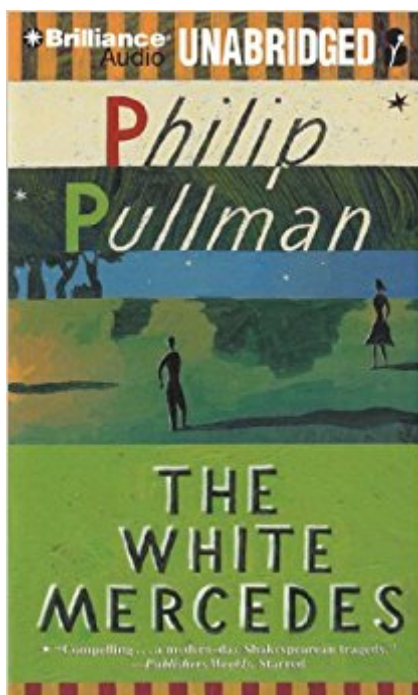


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The White Mercedes



Synopsis

A chance meeting with Jenny at an Oxford party leaves seventeen-year-old Chris with hope for a summer romance - and no premonition of trouble. Busy with his job and soon in love with Jenny, whose cheerful surface belies the dark uncertainty of her past, Chris misses all the signs of danger. Before he knows it, he's caught in the sinister web of a criminal whose desire for revenge crushes all those who stand in his way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The menacing darkness that lurked at the edges of Pullman's trilogy of Victorian-era thrillers (*The Ruby in the Smoke* et al.) comes to the fore in this contemporary tale of shattered innocence and betrayed love set in Oxford, England. From the first line--"Chris Marshall met the girl he was going to kill on a warm night in early June"--the sense of imminent evil and inexorable doom builds unrelentingly to the novel's violent, gutwrenching climax. Naive and well-intentioned, 17-year-old Chris has love, not murder, on his mind when he meets and later beds Jenny (described in lyric and intimate detail), who has run away from her abusive father. Indeed, it is precisely Chris's trusting nature and sense of justice that cause the youth to be duped by a vengeful felon into causing Jenny's death--and only then because she is mistaken for someone else. Here is a modern-day Shakespearean tragedy, with star-crossed lovers separated by fate, a terrifyingly philosophical villain and assorted innocents, cads and buffoons. Its evocative narrative and throat-tightening suspense make this novel a compelling read; however, the graphic sex, moral ambiguity and somber ending make it most suitable for mature YA readers. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1993 Reed

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Philip Pullman was born in Norwich, England, in 1946. He has won many awards, including the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award. His acclaimed trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, has been published in thirty-nine languages. . The Amber Spyglass, the trilogy's astonishing finale, was the first children's book in history to win the Whitbread Book of the Year Award. It was also nominated for the Booker Prize. When he is not writing books, Pullman enjoys drawing, woodworking, and playing the piano. He lives with his family in Oxford, England.

Enough with Romeo and Juliet, enough with 'near-pornography'! The fact that this is a tragedy reminiscent of Shakespeare is used as a contrast of R&J, not a retelling. Its flaws are of logical plot turns and character, not a misplacement in the young adult genre. It IS a young adult novel, written about a boy and girl more realistic, perhaps, than parents would like their children to read about, but it is far from pornographic (look in your school libraries for *Tropic of Cancer* and *Ulysses* if you want something to get angry about). Much is said here about Chapter 6, but what of Chapter 13? Is sex so much worse than an innocent's death? Young people read more graphic things in *Cosmo* and the Bible. This novel is about powerlessness and self-doubt in the face of Fate, and in that it succeeds better than most.

Says tragedy right on the front. I should not complain.

"The White Mercedes" was a tricky read. I found certain parts wholly realistic and understandable, raised my eyebrows in surprise at others, enjoyed some, and shivered with fear at the end. Why? Because this is an unpredictable book. Not in terms of plot (though this mystery will keep you guessing until the last pages), but in terms of atmosphere and mood. "The White Mercedes" has so many parts. It has a tale of growing up, a frightening glimpse at the world of gangsters, and at the core, a semi-typical, semi-obsessive love affair between two teens. The love story is suited for older teens, as many will be able to relate. One slightly graphic scene will discourage younger teens (who will perhaps be less capable of understanding and appreciating many aspects of the book), but older ones will find it pretty much accurate to seventeen year olds. "His Dark Material" fans be warned: "The White Mercedes" is nothing like Pullman's spectacular trilogy. The settings are completely different, as are the characters and the plot. A very different sort of novel. On the whole, the story is intriguing, though not amazing. It has some odd holes, but is still a quick, intense read.

This is a mystery, a love story, a tragedy, and a thriller all at once. Short, but powerful, it's a good book for a rainy afternoon. Not the best book ever written, but an interesting read nonetheless.

Philip Pullman has done it again in this captivating novel about trust, betrayal and love. While *His Dark Materials* was delightful in an innocent, fantastical sort of way, this book seemed a bit darker, more honest, and truer to our life. None of those things are bad or good; they're just different; and if you're expecting another *THE GOLDEN COMPASS*, change your expectations or you may be startled. This is an older children's book, more for fans of Chris Crutcher than C.S. Lewis. The characters are like people you meet on the street, not "destiny children" like Lyra and Will. They have dark pasts and modern-day troubles. You will love them and understand them as normal contemporary people. Pullman's descriptions bring the print of the book to real life. Without ever boring you, he lets you feel Chris's emotions, and Jenny's, and their feelings about their pasts and each other. It's a tragedy book with plentiful references to child abuse, sex and troubled families, which means I wouldn't give it to a ten-year-old who adored *HIS DARK MATERIALS*, but read it yourself and give it to him in a few years' time, and he'll love it for what it is: a compelling modern masterpiece.

You should also know that this very moving YA novel is also known by the title: *The Butterfly Tattoo*. Perhaps it's a British thing, but that's also the title of the forthcoming movie (Pullman's excited about it). Yes, it's dark. Tragic. But, honestly, as with all the tragedies we've ever read, don't get caught in the plot - get caught in the characters and then see what you think. See if it doesn't help you think twice about your assumptions, your judgments in life. The tragedy is we don't examine our pre-judgments... We're often driven more by events and our rushing to keep up with our biases. An unexamined life is also tragic. We could use a good book like this to spur some worthy self-examination.

Fans of Pullman's trilogy should receive a fair warning before moving any further. This is not Lyra's Oxford, this is our Oxford so expect thugs, sex, crime but also love, trust and friendship. Pullman retells the story of *Romeo and Juliet* with extreme adroitness. He manages to keep the lyrical beauty and truth of the play and avoids desperate attempts of retaining any elements that would seem dated and out of place in a modern novel. This is a novel for younger adults but if you feel that your 13+ year olds have never heard about sex, you may need to read it first yourself. The danger is you may get hooked on Pullman seriously.

although i must admit this book didn't have quite as much depth as the sally lockart series and his dark materials series, it was still fantastic. this is a very sad book but i really enjoyed it. i read it in one day. i absolutely love all of philip pullman's books. this book didn't disappoint me, i highly recommend it to you, i'm sure it won't disappoint you either. when chris sees jenny, it is love instantly, although it takes a little for him to get through to her. however jenny is involved in horrible business, someone doesn't like her. and he realizes he is a part of it too, but doesn't mind because he is so head over heels in love. but what would you do if you accidentally, but positively betrayed the one you loved? this is a fantastic you must read!

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