



Automatic Woman

Nathan Yocum

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There are no simple cases. Jacob “Jolly” Fellows knows this.

The London of 1888, the London of steam engines, Victorian intrigue, and horseless carriages is not a safe place nor simple place...but it's his place. Jolly is a thief catcher, a door-crashing thug for the prestigious Bow Street Firm, assigned to track down a life sized automatic ballerina. But when theft turns to murder and murder turns to conspiracy, can Jolly keep his head above water? Can a thief catcher catch a killer?

Automatic Woman is the second novel from award winning screenwriter Nathan L. Yocum. A volatile mix of steampunk, noir, historical fiction, and two-fisted action, Automatic Woman takes us to a place that never was yet we all know so well... the London of Jules Verne, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Jack the Ripper and Bram Stoker with a pneumatic twist.

Automatic Woman Details

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From Reader Review Automatic Woman for online ebook

Anzu The Great Destroyer says

I have received the *Automatic Woman* ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. No chocolate kitties were offered as bribe. No bunnies were threatened with death. Promise.

So let's get on with it, shall we? *Automatic Woman* is a pretty decent Steampunk story. The beginning of it was entertaining. I really liked crazy old doctor and his swan lake ballerinas. A very nice idea indeed. BUT it did not live up to all those praises from its description. This particular phrase got my hopes up:

A volatile mix of steampunk, noir, historical fiction, and two-fisted action, Automatic Woman takes us to a place that never was yet we all know so well... the London of Jules Verne, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Jack the Ripper and Bram Stoker with a pneumatic twist.

Automatic Woman failed to deliver all that.

Despite the fact that Jolly is not my type of fellow, I kind of liked him. I can't say the same regarding the rest of the characters though. Everyone is broken in this book. The story started brilliantly, but lost me mid-way. All the events that took place headed in a wrong direction. Jolly got extremely annoying as the story progressed. Eh.

Anyways, *Automatic Woman* is not a bad book. It's not a great one either. I would recommend it if, say, you can borrow it from someone, and/or if you have nothing better to read.

2.5 stars

Review also posted on

Rosie Amber says

Automatic Women is a Steampunk novel set in London in 1888. Jacob Fellows is a thief catcher and works for The Bow Street Firm, which I believe is the author's take on the original Bow Street runners, the first professional policemen of London.

Known as "Jolly" Fellows, he is called to a theft as a penny theatre by Dr Saxon. Saxon has a set of automated dancing dolls who perform to the music of Swan Lake, but his leading lady, The Swan Princess, has been stolen. Jolly knows little about automated figures and leans on his informers for a name where he can go to begin his enquiries. Jolly meets eccentric Frenchman Jacques Nouveau, who himself owns several life-like automatons. He knows of Saxon and admires the magical qualities of his figures, especially The Swan Princess.

Returning to Saxon's theatre, Jolly finds Saxon being crushed to death by the Swan Princess, a graveyard of other automated figures and then he is attacked and must fight to save his own life. He is now the number

one suspect in a murder case, is forbidden to return to his workplace and has fourteen days to prove himself innocent. The one piece of evidence which might save him is locked in storage back at The Firm.

An intriguing plot follows as someone wants Jolly dead and he becomes a pawn in the long standing game between too theorist rivals of the time. There were some great characters; Conan Doyle, Darwin and Bramstoker mixed with historical components of the era. For me the ending left more questions than answers and the copy I read had a good dozen minor editing errors which just needed tweaking.

DL says

I was expecting a bit more action involving the Automatic woman and a little more Steampunk. Rather than disappointing me, this book ended up thrilling me. The hero was very different. He was a man who completely defied not only his own brutish looks but the role he was given in life. He was a brute, but a brute with purpose and a brute with loyalty. I would expect a book that drew Bram Stoker, Charles Darwin and Conan Doyle into the plot would end up silly but somehow it all came together quite well. My only complaint was Darwin's rather drawn out debate regarding evolution. This book would make an excellent movie!

Rebecca says

I received a copy of this book for free in exchange for my honest review and WOW. This read like a seedy, back alley mystery to me, full of Steampunk goodness!

The main man whose Point Of View we follow not only has an epic name but an epic voice. Jacob "Jolly" Fellows tells his tale to a recording device held by the metro police of 1888 London. He's under arrest and he's telling it like it is and exactly as it happened to him.

Which is? What happened to Jolly, our rotund steam engine of a man? He's something of a detective, a thief-catcher, working for a Firm who hires him and his thugly ways to track down a ... an automatic ballerina?! That's right! He's seen her, the Swan Princess, and her fellow automaton dancers. The private joy of their creator. And he's seen her do something horrible. Something like murder.

Now Jolly has to find the rogue machine, clear his name, and stop getting hurt in the process! He has heads to bash, a prostitute to fall for, and a bunch of animal mask wearing murderers to reveal.

