

# AN AUDIENCE FOR EINSTEIN

Mark Wakely

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Dedication

For my wife, Pam,  
and our three children,  
Sarah, Eric, and Kevin

and

In fond memory of my grandmother,  
Mildred "Muzz" Gorndt

Your faith in me early on made all the difference.

This book is for you.

And many thanks to the following for fact-checking my  
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Gina Consolino, R.N., M.S.N., C.N.P.

Marie Baehr, Ph.D. (Physics)



# AN AUDIENCE FOR EINSTEIN

## EDITORIAL REVIEWS

Strange cutting-edge experiments involving the transferring of memories, as well as a touching story of human relationships, make *An Audience for Einstein* a lasting science fiction novel that explores the limits of humanity.

—*The Huffington Post*

This is a slick little science fiction story with good old hard science (astrophysics and neurology) compared to soft science (human development and family relations). I can appreciate stories based on either hard or soft science. Most others, I'm afraid, prefer hard science and the harder the better. This story should please both.

—Dan Shade, *Orson Scott Card's Intergalactic Medicine Show*

This is a wonderful short novel that shows what good science fiction can be. The author takes pseudoscience with a ring of authenticity and mixes the plot with some believable characters that the reader can identify with. This is a very good example of near-future sf.

—R-Laurraine Tutihasi, *Simegen Reviews*

The story is well crafted and fast paced. Wakely's characters are rich with human desires, fears, problems, foibles, and reality, and he teases and tempts them and the reader with possibilities, then taunts with doubts and questions. I was tugged into the in-depth self-examination and insight, and moral and ethical issues that haunt scientific endeavors—or should—while Wakely's story crafting skills kept me engrossed in the tale. Well written, well told, and well worth the read. *An Audience for Einstein* is a bookshelf keeper.

—Charlene Austin, author of *Dream Pictures*

A strongly recommended read for all fans of science fiction, as well as the general non-interest reader who enjoys a brilliant piece of fiction, *An Audience for Einstein* would make a popular addition to any community library's science fiction collection.

—*Midwest Book Review*

*An Audience for Einstein* is an enjoyable and thought provoking read, which never veers into the realms of "too heavy" yet still has something to say.

—Theresa Derwin, Bookpleasures.com

Do not begin this book believing that you can guess the outcome. This is a very good sci-fi that will leave you in deep thoughts long after you finish reading.

—Detra Fitch, *Huntress Reviews*

*An Audience for Einstein* is an intelligent, moving novel. Philosophical, yet cleverly written and thought provoking. As a first book, it jumps from the pages, forcing you to ponder the consequences of our actions. That's what good literature is supposed to do. What's next? Movie? Bravo Mr. Wakely.

—Tim Lasiuta, *Penguin Comics*

Mark Wakely's *An Audience for Einstein* is a well-written, at times riveting story of the search for the afterlife. ... Wakely is clearly an excellent and concise writer ... All in all, *An Audience for Einstein* is an interesting and good read that would make for great bedtime reading material for those who have an interest in science.

—Ellen Feig, *Skuawk Literature Reviews*

Although it is promoted as a sci-fi book, this was definitely so much more than I anticipated. Full of emotions and twists, you will not want this book to end.

—GetBookReviews.com

In this science fiction thriller and winner of a national writing contest, Wakely presents rich character analysis in a theory of our not-so-distant future.

—Will Petty, *West Suburban Living Magazine*

The relationship that develops between Marlowe and Miguel is surprising and fascinating...it's wonderful to find secondary characters so full and rich and well-developed. Science is a major component in this original novel which is ultimately about people, choices and identifying right and wrong. A lot of *An Audience for Einstein* recalls the older, classic stories of science-fiction.

—Aurora Reviews of Books

A great read. I recommend it to people who like speculative fiction not set in far-flung galaxies.

—Glenda Woodrum, author of *Lady's Daughter*

This novel is well-designed, fast paced, and does a great job keeping readers interested but not overwhelmed by the movement throughout the story line. Even more, the plot is layered with twists and riddles that will keep the readers guessing all the way through the end. Wakely does a good job using the characters and situations to study the human condition. As they work their way through the story, readers must face their own self-examinations and internal doubts, staring down the darker parts of human nature. It also provides a great fictional exploration of the moral dilemmas of science and knowledge...One of *An Audience for Einstein's* strong points is the well-developed and dynamic characters. It is easy to get attached to the professor and the young boy, dragging readers' emotions along with theirs. While this may be a book geared more towards boys with its predominate male characters, it is one that both genders should give a chance.

—Livejournal.com

Rooted in a strong morality tale, Mark Wakely's *An Audience for Einstein* represents a great introduction into science fiction, especially for teens...a solid choice for any middle school classroom library.

—Brian Kelley, *Walk the Walk* blog

*An Audience for Einstein* delivers on all counts...Well written and well told, *An Audience for Einstein* is an important book you'll think about long after you've read it.

