that nearly killed his wife Laura and changed both their lives forever. Laura was trapped in the car that Dryden was driving as it went into one of the canals. Comatose she has lain in a hospital bed for many years since then. A victim of “locked-in” syndrome, she has recently been able to communicate sporadically with the outside world via a computer driven by mouth suction. Since the accident Philip has refused to return to driving, and he is now ferried around by Humph, owner driver of a beaten up Capri taxi and devotee of language lesson tapes. Humph is happy to drive Philip and then sit and wait, in fact there is very little of Humph's life that's conducted outside of the Capri.

In *THE MOON TUNNEL* Philip is pursuing a number of stories. Firstly the future of the town dump is causing ructions, and as the smog lingers, the local council and the dump owners escalate the arguments. Not too far away, an archaeological dig is working on a series of Anglo-Saxon burial tombs. The tombs are situated below a WWII prisoner of war camp which held Italian, then German, servicemen up until the end of the war. Many of the Italian prisoners worked on farms in the area and a lot of them stayed in England after the war. They, and their families, are a prominent group in Ely still. When a skeleton is found in a wood lined tunnel, it makes sense that this is an escape tunnel from the POW camp, and the body must be that of an Italian serviceman. Only there doesn't seem to have ever been an escape from the camp. Combine that mystery with the theft of an extremely valuable painting from one of the local "Country Houses" in the dying days of the war, and Dryden thinks the body in the tunnel is not really who they re-buried him as.

THE MOON TUNNEL is one of those engaging, stately character driven English mysteries. Stately isn't meant to imply a slowness of plot that's annoying, rather that the story progresses elegantly and smoothly. Philip is a perfectly feasible amateur sleuth as he digs away at stories that interest him, perhaps that could be saleable to bigger papers than just his local rag. His ongoing devotion to his wife is touching, but not cloying or overplayed. The nightly visits to Laura, particularly now that she can communicate, albeit stiltedly, convey an intellectual as well as loving connection between them. His ongoing reliance on her ability to perform some research tasks for him is natural as is his acceptance that she may forget. Philip's ongoing friendship with Humph is also beautifully drawn out. Humph's a character and really Philip is equally as eccentric and these two men have created a friendship out of mutual reliance which is comforting and charming. Many of the cast of supporting characters also fall into that eccentric category. Ma, the dump owner, is a woman to remember, as is Vee, the elderly sole remaining member of one of the great families of the great Country Houses.

Despite the amount of back story between Philip, Laura and Humph, *THE MOON TUNNEL* still stands up well on it's own. There is just enough information about their past to make the reader catch on to what is happening, without rewriting earlier books. The mystery of the body in the tunnel interweaves the archaeological team, local Druids and protesters, the ex-pat Italian community and Dryden's own family. There are components of this story that come from the Second World War, there are aspects that are very much current day. *THE MOON TUNNEL* is a very entertaining book, the mystery is interesting, the pace of the overall book is really good and Dryden and Humph are a great combination.

Kay says

I always enjoy this author, who writes mysteries rather than thrillers. Set in the Fen country, the novel features a detective (Philip Dryden) whose wife is in a partial coma and a sidekick (Humphrey) who lives in his old Chevy Capri, which he uses to chauffeur Philip.

The atmosphere is like peasoup fog because a long-burning fire at the local dump is polluting the area with a thick smog of sulfur fumes. Meanwhile, a team of archeologists unearth the body of a man in a tunnel under the old camp used to house Italian and then German POWs toward the end of WWII. The man in the tunnel appeared to be going into rather than out of the camp, and hereby hangs the tale.

You could read this as a study of how many Italian POWs ended up settling in England while retaining their culture. A second subplot revolves around a reprisal incident in occupied Greece toward the end of the war. It's a complex tale, not one to speed through, but I enjoyed every minute of it.

Here's a sample of how Kelly describes a drive through a small town that used to be a railroad junction:

"Humph, ignoring the dismal visibility, took the first two crossings at the Capri's top speed of 53 mph, achieving a satisfying degree of lift-off and percussion on re-entry. This was one of the joys of his life and he was deeply satisfied to hear the exhaust hit the ground on the second attempt--a hollow clang like a Chinese dinner gong--followed by the faint but exotic scrape of the rear bumper touching the tarmac. But the third barrier was flashing red before he got within distance so he was forced to pull up in the mist and wait. A train clattered past devoid of passengers, rocking the cab slightly as it rolled over uneven sleepers.

" 'That was very childish,' said Dryden, looking pointedly out of the side window at the tethered goat, its eyes a pool of satanic yellow and black. 'Well done.' "

Sarahandus says

It just isn't my cup of tea.

Sandra says

Despite some mind-blowingly luscious descriptions this, for me, fell short of other of Jim Kelly's novels. In part I suspect because I've now discovered his more compelling other series, but there did seem to be an over-abundance of repetition of quirky habits and I got very mired in the multiple strands of plot.

Monica says

Another good book in the Philip Dryden series. Once again Philip puts together the pieces of a puzzle that starts in the past only to unravel in the present. When a body is uncovered in a tunnel underneath an old POW camp in the fens, Philip has a good story on his hands. What he doesn't foresee is that this body is the start of a much larger mystery. Add a second body to the story and things are no longer as simple as they seem. As I've said in my previous Philip Dryden reviews, I like reading a mystery from the point of view of a reporter rather than always from a police angle. It makes for a nice change as Philip approaches the solving of the mystery in an entirely different way. Add some returning characters, such as Humph, and this was a novel that kept the pages turning very quickly.