Andrienne says

I really liked this book, but the review copy I got didn't indicate that there's a sequel so the end just hangs. The book felt steampunk and it was written really well--it really puts you in that mood. The main character is anything but dashing (he's overweight with mutton chops), but somehow it works out. I was very intrigued by the story--lots of biblical references--the storytelling reminds me of bedtime stories. The author can really write a good story. The title of a book refers to a mysterious creation and when you throw in Charles Darwin into the fray, it can only get more interesting. I was expecting the story to go into Guy Ritchie territory with all the murder and stuf, but in the end, it was anyone's guess what this story was going to be. There's a lot of

steamy sex scenes and it just comes out gritty and blah, which still works. I was really hoping this was a standalone so I can find out what the mystery is but you won't find out until who knows when? The review copy I got had a weird prologue about a totally different person and I just couldn't bother to find out if this was a series or if the review item I got was a bad copy. Still a good read, but be prepared for a cliffhanger.

James Wymore says

Nathan Yocum's latest book, *Automatic Woman*, is a triumph. This action packed detective noir novel is set in London against a Steampunk background. With intriguing characters and tantalizing prose, this is one of those stories you just can't put down. The fun ride starts on the first page.

The first thing about this book I really enjoyed was the atypical protagonist. It wasn't a handsome guy with flowing hair and a six-pack of abs. He didn't dawn a trench coat or fancy hat. I found it refreshing to see the world through the eyes of a regular guy dragged into exceptional circumstances. The perspective held true all the way to the end, surprising me with insights into seeing the world through different eyes. Most of the time I get annoyed by first person narrative—especially in detective novels full of tired clichés and ridiculous similes. However, this one held off on heavy accents in order to keep the language from slowing down the story.

As a fan of the Steampunk sub-genre... read more at <http://www.speculatorsclub.com>

°~Amy~° says

I was very impressed with this book from the first page. There is a richness in the story that I don't see often enough in books anymore. The characters were fully developed, the language was rich and the details were plentiful.

I really appreciated the depth of the main character, Jolly. I could identify with him even though I've obviously never been a thief catcher. The author pulled me in and kept me right there with Jolly throughout. I was rooting for him from the beginning.

I enjoyed that the story contained a lot of detail and background, but it never felt forced or contrived. Everything fit together to make the story come alive. True talent there.

There was something missing from the very end for me but I can't put my finger on it. I still loved the book and couldn't give it just 4 stars. Writing this wonderful deserves 4.5 stars at least!

Anne Tilney says

It is no secret that I love steampunk. Steampunk itself started off as a small literary genre, or least a subgenre of science fiction and fantasy that includes social or technological aspects of the 19th century (such as the

steam) usually with some deconstruction of, re-imagining of, or rebellion against parts of it (the punk aspect). Steampunk doesn't stop at literature-there is steampunk music, clothes, jewelry, performance art, philosophy and films. In recent years, the subgenre has expanded and gained more popularity among mainstream society.

Automatic Woman has a main character that isn't the handsome loner with a tragic backstory, the Liam Neeson /Jason Statham type heroes in such movies as Taken and Taken 2 or Crank or the wealthy playboy with a heart of gold. Instead, it uses what can be described as a typical British bloke. Make that a fat British bloke named Jacob "Jolly" Fellows with the knack of breaking skulls who works for the Bow Street Firm as a thief catcher and his size happens to also make him one of the best thief wranglers in the business. Don't ask him to tell a joke. Even though that Jolly isn't eye candy, he isn't a mindless brute either. Despite his weight and not being school smart, he makes it up for being able to think well on his feet, and relies on observation and intuition.

He also has street smart skills that help him in the story. And anyone who has ever read any of the Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can see the influences sprinkled throughout the entire book. Why even Arthur Conan Doyle makes an appearance as a character along with Bram Stoker, Charles Darwin, and Grigori Rasputin. And the best part is that these historically characters are added in but it makes sense to the context of the story. It never came across as random or a poor attempt made by the author to add real historical figures to make the book seem historical plausible.

Automatic Woman is set in an alternate late 19th century London. I was able to suspend my belief and allowed myself to be lost in the story instead of focusing on the minutia. It starts off with a bang- Jolly Fellows latest case involves tracking down and finding a life sized automatic ballerina called the Swan Princess. Yet this case causes him to be thrust into murder and conspiracy. Jolly Fellows finds the Swan Princess who killed her creator before attacking him. He wakes up to find that he's been accused of murder; time is ticking as he tries to clear his name.

The suspense never lets up-not even for a moment- as we follow Jolly on his adventure. The pacing was fast but not too fast that you became lost and didn't know what was going on. The world building is subtle; descriptive but without endless pages of minutia. And there was never a massive info dumps. You get a clear picture of an alternative Victorian London but are left with enough room to fill in the details.

