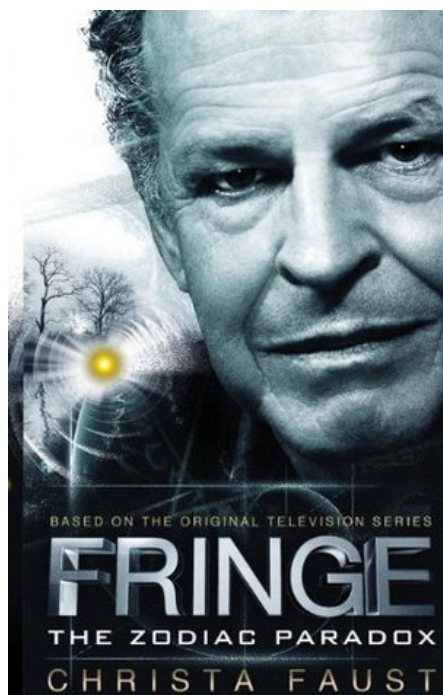




The Zodiac Paradox

Christa Faust

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In 1971 university students Walter Bishop and William Bell use an exotic chemical compound to link their subconscious minds. Unexpectedly, they open a rip in space through which comes a menace unlike any our world has ever seen - the Zodiac Killer. His singular goal is death, and it falls to Bishop, Bell, and Nina Sharp to stop him.

The Zodiac Paradox Details

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From Reader Review The Zodiac Paradox for online ebook

Joshua Palmatier says

I am a huge fan of FRINGE and was disappointed when the show ended. I was ecstatic when I realized that there would be three books released and immediately ordered all three. Only the first two are out at the moment, and I've had a chance to read the first of the three.

The premise: We join Walter Bishop and William Bell (along with Nina Sharp) when they are college students in the late 60s and 70s. Experimenting with a new acid mixture at Reiden Lake, Walter and William encounter a strange side effect of the mix: they link minds, and somehow open a portal to the alternate universe. Before they realize that's happened, someone steps through into our world and for a brief, terrifying moment, they link minds with this man--a cold-hearted killer. But when the acid trip ends, they decide that the entire episode was simply a wild acid trip, since the man has vanished and there's no sign of the portal. But years later, they run into the man again, and realize they've brought a serial killer into our world: the Zodiac Killer. Now they need to figure out how to send him back, before he kills again. Only now, the Zodiac Killer is after them.

This book was a mixed bag to me. For a long while, I was going to rate it as 2 out of 5 stars, not 3. It was great to get back to the characters from the TV series, especially Walter, who's character is what made the series work in that first season in my opinion. I liked the set-up of the story as well, considering the mystery that still surrounds the Zodiac Killer. So playing with the idea that the serial killer came from the other side was intriguing. The story presented here itself was good.

My problem, and the reason I was leaning toward 2 stars, was two-fold after that. First, the writing really isn't all that great. It's decent, and serves the story, but it doesn't have the emotional depth that I like in my fiction. I wasn't dragged into the emotions of the characters all that much. Maybe once or twice in a few moments, but nothing like what I expect from the novels I read. I want to BE those characters, and in this book, I didn't get that engaged.

And the second problem was that the characters just weren't quite right. William Bell came across as completely flat. I have to admit that I never felt that the William Bell character in the show was developed all that well either, so maybe my reaction is just a reflection of that. But he felt like a set piece that was moved around here and there, not really a full-fledged character. Now, Walter's character felt just like Walter from the show . . . which is the problem. The entire premise of Walter's character from the show is that BEFORE he had those pieces of his brain removed, he was a rather hard, not very likable person. Only after the pieces were removed did he become someone that he wanted to be. This book is set BEFORE those pieces of his brain were removed, but he was the same person he was in the show, not the hard-nosed man he ended up despising (and fearing he'd become again) by the end of the series. So there was a disconnect with the accepted lore based on the series there, in my opinion.

Nina Sharp's character in the book was great and spot-on, I felt. Out of the three, she was the best represented.

In the end, I enjoyed the story and the way the author interplayed elements of the show with this past life. There are plenty of good "connections" that fans of the show can make as the story plays out. But there were some disjointed elements that I had a problem with (mostly dealing with characters) and the writing wasn't as sharp as I'd hoped. I'll certainly read the next two books . . . and likely any other books that they decide to release . . . but I'm hoping that the writing and the story lines improve.

