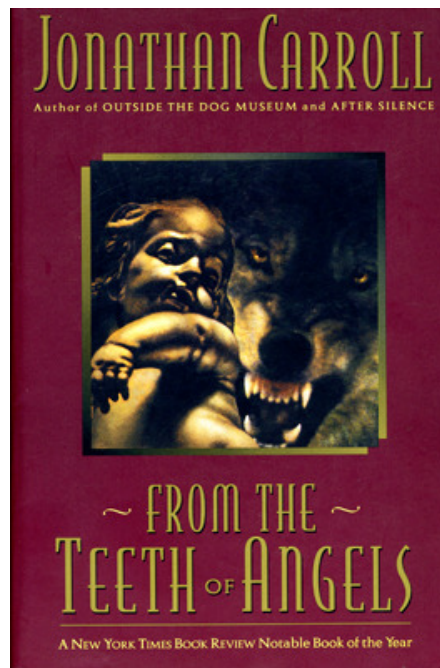




From the Teeth of Angels

Jonathan Carroll

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Jonathan Carroll is no longer just a cult author. His previous novel, *After Silence*, placed this gifted and award-winning writer squarely in the mainstream. The San Francisco Chronicle raved, "After Silence is filled with people who feel as real as one's closest friends, observed with a penetrating, and sometimes brutally chilling, clarity...a taut, original work whose excellence fulfills the promises made by this remarkable author over the last dozen years." In *From the Teeth of Angels*, Jonathan Carroll returns to that unique literary landscape that he paves with magic and wonder. While vacationing in Sardinia, Ian McGann meets Death in a dream. Death promises to answer any of McGann's questions, but if he fails to understand the answers, he will have to pay with his life. In Los Angeles, successful film actress Arlen Ford is no longer happy living in the Hollywood fast lane. She gives up everything - her career, her house, her glamorous lifestyle - and moves to Austria, where she meets a passionate war correspondent. From the start, their relationship is all-consuming. Arlen realizes she has been waiting for this man all her life. And in Vienna, the terminally ill Wyatt Leonard suddenly discovers that he has the ability to raise the dead. How all three of these extraordinary fates converge is at the heart of Jonathan Carroll's most daring and provocative novel, in which he dares to ask - and answer - the ultimate question: What is Death?

From the Teeth of Angels Details

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From Reader Review From the Teeth of Angels for online ebook

Velvetink says

Giving to si cotic

Georgiana 1792 says

Ogni libro di Carroll sembra essere una sorta di versione in *chiave Carroll* della *Divina Commedia* di Dante. Questo in particolar modo. Tanto che ho cominciato a credere che Dante sia stato - in effetti - il primo autore di Urban Fantasy...

Naturalmente il 50%, che dico, l'80% dei significati allegorici di questo libro mi sfuggono, ma, per quel che riesco a capire credo che Carroll sia geniale! E ci sono centinaia di frasi che si dovrebbero citare. Questa è quella che mi è rimasta più impressa, forse perché si trova alla fine, ma soprattutto perché spiega il significato del libro, quindi avverto dello SPOILER. Uno dei protagonisti del libro si rivolge alla Morte:

(view spoiler)

Scott says

Jonathan Carroll's *From the Teeth of Angels* really shocked me. Not the twists and turns that Carroll created, some which i saw coming, some which i did not. But I was shocked by the fact that this was totally a Jonathan Carroll book, and totally not one of his typical books at the same time.

This story is so cemented to earth compared to other Carroll novels. Everything seemed so real, even when supernatural things happened, the story was grounded and very serious, instead of floating in the beautifully surreal netherworlds that Carroll often takes us to. I liked the change of pace and how life-like he created these characters, but I totally wanted to be taken away the entire novel.

By the end of the novel, Carroll finally pulled out his stops and takes us there and had me completely enraptured in some extraordinarily beautiful imagery and language about the overall theme of the book. Actually i felt it was some of his best writing and imagery he has ever put to paper. It just took a bit too long to get there for me to absolutely love this one. And really, I'd give this book 4 to 4.5 stars (the way the man can write about life and philosophies on living is unbelievable...one of the best), but I'm comparing it to other books by Jonathan Carroll, and because of what I have already mentioned it doesn't hold up to what I think his best novels are.

Jen says

I love love love Jonathan Carroll, as much as I hate him every time I put a book down. You're reading along, enjoying the imagery and dialogue and then WHAM he tosses something in that shifts everything you just read. This one's no different--an interesting novel about death and love; does death=love? or love=death?

L.D. Colter says

An exploration of mortality, death, and dying through four characters - well, five. Is it a spoiler to say Death is a bastard? Probably not. Or is death a bastard and Death just is what he is? Largely a literary exploration of theme except for the personification of death but full of truths and relationships and insightful observations. Needs to come with a trigger warning for rape.

Sonia Lyriss says

A seductive book that doesn't shy away from deep and profound themes. I found myself tugged along, deeply intrigued, and not at all sure what to expect. I'd rather not spoil anything, so I'll just say that I'm glad I read it, and I'd read it again.

