

THE EIGHTH DAY by Joseph John

Published by Obsidian Dawn

For December's review I have chosen '*The Eighth Day*' by Joseph John, a futuristic thriller about genetic engineering. Despite being set in the year 2041, the subject matter of this novel is a little too close to a looming reality for comfort. Scientists have already successfully cloned animals, so it does not take a massive leap of imagination to envisage the replication of human beings.

THE PLOT

Bachelor Shawn Jaffe believes he is an investment broker from Ohio, until a stranger comes up to him in the Café del Mar and tells him he is being watched, and that nothing he thinks he knows is real. When the stranger is then immediately murdered, while trying to escape from two anonymous pursuers, Shawn starts to fear he could really be in danger.

Although Shawn's account is seemingly far-fetched, Sam Harrington – the detective in charge of the murder investigation – begins to suspect there may be a real threat behind the stranger's warning. His suspicions are soon confirmed when – after asking one too many questions – someone tries to kill him.

Three years later, Shawn wakes one morning to discover that he not only has a new identity – Ryan Marshall – but also a new wife. Although he has some memories of this new life, Shawn is confused to discover he can still remember snippets of a previous existence. However, when he tries to discuss this anomaly with his new wife, she suddenly pulls out a gun and tries to kill him. Shawn is then forced to run for his life.

As a manhunt ensues, Shawn soon realises he is a small pawn in a very large and secretive game, and that his only hope for survival now depends on discovering the real truth about his identity.

MY REVIEW

'The Eighth Day' is a fast-paced thriller that embraces the possibility of human replication as its central theme. It then expands on that theory by exploring the consequences of using genetic manipulation to play God.

Although a work of fiction, the story comes across as a terrifying portent of a potential reality. After all, the unrelenting march of science makes the cloning of a complete human being seem all too credible a possibility. The only question would be, is it ethically right to do so?

Joseph John sets the scene for his futuristic novel by presenting the protagonist with a mystery. He then immediately follows it with a murder, which in turn makes him a witness at the scene. From that point on, the reader is drawn along on a rollercoaster

of intrigue as Shawn Jaffe tries to discover the truth behind these events, especially as it soon becomes clear that things are far more sinister than he first imagined.

Split into two parts, the first half of the novel deals with Shawn's attempts to discover what the stranger meant by his warning and why he was ultimately shot for disclosing it. He would also like to know why he is unable to pass a news stand without feeling compelled to buy a newspaper and read the classified pages.

Keen to discover any information he can, Shawn starts to get involved in the investigation, constantly turning up at the police station and asking questions about the case. Although he maintains he did not witness the actual killing, Shawn's strange and intrusive behaviour only serves to convince the investigating officer – Detective Sam Harrington – that Shawn may be involved in some way. His suspicion is ultimately confirmed when a Senator is subsequently killed.

Following this event, Harrington's superiors step in and instruct him to drop the first murder case but Sam is suspicious about the reasons for these orders and continues his investigation regardless. However, his dogged determination and compulsion to pursue the truth trigger disastrous repercussions, particularly with regards to his career and family life.

In the second half of the novel, three years have elapsed and Shawn awakes to discover he is no longer Shawn Jaffe but is now Ryan Marshall. This alone would be enough to cause mental disintegration in most people. For Shawn though, this potentially catastrophic trauma is further compounded by the fact he not only remembers his previous life but also has new memories of a different one – which apparently now include a wife. I must admit, at this point I too had to pause to catch up with what was happening.

As if this was not bad enough, when Shawn tries to get answers to his predicament, his supposed wife grabs a gun and attempts to kill him. When two other gunmen appear from nowhere to back her up, Shawn decides the only thing he can do is jump out of the window, get into his pickup truck and head for the hills.

The story then segues from a murder investigation into a manhunt, as the orchestrators of an obviously secret experiment – sanctioned by the powers that be – realise things are spiralling out of control. They are then forced to resort to drastic measures to prevent their unorthodox practices and experiments being revealed to the general public. However, the solution they employ to solve the problem ultimately serves to bring about their own downfall.

The plot of *'The Eighth Day'* is cleverly constructed so that the reader shares Shawn's desperate journey towards the truth ... although being privy to a few extra clues along the way enables the reader to be one step ahead of him.

The details of Shawn's final battle to discover his true identity are difficult to discuss without giving too much away but suffice it to say he receives help from the only person he has ever been able to trust, making the ending both unexpected and exciting.

A departure from my usual choice of reading, I thoroughly enjoyed ‘*The Eighth Day*’. It intrigued me right from the start and kept me totally engaged throughout. The story is clever, different and well-paced, and the many questions posed are satisfyingly answered at the end.

The story itself deals with themes of identity as well as what it means to be human. It also raises the issue of how society tempers scientific and technological progress with proper consideration of the ethical and moral implications raised by such developments – developments that may have the potential to create new and unthinkable tyrannies if allowed to fall into the wrong hands.

Either way, it will definitely make you wonder whether Dolly the sheep was just the beginning of something more worrying.

THE AUTHOR

Joseph John is an army officer and combat veteran with over 19 years of active duty service as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot and operations analyst. ‘*The Eighth Day*’ is his debut novel and is an Amazon bestseller in genetic engineering and techno thriller fiction. His most recent novel, ‘*Democracy Inc.*’, is a dystopian science fiction novel, set in a startling and disturbing future that seems all too possible. Joseph lives in Vicenza, Italy with his wife, who is a graphic artist.

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‘The Eighth Day’ is published by Obsidian Dawn and is available to download in eBook format. Paperback format is also available from Amazon.