



Missing Man

Katherine Anne MacLean

Download now

Read Online ➞

Missing Man

Katherine Anne MacLean

Missing Man Katherine Anne MacLean

MacLean was awarded the Nebula Award for a short story with the same name, first published in *Analog Science Fiction*, March 1971. This novel is an expanded version of that short story.

From the DJ end-flaps: George Sanford has a gift for guessing right and very little else going for him. When Ahmed and his other friends in his gang grew up, they all advanced in school and got jobs, but George couldn't score well on tests, and there aren't any jobs for guys like him in The City. George never even wanted to sign his name, let alone fill in applications and reports.

When he bumps into his old gang leader, Ahmed, now a member of The City's Rescue Squad, George is swept up in the excitement of a hunt for a trapped girl. It is George who finds her with his special talent. George rapidly becomes the unconventional pride of the Rescue Squad. With Ahmed to run interference for him with the bureaucracy, George becomes a "consultant," and his talents grow. And George begins to change.

With each success he discovers more about himself and more about the society he lives in, and he begins to doubt. When a missing computerman's knowledge is put to use by an irresponsible gang of revolutionaries, threatening to destroy The City. George rescues the computerman and meets Larry, warped boy-genius and leader of the gang. But Larry asks questions George can't answer, and after Larry escapes, George knows he has to find him to continue the discussion. Only George is captured by Larry and forced to become a tool of Larry's mad iconoclasm. In Larry's control, George's talents pose the greatest threat of all to The City... George himself has become the missing man.

[The City = NYC]

Missing Man Details

Date : Published December 19th 1975 by Wildside Press (first published April 1975)

ISBN : 9781587151293

Author : Katherine Anne MacLean

Format : Paperback 228 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction

 [Download Missing Man ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Missing Man ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Missing Man Katherine Anne MacLean

From Reader Review Missing Man for online ebook

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/213781.html>[return][return]This book, published in 1975, is a fix-up of three stories published in Analog between 1968 and 1971 featuring psychic detective George Sandford, the last of which won a Nebula. The setting is remarkable - New York in a world recovering from environmental catastrophe, where there is much greenery and derelict buildings (and vulnerable underwater suburbs), and significant social control in return for quality of life. Sandford's somewhat seedy character and his feelings of blurred identity when he tries to read the minds of criminals (or their victims) are quite vivid. It is reminiscent of Alfred Bester, Philip K Dick and John Brunner. MacLean was obviously a pretty talented author who simply didn't produce as much as the other three; the only other story by her I remember reading is "The Snowball Effect", about the small town sewing circle that takes over the world.

Feliks says

One of the most overlooked and undersung SF novels ever. Nebula Award winner! Yet, no one knows about it.

Its brisk, lively; and engaging. Non-stop action. Great for teens. Great for building confidence in shy people.

The lead character (George) is a big cuddly bear. Mentally slow, backward, & fumbling--perceived as a 'loser' and 'misfit' in a fast-paced, chaotic, turbulent, futuristic New York. He generally struggles at life and relationships. But he has one interesting skill: empathy. He can vaguely sense people's feelings at very long distances.

Gradually, he discovers that he can be useful to society. Ahmed--a former street-tough whom George used to pal around with as a teen--now heads New York's overburdened rescue squad. Ahmed realizes George can be a valuable asset. He hires him as a consultant; and the fun begins as George uses his special talents to help locate citizens in trouble.

Its really a charming story. Give it a try.

fromcouchtomoon says

Wow, what a great classic sci-fi story! Elements of hard science engineering mingle with the soft sciences in this psi-detective story replete with character nuance and moral uncertainty. MacLean's Heinleinisms contribute to Missing Man's traditional flavor and intriguing concepts, balancing straightforwardness with controversial ideas, sometimes in ways that will bother a modern reader. But with a million sci-fi concepts in one novel, each page could inspire its own novel, feeling more like an collection of episodes, but making it one of the better vintage sci-fi novels I've read. MacLean's futuristic imagination is keenly entertaining!

Erik Graff says

I have no recollection of reading this science fiction novel.

Lawrence says

<http://gnomeship.blogspot.com/2017/11...>

Justin Howe says

Early 70s SF reminiscent of Russ and Delany and earlier works by Bester and Huxley, set in a utopian/dystopian New York city of communes and enclaves. An enjoyable read that surprised me on occasion with its insight and prescience.

Jean Triceratops says

Missing Man was that rare sort of novel where I went into it with exceedingly few expectations. The back cover of the book tells nothing more than the name of the novel—*Missing Man*—and the fact that it incorporates the Nebula award winning short story *Science Fiction's Greatest Man Hunt*. The cover shows two nondescript cop-like figures holding guns in front of a vehicle labeled 'police,' and the elevator pitch tells me that a great city requires a great police force.

My expectations were, I think, understandable: that the story would revolve around a manhunt, a missing man, and that the main characters would be police.

It does not and the main characters are not.

This is where I'd normally feel a tremendous amount of sympathy for the author. They have precious little control over what happens to the outside of their book, and publishers often don't care about accurately selling the book so much as selling the book at all. If misleading covers and bad back copy are what get it off the shelves, so be it.

Except, well, even though there were aspects of *Missing Man* that I liked, it didn't leave me capable of feeling much sympathy. And while the good parts were quite good (unlike, say, *Demon Drums*, where the good parts were good in theory but mediocre in practice), they weren't good enough to outweigh the bad parts. When I finished reading *Missing Man*, I slammed the book down on my couch and said "well, that was a dumb fucking book."

I'm getting ahead of myself, though. Let me start at the beginning.

