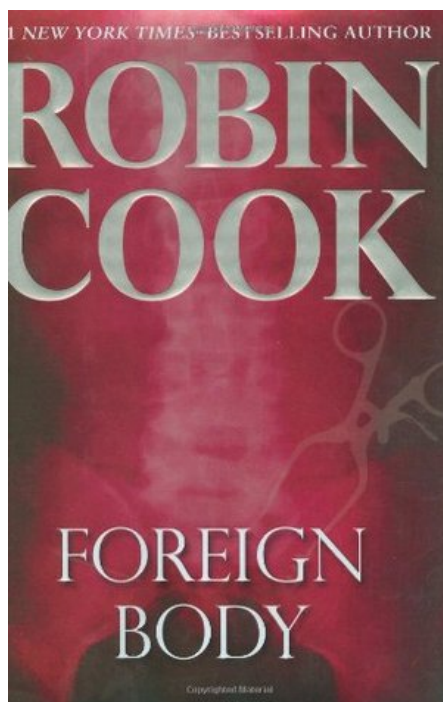




Foreign Body

Robin Cook

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A series of unexplained deaths in foreign hospitals sends an idealistic UCLA medical student on a desperate search for answers, in this chilling tale from the master of the medical thriller.

Jennifer Hernandez is a fourth-year medical student at UCLA, just completing an elective in general surgery, whose world is shattered during a break in an otherwise ordinary day. While relaxing in the surgical lounge of L.A.'s Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, she half-listens to a piece on medical tourism, where first-world citizens travel to third-world countries for surgery. But when she hears her beloved grandmother's name mentioned, her own heart nearly stops: the CNN reporter says Maria Suarez-Hernandez had died, a day after undergoing a hip replacement in New Delhi's Queen Victoria Hospital.

Maria had raised Jennifer and her brothers from infancy, and their bond was unshakable. Still, the news that Maria had traveled to India was a shock to Jennifer, until she realized that it was the only viable option for the hardworking yet uninsured woman. Devastated, and desperate for answers, Jennifer takes emergency leave from school and heads to India, where relations with local officials go from sympathetic to sour as she presses for more information. With the discovery of other unexplained deaths followed by hasty cremations, Jennifer reaches out to her mentor, New York City medical examiner Dr. Laurie Montgomery, who has her own deep connection to Maria.

Laurie, along with her husband, Dr. Jack Stapleton, rushes to the younger woman's side, discovering a sophisticated medical facility with little margin for error. As the death count grows, so do the questions, leading Laurie and Jennifer to unveil a sinister, multilayered conspiracy of global proportions.

Foreign Body Details

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Author : Robin Cook

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From Reader Review Foreign Body for online ebook

Claire says

Made it to page 167 before I gave up on this book. Such shallow and ditzy characters! I almost sprained my eyes from rolling them so hard.

Sue says

Predictable, often boring, uninteresting characters and an implausible plot - I dragged myself through the last half of the book. Disappointing as I have always enjoyed Robin Cook's early medical-thriller books. This latest effort just doesn't match up.

Heather says

This book is finally a slight departure from Cook's recently-typical conspiracy books. He writes it so you can see the deliberate nature of the people cooking up the conspiracy. It's actually kind of horrifying. I was losing interest in his books (I have skipped one or two recently) because they have turned into soap boxes against insurance companies and managed care and were pretty much all the same. I picked this one up because I do like the characters Laurie and Jack and I finished it because I like the style of the writing. My one criticism of this book, and it's minor, is I had just re-read "Harmful Intent" in which the drug used is the same as the one used in this book. Not a big deal, but isn't there anything else that would have served the same purpose but been more original? That made it feel a bit recycled.

Veselina Bakalova-Mihaylovska says

Actually, it is my first book from Robin Cook and I liked it. Although the end was predictable, I enjoyed most of the read. I will try to read it in the right order though.

Tanya says

Why do I keep reading Robin Cook's books? I enjoyed his early works, and I suppose I hope each time he'll have written something as interesting.

"Foreign Body," though, is a perfect example of a book dashed off without concern for its quality to satisfy a publisher's deadline. Cook knows his readers will buy and read (after all, I did), even if the book is sub-par. What can I say? The storyline was predictable, the characters flat, and the plot implausible. Most irritating, though, was the artificial dialogue. It struck me as a script for a puppet show.

So why not give "Foreign Body" only one star? Because it was readable enough to get me from front to back cover in a few days. If nothing else, I enjoyed tallying my grievances as I read!

Em*bedded-in-books* says

My second read of this book and am very disillusioned by the quality of research that has gone on to expose the paucity of Delhi and Varanasi in particular and India in general.

There are too many misrepresented facts that can't be ignored.

The story too is a lukewarm slapdash attempt at creating a medical mystery surrounding medical tourism.