Alan says

There are fantasies that involve swords and elves... and then there are those that quietly document the intrusion of the numinous Other into our everyday lives. The latter is Carroll's specialty, the ground he treads in this and other works, such as *Bones of the Moon* and *Outside the Dog Museum*. You can tell from the titles that something unusual is going on here. Can you imagine what it must be like, to be able to come up with the skew and surreal on a regular basis, and then have it relate back so well to our regular lives? Is it a blessing, or a curse? Whichever it is, Jonathan Carroll makes it look easy.

He knows how to get us hooked, too—and not just with titles. His characters are likeable, believable, people you wouldn't mind sharing counter space with at your favorite diner, the one with the really good hash browns, as they begin talking unbidden about their latest brush with Death. Apart from their unusual first names (Wyatt, Arlen, Leland and the like), the people in *From the Teeth of Angels* are ordinary, really—oh, perhaps they live more elegant lives than yours, take trips to Europe at the drop of a trilby and manage to imbue the most prosaic of breakfast foods with romance. But then Carroll pulls the covering away from the sculpted centerpiece he was hiding in plain sight, all along... and you find out that Death is real, personified, embodied as the guy at the corner newsstand or the woman driving your taxicab, another character who can be argued with, bargained with. Maybe you can cut a deal...

There is both sadness and great joy in *From the Teeth of Angels*. It will not give you any answers you did not already have. But it may help illuminate what you know. And if there is a reason for our existence as a species, I am sure that it is at least in part so that books like this can exist.

Mary says

From the Teeth of Angels is one of those books that makes you think a lot about the life you live and death. It brought up a great discussion in our book club with most of us liking the book with one lone dissenter, who didn't like the way the story ended, feeling it was too pat. I agree somewhat with that but I think it would be hard for it to go any other way.

The story starts with an Englishman Ian McGann, who meets Death in a dream. When he asks questions, if Death likes them, things go smoothly. If he doesn't, there are mysterious scars and wounds on Ian's body. He meets up with a young couple and Jessie, the husband, starts having the same dreams. His wife sends a letter off to his sister Sophie, who enlists the help of her best friend Wyatt. Wyatt is dying from leukemia. He doesn't want to head off to Austria with her but does so because of a favor that was asked from him before. What he finds there is that he is needed to sort out everyone's dreams of Death and sort out his own life.

We also follow Arlen, an actress who has spent the most of her recent past in Austria, cooking and cleaning and staying out of the limelight. When she meets up with Leland, a war correspondent, she discovers happiness and pain. I won't go into just what goes on with Leland. I don't want to give too much away.

The feeling that I got from the author is that we all have to die at some point. It's the one true thing in life. People die in many ways and the more you fight it, the less of a life you live. It's a wonderfully written book. There were a few passages that made us all have a-ha moments. I got confused a few times but it does eventually all work together and make a lot of sense.

Ben Hodson says

There are some really strong moments in this book that make you really look at your own life and how much you are valuing your small amount of time on Earth. When faced with a fatal illness, suddenly every moment is precious.

What makes this only a "like" instead of a "love" is that it lacks direction. Many of the chapters spend a great deal of time recounting past events (instead of letting them happen in real time through the book) so you read exposition everywhere and the end doesn't quite fit together with some of these tangents.

Worth reading for the analysis of life after finding out about a terminal illness.

Constance says

More amateurish writing and less complex themes than his other books, but also more straightforward in a nice way. This book didn't pierce through to the depths of my soul at any points, but I still liked it.

Thanks S, and also thanks for a very accurate book description -- Me: What is this book about? S: (pause) Death.

Metaphorosis says

reviews.metaphorosis.com

2.5 stars

A retired actress and a terminally former tv star encounter death - in person.

A while back, I saw a 5 disc set of Pete Seeger singing traditional American folk songs. I bought it - Pete Seeger, familiar folk songs, how could I go wrong? I've seldom made a mistake about quite so much music at once. ("Oh Susannah" is fun, but 139 banjo folk songs is just too many).

I feel the same way about Jonathan Carroll. His books were on sale, and I bought a lot. This is the last of the novel length books in the group, and I'm sorry to say that's a relief. Basically, it turns out I just don't like Carroll very much. Having just read half a dozen of his books over several months, I'm pretty confident of that. I still hold out hope for the last book - of short stories - but then I'm an optimist at heart.

The trouble I have with Carroll's books, and with this one, is that they're both simplistic and unplanned. Carroll clearly set out to write a book about death, so he wrote, very literally, a book about dealing with death - who, it turns out, is a jerk. Carroll approaches this through two disjointed narratives that eventually cross. The second begins with what's essentially a very long character study. Neither narrative is particularly interesting. Carroll adds an interesting twist at the end, but lets it die almost completely unexamined.

As usual, much of the action takes place in Vienna. That's one reason I remember liking Carroll's books; I grew up there, and I know these places. But even for me, Carroll gets carried away with his name dropping. He seems more intent on naming places and things than on the story. Yes, I know that cafe too - but that's not what the story is *about*. To misquote Freud (whose house also turns up here), sometimes a cafe is just a cafe. Presumably, Carroll's purpose is to place the story firmly in a real and interesting place. Instead, this focus on precision makes Vienna a permanently alien place, where everything is always known by its full name, rather than "that place down the street" - the view of a tourist, not a native.