—Fran Rubin, *yabookscentral.com*



Thought provoking and entertaining.

—Diana Tixier Herald, [genrefluent.com](http://genrefluent.com)

Mark Wakely's first novel tackles some big issues, forcing the reader to weigh the value of the life of a genius of science against that of an illiterate street urchin. Is the potential value of continuing a life already proven invaluable to mankind worth the sacrifice of one homeless boy who doesn't even know his own age? Or is the unique spirit Miguel brings to humanity more important than all of the equations and theories a second life for Professor Marlowe could offer?

—Michele R. Dillard, [TeensReadToo.com](http://TeensReadToo.com)

Science is a major component in this original novel which is ultimately about people, choices and identifying right and wrong. Very satisfying and engaging.

—[longandshortreviews.com](http://longandshortreviews.com)

## WINNER OF THE FOLLOWING AWARDS:

First Place, 2006 EPPIE Best Science Fiction Novel

First Place, 2003 Authorlink International New Author Award

Best Debut Novel, Fountainhead Press 2002/03 National Writing  
Contest

Finalist, [Writemovies.com](http://Writemovies.com) International Writing Competition  
Spring 2003

Finalist, Dream Realm Awards Best Science Fiction Novel 2005



# PROLOGUE

*Cambridge, England—1938*

In all of his fifteen years, nothing mattered more to him than this.

The poolside bleachers were filled to capacity, the students intense in their crisp red and white uniforms, the faculty men serious in their school sweaters and sturdy black bowlers. They clapped and cheered as he lined up with the rest of the swim team qualifiers for the final race. He faced the end lane, having barely earned a berth.

“I didn’t sleep very well last night,” he said over the din to the taller, more muscular teen next to him. “Did you?”

The teen scoffed, stretched up on his tiptoes as if to emphasize the physical difference between them, and then rolled his shoulders to loosen up. “I slept like a baby. That comes from having confidence. Something you must not possess.”

Another school cheer went up from the tightly packed crowd, echoing in the cavernous, tiled room. One of the swimmers dipped his foot in the smooth water, sending ripples on their way to the other side.

The smaller boy waved his arms about to limber up. “It’s not that, it’s just that it all comes down to this, our last and most

important race of the season. School champion." He looked at the mass of spectators on either side of the pool with scarcely concealed trepidation.

The teen regarded him with a brief sneer. "That's right. And frankly, I'm shocked you actually made it this far, Marlowe."

"Well I did, didn't I?"

"Doesn't matter. Everyone's certain you're going to lose, you know. You're just a brainy underclassman, not a true athlete like me." He flexed his prominent biceps to make his point. "Go back to your books, bookworm. You're no threat."

Percival drew himself up, his expression dark. "We'll see about that, my good man."

The teen sneered again as he twisted from side to side. "I suppose we will."

A group of teenage girls clapped in unison, and then one of them held up a paper sign with the tall teen's name scrawled on it.

The teen waved to them. They squealed and waved back, bouncing up and down.

"See that, Marlowe? How can I possibly lose with them cheering me on?"

Percival stared wistfully at the auburn-haired girl with the sign as he now twisted. "I could win it."

The teen scoffed. "Not likely. This is for all the glory. I'm not going to let it get away. The rewards will be great and many, if you know what I mean." He nodded at the girls then glanced at Percival with scorn. "But then again, I don't think that you do."

The swimming coach stepped forward, satisfied with the team's preparation.

"Ready, lads."

The young swimmers meticulously assumed their starting positions as the crowd quieted down.

"May the best man win," Percival offered.

"Yes," said the teen. "And that will be me."

The coach raised a silver whistle, a stopwatch in his other hand.

"Steady now, gentlemen."

The swimmers leaned forward, muscles tensed.

The sound of the whistle launched them.

Percival flopped into the water, a terrible start. All he saw were the feet of the other swimmers as they sped away.

He dug in, his arms flying and legs kicking furiously. They all reached the other side and turned around at nearly the same time.

His lungs aching, he swam with an intensity he never had before, determined to prove everyone wrong.

He drew even with the leader, the tall teen next to him. The teen looked startled to see him, and in that instant lost his rhythm and faltered.

Percival took advantage of the teen's mistake and took the lead.

The teen swam frantically to close the distance in the last few feet, but Percival lunged forward and touched the wall first.

The coach stood in front of Percival's lane, staring at the stopwatch with surprise and delight. He raised his hand to silence the excited chatter in the room, everyone now on their feet. The only sound was that of the swimmers' labored breathing.

"The winner, with a new school record, Percival Marlowe!"

Percival's arms shot up out of the water as the bleachers erupted in a roar of approval.

The tall teen turned his back to him as the other swimmers huddled to whisper in amazement.

They all climbed out and grabbed their towels to dry off for the award ceremony. Percival acknowledged the congratulations from several of his teammates—solid pats on his back and playful shoves—then stepped up to the top of the three-level award stand

for the first time. He bent down to allow his coach to slip a medal dangling on a red and white ribbon over his head. A fresh chorus of cheers went up from the crowd. As he shook his coach's hand, he saw the group of girls applauding for him now.