Harikleia says

Warning: Do not read unless you have a complete understanding of the Fringe TV Series.

“Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox” is one prequel to the TV series and shows why certain characters did certain things later on. It takes place in the early 1970s, about 40 years before the TV show’s storyline, when there is no Fringe Division, and there is only one major character from the series, Walter Bishop and two supporting characters, Nina Sharp and William Bell are seemingly promoted to major characters. There are cases that were never mentioned before, but they explain the later events. Most people write the first book first, and then continue in order chronologically. The book was based off of the TV show, but still manages to keep the sense of order, even though it was not decided that the events of the TV show would be explained by the events of The Zodiac Paradox until Christa Faust decided to write it in her book.

The Zodiac Paradox also gives a reasonable explanation to the “Zodiac Mystery” of the 1960s and 1970s, though a strange one (no one would think that such a person came from the Parallel Universe and had trouble with himself). The favorite scientist, Walter Bishop is messing around with William Bell and they accidentally open a rift between universes, in which a person uses to accidentally travel to this universe, the Prime Universe. When he starts to wreak havoc, Walter and his friends find out about the mistake they made, and try to set things right. Being a biochemist, there is only one way they can do this. How it turns out lies within the book.

Christa Faust did a remarkable job in tying her novel to the original TV series and reality at the same time, considering that most of the previous major characters are not present. Congratulations on getting 5 stars!

David Agranoff says

Before I get into this tie-in novel, I want to talk about the show it was spun off from. I am assuming if you’re checking out this book review you probably watched the FOX show. Fringe is one of my favorite shows of all time. I know many who watched the pilot and just a few episodes feel like Fringe is just an X-files rip-off.

If you watched the show you know it is much more science fiction than X-files and in my opinion it has a better mythology. Walter Bishop played in emmy/ golden globe worthy performances over five season by John Noble is one of my favorite TV characters. The mythology of the show extends into alternate universes and perfectly incorporated monsters of the week which were always based on interesting sci-fi concepts. All the characters were well written and performed. The finale was heartbreaking and tear jerker so I was pleased when scanning the shelves in Sci-fi and saw this book.

What made me even more excited was seeing the name of the author. Christa Faust is a great writer twice nominated for the Edgar award. This told me instantly that the book would be high quality. Two Faust written Fringe novels have been released and from what I can tell we will get a third and maybe a fourth. It also appears that Faust had access to writers from the show to develop these books.

It seems she is genuine fan of the show and the characters, which is not always the case in Tie-in novels. I only had tiny nit-picks with how the characters were realized in the book, but they were such small problems they are not worth going into.

This is a very Fringe story, set in the late sixties and 70’s with young Walter Bishop, William Bell and Nina Sharp. Tied into the Zodiac killings, experimental drugs and an alternate universe origin of the Zodiac killer.

Faust ties all these elements together and created a excellently realized prequel. Above average prose for a tie-in and short fast moving chapters make this a must read for Fringe fans.

Scott Rhee says

Movie/TV tie-ins and novelizations are generally critic-proof. They are usually written solely for fans, who aren't necessarily reading them for brilliance of language or poetic flourishes. Indeed, it seems pointless to even comment on how well- or poorly written a tie-in is, so I won't even go there with Christa Faust's first of a three-part trilogy of novels based on the TV show Fringe, "The Zodiac Paradox". "Fringe", created by JJ Abrams, was one of the best sci-fi shows to grace TV screens since the wonderful "The X Files". It was, in fact, heavily inspired by that now-classic show.

The set-up: A special branch of the FBI known as Fringe Division is created to investigate an unusual number of crimes and incidents that seem to have no scientific explanation. Led by the skeptical but intrepid (and sexy and blonde) young agent Olivia Dunham, the team recruits one of the most brilliant scientific minds of the 21st century. Unfortunately, Dr. Walter Bishop's brain has been atrophying as a patient for the past decade in a Boston mental institution, where Dunham finds him. Dr. Bishop, a literal mad scientist, will only be released if his estranged son, Peter, signs him out and agrees to care for him. The equally-brilliant but morally questionable (and sexy and rugged) Peter Bishop (Dunham tracks him down in Baghdad, where he appears to be running guns) reluctantly joins the Fringe team.

