



# Gunpowder Moon

*David Pedreira*

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**“Interesting quirks and divided loyalties flesh out this first novel in which sf and mystery intersect in a well-crafted plot...Pedreira’s science thriller powerfully highlights the human politics and economics from the seemingly desolate expanse of the moon. It will attract readers who enjoyed Andy Weir’s lunar crime caper *Artemis*.” -- *Library Journal*, starred review**

A realistic and chilling vision of life on the Moon, where dust kills as easily as the vacuum of space...but murder is even quicker—a fast-paced, cinematic science fiction thriller, this debut novel combines the inventiveness of *The Martian*, the intrigue of *The Expanse*, and the thrills of *Red Rising*.

The Moon smells like gunpowder. Every lunar walker since Apollo 11 has noticed it: a burnt-metal scent that reminds them of war. Caden Dechert, the chief of the U.S. mining operation on the edge of the Sea of Serenity, thinks the smell is just a trick of the mind—a reminder of his harrowing days as a Marine in the war-torn Middle East back on Earth.

It’s 2072, and lunar helium-3 mining is powering the fusion reactors that are bringing Earth back from environmental disaster. But competing for the richest prize in the history of the world has destroyed the oldest rule in space: Safety for All. When a bomb kills one of Dechert’s diggers on Mare Serenitatis, the haunted veteran goes on the hunt to expose the culprit before more blood is spilled.

But as Dechert races to solve the first murder in the history of the Moon, he gets caught in the crosshairs of two global powers spoiling for a fight. Reluctant to be the match that lights this powder-keg, Dechert knows his life and those of his crew are meaningless to the politicians. Even worse, he knows the killer is still out there, hunting.

In his desperate attempts to save his crew and prevent the catastrophe he sees coming, the former Marine uncovers a dangerous conspiracy that, with one spark, can ignite a full lunar war, wipe out his team . . . and perhaps plunge the Earth back into darkness.

## Gunpowder Moon Details

Date : Published February 13th 2018 by Harper Voyager

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Author : David Pedreira

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# From Reader Review Gunpowder Moon for online ebook

## Mandy says

3.5 to 4 stars. Science fiction isn't my thing at all. However this novel intrigued me. (Btw thanks to Harper Collins for the ARC).

It's 2072 and people live on the moon and are trying to save Earth. When one of the Americans is killed, making history as the first murder on the moon the military shows up and tries to take over production of the HE-3 that Earth needs and to start a fight with the Chinese.

What turned me off was I couldn't get a visual inside my head of what half these things or living spaces on the moon looked like and how the mountains on the moon looked. Also some of the space jargon completely goes over my head.

Other than that not a bad read. Would recommend, especially if you're a lover of space.

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## Roy says

A solid political hard scifi that has does some things well but wont set the scifi world on fire. The plot is pretty standard, with a resoltuion that seemed pretty cliched. It was resolved relatively easily. I however like the science behind the moon and its mining. The novel is getting some comparisons to Artemis. I feel like they are completely different in style and structure. Only common feature is the setting being the moon. The characters are a little one dimensional and didnt really capture anything different between each person. The writing was well done but just not my style. It had a procedural newspaper type feel, given that the author wrote for some newspapers it makes sense. Reccomend for hardcore Scifi fans however just gets a pass mark for me.

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## Peter Tillman says

Good, gritty near-future novel of mining, mayhem and murder on the moon, which morphs into bad political stuff. Well-written, good character sketches, nice touches of moral ambiguity. Well, sort of. I particularly liked the ending. A worthy debut, and one of the better novels on living and working on the moon that I've read. Recommended reading: 3.8 stars.

Linda Nagata liked it: <https://hahvi.net/?p=6556>

"An excellent near-future thriller. This one's got it all — realistic technology, an all-too-believable political conflict, and characters to care about — in a fast-paced story set amid the moon's austere beauty."

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## Kemper says

*I received a free advance copy of this from the publisher for review.*

They say to never judge a book by its cover, but if you show me a space helmet with a hole in the visor laying on the surface of the moon.....I'm gonna read that book.

It's the year 2072 and Earth has just begun to recover from a global climate catastrophe. Part of that comeback has been based on using helium-3 as a fuel source, and since the moon has oodles of the stuff there are now large scale mining operations happening on its surface. When Earth was in trouble all the nations worked together to do moon mining at first, but now that things are getting better everyone is ready to get back into greed and power grabs.

