



Mendel's Dwarf

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Like his great, great uncle, the early geneticist Gregor Mendel, Dr. Benedict Lambert is struggling to unlock the secrets of heredity. But Benedict's mission is particularly urgent and particularly personal, for he is afflicted with achondroplasia—he's a dwarf. He's also a man desperate for love. And when he finds it in the form of Jean—simple and shy—he stumbles upon an opportunity to correct the injustice of his own capricious genes. As intelligent as it is entertaining, this witty and surprisingly erotic novel reveals the beauty and drama of scientific inquiry as it informs us of the simple passions against which even the most brilliant mind is rendered powerless.

Mendel's Dwarf Details

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From Reader Review Mendel's Dwarf for online ebook

SteffieStar says

My husband is a Dwarf...so when I saw this book, I just had to read it! The man in the book is an Achondroplasia Dwarf, which is about 80% of the dwarf population. My husband is an Acromesomelic Dwarf which is very rare. 80% of Dwarf Babies are born to 2 average size parents. Yes, 2 dwarf parents up the odds to 50% dwarf baby/50% average size baby. My husband and his 1st wife(she died 17 yrs ago& she was an Achondroplasia dwarf) have an average size daughter(she is 20 yrs old)!

This is a BEAUTIFUL book about the life and loves of this young man! It made me Laugh, Cry, and understand my husband better!

Laura Bowater says

I loved this book. Simon Mawer's portrayal of Dr. Benedict Lambert the great, great nephew of the early geneticist Gregor Mendel, is poignant and beautifully portrayed. Benedict's absorption and obsessional search to unlock the secrets of heredity is a response to his personal urge to seek out the molecular explanation for his achondroplasia as well as a simple tribute to his famous uncle; the father of genetics. Father Mendel's life is brought to life and his ability to reconcile his sense of God with his sense of science is beautifully portrayed and interwoven with Benedict's own struggle to understand the profound implications of accepting that random chance is responsible for the tiny, almost mundane DNA mutation that causes his disease. Benedict is tough, resilient and a successful researcher. The author's portrayal of the laboratory experiments of a research geneticist is accurate and clear. But he also describes the circuit of the celebrity researcher accurately and sympathetically. This book tells a story of a scientist whose search for an explanation for his own human condition is portrayed in parallel with his search for love and ultimately his search for immortality. His personal journey is poignant and profound.

Monika says

Zábava s pou?ením.

Pou?nou ?ást však oce?uji mnohem víc (nap?. zjišt?ní, kdo všechno byl Mendel?v sou?asník, osv?žení základních genetických princip?,...).

Mawer umí velice nenásiln? a poutav? fakta propojit s fikcí a zatraktivnit tak základní d?j, který by pro mne sám o sob? byl sotva pr?m?rný.

Always Pink says

Cleverly constructed novel, combining two biographies with quite a bit of scientific background. The two

portrayed characters are Gregor Mendel and his fictitious great-nephew, who suffers from achondroplasia, an autosomal dominant disorder. Mawer's novel is a finely tuned psychological study, illustrating Mendel's laws of inheritance, not shrinking from issues of eugenics. Well written, solidly researched, very enlightening on genetical matters as well as entertaining - recommended.

Tony says

Mawer, Simon. MENDEL'S DWARF. (1998). *****. This is probably not a book for everyone, but I thought it was terrific. The drawback for the average reader is that the plot relies heavily on the discoveries made by Gregor Mendel and the subsequent science that has grown up around it. If you paid attention in your biology class, you shouldn't have any problems. Dr. Benedict Lambert, a distant relation of Mendel – Mendel was his great-great-great-uncle – is a molecular biologist. He is determined to identify the gene responsible for achondroplasia. He is driven to do so because he suffers from its effects. Dr. Lambert is a dwarf. Aside from his professional side, Dr. Lambert is also a man who is desperate for love and acceptance to compensate for his own capricious genes. He finally finds a young woman with whom he can relate. Her name is Jean (no pun here) and she is a librarian. He first meets her when he is a student, but loses track of her for several years. He meets her again when he is working at an institute in London, and finds that she is also employed by the same organization, also as a librarian. Unfortunately, during the interval she has gotten married, so that the relationship now has to take a different tack. It doesn't matter to Dr. Lambert. He manages to fall in love with her – or at least what he thinks is love. This all leads to a physical relationship that has perilous results for the couple. How they face this and what happens after will keep you reading until you've finished the book. The novel is extremely well written, and the author, a biologist, manages to weave together the story of Dr. Lambert along with the story of Mendel and his findings. Highly recommended.

Dymbula says

Rozporuplná hodnocení, ale za m? je to 4* skoro p?t. Že to je na efekt? Asi jo, protože Mawer trpaslík není. Jenže on se dokázal podívat na sv?i genetiku z pohledu trpaslíka. Trpaslíka, který za to, že trpaslíkem je, nem?že. M?že za to genetika. Mendel je v genetice ?lov?k významný, ale... to už by byl spoiler.