Obviously, the sexual tension between Peter and Olivia runs high from the start, but the real reason that fans tuned in every week was Dr. Bishop (played wonderfully by actor John Noble), whose alternating scientific brilliance, child-like obsession with food, and heart-breaking moments of memories lost and regained stole every scene he was in.

Faust's novel provides the back-story that fans of the show have only gleaned from occasional references. Set in 1971, young scientists Bishop and William Bell are experimenting with their own lab-made hallucinogen (an early batch of cortexiphan) at Reiden Lake, when they create a powerful psychic link that accidentally tears a hole in the fabric of space-time, and a serial killer from the alternate universe comes through. This serial killer flees to San Francisco and begins to wreak havoc as the Zodiac killer. Bishop and Bell (with the help of Nina Sharp) track him down in order to stop him and send him back to his own universe. Unfortunately, a renegade FBI agent is also on the trail of the killer, not to stop him but to recruit him as a weapon for the U.S. government.

I'll admit, it was fun to read the continuing adventures of a young, pre-institutionalized Dr. Walter Bishop. As a stand-alone episode of Fringe, I think Faust succeeds in creating something that true fans will appreciate. As a stand-alone novel (for those who have never seen the show) it could probably have used more character development. The problem, of course, is that true fans would probably not need character development for characters that are already pretty well-established. Despite its flaws, though, "The Zodiac Paradox" is worth a read for Fringe fans, and I look forward to reading the next two in the series.

Shara says

My Review: 4 - Problematic, but Promising

Let's be honest: I went into this with LOW expectations. LOW because when it comes to media tie-in novels, they have a bad reputation for not being well-written, and most of the time, the authors skimp on all the usual things that original novels demand: setting, characterization, world-building, etc, knowing their readers are fans of the franchise they're writing in and will therefore fill in the blanks. Not ALL media tie-in novels are like this, but that's the reputation, and that's what I expected when I broke down and pre-ordered *Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox* for my Kindle. Because while I assumed it would be *bad*, I miss *Fringe* and I couldn't resist seeing what the spin-off novels would be like.

I got what I expected, with a notch above in terms of quality/interest level. The pluses: Nina was very well presented on the page (I was going to say very *sharp* on the page, but that would've been a grown-worthy pun), and I liked her interactions with Walter, Bell, and her housemates. I also really liked Faust's characterization and POV of the Zodiac Killer (where he comes from rocked my world), because while some of it was a little too pat and stereotypical for me, I couldn't deny feeling very engaged by his POV.

Walter, as much as I love that character, left me in confusing shambles. I kept seeing OUR Walter: the *Fringe* universe Walter, the Walter after he's been in a mental institute for years and years, the Walter who's missing some vital parts of his noggin. That's how he came off to me, but this story? Is a YOUNG Walter. A Walter before all that other stuff happened. And while I could acknowledge the author may be making a case that OUR Walter was the original Walter all along, but events shaped him into the hard man he became that cost him so much, and the Zodiac Killer was one of the main triggering events. I can get that as an argument, but on paper, as shown in the novel, I couldn't. I wanted a different Walter, one different from the man I know and love and cried for. I want a devil-may-care Walter, someone who might feel a bit guilty about some of the things he has to do, but is able to put them aside for the sake of science, for justice.

William Bell, as a character, came off as a sounding box for whatever needed to be said, whenever it needed to be said. I never fully bought him as a character so much as a mouthpiece, but given William Bell's role in the show, I can't say I'm surprised. The character has always been enigmatic.

The writing as a whole is mostly generic (including one painful shout-out to William Gibson's *Neuromancer*), with nothing fleshed out and, as expected, the reader is required to fill in the blanks. This isn't a book I'd give to someone to introduce them to the *Fringe* universe: this is a book I'd give to someone who's missing that universe, wants new adventures, and doesn't place too much stock in whether or not the book is considered "high literature." It's fun and fast to read, and I'll admit it: I've pre-ordered the next two books, if only to see what Olivia and Peter's prequel adventures will be like.

Ramsey Isler says

As a *Fringe* story, this books works pretty well but as a novel taken on its own merits it's fairly average.

If you're a fan of the show (and you'd have to be to have any interest in this book at all), the main thing you'll be interested in is the portrayal of Walter Bishop. I can say for certain that Faust's characterization of Walter is very much in line with what you saw in the TV series. For most fans, this will be a welcome relief and an enjoyable aspect of the book. But part of me wishes that the author took more liberties with Walter's youth. Everyone changes as they mature, but in this book Walter in his late twenties is pretty much exactly the same as Walter in his sixties (even the way he dresses).