Caden Dechert is the chief of a small mining crew who just wants to do the work and keep his people safe, but when some of their equipment is sabotaged the American government is more than happy to point the finger at a nearby Chinese base. As things escalate Dechert may be the only person who can head off a full scale war on the moon.

There's a lot to like in this one. It's got a realistic and gritty portrayal of a near-future tech on the moon as well as having enough hard science to keep things grounded and relatable. The setting is well established so that you feel like you're walking the corridors of this cramped underground moon base as well as feeling the exhilaration and terror of doing long rocket assisted hops into pitch black craters. The plot is also good with the set-up of a pretty intriguing mystery which then becomes more of a conspiracy thriller as events unfold.

I also was intrigued with the character of Dechert who is an ex-military guy who had a belly full of all the wars that popped off when Earth was at its most desperate and fighting for scant resources so he got off planet. Going to the moon to get the hell away from most people is an attitude I can relate to these days.

There's an incredible tightness and economy to the writing so that David Pedreira is able to set up a detailed sci-fi concept as well as telling a good story. In fact, it's just a little TOO economical. It's less than 300 pages, and even though I'm all for an author getting it done that quickly I found myself wishing for a bit more story which came across as a little rushed at times.

It's a good sign when the worst you can say about a book is that it left you wanting more.

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## **Gary says**

The Moon has been a hot topic in science fiction lately. Ian McDonald has his elegantly overstuffed Luna trilogy; Andy Weir gave us an intricately detailed, but overly mechanical procedural, *Artemis*; John Kessel snuck under the radar with his magnificent utopian epic *The Moon and the Other*. The cover and description of David Pedreira's debut novel, *Gunpowder Moon*, seems to promise a good old-fashioned murder mystery. It's a no-brainer, really. Humans have no earthly business living on the moon – any reason for being there (namely, profit) would have to come with a set of standards and protocols geared toward the safety of its inhabitants. Murder would be easy from a technical standpoint – as Weir pointed out in *The Martian*, space wants to kill you, so killing someone would hardly call for exceptional effort of the part of the killer. However, it is expensive to put someone on the moon. The people who get there would hardly be considered expendable, and even if motive could be established, you'd better have a damn good reason to kill someone and an even better plan, because there's really nowhere to go afterward. You're stuck on the moon, after all. That Pedreira conjures up a believable motive and opportunity makes it all the more disappointing that the murder mystery angle is *Gunpowder Moon*'s weakest element. The story follows Dechert, commander of an American helium-3 mining operation on the moon in the year 2072. He runs a tight ship, with no accidents or

deaths under his watch – a welcome departure from his time as a marine fighting in (predictably) the middle east. But a bomb goes off on one of his diggers, killing the youngest member of his team, and evidence points to a conspiracy that could spark an international incident as China and Russia also have mining interests on the moon, and control of the energy supply is the best leverage a super power has over the world and possibly the solar system.

As a mystery, the novel never really gets off the ground. The protracted setup labors over establishing character and setting, but we never really get to know anyone, except for Dechert, particularly well, and while the mining operation itself is detailed enough to be believable, I find it very hard to believe that any government could convince anyone (In this case, four men and one woman) to live in such a cramped space for several years with no down time or recreational options or that they would all manage to keep their sanity under such conditions with no alcohol or sexual activity of any kind – but that appears to be the case. Once the young miner Cole is murdered, and Dechert is compelled with some urgency to uncover the truth, the search for the killer is postponed as the American government immediately militarizes its operations on the moon in order to respond to their perception of the bombing as a Chinese threat.

This development turns out to be a blessing for the reader: as a military thriller with tense and believable depictions of what combat might be like in space, the novel almost takes off. I say almost because this doesn't happen until about halfway through, before shifting back to murder mystery mode a few chapters later, just in time to reveal the culprit – a reveal that happens through no real effort on the part of the hero. It is, and always shall be, a terrible mistake to set up a mystery and then solve it with literally no intervention on the part of the story's protagonist. After which, the denouement is nearly as drawn out as the beginning and is only there to set up a prospective sequel/series.

Gunpowder Moon is executed at a fairly steady pace and has its entertaining moments, but the uneven story development and humdrum worldbuilding keep it from standing out among its peers.

