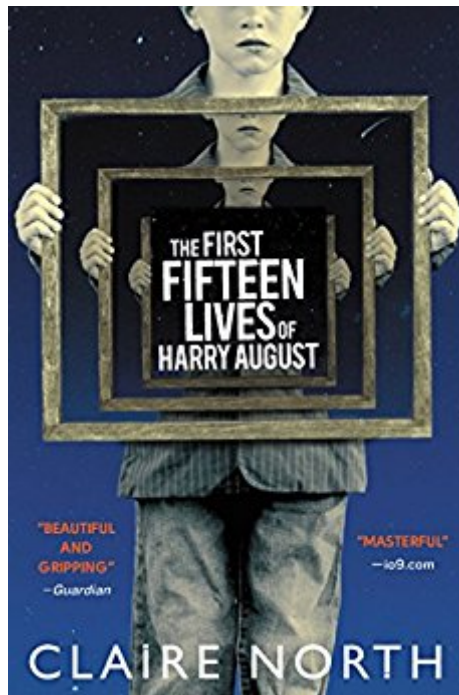




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The First Fifteen Lives Of Harry August



Synopsis

SOME STORIES CANNOT BE TOLD IN JUST ONE LIFETIME. Harry August is on his deathbed. Again. No matter what he does or the decisions he makes, when death comes, Harry always returns to where he began, a child with all the knowledge of a life he has already lived a dozen times before. Nothing ever changes. Until now. As Harry nears the end of his eleventh life, a little girl appears at his bedside. "I nearly missed you, Doctor August," she says. "I need to send a message." This is the story of what Harry does next, and what he did before, and how he tries to save a past he cannot change and a future he cannot allow.

Book Information

File Size: 2433 KB

Print Length: 417 pages

Publisher: Redhook (April 8, 2014)

Publication Date: April 8, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00ECE9OD4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #14,063 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #41 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Fantasy #43 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Time Travel #46 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Metaphysical

Customer Reviews

I enjoyed this book. The idea that there are people that are born, then die, then are born again in the exact same starting point is intriguing. Such is the Life of Harry August. As the story rolls out, he discovers others like him, as a villain is revealed and his decision to save his kind unfolds. I liked the way the book explores the age old thought of "what if I could go back and live that point in time again, how would I do it differently? I will advise that there is some strong language in the book, but overall a good read that I could not put down.

With such a unique premise, the storytelling could easily have been overshadowed in this novel. But "The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August" delivered a wonderful story told over time with puzzle pieces and story plot points coming together just-so. The plot was well-crafted without becoming overly complicated. There are suggestions of interesting moral dilemmas, and if I felt the book could have explored these just a little more, well perhaps that just opens up for a potential sequel. And I loved the ending. It's wonderful to be pulled through a finely crafted story to be faced with such a fitting ending. Fascinating premise, great story, intriguing characters, amazing ending. Read it!

(This is a spoiler-free review of an advance reading copy provided by the publisher.) "The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August" by Claire North is a fascinating mix of "Groundhog Day" and "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" with some time travel thrown in for good measure. The protagonist, Harry August, is one of the rare people who are unable to truly die: as soon as their body dies, their life starts over with the same parents, the same childhood, the same world - except this time they have a lifetime (or 15 lifetimes) of knowledge and experience to draw back on. As Harry August dies for the 11th time, a little girl warns him about the impending end of the world... The novel is beautifully crafted: the author not only came up with a fascinating concept that's very rarely seen in science fiction, but developed it and fleshed it out to such an extent that the book's universe seems quite believable. We get glimpses of other immortals (or ouroborans, as they call themselves) and the many, many different ways they spend their endless lives. We get cautionary tales of what can happen if somebody tries introducing advanced technology centuries before its time. (Alternate history fans will love that part.) We see the best and the worst that strange immortality brings out in regular people - and how they deal with it. The person writing under the pseudonym of Claire North, whoever he or she truly is, did a marvelous job when researching the book: as a Russian immigrant, I can attest that the chapters that take place in the USSR are absolutely believable, which isn't something I can say about a lot of books that pick exotic locales just for the fun of it. One of the best things about this book is the witty internal narrative by the protagonist, with small hilarious quips and observations. Consider, for example, "I was out of shape, having never been in much of a shape to get out of" - or "if Pietrok-111 was a one-horse town, Pietrok-112 was the glue factory where that horse went to die." But by far the best feature of the book (at least in my opinion) is the way the narrative loops upon itself, much like the ouroboros itself - but you'll have to read it for yourself to figure it out. This book raises many interesting philosophical questions and will keep fans of hard science fiction (or time travel fiction, for that matter) on the edge of their seats.

Harry August is a kalachakra, one who must live their life over and over again. After death he is reborn at the same time and place and must go through childhood until he is able to escape and make his own way in the world in whatever way he wishes. Harry is also unusual in having a perfect memory and remembering every detail of his former lives. Kalachakra must be careful not to alter the major events of history to keep the world a stable place so when a message is passed down from kalachakra who live in the future to Harry on his deathbed that one of their kind is tampering with events and bringing about the end of the world, Harry must find a way to hunt him out and stop him. An original idea that raises some fascinating concepts of how someone would choose to relive their life if they knew what events were coming as well as the consequences of their actions. Intelligently written and thoroughly engrossing.

I loved this book. Its premise is so original, something I've not encountered before and I really enjoyed the twists and turns produced in each of Harry August's first 15 lives. There is a time-travel element, but it's not about time-travel at all. The lead character is fascinating, as are the other many-lived people he describes and interacts with. The whole concept of living one's life many, many times is intriguing. The philosophical questions the author explores are deep, and are illuminated by the quantum theory that she describes - quantum theory is in a way its own character in the book. I look forward to reading Claire North's next book.

Plot spoiler ahead. Don't like ending.-----Book is well-written, but the ending is problematic. Instead of just revealing to the remaining club members exactly where and when our evil friend was born, so that one of the members born 5-10 years before Harry can take care of him, he decides to write the evil guy a letter so that he knows his last life is this one. EXCEPT, that now our evil person can, now that the secret is out, tell one of *his* friends, to go and shoot and kill the first 7 year old that comes traipsing by his pregnant mother's house with a basket of food. True, Harry will keep remembering for his next life, but in *this* life, the evil guy will manage to make his mirror, since he learned all he needed in the last life.

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