The story does often feel like an overlong standalone episode of the series (in both good ways and bad). It's a good concept, and one that fits into the *Fringe* lore.

But a great concept needs great execution, and this book has a few issues. These supposedly genius-level characters often do fairly stupid things, and although Nina comes off as the "sharpest" of the bunch, she and William Bell are still lacking the cunning minds we came to know in the series. Also, the author does a little too much description for my tastes. She often delves into long descriptions of minutiae about side characters who barely appear for a few pages, and places that are just briefly visited. I don't mind descriptive, rich world-building, but sometimes it should be done with a light touch so the main story can flow. Far too often, the descriptions got in the way of the story and I found myself fighting the urge to skip over paragraphs. But, I'll readily admit this is a matter of reading taste and others may find this style to their liking.

If you really, really liked *Fringe* and you felt the series ended too soon, this book will definitely give you your fix. If you were a more of a casual fan, you might not like this as much.

disclosure: I received a free ARC copy from the publisher

Deena says

Being a huge fan of the TV series, I was extremely happy when I found out that a series of tie-in books would be coming out that furthered the Fringe universe and would give fans some new material concerning the backstories of the main characters.

I was excited to know more about Walter and Bell's friendship prior to where the TV series begins, and when I read the synopsis for *The Zodiac Paradox* I was super excited; I even pre-ordered the book on Amazon because I couldn't wait to have my own copy. Unfortunately, what begins as a very interesting premise turns into a sloppy mess by the end of the novel.

I wanted so badly to give this book more than one star just for the sake of it being a continuation into the lives of the characters I grew to love on the show, but the sloppy writing was too much for me to bear and I knew I would be lying if I gave this book more than one star.

For about the first 30 pages, I was pretty optimistic that the book would be good; I liked where the story was going and how the author was able to blend a real-life serial killer in with the sci-fi universe of *Fringe*. Plus, I've always been a little fascinated with the Zodiac killings and I figured it would be a good fit for this type of setting.

However, the grammar and punctuation errors in this book are abundant and really began to take me out of the story. This book needed a much better editor to fix these mistakes and make the story more condensed. I would say a good 50 pages could have been edited out of the book to make it better.

I also thought a lot of the dialogue was cheesy and melodramatic. For example, on page 262 in relation to the Zodiac killer FBI Agent Iverson says, "'You want to repay me?' he asked. 'Whatever you do, don't let Latimer capture the Zodiac. He's become obsessed, and can't be reasoned with. He thinks Zodiac is the ultimate nuclear weapon, and all he cares about is controlling him. It's up to you three to prevent it.'"

Overall, this was one of my most disappointing reads so far this year. I will still continue reading the other books in the series because I love *Fringe*, but I've lowered my expectations a considerable amount. I guess I will just shelve this book under guilty pleasures, even though it would probably be a job trying to get myself to read through this again.

Trekscribbler says

If you missed Fox TV's popular FRINGE television program, then you missed something special. For those of us who tuned in regularly were rewarded with a richly written program that tackled such subjects of life, death, and the very nature of existence. Multiple worlds were discovered and fractured timelines were breached as the Fringe Division – a special subset of the broader FBI dedicated to cases that defied conventional explanation – went about solving puzzles that couldn't be easily fit into the appropriate boxes. Even richer were the characters – a mad scientist, his anti-authority son, and an FBI agent tasked with keeping them in check – who, each episode, took audiences on adventures that shattered expectations. It all built up to something very special ... but, now, author Christa Faust offers readers a chance to understand where it all really began with a look into the past of these characters.

And it's a past they may never have suspected possible ...

(NOTE: The following review will contain minor spoilers necessary solely for the discussion of plot and characters. If you're the kind of reader who prefers a review entirely spoiler-free, then I'd encourage you to skip down to the last two paragraphs for my final assessment. If, however, you're accepting of a few modest hints at 'things to come,' then read on ...)

A young Walter Bishop and his friend, William Bell, are experimenting with a consciousness-linking hallucinogen when they stumble across a startling discovery: with their minds linked together, they find they have inadvertently opened a porthole to what appears to be another universe. What they cannot know is that, in doing so, they've accidentally released the depraved Zodiac Killer back into our reality. Flashes of the man's future convince them they know when he'll strike again ... but can two college students with only their flawed memories convince the authorities that what they know is true?

