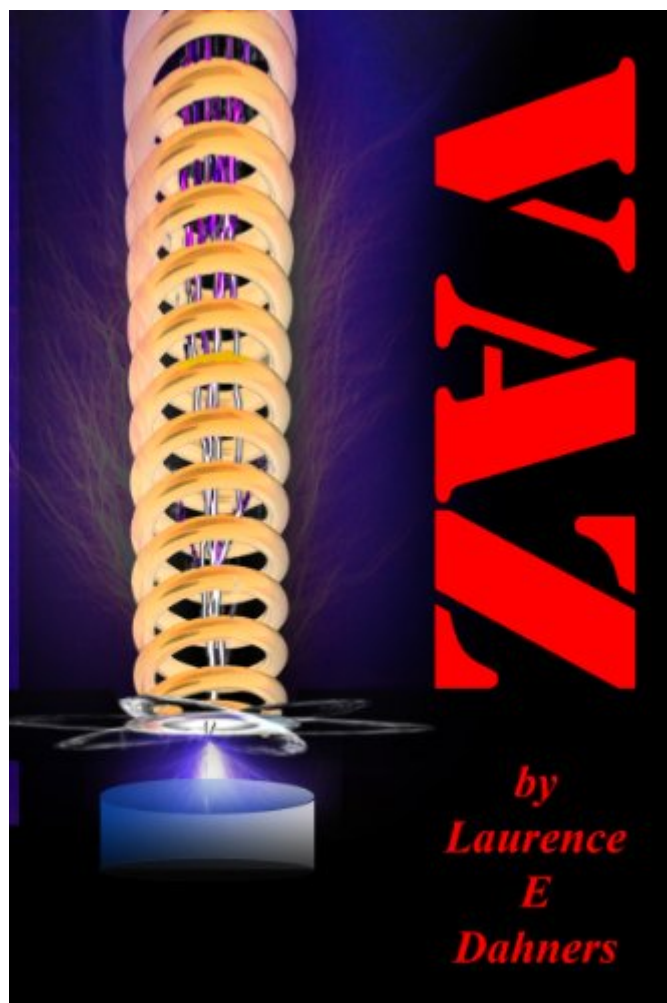


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Vaz



Synopsis

• is the story of a man who falls somewhere on the Aspergerâ™s/Autism spectrum, verging on the nature of an idiot savant. • He has terrible social skills, but absolute brilliance in the sciences. Vaz doesnâ™t recognize his company is cashing in on inventions heâ™s made, but paying him a pittance. Then a new manager fires Vaz for his odd behavior without realizing how important he is to the companyâ™s bottom line. Once fired, Vaz happily continues working on a new cold fusion idea that fascinates him. Meanwhile the man who fired him, realizing that heâ™s killed the goose that lays the golden eggs, hires people to force Vaz give up the secret of his cold fusion invention. These people mistakenly assume an odd man like Vaz won't be able to protect himself or his family. However, in the hands of a genius, almost anything can be a weapon!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At the start, Vaz is research physicist in a near-future world. He has horrible people skills, but very creative. One of his supervisors calls him, without affection, an Idiot Savant. Vaz has been fortunate--his skills are valued at work, he has a wife who understands his Asperger-like limitations but is still in love with him after almost twenty years of marriage, and two kids. His equilibrium is disturbed when his boss retires, and a new manager is appointed for the R&D team. Vaz's strange work habits, his incomprehension of office politics, and the new boss's ego lead to Vaz's loss of the

job. Hijinks ensue when Vaz continues to pursue his fascinating ideas at home, his family get increasingly concerned over what they think is an average lab technician's joblessness, and his employer's desperate realization of what they lost. Vaz is a likable character; his scientific brilliance, and his remarkable physical strength paired with inability to read emotions, and childlike dislike of change. The science-fictional ideas are interesting, but are mostly a vehicle to expose character development. Still, Dahnert has built a plausible world, with social aspects of technology development showing consistency and thought. The book is short, with a rather streamlined plot: I found it pleasantly entertaining.

This is not a book I would have just picked up. A good friend recommended it to me. It is about a true genius that has negative interpersonal skills that is forced out of his comfort zone at a company and just gets on with his life. His genius is in visualizing and inventing strange things. In some respects, this is a relatively simple story. You can kind of anticipate how it is going to progress. The really strange part is that for such a simple story, I Could Not Put It Down! This story is contemporary and reflects, in an extreme way, challenges in the work place, at home with your spouse, and dealing with teen age kids that are also really smart. This book will also make you feel good when you get to the end. Buy it and read it.

This book somehow makes the reader root for a socially incompetent nerd. Not just incompetent because of lack of experience, but because he doesn't seem to have enough of some abilities that we all take for granted: being able to easily infer other people's feelings from their displayed behavior or speech, and to react appropriately. Some of the funniest parts are where he's trying to figure out what someone's thoughts or feelings are, even when it is totally obvious to the reader. It shouldn't be hilarious, but it is. This is combined with a love story, some decent science, some nasty bad guys, and some action. All in all, a great read. Be warned: you're likely to come away with a bit more sympathy for the socially incompetent amongst us. Good stuff.

I've enjoyed in all Dahnert novels how he likes to change one element of a situation and then writes a story on the ramifications. You can't help comparing this novel to his Ell Donsaii series. The protagonist, Vaz, is middle aged, male and married, but he seems to have the same nerve mutation as Ell without her unusual concentration of fast twitch muscle fibers. This expresses itself in the muscles with abnormal strength and little fatigue after enormous output. This would make for an interesting story all by itself. The same mutation also makes Vaz's brain cells more densely packed

and quicker, like Ell. What makes this story unusual is that due to the structure of Vaz's brain he is autistic and he views the world very differently than the average person and the story plays out from there. If you compare the human brain to the Central Processing Unit (CPU) of a computer, then the nerve mutation in the Ell Donsaii and Vaz stories would be comparable to making the electronic structures of the CPU smaller and therefor faster and with more on-chip memory on the same size silicon. This is one way we increase the power of a computer. Different designs of CPU's work better for different applications, like human brains. Ell, Zage and Vaz have very different brain structures, turbocharged.

"Vaz" shares a good deal of DNA with the Ell Donsaii series, though the protagonist Vaz is not the perfect creature that Ell is, and the book was clearly not aiming for the female YA market. Vaz is an adult man, a scientific researcher who appears to be modeled on someone with a high functioning autism like Asberger Syndrome, extremely talented in a narrow area but uncomprehending of others' non-verbal communication, and needing to control his anger through intense physical exercise, graduating to mixed martial arts. The latter substitutes for Ell's dancing and is a more suitable outlet for a man, I suppose. Oddly, everyone in the book, and there are many who are quite smart and well educated, including Vaz's wife of some 20 years, sees him as "weird", sometimes difficult and always socially inept, without once suggesting the obvious diagnosis. Vaz himself is extremely uncommunicative but there are occasions when the author gives him a "normal" dialogue that struck me as being out of character. Dr. Dahners has a particular fixation on those around us who are close-minded, quick to judge, and intolerant of those who are gifted. Ell Donsai was always bumping against them (see: President Stockton), and it is Vaz's conflict with such a foe that propels the story. Once again, a predictable plot is lifted by a healthy introduction to science. Vaz is an interestingly different character, though the perspective of one with autism is handled far better by Mark Haddon's "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time".

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Invaders (a sequel to Vaz, Tiona and Disc) Vaz

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