



## **The Rule of Stephens**

*Timothy Taylor*

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**"The significance of being a survivor, in the case of Air France Flight 801, for a long time lay in the simple fact that there should have been no survivors."**

Catherine Bach did survive, barely suffering a scratch. She hates the word "miracle," yet it feels that way at first. She returns to life as it was before the plane went down. The biotech startup she'd built from an idea to a multi-million dollar valuation continues its meteoric rise. But then things begin to go very wrong. Glitches in tests that are meant to run smoothly, design delays, security breaches, impatient investors. Catherine has a growing sense that her good fortune is spent, that the universe might be betting against her.

And then comes the late-night call, from one of the other survivors. He has a story to tell, a warning he says, about his own troubles, a life in ruins, his luck run out. And all at the hands, he insists, of a mysterious other, resembling him perfectly right down to the features of his face.

Madness, Catherine thinks. Or she tries to think as a mystery hedge fund launches a takeover attempt, run by a woman nobody seems to know but who is said to bear an uncanny resemblance . . . to Catherine. Catherine has always believed in an ordered, rational world--more Stephen Hawking than Stephen King. But with her life at the brink, she cannot shake the feeling that her "Rule of Stephens" may no longer hold.

Writing with stinging precision about the knife-edge balance between what is known and what is believed, Timothy Taylor bridges the divide between literary fiction and page-turning thriller in this psychological tale of guilt, doubt and doppelgangers.

## The Rule of Stephens Details

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Author : Timothy Taylor

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## From Reader Review The Rule of Stephens for online ebook

### Mystic Faerie says

It took me a little while to get into this book. It was well written... but I found it somewhat confusing. Or maybe I was looking for more and it just wasn't there? Not sure. I will check out the author's other books though, because I enjoyed his writing style.

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### Sarah says

Thanks to goodreads and the publisher for a free copy of The Rule of Stephens!

There's a lot to love about this book. The concept of a rule of Stephens, for starters — that idea of using Stephen Hawking- or Stephen King-style explanations for your life. It's such an interesting way of illustrating the dichotomy of scientific explanations and *others*.

Then, there's the whole concept behind the book. A plane crash with a handful of unlikely survivors; the difficulty of dealing with the aftermath of a disaster; a cutting-edge health/technology company; and a sense of unease surrounding birds and lookalikes.

And finally, the writing style is excellent. About halfway through, I got chills. *Chills*. That happens so rarely.

If you enjoyed Bellevue Square and are looking for something that's kind of similar — doppelgangers, weird happenings, and a shorter but gripping novel — then give this one a shot.

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### Robyn Roscoe says

Turns out, I have read everything fiction-wise that Timothy Taylor has published, plus most of his non-fiction. All have been excellent, and this was no exception. I was thrilled when I learned that he had a new book this year, and even more thrilled when I was able to get it for my vacation reading pile.

There's a recent theme in Canadian fiction - doppelgängers (see also Bellevue Square, by Michael Redhill). This story is about doubles, but with a more sinister and supernatural bent. The title refers to a philosophy espoused by the main character, Catherine. It refers the competing views of the universe of two Stephens – Hawking and King – and holds that the universe complies with the laws of physics or the laws of the paranormal, but not both at the same time. (I found this premise a bit tenuous, as the character only refers to it a few times directly, and it was more of a distraction than a thread in the story.)

The central plot – the development of a diagnostic appliance for consumer medical monitoring – was very interesting to me, and not far removed from my own real world (likely there are companies out there doing those very things right now). Taylor presents Catherine's struggles with the demons of her mind and the business world very well, appropriately touching but not dwelling on the issues of women in the tech world.

The ultimate resolution is well done, and keeps its feet firmly in the Hawking world, while giving fair

consideration to King's. It was also delightful to follow the characters through Vancouver, and to recognize the locations and locales. Taylor's foodie background comes through with the descriptions of meals and menus that ultimately reflect the characters and situations appropriately.

I was able to read this book in one day, but only because I was on vacation. In real life, it would have taken several days I'm sure, but it was a true page-turner. It would also make a terrific movie.

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### **Steven Buechler says**

Taylor is one of those rare writers who documents elements of the human condition that are just outside of our perception. Careful readers will note the points he is making through the telling of the story of Catherine Bach in their own lives yet may have never noted the situations of emotions until reading this book. Certainly this is a unique book told by a unique and talented writer.

<https://pacifictranquility.wordpress....>

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### **Tammy Hoy says**

What a fantastic book! Beautifully written with a dreamlike quality. Only wish it was longer!

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### **Sonia Garrett says**

"The Rule of Stephens" held my attention through every well written twist. Catherine Bach, a doctor wanting to create an early diagnostic app that puts people in charge of their own bodies, finds her life spinning out of control. Against the odds she has survived an air crash only to find survival is not the only thing defying explanation. Doppelgangers, mysterious strangers, strange downturns in fortune.. what does fate hold for one of the lucky survivors? Timothy Tailor has created a spell binding, psychological thriller. Enjoy the ride.