For my tastes, THE ZODIAC PARADOX starts very slow, almost lethargic, and part of that may be deliberate. As I've come to understand, this is only the first of three novels being published over the next few months, all of them written by Christa Faust. Ms. Faust was given unprecedented access to the show's creative staff in order to plot out the course of these novels; and, without being absolutely certain, I tend to think that each will only build on the central mystery presented. Because this first novel may only be one part (one-third, to be precise) of a much bigger story, I have to wonder if more deliberate attempts at set-up were underway.

However, after about one hundred pages in to the 350 page novel, it all tightens up. It becomes clear that ZODIAC is – in every possible sense of the word – a prequel, and I've no doubt accepting that what Faust delivers is intended to be the definitive background of just how Bishop, Bell, and the mysterious Nina Sharp (all from the Fox TV show) met, as well as what their collaboration set into motion. That would appear to be the overwhelming dynamic, especially when you get to the last few pages of the book, as the interpersonal scope of this odd trinity is established.

Given that I may only be responding to one piece of a larger puzzle, I'm not entirely certain I can do justice to this story in a single review; still, without spoiling anything, I'm comfy concluding that everything at work in ZODIAC certainly works based on the mythology and characters of the TV show. Bishop is young and idealistic, and he allows his said idealism to occasionally stand in their way; by contract, Bell – his most influential partner – believes that the undiluted exploration of science is precisely what's needed for their future together. They're two sides of the same coin, so to speak, but both rely on the other in times of dire need. Exactly what role Sharp will play in this 'intellectual property' remains to be seen, though Nina herself has her sights clearly set in accomplishing Bell's bidding.

I would imagine that long-time fans of FRINGE (the show) will be delighted by ZODIAC. It's hard to say

how newcomers to the property will embrace the novel; having a working familiarity with the cases of the Zodiac Killer certainly helps in understanding everything that's going on here, but what's more greatly rewarded is a grasp of the themes and 'fringe' science examined by the Fox program. Coupling that with these events, it becomes clear just how vivid this portrait of Bell and Bishop's younger days is and what it will mean in the decades to come.

FRINGE: THE ZODIAC PARADOX is published by Titan Books. The tale is written by author Christa Faust. The book bears the cover price of \$7.99 ... and that's a small investment indeed to once again visit a handful of characters and inspirations of the FRINGE universe.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. FRINGE: THE ZODIAC PARADOX starts slow – in part because the entire episodes is fueled by a radical drug trip experienced by the young Walter Bishop and William Bell – but, about halfway, the entirety of the set-up makes perfect sense. This is a prequel in every sense of the word, revisiting only a handful of the characters audiences met in Fox Television's popular FRINGE program. Despite a successful ending, parts of it felt a bit rushed while other parts felt entirely unnecessary and/or mildly inconsequential – but as this is only the first of three books by Christa Faust being published very closely together, I'm inclined to belief that it may end up being part of a bigger, broader mystery. Definitely for fans of the show; newcomers may find themselves scratching their heads more than once or twice.

Jasper says

Originally posted at <http://thebookplank.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-zodiac-paradox.html>

The Zodiac Paradox is the first tie-in novel set in the Fringe universe. Fringe is a well popular TV series that has been airing for five seasons with 100 episodes. I have watched several episodes myself and I am a big fan of the supernatural aspects. The tie-in novels aim to reveal much more about the the mythology of Fringe and how everything came to pass. Featuring never before aired material. In total three books will be released: The Zodiac Paradox, The Burning Man and Sins of the Father.

The first book in the series, The Zodiac Paradox, picks up in September of 1968, and introduces us to Walter Bishop and William Bell. They are experimenting with several hallucinogenic substances trying to link their subconscious together. But what they hadn't expect was what they brought along with it, opening a gate from another dimension, giving rise to a new Zodiac Killer. However they do not fully understand until a few years later when there are newspaper articles and photographs and things fall into place. Now it falls into the hands of these scientists to undo what they have brought into the world. But not really understanding what they did and how they did it and even how to catch the Zodiac Killer, Walter and William have a lot to learn...