Thanks to the author, Harper Voyager and Edelweiss for the opportunity to read this DRC.

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## Brooke says

DNF. Took three chapters before we met a non-male character. Three sentences into that, one of the men is staring at her ass. A couple paragraphs later, we get a detailed description of her appearance (the only other character with such a description was the token POC, naturally) culminating in the main character reflecting on her beauty. Sigh. Goodbye forever. It's 2018 and I don't want to read about white men anymore. Don't @ me.

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## Will Byrnes says

**We are still the beast, and we always will be. And all this stuff that we fight over—power, money, territory, helium-3—it's little more than a carcass on an African plain.**

Serenity 1 most definitely deserved its name as a peaceful place. But things change. Dechert is in charge of this Level 1 Lunar outpost, and his death-free record at the base has just been liquidated with extreme prejudice, a shaped charge under a manual hatch on a lunar crawler. Ka-boom! Bad enough the damage from the charge, but blowing the hatch does a nice job of instantly removing all the breathable air from the vehicle. When a member of a man's team is killed, he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't matter that he was a loose cannon, you're supposed to do something about it. It's bad enough having to cope with

the first murder on the moon, but, things being what they are, this one death could trigger a much larger conflict.

**David Pedreira** - image from his FB pages

It's 2072 and the Earth has had a rough go of it. A thing called the Thermal Max had done a nice job of removing large chunks of excess humanity from the globe, albeit unevenly, and homo sap is getting back to some semblance of life (and power structures) before. The bright light of peace that took precedence over conflict is now going all dark side, as some nations are once again feeling their military oats. The Moon has become a crucial source of material needed to power Mother's new power plants, the richest store of power resource in human history, and what was once a friendly lunar sharing is in danger of becoming the first exo-war. Even with tensions back home, the various national crews mining the Moon share the perils of living with a harsh mistress. Can their camaraderie intercede or even survive if mommy and daddy go at it full bore? And where does the first murder on the moon fit into this? Is it part of an international conspiracy, or something more personal?

There are some gross similarities with Andy Weir's *Artemis*, namely the location, and a crime to be solved, but the similarities end there. Weir's is largely a YA yarn with a young central character. Pedreira's is much more a sort of political action-adventure-thriller cum procedural yarn. It features an older demographic in the characters, and, I expect, target readership. So, whodunit? And why?

**Book cover image** - image from Barnes and Noble

The story moves along at a nice clip, for the most part. Dechert is a decent sort, war-weary marine, with experience in the Bekaa Valley, the Middle East always being a believable warzone, in any era. He carries some battle scars and baggage with him, but nothing surprising. We are meant to see him as the grownup in the room, looking after his charges, being responsible, even when he is being pressured to behave in a less reasonable manner. He is a decent sort, and is easy to care about as he does his best in a dodgy political situation.

**The Sea of Serenity** - image from wikipedia

And as for that, it is a trope in much of contemporary writing that, just as the money-grubbing corporation is so often behind whatever evil-doing is going on, anyone working for government is immediately considered suspect. Political decision-making is always considered wrong, because, you know, the people on the ground always know better. I would hardly defend all political/governmental military decisions, but I bristle at the tropishness of so many tales presuming ignorance, stupidity, foolishness, and inadequacy in people who work for government. Sometimes they have a wider perspective that runs counter to what may seem obvious in a smaller theater. Sometimes they simply suck. In the same percentage as people everywhere. And just because one might be able to make more money in the private sector, that does not mean that anyone who works for government is second rate. People do make decisions based on things other than simple economic benefit. Sometimes people work for government out a sense of patriotism, or an opportunity to do some good in the world. In the era since Reagan proclaimed the Randian bible that government is always the problem, far too many writers seem to be sipping the Kool Aid without examining the ingredients. Ditto here. Although I do give Pedreira credit for attempting to show the bigger picture perspective before blasting off for his next adventure.

## **Crater Posidonius** - Image from the British Astronomical Association

There are several interesting elements here. One is some detail on how one survives on the moon. Not nearly so detailed as the techsplaining in *Artemis*, or *The Martian*, but enough to matter, particularly regarding rail weaponry and finding water. More interesting is the internal dialectic Deck faces in attempting to walk the line between personal and national loyalty, between peacemaking and war-prep. Pedreira has had a career as a journalist, which nicely informs his portrayal of a reporter who tags along with a bigwig on a lunar visit. The gunpowder of the title is a reference to a description of the scent of moondust as reported by the Apollo 11 crew. Particularly apt here.