Judith says

Wonderful. Learn about genetics while getting to know a cranky, intelligent, funny little man - Dr. Benedict Lambert. Lambert is a dwarf. He is also a geneticist, and much of his drive in this field is to find out just what makes a dwarf.

About 90% of "little people" are accidents. They come from normal parents with no history of dwarfism. It's a genetic goof, a mutation. The question is: where does this mutation occur on the incredibly long DNA chain? When offered a seat at a prestigious institution, Lambert says this will be his area of study.

There is hardly an hour that goes by when Lambert is not reminded of the differences between him and "normal" humans. He is also sharply aware of the way many people overcompensate for their discomfort around him, clapping perhaps a little too loudly, smiling a little too broadly, only emphasizing more that they feel he is different from them.

Lambert yearns to know what he might have looked like, if the traits of achondroplasty had not separated him from his mother and father and joined him with others around the world instead. He wonders what a child of his, a normal child, would look like.

As he explains to us various wonders of genetics, complete with footnotes, always at the back of his mind is how it all ended up - in him. Curiously, he is related, by an odd great-uncle, to Gregor Mendel, the little priest who labored over his pea plants for years and years and wrote the definitive explanation of genetics, of dominance and submission and more. We are treated to many imaginary conversations in Mendel's life, filling out the bare bones of what is known of his existence.

This is no dry science book, however. The personality of Ben is far larger than his overlooked body, and it is this character that makes the book so alive. Ben is no long-suffering saint. When told how brave he is, he counters that bravery only counts when you have a choice. His appetites are certainly up to par, and his thoughts might even be considered ...at times...perverted.

And thus we come to his affair. He meets up with a woman who was a young librarian when he was but a callow youth seeking wisdom from the library shelves. He had always felt a little bit of lust about this quiet, retiring librarian with the quirky trait of having one blue eye and one green (a mutation as well!). The two become adult friends, and Ben can hardly keep from thinking about becoming more than friends. I will leave it to you to discover if this happens and what is the result.

While this is a funny, witty, intelligent book, don't be fooled into thinking there is anything particularly lightweight about it, Easy to read, sure, but weighty in implications, and finally, not made for television.

I should mention - the library from which I bought this book classified it as a "romance". tsk tsk. Somebody there should have read it or at least read the inside covers.

Sophie Rayton says

How do I hate thee? Let me count the ways.

The dwarf is a selfish dirty pervert rapist and the quick ascerbic wit he was supposed to have did not find its way to this reader.

The tandem story of Mendel did not work and only added to making it longer.

"The whims of women. Like racial stereotypes, you desperately deny their existence, and yet there they are. One cannot deny them. Like the violence of men, the whims of women exist."

What?!?!?

Hated it from start to end. Would have put it down after the first 50 pages but had to plod along for the sake of a book club discussion, which with my strong opinions, is bound to be a good one.

John says

London geneticist Benedict Lambert is the great-great-great-nephew of Gregor Mendel, the priest who discovered the laws of heredity and whose work, lost from view until decades after his death, finally offered a mechanism for natural selection. But this isn't Ben's only distinction. He has the disadvantage of being an achondroplastic dwarf, which means he finds difficulty in being taken seriously in both his professional and his social life -- specifically, his sexual life.

But then, at last, he finds love in the arms of a mousy colleague, Jean Miller, estranged from her dimwit husband Hugo. Even after she and Hugo are reconciled, the bond between her and Ben remains strong. And when, because of Hugo's sterility, she decides to opt for IVF, she asks Ben if the seed could be his and if he could use his skill as a geneticist to ensure, through selection, that the ensuing child be "normal" rather than achondroplastic . . .

Ben narrates this love story often quite caustically, so that we can feel his bitterness even while we're laughing at his jokes. He also interweaves into the narrative quite a lot of fascinating biographical information about Mendel and a good deal of very clear explication of heredity. I found the result to be completely absorbing, even though I was sure the relationship/affair between Ben and Jean was headed for tragedy. The climax of the tale is, indeed, heartwrenching, both in the way I'd expected but also, more profoundly, in a way that I *hadn't* expected.

This is a novel that I won't forget in a hurry. Thoroughly recommended.

Fiona says

I hesitated before buying this book, unsure that I would engage with the topic. There is a lot of scientific data in it and that's not something that would ordinarily interest me but, typically, Mawer managed to relate it in such a way that it was understandable, even to me, which is just as well as understanding the genetics is intrinsic to understanding the premise of the novel. The main character is not particularly likeable but it is possible to empathise with his view of the world. I'm unsure how successful the ending is really. It left rather a bad aftertaste and was weak in comparison with the rest of the book.