The Zodiac Paradox is the first tie-in book to the popular TV series, however for me with only having watched a couple of episodes, a lot of the idea's and the general descriptions felt new and very interesting. The books starts of with the right set of mind, introducing the events that will eventually lead up to the chase to catch The Zodiac Killer in the remainder of the book. When I first read the scenes is was like, "Ok, what?" but later on you get to learn more and more on how everything came to pass and I think that this is one aspect where the book gets it's strength from, slowly building up the storyline step by step, exposing more and more of the first steps of the frigne division. Which makes this book, I think, in addition to readers who are familiar with Fringe a valuable addition to get more background information, and for reader who are like me less familiar a great new start of an interesting series. In essence it's a great supernatural thriller/crime, if you have never heard of Fringe before.

The two main characters, William and Walter are shown just in a spot on manner regarding their background and their part in the story. They are both scientists and this greatly reflects how they act in the book. Wanting to find out how things exactly work but also, giving great thought about how to plan it, being confronted with The Zodiac Killer they come to the conclusion that it is better from them to do a mind-to-mind battle instead of challenging him physically and of course repeat the experiment! This both gives some laughable moments but also some very serious and tense moments. Nina Sharp comes in the story a bit later on, her job feels that she is more or less keeping Walter and William in check, not to let their enthusiasm run to wild of a course. In terms of each of the three main characters, Christina Faust has done an excellent job in voicing them, they feel young, vibrant and are keen on undertaking.

The bad guy of the story, The Zodiac Killer get his own point-of-view in the story, though a bit more early compared to the later parts of the book. This does add another layer to the story. The Zodiac Killer is clearly a psychopath and his action really reflect this, but he is also struggling with himself what he now is and the pleasing the voices in his head. When I read a the introduction of "Dear Editor" I knew that his character would haunt me, and he did. He is creepy and doesn't show remorse, especially when you see him lurking in the shadows planning his next move, there are also a few close encounters between him and Walter and William where I actually thought it would be a done deal. I really like when bad guys get their own visions in a book, really adds much more flavour to the story.

The mythology of Fringe is shown in a nice way in The Zodiac Paradox, laying the focus on the early discovery and the subsequent testing of the drug Cortexaphan. Because the original TV series starts of with several things already well established, these new insights in the book about everything for me proved to be really fruitful, and I am interested to learn more and more about it the history in the books to follow. The Zodiac Paradox can be read as a stand alone book since the story is well contained and has a solid ending, lets see what else will be revealed soon!

The Zodiac Paradox makes up great start of this tie-in series (just a note: not having watched all the episodes I cannot say it has all new info), but I can say that I enjoyed it a lot and when read without any or less knowledge of the TV series proves to be just as great. Christina Faust wrote up a great beginning of the book, building up the story step by step with all that was possible and the consequences of the actions. Making this introduction and describing the events in a engaging manner which made me feel right here in the story. The whole supernatural aspect of the book resonates quite nicely through the pages and the eagerness of William and Walter to explore the possibilities of the drug and that even they don't fully understand the potential yet, leaves enough open space for the story to continue with. The second book in the Fringe series, The Burning Man was released July 16th by Titan Books.

Robin Burks says

I received a review copy of Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox by Christa Faust from Titan Books, which is fortunate, because I was an avid fan of the Fringe television series. But how does the book compare? Read on for my full review.

Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox serves as a prequel to the hit Fox television series. In this new book, Walter Bishop, Nina Sharp and William “Belly” Bell are in their early 20’s and they have not yet become a part of Global Dynamics. They’re still kids, but they’re the most brilliant minds of their generation. When Walter and William start experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs, they unwittingly open a gateway to an alternate universe. Through that gate comes a killer, one of the most remembered of the time: The Zodiac Killer. It’s up to Walter, William and Nina to make sure the killer gets sent back to where he came from.

It's interesting to see the characters in their younger incarnations in the book. Walter, however, hasn't changed much from the bumbling genius that he is to grow into and that we know from the television series. I still don't feel like I know William Bell, very well, though – he's always been enigmatic and remains so in this book. Nina, however, is different and much more vibrant as a young woman and this book shows a side of her I wish we could have seen on-screen. The characters are written true to form and seeing them in their younger incarnations is fascinating.

There are many things in this book that actually lead up to things that happened on the television. We see the early form of cortexiphan and the results that Walter and William had with it. We also see some foreshadowing of Walter's own future concerning his son and the beginnings of what will eventually become the government's Fringe division.