The action-packed sequence at the back end of the story is sweat-inducing. If you are reading a paper version of the book, you might want to use that to dampen your fingers, lest the blistering pace of page-turning ignite the stock. This is a book that is about two things, humanity's bellicose nature, and action. Both are shown quite well. What is somewhat slim here is his painting of characters. Dechert is a decent leading man, but the supporting cast could definitely use some work. The reader should care a fair bit more about the imperiled crew than one actually does. Pedreira clearly has the action element down. Working on his character construction could raise the level. *Gunpowder Moon*, is an auspicious first novel for Pedreira and makes a fine summer read.

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Publication date – 2/13/18

=====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and FB pages

### **Interviews**

-----From PaulSemel.com - Gunpowder Moon Author David Pedreira

-----From MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape - Interview with David Pedreira - by DJ - some good info here

I didn't want to get preachy or overly thematic, but I think there's a strong undercurrent in the book about the history and nature of warfare, and how it always emerges for the same reasons: power, greed, territory, resources, and the darker side of religion. No matter how technologically advanced we get, those remain the foundations of human conflict—which is why war endures. And if anything, I wanted Dechert to be a positive voice for our future endeavors in space. We've shown that we can screw things up on Earth, but we've also shown that we can work together in space. Is it inevitable that we'll bring the worst parts of humanity with us when we start to colonize the stars? That's one theme I wanted to explore.

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## **Mogsy (MMOGC) says**

3.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/02/19/...>

When I first found out about Gunpowder Moon, I knew I had to read it. I'm a sucker for a good sci-fi mystery in space, and the novel's lunar setting further sold me on it.



But this is not just another one of your simple murder mysteries, and the main protagonist is not your typical detective. It is the year 2072, and Caden Dechert is a former Marine heading up a US mining operation on moon. He's a good leader, drawing from his war experience back on Earth as he mentors his team and takes the new recruits under his wing, teaching them all about safety and survival on the lunar surface. Anything from a small leak in a suit to a speck of moon dust getting in the machinery can lead to fatal results, and no one is more diligent or careful than Dechert when it comes protecting his crew.

So when an explosion occurs, killing one of his young miners, everyone is shocked. No one believes it to be an accident, and sure enough, an investigation finds clear signs of sabotage. There are plenty of suspects to go around, but the top brass arriving from Earth are quick to point fingers at the Chinese, who run a rival mining company near the Americans' base of operations on the edge of the Sea of Serenity. Dechert, however, is not so sure. He knows tensions between the countries are already on edge, with both sides itching for a fight. Unwilling to jump to conclusions—and hoping to avoid an all-out war—he launches his own investigation in search for evidence.

It's a straightforward enough story, and in fact, *Gunpowder Moon* is not a very long book, its streamlined plot leaving little room for much filler or downtime. The driving pace gave this novel the feel of a high-octane thriller, making it a very quick and easy read. If anything, I thought the narrative could have used some slowing down, especially during pivotal moments where the author could have furthered increased the tensions or emphasized suspense.

To Pedreira's credit though, he didn't skimp on characterization or world-building. Caden Dechert was a wonderful protagonist, well-written and fleshed out. I was able to sense his commitment to his work and to his crew in everything he said and did. I also enjoyed the flashbacks to his life in the military, fighting in the Middle East. These sections gave us a deeper understanding into his personality, as well as possible insight into why he valued the status quo on the moon. War on Earth was ugly, and Dechert would do anything to stop all that death and violence from coming into his new life.

*Gunpowder Moon* also painted an intriguing picture of lunar life. The desolate landscape notwithstanding, everything about the moon—sights, smells, tastes, and sounds—was described and brought to life in stunning detail. That said, it's the social aspects I found even more compelling. An entirely different culture exists on the moon that newcomers from Earth would never understand, giving a whole different dynamic to the relationships between the characters. A code of honor among lunar residents was strongly implied, especially for the miners who put their lives on the line every day. It didn't matter who you were or where you came from; if someone was in need of help, people were always willing to give it, even if those involved were from a rival corporation or country. Thus, a murder meant that the killer had to be extremely motivated, a sticky fact that made Dechert's quest for the truth that much more complicated and difficult.