With villains you love to hate and a likable hero, Automatic Woman is one of the best stories I've read in a while. The ending itself leaves you hanging-but in a good way- the mystery of the automatic woman remains at the end, visible but just out of reach, as you know that a sequel is in the works. Just like Guy Richie's Sherlock Holmes-its action packed and has a gripping plot. I looking forward to reading the sequel and hope this develops into a series.

Wayne McCoy says

A rip-roaring "steampunk noir" novel. Jacob "Jolly" Fellows is a big bruiser of a man. When he gets involved in a case that sees him framed unjustly for murder, he decides to investigate. Along the way he runs across A certain Dr. Doyle who offers him a "seven percent solution" to keep him going, and one of the antagonists is a certain Charles Darwin.

What is at stake is the Automatic Woman of the title. A robotic woman programmed to dance in Swan Lake, but who, it seems, has gained a life of her own. He is double-crossed and beat up at every turn along the way, but he also finds an unlikely ally.

I enjoyed this novel. The main character has a dark sense of humor and manages to take quite a beating during the book. He is not without resources, but they are reasonable and not preposterously out of line. The name dropping tends to get a little old to me, but this is not out of sorts for this genre of novel. Charles Darwin made an unusual choice for an antagonist, but I thought it was interesting.

A fun quick read and I recommend it.

Kathyk21 says

The Automatic Woman by Nathan Yokum is what I would call "steampunk lite". It is definitely worthy of a read by any steampunk fan, although there aren't a particularly large number of clever inventions; and the time frame of the story just barely borders the steampunk epoch.

Jacob (Jolly) Fellows, the speaker of the story, is a rough and tumble detective with the Bow Street Firm. He was hired for and is used for his tough fighting strength. Surprisingly, he is quite clever, intuitive, and thoughtful. The story is complex; Jolly is very likable; the mystery is challenging; and the whole reading experience is very rewarding.

Stephen Ormsby says

This is one great book. The language and style of it just sucked me and before I knew it, I'd read a large chunk of it in one sitting. It is strange, wierd but a hell of a lot of fun.

Jolly is a gret character and you just want him to get through as the tension builds to a great conclusion that leaves just enough dangling to hint at a follow up. I already want to read that sequel. But that is all I am going to say about the plot. You should sit down and read it to really get a feel for it. Dark, complex but it flows in a way I did not expect.

Nathan Yocum, you have written a humdinger. I don't think I've read a book this fast for a long time. How long before we see the next one? I'm glad I found this one!

My Rating:

5 gears out of 5 (I was only going to give this 4, but then I thought it deserved better.)

HBalikov says

Is there a genre called "steampunk noir?" This would fit nicely in that niche with its springs, gears, pendulums, Queen Victoria and the strangest P.I. in a long while. Jacob "Jolly" Fellows is a "thief-catcher."

He is big (tall and fat) man with a beard that doesn't cover his double-double chins.

There are plenty of bows the classics of mystery and suspense novels, as well as 19th Century England. Fellows works for the Bow Street Firm. And, by the luck of the draw, is assigned to help an inventor recover his stolen invention. The title is a hint. Dr. Saxon has invented a troupe of "dancers" who perform "Swan Lake." These are "man-sized statues with fully articulated arms, legs, fingers, necks...instead of skin, they were encased in stained white pine....Their eyes were custom glass orbs..." The Swan Princess has been stolen. We learn that these dancers are not only fully articulate, but (perhaps) endowed with artificial intelligence.

Saxon is murdered and Fellows is suspected of being the guy who did it. We are off and running. The plot is taut and the pace is fast. Yocum enjoys the noir language and uses it effectively.

"Can I make a proposition?" he asked.

I was interested. "Sure, Jacques, discretion is my Christian name."

- and -

"Weakness in men makes my skin crawl. A man who begs and cries is like a dog in coulat trousers. My dad used to say that. I get chicken skin up my arms thinking about this bloke begging through a busted gob, wailing away, waiting for an exodus to safer accomodations, which in this place meant another cell; same type of cell, same type of blokes, same type of pissers. That might might a metaphor for life. I don't know. I've never been called a literate man."

But he is bright and wiley. "I know about the blood and the man because it is my profession to know. Doctors stop seeing patients. They only see symptoms and remedies. Mashers stop seeing girls; they only see ankles and legs and tits and arses. Thief catchers see clues, hints, causes to be linked like puzzle pieces into a great, rational, and hopefully honest story."

This book has the noir brutality to it. "My body was holding a pain competition. The clear winner was my face with its broken nose and twin black eyes. Second prize went to my skull, which throbbed with equal parts hangover and concussion. Honorable mentions were taken by my sore back and dried out tongue."

