

More than Bones

Craig David Singer

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Craig David Singer's cheeky *More Than Bones* is tale of self-discovery filled with quirky comedy and surprising depth.

Dr. Emily Norton begins a residency program at a prestigious Catholic hospital in Baltimore. She moves into a sleepy suburb and befriends her eccentric neighbor, Frank. He gifts her an unusual amulet on a beautiful gold chain with the strictest instructions never to remove it or doubt its powers. Emily refuses to bow to superstition and leaves the amulet in her room, hanging on the neck of a newly gifted skeleton.

Soon after, Emily's fiancé suddenly ends their relationship, she's fired from the hospital, and she's caught up in a citywide scandal. The amulet appears to be the source of her sudden downfall, but she's lived her entire life with a fanatical devotion to science and logic, resisting her fire-and-brimstone father whose beliefs left her filled with rage and doubt. Faith and reason clash as Emily embarks on a journey filled with dark turns, surprising humor, and heart.

The core mystery of the amulet and its origins revolve around Frank and anchor the story. At first, the amulet and its alleged powers seem trivial, but Frank's past and motivations come to light in the closing chapters, resulting in a painfully animate character. Emily's connection to the amulet is less engaging than his.

Whimsical prose drives the novel forward, if Emily's internal monologue makes it clear that the amulet had little real effect on her. Dramatic irony highlights the reality that she has herself to thank for most of her troubles, with other obstacles arising from mere vagaries.

Wicked and pleasantly lighthearted, *More Than Bones* weds individual faith to a compelling mystery.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January/February 2019)

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