No doubt, sci-fi fans seeking fast-paced action and clever intrigue would enjoy *Gunpowder Moon*. Ironically though, I found that the novel's mystery plot actually played second fiddle to the wonderful depictions of the politics and culture of lunar life. But while the story could have been stronger, David Pedreira made up for it with excellent world-building and character development, which I felt were the book's greatest strengths. An entertaining read overall.

**Audiobook Comments:** Time simply flew by as I listened to *Gunpowder Moon*, which featured a story that was well-suited to the audio format. Jeffery Kafer was a skilled narrator, successfully bringing out the tensions and excitement in the author's storytelling. He seldom varied his voices for different characters though, which would have been my only criticism, but otherwise this audiobook was a great listen and I would recommend it.

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## **Jamie Collins says**

2.5 stars. This is billed as a murder mystery set on the moon, and isn't that a great cover image? I found it an okay read, but I suspect other fans of science fiction will enjoy it more.

The setting is great, even if the author is too much in love with the technology he has invented. The writing in itself is quite good, except that there was something lacking about the characterization. I didn't think there was much heart to the story, and the characters never felt like real people.

The plot technically does include a mysterious murder, but the book focuses on the protagonist's efforts to figure out who is trying to start a war between the US and China, which both have mining interests on the Moon. This story is set after an apocalyptic event on Earth which occurred when "two trillion tons of methane hydrate had bubbled out of the Pacific Rim with almost no warning", but still humans are implicated: "Climatologists called the catastrophe a cleansing of an overpopulated and overheated planet."

My trade paperback edition has a binding error and it was frustrating that the most exciting action of the book takes place in the section where the pages are out of order (pages 184-212).

There's a prominent female character, "a woman on a Moon full of men", and there's something a little Heinleinian in the way the book treats her. "Whoever finds the secret to summoning a woman's power when it's most needed will rule the universe." Really? But to be fair, the excellent marine pilot is a woman and her gender is barely noted.

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## **Sarah says**

I'm giving it 3.5 stars rounded up to 4. This is a murder mystery set on the moon. Moon related fiction seems to be a popular trend right now, but I'm not complaining.

The writing in this book was excellent. The author does a very good job of expressing the cold desolate landscape. He described various ridges, the way the moon dust levitates in the air as night turns to day, and let's not forget the smell. Moon dust smells like cordite, or more simply, gunpowder. Hence the name, Gunpowder Moon, and for whatever reason the title and the description really stuck with me through the novel.

I also enjoyed the characters. They were mostly men, but I guess in a world where no women have actually set foot on the moon yet (ahem) I shouldn't be all that surprised. The one woman, Lane, had a pretty major role and wasn't cast in a stereotypical way. She was strong and fearless and makes smart decisions. I enjoyed her character arc as well as the arc of the main character, Dechert. My only complaint with Dechert was that I never really got a sense of how old he was. I kept thinking of him as an old man because he was a grizzled war veteran, but upon reflection I get the feeling he was supposed to be about middle aged. He felt very human to me. Flawed and sort of tragic.

For you hard sci-fi lovers, there was plenty of science to go around. They are mining for HE-3 deposits. There's talk of magnetic fields and g forces and .6 gravity etc. I did find this slowed the pace occasionally

because the science was above my head. (Also- I read another review on Amazon that said the science was not entirely accurate, I can't comment on this because I wouldn't know enough to tell you either way.)

On to the story itself, there were things I liked and things I didn't. To start with, I didn't really feel like this was set far enough in the future to suspend my disbelief that apocalypse level climate change happened everywhere, leading nations became the new third world nations, wars broke out, and then lunar He-3 deposits are discovered as the answer to all the world's problems. The other result of this mini apocalypse- is apparently that everyone is suddenly very theistic (and America is of course very Christian, and top brass doesn't really like when the people working for them aren't). I'm not sure where this falls on the plausibility scale. I live under a rock and I know religion isn't going away anytime soon, but to have America just become a bunch of religious zealots didn't sit quite right with me either. (Isn't it equally plausible that they all became atheists in the name of science?)

