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## **Artemis**

By Andy Weir  
305 pp.

People have long held a fascination with space and its exploration, gazing up at the night sky and dreaming of travelling to distant planets and moons. Andy Weir has taken advantage of this celestial interest by writing novels that could be termed 'realistic science fiction.' Several years ago, Weir became an overnight literary sensation with *The Martian*, a harrowing tale of an astronaut stranded on Mars and the attempts to get him back home alive. In his newest book, *Artemis*, he explores life relatively closer to Earth in a fast paced crime thriller set in a near-future colony on the Moon that deals with international intrigue and criminal conspiracies.

The action of Weir's novel is told from the perspective of Jazz Bashara, a young woman born in the Moon colony of Artemis who makes a living as a porter and small time smuggler. However, she dreams of becoming a member of the exclusive EVA Guild, which would allow her to work outside of the environs of the domes that form the small lunar colony and lead a significantly better life. Unfortunately, in the first scene of the book, Jazz fails the certification test that would allow her to do this, which forces her to explore less scrupulous options to make money.

The opportunity to do so is presented by Trond Landvik, one of the richest citizens of Artemis, who often hires Jazz to smuggle items in for him such as Dominican cigars. Landvik heightens the stakes by tasking Jazz to sabotage the massive 'harvesters' used by a company that produces aluminum in the colony (which also allows them to provide oxygen to Artemis, something Weir painstakingly explains along with many of the other scientific principles that allows the colony to exist and function).

As many convoluted criminal plans are wont to do in books and movies, Landvik's scheme quickly falls apart, leaving Jazz to spend much of the novel trying to figure out exactly what she has become involved in and who is behind it all. We also get glimpses into Jazz's somewhat troubled past in letters written throughout her life to Kelvin Otieno, who eventually gets a job with the space agency based in Kenya that runs Artemis and helps with her smuggling operation. Also, the local constable, Rudy DuBois, serves as a foil of sorts and a consistent reminder of Jazz's shortcomings since she was a teen. After the botched attempt to destroy the aluminum harvesters and the subsequent murder of Landvik, the book becomes a typical thriller that happens to be set on the moon, as Jazz investigates a larger conspiracy while avoiding danger at seemingly every turn.

Ultimately, it was going to be difficult for Weir to replicate the massive success and intriguing plot of *The Martian*. This is not to say that *Artemis* is a total failure by any means. Like in his debut, Weir is a master at explaining the science, both actual and theoretical, of surviving in unforgiving environments away from Earth. By setting the action of the novel in an enclosed lunar colony, he creates a sense of claustrophobia where there is literally no escape for the characters attempting to do just that. There are also a number of well-written action scenes that keep the plot moving quickly, such as the

race against time (on the surface of the moon no less) by Jazz to destroy the harvesters by rigging them to explode.

However, there are shortcomings that make *Artemis* less than completely satisfying. The interactions between characters is often clunky, and some of the explanations by Jazz concerning the environment, while often interesting, seem unnatural and a bit forced. Unfortunately, this story could not fully match the absorbing and emotional journey of Mark Watney, the astronaut from *The Martian*, to survive and make it back home against all odds. Yet, despite the novel's flaws, Weir brings a breadth of scientific knowledge to his writing that helps him create unique settings and a sense of wonder in his action sequences. This will hopefully bode well for him in his future works.