Jennifer Hernandez (I strongly resented this character, she rubbed me the wrong way), a 4th year medical student is shocked to know from CNN news that her grandmother has died under mysterious circumstances after undergoing hip replacement surgery in New Delhi, India. Within a couple of days, another 2 US citizens die in reputed hospitals in Delhi after undergoing elective surgical procedures. Jennifer flies to Delhi to investigate, dragging in Laurie Montgomery (her mentor) and Jack Stapleton, Laurie's husband), both of them reputed forensic pathologists. Jennifer's boyfriend Neal too joins the melee..

they uncover disheartening facts.

Veena Chandra, is a nurse employed by an American company, who has a hand in these mysterious deaths. She is another character who has a major role in the turn of the events.

The whole story was improbable and ludicrous. I usually don't find out loopholes, unless they are pointed out to me. But this novel made me proud of myself.

Later on, I will enumerate all the drawbacks of this story, but suffice to say, this is one book that I won't recommend to anyone.

Becky says

Some of Robin Cook's books are really good, but lately all of the books tell a story for a while and then he just ends them. It's like he's decided he has enough pages so he summarizes in 10 pages (quite unrealistically) and is finished.

Patti Phillips says

Robin Cook, author of over two dozen medical thrillers, took on the medical tourism industry in "Foreign Body." As in all his books, we are invited to view the dark side of medicine, so if you are considering traveling overseas to get a kidney transplant or a hip replacement, think again. Just kidding... maybe... ;-)

The sinister plot revolves around the untimely passing of a sixtyish grandmother after undergoing hip surgery in India. The fourth-year medical student granddaughter, Jennifer Hernandez, finds out about her loss while watching CNN in California only hours after granny has died. Medical tourism is the culprit behind the death (and two others), with American medical company employees out to discredit surgeries performed in other countries in order to keep business firmly in the USA.

We know who is at fault from the beginning, but the fun is in seeing how the granddaughter travels to India and unravels the complex crime, then discovers the criminals trying to cover their tracks. Her mentor, NYC medical examiner Dr. Laurie Montgomery, and Laurie's husband, Dr. Jack Stapleton, follow Hernandez to

India when unexplained medical questions arise and she is pressured unnecessarily to cremate her grandmother. We aren't sure until nearly the end how it will all work out, but we are fully invested in the characters as the tension mounts and the stakes escalate.

I met Dr. Cook at a writer's conference (where he was interviewed by "Sandstorm" author, James Rollins) and he was kind enough to autograph a copy of "Foreign Body" for my mother, a huge fan. She chose it for me to read to her during a hospital stay and several chapters work well as cliffhangers. It was hard to put down and leave behind when the story moved along so well. Fun read.

Fans of Cook have probably seen the movie, "Coma." The book of the same name was Cook's breakthrough novel, largely defining the 'medical thriller' genre over thirty years ago.

Kate says

I've listened to many of Robin Cook's novels on book-on-tape. I did the same with this story. The story of medical tourism and corruption from the inside of the business out is very intriguing through out the novel but I still hold true to the truth that if I had to actually pick up the novel and read it, I would put it down and touch it again every couple months to read a chapter here and there to once again discover that yes, I do not enjoy Robin's writing style. This novel takes place over a span of a week or so, maybe less, you lose track of the days after many hours of listening. Everything that happens seems very dragged out, more or less to the point that the prologue took an hour by the professional's voice to listen to. I don't enjoy books where everything is too slow, and during the listening I did notice three or four errors in the writing the way things were worded, did not quite add up to be a professional novelist. The story it's self about Jennifer trying to find out what happened to her grandmother while away for medical tourism was a good story, I just wish that at points more things were included. I would have liked to see more of how her and Neil's relationship effected the decisions made by Jennifer. In the end of the book, it seemed to just end without any real closure for the story. After hearing the last chapter I was wondering why it was over. With so much detail through out the novel to wrap it all up in one sentence. The eipologue was not satisfying to that existent either. When the tape said it was over all I could think was "that's it?"

April says

You know, I really used to enjoy Robin Cook. I don't know if I've become too good of a reader for him or if he's having someone else write his stuff for him now. It's sad. I knew what was going to happen from the very beginning and the coversation was horrible. Oh well. I guess I'll just stick to his old stuff and hope that he stops writing soon so the majority of his books are good.

Jody says

I generally like medical thrillers and used to enjoy Robin Cook but lately I find his writing, especially his dialogue to be implausible. He over uses the exclamation point and I find myself thinking again and again, 'no one talks like this'.

D.K. Cherian says

A great story. Laurie Montgomery and Jack Stapleton are back, though in a cursory role in this fast paced novel which uncovers a plot to discredit the Medical Tourism business in India and Asia.

A company has been set up to provide training and visas to Indian nurses so that they can get jobs in the US. But this was actually a front to gather data from the hospitals catering to rich foreigners who have come to India solely for the purpose of undergoing various surgical procedures at much more affordable and attractive rates.