These are small parts of the book and only detracted from the story as minor annoyances. I did like the conspiracy theory level mystery. Layers being uncovered one after another. Evidence trickling in from various sources. The need for secure channels and evacuation plans. I love a good conspiracy theory- so I never mind a trip down the rabbit hole.

Where it lost me again, was the way the mystery was solved. It was too immediate. Too convenient. I'm not a fan of the "epiphany" as a source of solution.

The action scenes were a blast and I think the author wrote them very well. It was very reminiscent of Star Wars. Shuttles flying blind through canyons and craters, skimming the dusty lunar surface. Navigation via a basic green and black grid. These scenes were show stealers.

To sum it up: excellent writing, fantastic setting, lots of science and human characters made for a good overall story. I'd recommend this to readers of hard sci-fi or anyone in the mood for a good lunar tale.

Thank you to Harper Voyager for the ARC!

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## **Mike (the Paladin) says**

I put this on my "Thriller" shelf...but that's being a little generous I think.

I saw this book "touted" and read the synopsis which says (quote) "*this debut novel combines the inventiveness of The Martian, the intrigue of The Expanse, and the thrills of Red Rising.*"

I'm sorry, it isn't and doesn't. This is a fairly standard political story with a slight mystery rolled in (who's behind the bombings and other "disasters" on the Moon at the Moon Base). Are the villains the Chinese...or is the culprit closer to home? DUH, DUH.DUH!

Yeah I figure many of you will spot what's going on here and maybe put together the clues that the main character manages to fail to put together until the very end.

So far as having the "*inventiveness of The Martian*" Nope. The Martian is a masterful work that rests on the writer's ability to build a complete character we all felt as if we got to know without EVER allowing the story to flag. The balance of plot and character is almost flawless in that book ( ). Here the characters are

never really deep, I came away not feeling (I use the word "feeling" advisedly here) I knew any of them and I wasn't invested in their well being or the situation.

In a future where the author sees the US as having become a 3rd rate nation and competing with China for dominance on the moon. The nation is led by rather stupid shallow politicians (okay so that statement could be thought repetitive) also has...well if I go on I'd be in spoiler territory so suffice it to say for me there is a lot of "been there done that" in this book.

In short (if it's not too late to say "in short") I was ready (very ready) for this one to be over. I actually was ready to drop it part way through but that would have (by my "couldn't finish it" rule) have brought the book a 1 star rating and some people hate to see a low rating if I don't actually ~~drag myself through~~ I mean read a book to the end.

Look, if you like this book (and I see a mix of ratings from 5 down) this is MY opinion of the book. I didn't hate it, but I sure didn't care for it. I think it definitely suffers from being compared to . So in my humble opinion...didn't care for it, can't recommend it.

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### Jeffrey Keeten says

**"Life is so tenuous on Luna's desiccated expanse that staying alive is an endeavor practiced with almost religious fervor. No one ever deserts another man on the Moon. Race, creed, religion, flag---none of that crap matters. Dechert would risk his life for any Chinese digger in distress, as long as they were within range. And he knew they would do the same for him.**

**At least until what happened to Cole."**

**The Moon---"Earth's naked shadow."**

When survival is paramount, we are drawn together in the interest of mutual survival. We forget all the things that divide us. It is only when we have the luxury of existing at a certain level of comfort that we start to figure out ways to separate ourselves. There are plenty of natural resources for everyone on the moon. There are several countries participating in mining the moon, but the two elephants are the Chinese and the Americans; all the nations of the world have a stake in extracting enough Helium-3 to keep the lights on back on Earth.

And the Earth is still in recovery from an apocalyptic event.

*"Asteroid collisions you can prepare for, carbon emissions you can legislate against, but who expected a subsea methane eruption would plunge us back into the Dark Ages for more than a decade?"*

As if I don't have enough things to worry about, now I have to add methane eruption to the list?

Caden Dechert is the chief of the U.S. mining operation on the edge of the Sea of Serenity. He is a veteran of wars in the Middle East and is reminded of his tour of duty with every breath he takes. **"The gunpowder smell of moondust filled his nostrils."**

Dechert has a good relationship with his counterpart over on the Chinese side of the moon. They have similar military backgrounds and both have no illusions about the simmering politics on Earth that could spill out into the universe, even to the moon. They have enough to worry about keeping some catastrophic event from wiping out their stations, such as solar flares or something as seemingly mundane as moondust crippling their power supply.

