



God Is an Astronaut

Alyson Foster

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Jessica Frobisher is a botany professor at a university in Michigan. Her husband Liam works for a space tourism company called Spaceco. She has a son and a daughter, a nice house – and an intense friendship with Arthur, a fellow botanist, who has departed to the wilds north of Winnipeg, who she emails almost every day and misses every moment.

Then disaster strikes Spaceco. Liam departs for Arizona and Jess wakes up to three TV vans parked in their drive. Jess attempts to keep down to earth by building a greenhouse in her garden, dreaming of orchids and orange trees and roses hanging from the ceiling. But nothing she does can prevent her life beginning to spiral out of control.

Unfolding through Jess's emails to Arthur, written in glimmering prose, this extraordinary debut is both an exploration of space and of what it is to be human. It is also a love story like no other.

God Is an Astronaut Details

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From Reader Review God Is an Astronaut for online ebook

Carolyn says

I really enjoyed this slightly different, offbeat book. The story is told entirely in emails from botany professor, Jess Frobisher to her recent ex-lover and fellow colleague Arthur. Arthur has taken himself off on sabbatical to the wilds of Canada to study the effects of climate change on pine trees. Although we never see his return emails we are able to intuit some of his responses from Jess's replies and get a sense of his character and feelings. There is a lot of humour in their correspondence and Jess is clearly still in love with Arthur and misses him terribly. However, she is married with two great kids, Jack and Corinne and struggles to keep her grief at bay so they can lead a normal family life. Not that their life is ever normal with her husband Liam head of a private space travel business and away for weeks on end whenever there is a rocket launch.

At the outset of the book, we discover that there has been a major accident involving one of Liam's shuttles. In damage control mode Liam agrees to have a film maker make a documentary on one of his launches, which means having his family life filmed as well. Jess, in the middle of a project to build a greenhouse onto the back of their house which she plans to fill with orchids and other exotic plants, does not welcome the invasion of a film crew into the middle of her family and soon discovers that more is expected of her than just being filmed at home. Both Jess and Liam have their secrets which start to unravel as the film making gets underway. Definitely a fun read about love and relationships and reaching for the stars.

Emily says

I had to physically force myself to finish this book. I hated the writing style, the continuous spelling errors infuriated me, and I found the story line uneventful.

A book formed of a series of e-mails between Jess and a colleague on sabbatical. Jessica Frobisher is a botany professor at a university in Michigan. Her husband, Liam, works for a space tourism company called Spaceco, which has begun sending members of the public into space. When disaster strikes, and a mission goes badly wrong, resulting in the members of crew dying, including a pregnant lady. With the media swarming her house, reports on the news, and a person documenting their lives for a film, Jess attempts to keep "down to earth" by building a greenhouse in her garden. But nothing she does can prevent her life spiralling out of control.

The entire book is composed of e-mails from Jess to her colleague, Arthur. However, we only get Jess's side of the emails, leaving us to guess what Arthur said based on her responses and the e-mail titles. I personally disliked this style, although I did get used to it as it went through. We got to know Jess well, through her brutal honesty. However, I still found her quite a flat character. She spoke a lot about mundane things, and constantly went on about her gardening. This made the story very slow, and I found it very dull. The main thing I disliked about the e-mails were the constant spelling errors. Now I know that we all make error when typing e-mails, and these add to the authenticity of it, but for me, when I read a book, I don't want to keep having to re-read a sentence, guessing words to try and make it make sense.

Personally, I wouldn't recommend this book.

With thanks to Bloomsbury on Netgalley for providing a digital ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Pgchuis says

This book consists entirely of emails, almost exclusively sent by Jessica, a botany professor, to her colleague, Arthur, who is on sabbatical doing research in Canada. Jessica (who has recently had an affair with Arthur) is married to Liam. Liam works for Spaceco, which sends rich people into space for an orbit of the earth. At the beginning of the book one of Spaceco's rockets has exploded on take off, killing the six people on board. We hear of what Jessica does during the aftermath of the disaster (avoid the media, ask Liam what went wrong etc) by way of her emails. Although we can intuit pieces of what Arthur must have replied, we never see any of his responses. Eventually, as part of the damage control, Jessica agrees to have a documentary film made leading up to the next Spaceco launch and (along with the film makers) agrees to be one of the passengers.