George is a young man. He's not very quick—by our standards it would be easy to assert he has significant learning disabilities—but he's competent in his own way, and kind, and driven, and incredibly sensitive to others. So sensitive, in fact, that he can use telepathy to tune into other people. He leans on this ability to get

out of trouble and make people sympathetic to him (though never in predatory ways), but strikes unexpected gold when he uses his telepathy to help a member of the Rescue Squad find a dying woman. Saving people and averting disasters is all that the Rescue Squad does, and George is exceptional in this capacity. He's quickly hired on as a consultant to the force.

Okay, so far, so good. I liked George, and I loved that he's not a wunderkind. Hell, I loved that MacLean portrayed someone with a learning disability, and that he has so much agency. He's not pitiable, he's not pathetic, and he's not (so) desperate; he's just a guy who is different from the 'norm' and good at his own thing.

I also liked aspects of the world. For example, statistics are king. George's ESP isn't entirely believed or accepted, but he obliterates the odds when it comes to finding hard-to-find people, so the statistics are in his favor. Even if no one in the department believed that he had these powers, they'd keep him on the roster because the statistics say that he has something going on. A hard-facts, science-is-god sort of world that puts a man claiming to have ESP on a pedestal because they can't refute his success rate; that's delightful.

Initially, too, there was a sort of satisfaction in reading a book that bucks all expectations. When, approximately 20% into the novel, George is given visions of a catastrophe, it's easy to assume that the plot of the novel will be averting this disaster. So when, not many pages later, the catastrophe occurs without George doing anything at all to stop it, I felt this thrill of "Oh my cod, anything can happen!"

The problem, of course, is that anything can happen.

There's a weird plot about 'autistics' taking over the world and molding it to their favor at the express exclusion of others. [Note, George is not considered an 'autistic.']

There's a weird plot where kind, sweet George falls in with an unrepentant mass-murderer (to the tune of thousands of deaths) because kind, sweet George just kind of likes him? He knows 100% that this guy has caused untold deaths, but, you know. Eh. (This guy's name is Larry. What do you think the odds are that this is an intentional riff on George and Lennie of *Of Mice And Men*, juxtaposing their roles to pose a philosophical question about intelligence?)

There's a weird plot barely tangential to the story, though it gets a surprising amount of time dedicated to it, revolving around the hostilities between Israel and its Arabic neighbors. It smacks of racism and xenophobia, though the fact that it holds both groups in low esteem is confusing. These days I'm so used to people openly favoring one side while even-more-openly disparaging the other. Favoring neither is baffling. The fact that *Missing Man* also hints at the fact that the United States had a role to play in the de-stability in the Middle East is also a head scratcher. The whole sub-plot was bizarre and, honestly, didn't interact with the point of the story at all. While reading I wondered how much of it was Kathleen MacLean just wanting to say her piece. [Note, racial slurs for Jewish folk are thrown around by passing characters.]

There's a weird plot hugely, if unbelievably convolutedly, tied to the main plot involving a bunch of ESPs in California that try to connect with George but can't for one reason or another. He thinks they're hallucinations. It's obvious to the reader that they're not, but even when I closed the book for good I couldn't say what part they really played. They tempted Jesus in the desert, I guess? They offered George power, and he turned that power down, but there was no weight to that feeling. George never struggled not to play god—he was always a good, kind guy that trusted and believed in people. So the climax where he says "No! I won't use my power to control people!" is the first I'm hearing of this struggle, which means that I don't care. How could I? He's announcing he won't do the bad thing at the same moment that I'm learning he's

tempted to do the bad thing. It's a non-issue.

Worse, even the good parts of *Missing Man* are so quickly dropped, so poorly fleshed out, or so superfluous they lose their charm. One of the first things George does is find try to locate a pregnant woman—who he doesn't realize is a friend of his—who he can feel is dying trapped and alone somewhere. He finds her inexplicably trapped in her attic.

It's a strong moment: George has proved his telepathy works, and, huzzah! He's saved an old friend from dying alone, slowly and agonizingly, of thirst.

It also adds a pop of intrigue. Was her almost-demise an honest accident or fair play? Will she recover from her ordeal? Will her baby survive? Is this connected to George in any way?

Who knows, because she never re-enters the picture. Hell, George never even thinks of her again. He solved that mystery, it's in the past, and that's that.

Honestly, had this been a collection of short stories about George's life, I could easily see this as a four-star book. The world had its merits, George was likable and unique, and there was something soothing about him saving people. Everything—and I really mean everything—that tied those sub-plots into a novel, though, was awful, shallow, poorly-conceived and barely related yet offered up with glib optimism. Worse, these elements became greater than the sum of their parts and started to overpower my previous enjoyment.

Yeech.

[I read old fantasy and sci-fi novels written by women authors in search of forgotten gems. See more at forfemfan.com]

Bill says

Katherine Maclean is a short story writer and considered by the SF powers from it's golden age to be a *grand dame* of SF. This novel is expanded from a 1971 short story from *Analog*. The "novella" won a Nebula award.

The novel is more of a collection of short stories which are related by character, time and location. It occurs in a dystopian, balkanized NYC, sometime in the near future. George Sanford is a low class empath who grows into much more by going through a series of life events while acting as a consultant for the Rescue Squad, a bureaucracy responsible for saving people in trouble. George begins to question everything about himself and The City and becomes (view spoiler). These events are told as a series of vignettes any of which could have been the original *Missing Man* short story.

The prose is crisp and clear. George, Ahmed and Larry are of potential interest as characters and the novel has a second level dealing with identity, culture, society and politics. For me, though, it does not really work as a novel. More fleshing and coherence are needed. As is, it was not very interesting.

5 of 10 stars
