Clarion Review

Science Fiction

47

Angela Peach
AuthorHouse UK
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Four Stars (out of Five)

A group of murder suspects trapped together—perhaps snowbound at a hotel or confined on a ship at sea—is a convention of mystery novels. Angela Peach's *47* adds a science-fiction element to the scenario, resulting in a suspenseful and exciting story.

47 follows Captain Lilith (Lily) Mae Madison and the crew of her spaceship, Phoenix, as they travel into a wormhole in search of greener pastures for humanity after a series of disasters befall Earth. Crews members are murdered by an unknown assailant, and suspicions run rampant as Lily races to determine the killer's identity before the entire crew is slain.

With *47*, Peach has created a thrilling whodunit adventure in space. The book jumps right into the action, setting the tone and background with a series of one-page news releases by the fictional *World Geographical News*, which quickly relates the problems on Earth before the story shifts to the spaceship setting. Tension is maintained as the story unfolds and the narrative jumps around in time; readers are fed bits and pieces of information, with the whole slowly coming together as the book proceeds.

The major flaws with *47* are those that interrupt the reader's suspension of disbelief. For example, Lily is named captain of the ship despite being only twenty-nine years old at the time. Though a few years pass by the time the ship leaves Earth, it's hard to believe such an important mission would be entrusted to someone so young, whatever her credentials. There's another tough-to-swallow moment when, during the ship's mission, the parents of a small child ask Lily to keep the child in her room for security reasons. It seems unlikely that parents would trust their captain more than themselves, and just as unlikely that a ship's captain would take on responsibility for an infant. There are times throughout the mission when Lily is frantic and insecure, to the point that it seems as though she has little control of her ship. Many of these issues are addressed by the story's conclusion, which is both surprising and satisfying, but they

can be a distraction as the book hurtles toward its end.

One mystery that is not adequately explained is the book's title. While intriguing, the number forty-seven doesn't seem to refer to anything in particular. The only mentions of the number are the forty-seven-month duration of the first probe sent into the wormhole, which preceded the *Phoenix* mission, and the year 2047, when *Phoenix* returns back through the wormhole.

The story's flaws do not slow its progress substantially, and readers will be too interested to discover the shocking truth about what's really happening on *Phoenix* to be put off by them.

Peter Dabbene