He straightened up, boldly raised his right arm to point at the girl who still held the sign with the vanquished teen's name on it. Aware they weren't the chosen one, the girls around her leaned away. With an innocent look, the auburn-haired girl grasped the sign in the middle with both hands, then grinned and tore it half.

On the second tier, the tall teen scowled and lowered his head.

Percival raised two fists in the air as he listened to the crowd chant his name, absorbing their adulation. Then he held out the medal for them to see, looked closely at it himself, and even took a whiff of it. The pungent yet not unpleasant smell—unlike anything he had ever smelled before—made him take another sniff before letting the medal drop back down to his chest.

Raising his arms again, he wondered how, in all of life ahead of him, he would ever equal or surpass this moment and could only conclude that would be impossible. This was—and would forever be—his one best, defining achievement, the time when his life truly began, forever and ever and ever . . .

# CHAPTER ONE

*Somewhere on the east coast of the United States—present day*

Sometimes he envied the dead.

There was once a fierceness in him that radiated to every corner of a room; now all that was left were the steel-gray eyes that could still flash at injustice great or small, like the great injustice of growing old.

He set the wheelchair in motion, out of the musty, oppressive bedroom to the cool sanctuary of the red brick patio. The brief whir of the electric motor made the seabirds resting nearby take wing in shrill protest. A sharp ocean breeze sent his thin white hair straight up and his ill-fitting shirt flapping against his shrunken arms and neck. Like the bright, earnest young men who sought him out, then left visibly distressed at who they found, the old man could not believe what had become of him. In what seemed like the mere snap of his fingers, he had gone from the dynamic, premiere scientist of his era to being nearly bedridden and obscure. Even teachers who made their living reciting his theories that forever changed the world often spoke of him in past tense, the bright young men reluctantly confirmed—their eyes averted—as if those

mere reciters could ever shoulder the mantle of scientific eminence that still rightfully belonged to him.

The professor clenched his jaw and his eyes flashed again.

*Afraid you're not quite rid of me yet.*

As the seabirds cautiously returned and circled above, he stared down at the moonlike landscape of rocks and sand mounds and white foam waves that raced ashore less than fifty yards away. The wind took days to move the mounds noticeably, like waves in slow motion.

He saw a small sand pile forming at the edge of the patio, burying the bottom of the rusting iron fence partially enclosing the weathered bricks. The professor shook his head. Years ago, he wouldn't have hesitated to grab a coal shovel and toss back the invasion; now he wondered why on Earth he had been so eager to fight such a losing battle. In a few days the wind would sweep the patio clean and another sand mound would begin to take its place. He liked the steady, dependable rhythm, could appreciate it now that his youthful impatience was gone.

The professor gasped, sat up straighter in his wheelchair. He noticed a small yet startling distant bump on the ocean, shimmering like a city in celebration. But that was impossible, he thought in confusion. Could atmospheric conditions bend light that far? He had seen mirages before—dozens of them—but this was far more focused and clear. Why, the shores of Europe were two thousand miles away, he marveled, yet it seemed he could almost reach out and touch . . .

. . . and he realized he was staring at a ship on the horizon, its image wavering where the boundary between sky and water blurred.

The professor dropped his trembling arm and slumped in defeat. Why hadn't he immediately realized it was only a ship, as any fool could plainly see? Was his eyesight failing him now too? *My God*, he thought, *leave me something!* And even though it was an



insignificant mistake, he closed his eyes and sobbed once, despising his relentless decline.

He turned and propelled himself back into the bedroom, aware his feelings of hopelessness meant only one thing; he had forgotten to take his antidepressant.

As he took a pill from one of the open amber vials on the crowded nightstand, the thousand-red-hot-needles pain in his chest that was becoming more frequent and severe struck him again, pitching him forward unceremoniously out of the wheelchair. He landed hard on his side on the worn carpet, fighting for every breath and clutching his throat, not just for air but to keep from making a sound. As before, the needles withdrew as fast as they had come, leaving him panting, forehead wet with sudden sweat and his eyes burning with determination to keep hidden from Natalie for as long as he could how he fought these little skirmishes with death.

He did not want to be taken from here to die in a faraway place, his slim chance to live again lost because his memories had degraded beyond Dorning's ability to save them.

He grasped at the wheelchair, straining to pull himself up until he was finally sitting again. His shoulders heaving from the effort, he suddenly realized to his slight amusement that he was still clutching the pill in the palm of his left hand.

There were three familiar soft raps on the bedroom door behind him.

He closed his eyes to compose himself and blot his forehead with a handkerchief before answering.

*Much too close that time.*

"Dorning? Is that you?" The professor tried to sound nonchalant as he hastily tucked his handkerchief away. "Go ahead and let yourself in. I can't help."

The door swung inward, revealing a plump, perspiring man in a

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