The famous are interspersed ranging from a physician, Dr. Conan Doyle, to a side of Charles Darwin that you have never seen before. Darwin offers a lot of observations including: "Survivability takes in all factors and focuses on results. The better man is the man who can survive the longest." Darwin is determined to prove this in a way that will likely surprise you. "I see everything. I told you a moment ago that there is no such thing as luck. It would be more accurate to say there is no such thing as chaos. Ours is an orderly universe. Every event, every action and reaction is predictable." That was the 19th Century conceit. See if you still believe it when this great yarn reaches its conclusion.

Linda Baker says

I requested Automatic Woman from netgalley on a whim, as I do like steampunk as a rule. I certainly was not expecting to meet someone like Jacob "Jolly" Fellowes. By his own admission, Jolly is fat, ugly and violent. The violent part comes in handy as he acts as muscle for the Bow Street Firm, chief thief catchers in London. The fat and ugly part is handy as well- Jolly quite often can intimidate people with his looks alone.

Jolly is called in to search for "the Swan", a remarkable automatic woman in an equally remarkable dance troupe built by Dr. Saxon, mechanical genius. Things very quickly go south and Jolly is accused of murder and on the run from both his employer, Lord Barnes, and the Metro Police. Charles Darwin, Bram Stoker and Dr. Conan Doyle romp through the pages of this shortish novel. Along with Jolly's love interest, a prostitute named Mary, Jolly must solve multiple mysteries and go up against some of the great minds of the age to avoid hanging.

I began the novel thinking that Jolly was simply a thug- one that I could never root for. But Jolly is also good hearted, a smart investigator and surprisingly erudite under all that thuggish veneer. Automatic Woman has some wonderful characters, chief among them Jolly himself.

3.5 stars

Fel says

(Disclaimer: I received this book in exchange for an honest review.)

In 1888, London, Jacob Jolly Fellows (what a name!) is a thief catcher, and his size happens to also make him one of the best thief wranglers in the business. In his work for the Bow Street Firm, he's assigned to help Dr. James Saxon, a strange man of science. Jolly soon finds out that Saxon has been spending a great deal of time in the creation of an entire troupe of life-sized, ballerina, robots. These robots are programmed to respond to the music of Swan Lake, executing each step in beautiful perfection for the eyes of Dr. Saxon only. But, one of the robots has gone missing, the star, Dr. Saxon's Swan Princess. Jolly sets straight to work, predicting that with such a large and unique object he'll have no trouble wrapping this one up in short order. To my surprise, he was right, finding the Swan Princess robot was only the beginning of his story, from there, we follow Jolly as he tries to prove his innocence in a murder committed by the supposedly harmless robot.

I imagined that, as a historian, I'd surely have a difficult time suspending my belief and allowing the story to happen instead of what was supposed to happen. However, Nathan does a delightful job of pulling us into his own version of the late 19th century London. Written in first person, the cadence, vocabulary, structure, and mood immediately threw me back in time. I felt an immediate connection with Jolly, and the sense that I was immersed in another place and time. I didn't care that historical dates were thrown off, because everything happened for a reason. It is possible that even the smallest events could have drastically thrown off the discovery of penicillin, so, why not?

As a hero, I loved Jolly. He was candid in his descriptions, especially of himself;

I've often looked for a solution to my roundness. I'm physically active at work and in leisure. I love football and am bloody hell on gears in the goalie box. Nevertheless, my cheeks are round and my jowls hang. Nathan L. Yocum, Automatic Woman (Kindle Locations 21-22). Curiosity Quills Press.

He may not be the best looking guy in the crowd, but his build certainly helps in some situations (like when he's trying not to be killed by a certain robot). He thinks well on his feet, and relies on observation and intuition. And, I could certainly see the influence of Sherlock Holmes sprinkled throughout the book.

My verdict? If you haven't tried steampunk, if you've had doubts, I recommend you give this one a shot, (especially if you love a good mystery). If you're a fan of steampunk, stop reading my review and

find this book!

Jaime says

The London of 1888, the London of steam engines, Victorian intrigue, and horseless carriages is not a safe place nor simple place...but it's his place. Jolly is a thief catcher, a door-crashing thug for the prestigious Bow Street Firm, assigned to track down a life sized automatic ballerina. But when theft turns to murder and murder turns to conspiracy, can Jolly keep his head above water? Can a thief catcher catch a killer?

Jolly is the hero of the everyman. He's overweight, not handsome, not suave, not rich, and has no skills with the ladies. But he's strong, resourceful, smart, and knows how to use those things to his advantage. I love that the mystery of the book is not a whodunit, because that we know. It's the "why" that leads our hero on his adventure. Full of likable, and love to hate character's. The only thing that threw me off was this is the first steampunk novel that I've ever read that didn't even mention the Queen. Although Bram Stoker and Charles Darwin were key players. Maybe her majesty will make an appearance in the next book. A fun, fast read. I can't wait to read more about Jolly.