El says

Dr. Benjamin Lambert is the great-great-great-nephew of the geneticist Gregor Mendel. Ben is also a geneticist but has a bigger challenge between him and the world - he is a dwarf. The real story starts when he expresses his love for the librarian, Jean, and the complications that arise from their relationship.

The author uses science throughout the story but manages to make it easy to grasp; Mawer himself is a scientist and it shows with his knowledge of genetics, biology, evolution, and research papers (as evidenced by his use of footnotes throughout). But the science here is really a secondary character to the greater story. Ben is wicked analytical and uses his knowledge of genetics as a way to justify and explain his existence. As his relationship with Jean progresses Ben finds himself in a position similar to that of playing God, creating an interesting science versus religion dynamic.

Sadly - and the main reason for giving it the stars I did - while the majority of the book was almost perfect, the ending was sudden and anticlimactic. It was like Mawer slammed the door in my face, denying me the

rest of the story. Maybe he was on a deadline.

Rebecca Altmann says

I nearly didn't finish the book but the last third upped the rating from one star to two, because of the genetics and historical content.

I was looking forward to reading this but got a rather different book than I was expecting, with a pompous and unlikeable narrator. Benedict Lambert is a creep.

I got well and truly sick of him reminding me that his penis was the only part of his body unaffected by achondroplasia. He spends a considerable portion of the book talking about his penis, thinking about it and imagining what he can do with it. It got annoying fairly early, and it was quite clear that the reason he would never have a rewarding relationship with a woman had nothing to do with his appearance.

Edited 5/1/18: Came back to change the star rating to a three. Disliking Benedict as much as I do - to the point where I am still reflecting on the book a week later - is a sign of skilled characterisation and strong storytelling. It probably deserves a four.

And that ending...

Edited Aug 18 - Changed the rating again.

Read it yourself and see if it hangs around in your mind for months and months.

A skilled author.

Bandit says

Anyone with even a passing interest in eugenics and genetics would find this book of interest. It stands firmly on its own two feet as a dramatic novel, clever, sad, thought provoking story of Gregor Mendel (the father of modern genetics) and his distant heir, intellectually and genetically, Benedict Lambert. The two timelines weave together seamlessly, but it is Benedict who is the main character and this is very much his story since he is the eponymous Mendel's dwarf and a genius scientist obsessed with finding out exactly what quirk of DNA is responsible for his diminutive stature. Certainly the most compelling dwarf protagonist since Tyrion Lannister, tragic romantic entanglements included. Very emotionally astute, intelligent portrayal of what it must be like for someone who differs from the norm, the socially accepted standards. This isn't an easy (light) book and in parts it can be downright overwhelmingly viscerally anatomic and/or biological and yet it's an utterly engaging, fascinating and moving read right down to its tragically ironic or ironically tragic end. Very strong writing, certainly a most auspicious introduction to a new (to me) author. Impressive start to the 2016 reading year. Recommended.

RB Love says

Masterful. Ingenious. Brilliant. Also, a little technical and biology specific. So, you know, I highly recommend this book to my friends who are teaching second semester high school biology, or are taking biology right now or have an acute interest or fetish with biology and genetics. The science of genetics, frankly and unfortunately, has left this book, published in 1998, far behind, but it is a beautiful story of the way things were way back in the late nineties.

This would be a decent movie. The history of Gregor Mendel, the friar who first discovered the science of genetics through his pea experiments in the gardens of his monastery in Brno, Austria-Hungary, is presented well enough that I don't know, now, if I'll get around to reading Robin Marantz Henig's, *The Monk in the Garden*. And you can not read a single page of the narrative that follows the devious mind of Dr. Benedict Lambert, the book's achondroplastic protagonist, without picturing actor Peter Dinklage in the role.

The story is excellent and the information you absorb during the course of Dr. Lambert's affair with Miss Jean Piercy, is magnificent. There are great meditations on the true discoveries that Mendel made during his lifetime that were 35 years ahead of their time, (and recognition) and on the implications and ramifications and ultimate ironies of his making these discoveries as a monk at a monastery. Further, there are very revealing and enlightening passages about the inaccuracies and smudgey work of Darwin and his followers and processors. I may well read this book again.

Michal says

Sklen?ný pokoj byla ?istá funkcionalistická nádhera, Mendel?v trpaslík více tahá za srdce. B?hem prvních dvacetí stránek jsem m?l v o?ích n?kolikrát slzy a v?bec m? v tu chvíli nezajímala syrská pouš? za okny autobusu. Téma Mendel m? díky studiu na stejném gymnáziu jako slavný genetik provází už delší dobu, nehled? na p?vod ze stejného kraje. Mawer se op?t dokázal dotknout ?eské-n?meckého vztahu tak, jak to nikdo z ?ech? nedokáže. A k tomu dva strhující paralelní p?íb?hy o tom, co d?lat, když k napln?ní vašich životních p?ání dojde jen na bolestn? krátké okamžiky.