Unfortunately, another thing seen when reading this book is a great deal of typos. These things don't usually spoil my reading experience, but when they're as noticeable as they are here, it does provide some distraction from the story. I will also admit that I was a little let down that we didn't see more hints about Olivia Dunham, but the book does take place in 1971, before she was born. However, Walter does have a vision about Peter, so I suppose there's that.

With that being said, fans of Fringe will enjoy this book, which expands the story a little further and gives us a good background of just how things began. You can buy it now on Amazon.

Melissa says

As an avid fan of the television series Fringe, I was a bit skeptical about a tie-in novel. However, I love the series so much and I love reading as well, so I decided to give this book a chance to win me over. I'm glad I gave it the chance, because this book was definitely better than expected. I think the real key to the success of this book and the believable feel of the tie-in aspect was the fact that Christina Faust did not try to recreate the series itself, but decided to go back long before the Fringe team was formed and delve into the histories and beginnings of Walter Bishop, William Bell, and Nina Sharp. With all of the science, action, and breathtaking cliff hangers of an episode of the show, The Zodiac Paradox drew me in and didn't let me go until the last word on the last page. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this book for me were the minute details that tied the book in with the rest of the show. These details were not so blatant as to make me feel as if I were being hit across the face with them, but rather were subtly woven into the larger picture of the story and made me gasp with surprise every time a new connection was made. While I would not necessarily recommend this book for non-watchers of the show, it is not completely impossible to follow the story-line from an outsider's perspective. Overall, a great story and an enjoyable return to the world of Fringe.

Vikas says

I watched Fringe TV series later than usual being in India at that time only way to watch it was to download the episodes which I did with extreme eagerness for this was a wonderful Sci-Fi series which actually ended properly. So it was fun to revisit that world after a long time. These series are a prequel series each focusing on one of the main character this first book focuses of exploits of Walter Bishop in 60s and 70s along with Bell and Nina Sharp.

This mostly focuses on how Bishop and Bell open up the first gate which allows a criminal from the other dimension to our world and he turns out to be the Zodiac killer yes Fringe takes a swing at the Zodiac case to

make it sci-fi and also details how the Fringe department in FBI came in existence. This was a fun read and Bishop and Bell's friendship and the way they stumble through their experience and their experiments in Boston and San Francisco of 70s. It was fun to learn about the history of these characters.

Do check this book if you already seen the Fringe TV series because this would be better and would give you much more fun but even if you haven't seen the series it's still a good sci-fi book, read it then Keep on Reading.

Soulfire says

A couple months ago I re-watched Fringe and immediately after doing that I wanted MORE! So I searched and found this series. As anyone that has read book adaptations of non-book worlds know they can be hit or miss. I've loved some Star Trek books and hated others, the same with the Fable video game books. However, I really wanted more in the world and bought the first one, without reading the blurb, not sure why I did that.

I should have been clued in by the title but I was still surprised that the book was about the Zodiac Killer. I've read some books on serial killers that of course mention the Zodiac but it's been a few years so I couldn't tell you if the facts were right. Honestly, I don't think it matters.

The story was interesting and revolved around Walter, Bell, and Nina. It was nice to see them younger and see the beginning of... everything really. You saw Bell and Nina get it on for the first time and their more than romantic bond begin. You also saw the beginning of chortexisphan (?).

I was unsure of the depiction of Walter. In most of the flashbacks that I remember in the TV show he seemed very focused on Science, but not as absent minded or crazy as he seemed in this book. I thought the crazy didn't happen until they took the part out of his brain. He was the moral center of this book, but was easily overruled by Bell and Nina, which I don't really see becoming the character that is in such control in the TV show before the brain slice.

I liked seeing Walter again but I'd really like to read more about the other characters. This was definitely a prequel to the TV show and I'm never too fond of those, however, it was nice to see the origins in this case.

4/5

Mike says

Most of the readers of this book will be fans of the show Fringe, as I am.

The wisdom of starting a series of tie-in books AFTER a show is over is dubious at best. But it is nice to revisit that universe and get new content.

And many who pick up this book will be surprised that the book is about Walter Bishop, William Bell and Nina Sharp (and the band Violet Sedan Chair--whom Walter is obsessed with), circa 1968-1974.

In Christa Faust's "The Zodiac Paradox," the plot is that Walter and "Belly" in the midst of an acid trip (with their "special" blend) at Reiden Lake accidentally pull the Zodiac Killer through from the "other side." And the Zodiac Killer does what he does best once he's on this side, first killing his own doppelganger and then resuming his evil, murderous ways on this side.