Once I had got used to it, I quite liked the email format and there were moments of humour, particularly around Jessica's children or her colleagues at the university. On the other hand, I found some of the motivations confusing: I had assumed that Jessica was working her way towards leaving Liam for Arthur, but then she agreed to go on the next space flight and Arthur (understandably as the novel is framed) took that as a rejection. Jessica had previously stated that she had no interest in going into space, but she did not seem to be trying to repair her relationship with Liam and indeed apparently deliberately sabotages it at the end. It is also revealed that her relationship with Arthur ended the first time because she enthused to him about the excitement of a previous trip taken by Liam. However, Arthur had months previously to that already committed to going to Canada without telling her and his attitude to the relationship is not clear to me.

I found it annoying that Jessica was so clueless and head in the sand about the space disaster - she is a professor and in a science discipline. Why are women so often portrayed as unable to assess and react to situations practically and dispassionately?

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

First-person literary narrative should be the forte of an accomplished writer, and here we see exactly such. Not only first-person singular, but epistolary; one that would expect skewed perspectives, but our author surmounts this and gives us both three-dimensional characters and a solid understanding of the background, both present and past.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

This novel is written in the form of emails, which I have a fierce dislike of. But it must be said that I never dismiss any story because of the style it's written in. Foster's novel surprised me as the emails flowed naturally and I enjoyed the writing. Jess's recipient of the emails is her co-worker, Arthur (who is currently on a sabbatical). The reader isn't privy to Arthur's replies, and curiosity is stimulated. There are secrets that

weigh the emails and much of our story hides here. Jess's husband Liam owns Spaceco, a space travel tourism company. A shuttle explodes at launch, with no survivors. To salvage his company's image, Liam agrees to a husband and wife documentary team. Under a microscope from the team, and the scrutiny of the press more is bound to blow than a shuttle. Liam has secrets of his own, and while this novel is a dark one, it manages to be a love story as well. It is a unique approach to love. Pleasurable read and hard to review without giving anything away...

Toni says

I thought the writing in *God Is an Astronaut* was excellent. I was drawn into the author's clever use of the language and her ability to reconstruct conversation in a believable way. The voice of the character, Jess, rang true and clear in her emails. The emails seemed honest, albeit about her confusions, while she seemed to be sleep walking through her life and relationships with the people who were not at the other end of her emails. Most of her real time conversations seemed like 'blurts' without connection and I didn't feel anything changed at the end. Arthur, Jess' lover seemed more muse than a beloved person. After I finished the book I wondered if Jess could ever really get into living an off-line life, with or without Arthur.

I liked the background of space travel, botany and environmental concerns in the book. I liked the idea of the greenhouse but then at the end it seemed unimportant. I was depressed about the subject—not space travel, but the marriage that never seemed to have an upside and then just unravelled. Still I expect good things from this author. She nailed the voice of this remote woman, Jess, and drew me into her story until the end.

Karla says

Who would think that a book that included a space disaster, space travel and an extramarital affair could be so boring?

This is written entirely as a one sided email conversation - really detracted from the story.

Renita D'Silva says

Witty, sad and yet funny and very engaging. Loved.

Matt says

This was a really enjoyable, super-readable romp. It was just the book I needed, after coming up a run of books recently that never really captured my interest.

The whole novel is composed of one side of an email correspondence, as botanist Jess writes to her academic colleague and lover Arthur about the tragedy that strikes her husband's company, called SpaceCo which seems like a not-even-veiled version of SpaceX. And though the format doesn't sound promising, Jess' voice is funny and rich and varied enough to keep me interested, and the story took some pretty good turns that weren't telegraphed but which felt right once you saw them happen.

It wasn't perfect; there are places where the characters acted because they needed to instead of based in any clear motivation, like the way Jess and hubby Liam's dispute escalates to crisis rather suddenly. Likewise, the character of the NYT reporter seems kind of like a paper tiger, and some elements of the climax seemed at once arbitrary and unnecessary-- like, something needed to happen, so something did, but it didn't seem to really fit the design.

But really, those quibbles did very little to diminish the joy I felt on nearly every page I read.

Stephen says

this book is one of those where you would either hate it or love it. the format of using emails felt at first strange but as the story/plot unfolds you get used to the one person dialogue as the person talks about her colleagues, family and life in general and the gradual breakdown of her marriage after the shuttle disaster which her husband owns.

one drawback however is the one person dialogue in some parts of the book as you have to read between the lines of Arthur replies and the implied affair.

