

The Quantum Cop

Lesley L. Smith

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The Quantum Cop is a clever, fast-paced, and entertaining work of science fiction.

An opportunistic college student learns the earth-shaking secret to altering reality, and now it's up to newbie physics professor Madison Martin to save the planet—while she also teaches class, falls in love, and figures out what to wear on a first date. Lesley L. Smith's *The Quantum Cop* is an amusing, action-packed science fiction romp.

Struck by a car as she crosses a street, Martin reflexively and accidentally exploits the laws of quantum mechanics to change reality so the car never hits her. Luke Bacalli, an arrogant physics undergrad and Martin's student, witnesses Martin injured in the street one moment, and standing unharmed nearby just after. He shadows Martin as she works out the secret of how she altered reality, until he can do it, too. With ultimate power in his hands, Bacalli becomes a menace that only Martin can stop. The comic-book-simple plot involves abilities that seem like superpowers; this makes it no less enjoyable, thanks to clear, vivid writing.

The narrative unfolds through Martin's perspective. She combines girl-next-door with scientist, teacher, and action hero. Her self-deprecating humor—"Note to self: don't scare your boss"—and her frequent observations on quantum mechanics—"What it means is we live in a world in which almost anything is possible"—make her an entertaining and sympathetic protagonist.

Other characters, from Bacalli to a sexy romantic interest and sidekick, Andro Rivas, the professor in the office next door, are clearly and sharply drawn through action, physical descriptions, and short, snappy dialogue.

Characters aren't surprising, though. The good guys are good, the bad guys are bad, and nobody seems capable of developing into something other than what they seem. This straightforwardness reduces the potential for suspense, though chapter-ending cliffhangers make the book a page-turner.

Colorful physical descriptions extend to settings, action, and even food, keeping the story grounded when the action goes beyond reality, which it does often and with gleeful abandon. Walls dissolve, fingers shoot lightning, and clothing vanishes, leaving people in various states of awkward undress.

Along with the physical action, emotional chaos swirls, as Martin navigates breaking up with one man while falling for another, and encountering trouble at school as her attempts to help the FBI threaten to generate bad publicity for the university. The variety of the book's action—quantum-leap chases through limbo, punctuated by tense dinners with in-laws and a touch of steamy romance—keeps it fresh.

Action, romance, humor, and factual nuggets about quantum mechanics combine to make *The Quantum Cop* a clever, fast-paced, and entertaining work of science fiction.

GARY HENRY (January 6, 2018)

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