Okay, it's Fringe. I can kinda believe that's possible. It's even a good idea for a story. And it shows how the three protagonists bond together as a team. They're kind of the first "Fringe" team, but working very much

outside the law and with very little oversight.

I would have given this book a solid, four star rating but for two things...

1) The Zodiac Killer is somehow radioactive as well as evil. This is never adequately explained. He seems to be able to use his "radioactive superpowers" at will, with no damage to himself. Just being an inter-dimensional serial killer isn't bad enough, apparently, he now has to be able to melt faces. A cool idea, in theory, but flies directly in the face of what I know of how the dimension hopping works from the Fringe TV show.

Though I'm certain some "helpful" soul will explain how it actually "works" within the show's mythology to me...whether I like it or not...yet it still made the book less interesting for me because that aspect just seemed not to "fit" with my understanding of how the science of the TV show functioned.

2) The sort of offhand way the "helpful" students died. Yes, the Zodiac Killer was defeated--through the intervention of the Observers--but it killed all of the students who were helping Walter, Bell and Nina. And the author, in her hurry to both wrap up the story and drop lots of canon "portent" on us (like Walter's vision of the dying Peter, who hadn't been born yet) just sweeps those deaths aside as if they were of no consequence. True, if the students had lived, they would have told of the whole operation. But their mentor, Dr. Rayley, did survive. Anyway, that whole thread just seems to be an example of shoddy writing in an otherwise good book.

Though I said there are only two reasons why this book got only three stars from me, I have two smaller problems as well. One being that they never explain exactly why that Walter and Roscoe (the leader of Violet Sedan Chair--played by Christopher Lloyd on Fringe) don't remember each other years later when they meet again. They have both been through severe mental trauma, but that, again, makes little sense and seems like bad writing.

Though adding Violet Sedan Chair at all seems to serve no real purpose except as a nod to the "universe" of Fringe...and to make the story longer. Which leads me to my second smaller complaint--and it's one I often have with tie-in books--the novel is at least a third "filler" and the story lacks immediacy as a result.

Of the three main characters, William Bell seems the least well-drawn. Walter and Nina are quite vivid, but Bell is more a collection of traits than an actual character.

But despite the above complaints and issues, I did enjoy "The Zodiac Paradox." Once I got close to the end, I didn't put it down until I was finished. To me, that means I had some fun with it. The interference of The Observers at the end was a bit "Deus Ex Machina" for me. But at least it made sense in the context of the story and the Fringe universe.

Let's just say I have higher hopes for the next two books in the Fringe series of tie-in novels.

Erin says

In my humble opinion Fringe is one of the most underrated tv shows in the last 20 years.

I fell in love with Fringe long after it was cancelled by Fox. In fact I don't even remember ever hearing about it while it was on air. I discovered Fringe about 3 years ago, the way most people do these days, I discovered it on Netflix, while battling the flu and I fell totally in love.

Reasons I Love Fringe:

1. Joshua Jackson aka Peter Bishop aka Pacey Witter aka Cole Lockhart.
2. Its hilarious. Walter Bishop is probably one of my favorite tv characters.
3. Watching Fringe makes me feel both smarter and dumber(there is alot of Science)
4. The world created in Fringe is complete and unlike most Sci-fi shows Fringe was able to end in a satisfying way.

When I discovered a 3 book prequel series to Fringe existed I had to have them. I've missed the world of Fringe and could not wait to plunge back in to it.

Fringe is about a division of the FBI formed to investigate events that lie beyond the realm of possibly. Special Agent Olivia Dunham, Fringe scientists Walter Bishop, his son Peter Bishop, and Junior Agent Astrid Farnsworth work together to safeguard the very fabric of our reality.

This book series is not for people who haven't watched the show. It will be confusing and I just don't think they'd get it.

In book one The Zodiac Paradox we meet a young Walter Bishop, his best friend William Bell, and the always kickass Nina Sharp. I won't reveal the plot because it would be a spoiler if you ever plan to watch the show. I will say I liked it but didn't love it. I don't think Christa Faust captured the spirit of the show. I know the events in this book take place decades before the series but I didn't feel the chemistry between Walter and Nina was there.

My plan is to binge read the series and I have hope that the series will improve with each book.

Recommended only for people who loved the show and would like to spend more time in that world.

February read-a-thon: Read a New to You Author.