Latkins says

This is an unusual novel in that it's written solely in emails from botany professor Jess to her erstwhile colleague and lover Arthur. Jess's husband Liam works for a space tourism company, Spaceco, and when one of their rockets blows up, killing everyone on board, Jess and her family find themselves under siege from the press, and then from a French documentary filmmaker, Theo. Foster only includes Jess's emails, and not Arthur's replies, drawing you closer into the action of the story. It's an enjoyable, bittersweet love story with added space travel!

Richard says

I didn't quite finish this book, I only read the first 15-20 pages of it. Quite weird in it's structure. It is written with only one protagonist speaking. All she is doing is emailing a colleague and perhaps one time lover ? Like I mentioned, I really don't know too much about it, other than I didn't like it from the get go. It is written like an email and it has the protagonist (Jessica Frobisher) just rattling on and on to her colleague (Arthur Danielson) about various topics and things. Arthur Danielson doesn't email or respond to her and the whole book has her talking, talking and talking via email messages. I do know that woman, overall can talk a man's ear to death, but this novel is ridiculous. I would like to have other characters involved, instead of one woman (Jessica Frobisher) just babbling on and on and most of what I read is just pure nonsense. An example of the "style" in which this was written include :

From: Jessica Frobisher

Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2014 3:18pm

CC:

Bcc:

Subject: Re: holy shit

blah blah blah blah blah
blah blah blah blah blah

The entire novel is written as a email and only one person corresponding and talking i.e. - Jessica Frobisher !

I'm not going to waste my time with this drivel with ONE woman talking all the time and most of the email conversation again is just garbage and trivial sh*t that bored women and/or men would do. There are so many books to read and I just don't want to waste my time reading one character babbling thru-out the novel !

Shannon says

Botanist Jessica Frobisher and her husband Liam live a normal life in their Michigan home until a disaster strikes Liam's space tourism company, Spaceco. In the midst of legal battles and increasing pressures, Jessica and Liam agree to be followed by documentary cameras in hopes of polishing Spaceco's name. Instead, the cameras capture both the family and the company's gradual decline.

In a total diversion from common narratives, *God is an Astronaut* is written completely in Jess's e-mails to a former colleague without giving readers insight into his responses. Though it takes several pages to get a feel for the style, the format soon takes shape and works well as a sort of quasi diary. Jess gives readers an uninterrupted, unedited and often hilarious account of the events unfolding around her while slowly revealing the secrets that bind her to her colleague and push her away from her family.

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Tiina says

Hmm, quite liked it. Not quite 4, but it's definitely above "just liked it" as it's a lovely read. Surprisingly fast, too. I really don't understand the lowish rating but Goodreads sometimes moves in mysterious ways. I mean, OK, it's statistics, and there isn't anything mysterious about the average rating, but sometimes the mind just boggles about people's tastes.

In short, I love (most) epistolary novels and this was written fully as e-mails. The fun thing was that we got only one side of the correspondence between the female protagonist and his work colleague - another botanist. The main character was...interesting. She did some things I wasn't fully on board with, but then again I was never angry at her, despite a few of her morally more questionable actions. Also, I loved the subtle pairing of botany and space travel. And like I said above, I like works books in letters A LOT so I can be very forgiving because of that.

Would recommend if you like or don't mind the e-mail format.

Elaine says

Botanist Jess Frobisher certainly has her hands full, juggling her career, children, marriage to space tourism boss Liam, as well as taking on singlehandedly the construction of her own 20' x 30' greenhouse. When we join the story, her life has just been turned upside down by a disaster which struck Liam's company. Their

home is being bombarded by journalists and documentary film makers, not to mention Liam's colleagues taking over the house as "Disaster HQ" and Jess herself is going to have to publicly make a show of support for her husband and his business. Jess is a very unusual character, whilst her husband's eyes are firmly set on the heavens above she is more interested in digging into the soil and studying what grows on earth. She has never, until now, been one to seek the limelight, and has always played down any of Liam's achievements. The question is, just how far she will have to go now to prove her faith in him and how many changes will she eventually have to make in her life.

The story is told entirely by emails that Jess writes to her former colleague Arthur. I was a little dubious when I realised this, but it works and they actually tell the story very well indeed. They are very conversational, the story is related in a very chatty style that someone would definitely use when corresponding with someone they were close to. We never actually see Arthur's replies and this means that we have to fill in quite a lot of blanks ourselves to get a full picture of the story as not everything is detailed in the book. We also never see the story from her husband's perspective, so he is only ever portrayed as Jess wants Arthur to see him.

It is a very unusual, different, quirky read that is often witty and funny in a very gentle way.

I won the book in a Goodreads Giveaway competition.