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### **Sarnfield says**

So disappointing. "Page-turning thriller"? Hardly. "Psychological tale of guilt, doubt and doppelgängers"? Maybe a little in the final pages, but that all fizzled out pretty quick. More a story of the protagonist's start-up company, how it worked, how it was financed, etc, etc. Unless I totally missed something here or I just didn't get it. Either way, was happy to turn the last page.

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### **Philip Vernon says**

A chilling examination of the seemingly inexplicable. Catherine is forced to confront the possibility that the lens through which she views the world is inaccurate. And the fallout is nothing short of life-threatening.

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### **Lis says**

Hard to say what this book is. Mostly a thriller, though especially the early part moved slowly and there were a lot of paragraphs I found myself skimming or skipping. Also a not-quite-supernatural thread, which was either critical to the story or irrelevant, and I'm not quite sure which.

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### **Laraine says**

3 1/2-4 star read. The premise of this book intrigued me. A woman is one of 6 survivors of a plane crash that no one should have survived. Catherine has struggled with survivor guilt and memories of something strange that happened when the plane was going down, something she has told no one else. Busy launching a new company, she makes time when another survivor calls her to tell her his story, similar to hers. All their luck dissolved when they survived the crash. And all of them have committed suicide. And then Catherine's luck starts to change for the worst. And she has to decide if she is going to be another victim or if she is going to find a way to make her survival count. Not a bad read.

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### **Kevin says**

How do you follow up in the wake of *Bellevue Square* with another *doppelgänger* story? The world of Canlit seems to be a bit too busy in this realm and Timothy Taylor just happened to be publishing at the wrong time. In *The Rule of Stephens*, he couldn't seem to figure out what his story was about: science vs the unexplainable, technology and luck, reality or surrealism... and sadly neither is the reader. It's a short read and he just crams so much into its pages that we skate through it on a jagged, thin river of ice. And once we fell through one, there was no resurfacing.

And the sad thing is that both this book and the aforementioned *Bellevue Square* have the same editor, Martha Kanya-Fornster. Sad she couldn't provide a bit more guidance here especially since she was close to both books... but I suppose some books swim while the others inevitably sink.

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### **Joanne-in-Canada says**

So nice to have a new novel from Taylor! I have missed his passionate-bordering-on-obsessive characters, his innovative fictional projects, and the strong presence of Vancouver as a backdrop. Would have been five stars but for an ending that didn't live up to its buildup.

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### **Booksandchinooks (Laurie) says**

Thank you to Penguin Random House for a free copy of this book for review. The rule of Stephens? Stephen King or Stephen Hawking? Catherine is a plane crash survivor and her life begins to turn upside down when she hears from another survivor from the crash and he warns her about mysterious events happening in his life. As strange events begin to happen to Catherine she begins to question things she has always believed. This is a short and interesting book.

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### **Susan says**

Judging by the synopsis I would think this was a supernatural thriller but right from the start it's clear that this is not going to be a mindless read. This is written like literary fiction, not like popular fiction. It's a very short book but the writing is meaty and dense. It's not a book that can be read quickly or skimmed. It doesn't explain itself or wrap everything up in a pretty bow at the end. This book reminds me a lot of another book I recently read, *Bellevue Square*, which was also about doppelgangers and in a similar fashion you are never really sure if we are dealing with the supernatural or the natural. I'm fine with an ambiguous story no real resolution to the mystery but if you're looking for answers you won't find them here. It's a book to be experienced and not so much to be understood. I enjoyed the slight creepiness and the central issues were interesting to me but I can see that this wouldn't be to everyone's tastes.

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### **Andréa Fehsenfeld says**

The darker, unpredictable part of the premise is what drew me to this story. One of six survivors of a horrific air crash finds her world turned upside down when another survivor reaches out with harrowing troubles he's experiencing post-crash. Much of the tension in the Rule of Stephens is derived from this plot line, but by the end, I was confused. There was no clear explanation how Catherine avoided a similar fate of her fellow survivors. It left a hole dying to get filled.

Otherwise, the prose is clean and clear, dialogue snappy, and the world of a biotech startup - VC's, buy sell agreements, lawyering - is accurately portrayed. For me, the business plotline was less interesting than the weird, mysterious world of the survivors and the interweaving of both didn't quite match my expectations to the jacket copy.

The heroine remained an enigma to me. I'm familiar with the world of VC's and start ups (and also a woman) yet couldn't connect with Catherine. After reading that Taylor second guessed his decision about making her character a woman (his own fears of putting a female through such a wringer situation) I wonder if he left valuable emotions off the table to assuage his doubts.

But I did enjoy Taylor's writing style and I'm curious to read his Giller Prize novel - *Stanley Park*.

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