When this company discovers that the actual success rates for surgery and post-op in India was outstanding they decide to opt for the unethical solution – create their own bad data for each of these hospitals, thereby discrediting the Medical Tourism business in India and Asia in general, which would guarantee an end result of Americans spending their hard earned money in the US itself instead of choosing cheaper options abroad. The plot is fast paced and the suspense is spine-tingling. It starts off with the death of a medical student's grandmother and the hospital forcing her to make a decision on the body – which in turn gets her hackles up. Upon dogged investigation and sheer luck, she stumbles upon two other similar cases and touches base with the grieving family.

Our favourite MEs – Laurie and Jack play only a cursory role in the drama as Laurie flies down to India with Jack in reluctant tow (owing to the fact that the couple is trying hard to get pregnant and can't miss any opportunity during the fertility treatment).

For most of the book, Robin Cook's research into India can clearly be seen. Care has been taken to describe even the small details with great accuracy.

The medical student dominates the plot – her character is well-rounded – intelligent, sharp and strong while still maintaining the usual human emotions as she is grieving for her beloved grandmother.

The hospital staff, while not the cause of the deaths, are still trying to cover their own behind and save face; such a response would definitely be expected, especially from a business that relies completely on the medical tourism business i.e. foreigners and their foreign currency.

The shell or fake company that provides training for the nurses are the bad guys here. And while the big bosses of the company are clearly without ethics what surprised me was the characters of the Indian nurses. This company had hired honest-to-God, hardworking, decent Indian nurses who all had ambitions of working in the US. None of them had any criminal records, and when the bosses hired them they did not consider any morally bankrupt individuals since the main purpose of the company was going to be the gathering of data from these hospitals regarding the failure rate. It had been assumed that failure rate and post-op infection would have been common in a third world country like India and the hospitals themselves were covering up the bad data. As this was not the case, the bosses of the fake company decide to use the same Indian nurses to act as angels of death in the hospitals to which they had been farmed out to.

I am quite confident that no matter how badly Indians want to work abroad, they would not have a complete change of character from good to evil and easily partake in murder as though it was commonly done by them. This portrayed Indians and Indian women in a bad light, especially since, nowadays Indian women are more empowered.

That aside, the story was gripping and a must read.

Mark Fallon says

And people wonder why I hate hospitals.....

Russ Hughes says

Corruption runs rampant through India. The big dogs look out for themselves, and only themselves. Any way to make a bit of money is not out of reach, and Jennifer Hernandez hears of her grandmother's sudden death during elective surgery in India, she becomes suspicious. Jennifer ends up traveling to India and finds herself caught in the center of a web of conspiracy and corruption. Robin Cook's *Foreign Body* provoked thoughts of the plausibility of similar instances happening in reality.

Unfortunately, this book contains certain characteristics that disappointed me. One, over-casting, can degrade from the overall effect of a book by going into too much detail involving minor characters. Another problem of over-casting involves remembering characters. With so many characters, remembering every one, and relevant information involving them, becomes difficult. Robin Cook also uses strange names in *Foreign Body*, which is justified because the events unfold in India. However, he uses names very similar to each other, for example the names Rajish and Ramesh can be confused very easily.

Another dissatisfying trait that this book possesses is the point at which the book caught my interest. By the time I actually reached the good part of this book, I had sworn that I would never read another of Cook's books. The satisfying action in this book occurred within the last twenty percent of the novel. Most books have action placed throughout, but this manuscript concentrated all interesting parts near the very end. Not only is the action too concentrated, but also any decent skirmish dissipates momentarily quickly.

Thus far I have not allowed Robin Cook any leeway or slack. Thus far I have criticized and cut down his work, but despite all of the negative aspects of this novel, some positive features exist. For one, this book made me think. The events told of in this paperback seem impossible at first, but upon further inspection, a revelation may occur. Some people will do anything for money and power. Inside this tale, greedy, despicable humans inside this book and outside commit crimes remorselessly just to gain material possessions or power. This book simply provokes one to question the morality of big business, their government and others, and perhaps other seemingly normal people. After reading this novel, I realized that anyone can succumb to corruption, and given the right circumstances, definitely will.

Regretfully, this book's over-casting, slow pace, and other degrading traits take away from the thought provoking aspects of this novel. If read through completely, *Foreign Body* becomes a decent read, but the difficulty lies in reading through the book completely. Had I not have to have read the book for AP Biology, I would have thrown the paperback into the fire and realize that watching the sorry book burn actually turned out to be more entertaining than reading to where I got to. I must say, I do not recommend this book to anyone save die hard Robin Cook fans. To be quite blunt, Robin Cook's *Foreign Body* was a complete waste of time and given the opportunity, I would un-read the pitiable novel.

506 Pages

Judy VanDeWoestyne says

Good book. It kept my interest to the end.