They don't have time for murder.

But murder is what they got.

When that hatch explodes and kills the first surfer dude on the moon, the ramifications go well beyond just the extinguishing of a life. Dechert has dealt with death his entire adult life, but never has he had a death mean so much. *"The dead settle in our mind like cooling embers. After a time they diminish, snuffed out by the immediate, and then a puff of memory rekindles them and for a moment they are hot and near once again."*

**A boot print is one of the few clues.**

That explosion that blew that hatch on the moon is the equivalent of the bullet that killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. The tinder is so dry that it only takes a spark to light a conflagration that could burn up not only all the progress Earth has made recovering from the methane eruption, but could level us back to the Stone Age.

Dechert has experienced being in the middle of a war, but he has never been at the flashpoint of the beginning of a war.

Was it the Chinese?

Doesn't make sense.

Then who was it?

Before everyone dies on the moon, maybe we should take a moment to look at the sky. **"How to explain the Moon's thunderous star field to the uninitiated? It would be like describing the yellows and reds of Van Gogh's Wheatfield with Crows to a blind man."** Maybe we all need to look at the sky more often and clear our minds of the deluge of testosterone driven patriotism. Dechert's loyalties, never in question before, are wavering as he tries to sift through the evidence and find a solution before there is no turning back.

The American marines arrive. The Chinese equivalent of super troopers arrive. Weapons that have never been allowed on the moon are now bristling on every person's body. Who killed Cold Benson is becoming irrelevant to everyone, except Dechert. How many times does a war start and, within a short amount of time, everyone forgets how it ever started? Why are we fighting? Ask the Hatfields and the McCoys why they hate each other. It is like we are all just waiting for a reason to give in to our most primordial instincts.

**The smell of fear on the moon is mingling with the acrid stench of gunpowder, like lovers reunited over the expanse of history.**

## **The Sea of Serenity is not so serene after murder comes to visit.**

What I really enjoy about this book is how real it feels. This isn't some science-fiction universe that exists in some future that is beyond our own scope. This future is tomorrow or next year or certainly within our life spans. President John F. Kennedy asked us to go to the moon; now all someone has to do is ask us to go to the moon and stay. I was very aware of the constant danger of eminent death. One mistake and not only will you kill yourself, but you might kill your whole team. It is a fragile and invigorating way to live. Where David Pedreira really shines is in his descriptions of pulse pounding, moon blasting action. I was so involved in what was happening that I needed my own space suit to monitor my vitals. **"Mayday, mayday, mayday"** was a metronome that blasted through the comms in my dreams for several nights after finishing this book.

Buckle up, squeeze your cheeks together, pour a pitcher of Tang, and put your cell phone on silent. You won't have time for Earthly concerns once you land on the moon.

I want to thank Harper Voyager for sending me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>  
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

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## **Alejandro says**

### **A murder mystery at the moon!**

### **EVERYTHING STARTED WITH ONE DEATH...**

In a near future, the Moon becomes a key resource to get Helium-3 from the moon dust, vital to process fuel for fusion reactors.

Each major political power with space capabilities has its own facility at the Moon, like USA, China and Russia.

Caden Dechert, manager of the American one, is a war veteran and he can't avoid to notice that the moon dust smells just like gunpowder...

...so it's not so rare that a murder happens.

Not matter the tense political ambiance, Dechert has been able to keep the peace with the other mining operations, however with a dead man...

...in a place where hand weapons were unnecessary...

...a madness explodes, that along with the arrival of military forces from Earth, representing each political power, now the guns are everywhere and everyone carrying them.

But the mystery remains...

...who murdered Cold Benson and why?

A murder happened at the Moon, and while you may think that it's not so easy for the culprit to escape...

...guess again!

Never the Sea of Serenity has been more in turmoil!

A great debut work full of realistic science fiction!

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### **Kaethe says**

That was fun. Highly recommended for fans of Cormoran Strike and military fiction: Dechert leads a team of quirky alpha men (and one clever not too girly woman) in a constant battle against the lunar elements. Now he has to try and keep them safe from a murderer, and possibly, a war.

A strong space mystery, the tone and cast are reminiscent of the first book in The Expanse. A tad broody, but it's mostly fast paced and cynical and a promising first novel.

ARC from publisher

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