The characters are also pretty standard for Carroll. They accept the supernatural with equanimity. They're demonstrably well-read and intellectual. They like to philosophize. One part of a couple seems deeply committed, while the other seems disinterested.

I give credit to Carroll for dealing with interesting subjects. I give him credit for experimenting in this *Answered Prayers* series by using the same basic characters and props in different combinations to answer overlapping questions. His writing on a sentence by sentence basis is good. It's in the *storytelling* that things fall apart. There just isn't that much story here, and what there is seems pasted together almost at random, with the interstices filled by anecdotes. The final message? Death sucks.

I was wrong to buy these books; at least, to buy so many at once. It's been a disappointing, draining experience to read them. They're not bad, but they're not good, either. If you're already a Carroll fan, pick this up - it's what you're expecting. If you're not, don't start here. Or maybe don't start at all; there are other things to read that I think you'll like better.

deb says

Interesting but very strange.

Valeottantadue says

<http://my-empty-purse.blogspot.it/201...>

Scrivere le mie impressioni su questo libro non si presenta impresa facile. Non che sia stata una brutta

lettura..ma nel portarla vanti non ho provato nulla, nessun sentimento o emozione. Ne ansia, ne angoscia, tristezza o altro.

Non è il classico romanzo a cui sono abituata.

Mi sono avvicinata a quest'autore perché lo conosco di fama, ho letto anche Mare di Legno (il 3° di una trilogia..io l'ho iniziata a rovescio—va beh), viene definito tra gli autori più visionari del nostro tempo e non può essere più vero. Le sue storie sono sempre surreali e a volte un po' grottesche. Leggerò sicuramente qualcos'altro per capirlo meglio..non sono riuscita ancora a stabilire se è nelle mie corde o no.

Jessie in viaggio in Sardegna con la moglie incontra Ian McGann, un uomo che svela loro di sognare la morte e di farle delle domande, le cui risposte però non capisce e per questo la morte lo punisce. Fisicamente.

Wyatt, dopo una vita di successo nel mondo dello spettacolo, scopre di essere malato di leucemia.

Arlen Ford è un attrice di successo, quando decide che quella vita, anche se fatta di luci e successo, la sta svuotando; per questo decide di ritirarsi e andare a vivere in Austria.

Un giorno Jessie sparisce senza lasciare traccia. La moglie preoccupata avvisa la sorella Sophie, che decide di partire per cercarlo. Wyatt, legato a lei da profonda amicizia, l'accompagna.

Qui le vite di questi personaggi finiranno per intrecciarsi.

MA la vera protagonista della storia è la Morte.

Che qui si presenta in una veste crudelissima, non solo uccide, ma si diverte a giocare con loro, come fa il gatto con il topo. Dà la possibilità di farle delle domande, su qualunque argomento, e di conoscerne le risposte; ma devi riuscire a capirle sue risposte, o lei ti punisce. Jessie e Ian, non riescono Wyatt sì. Ad Arlen riserva uno scherzo, se vogliamo, anche più crudele.

Il mio rapporto con la morte è sempre stato sereno, so che c'è e che prima o poi ci farò i conti, ma non mi ha mai spaventato. L'accetto come parte della vita. Forse è solo la presunzione della gioventù che ti fa sentire invincibile. È anche vero che non ho neanche vissuto esperienze terribili, come malattie incurabili in famiglia o morti insensate. Le più dolorose sono state quelle dei miei nonni, ma erano comunque persone anziane e io troppo piccola per rendermene davvero conto.

Una morte come quella descritta da Carroll, però, è da incubo.

Alla fine la soluzione ai suoi enigmi viene trovata ed è quanto di più vero ci sia nell'animo umano. Così almeno per il momento la Morte deve fare un passo indietro, non può esser sconfitta, ma per ora ha vinto la vita.

Bryce says

Neil Gaiman insisted that all his Twitter followers buy this ebook, when it was 99 cents on Amazon.com. With that kind of recommendation backing this book, I bought the book for my Kindle with incredibly high expectations going in but absolutely no idea what the book was actually about.

In short: Death.

Slightly longer, it's about a group of people actively being messed about by Death. And Death is a total dick.

While Carroll's writing is undeniably beautiful and engaging, I can't say I truly enjoyed this book. Carroll jumped from character to character in each chapter, with little explanation or clear connection between them all. Many times, just as I found myself interested in a character's narrative, the story would jump time, place and person. After a few instances of this, I learned not to get too invested.

The ending itself was also frustrating, simply because it was so lesson-y and on the nose. Almost like a fairy tale in the way it neatly taught a lesson. But since the book up to them reveled on a free form story style, the

neat bow tying everything up at the end seemed out of place and lazy.

Sorry, Neil, maybe next time....

Jim Zoetewey says

I just finished the book, and I haven't forgotten enough of it yet to sort out which parts are important, and which aren't.

But...

This is a book in which people encounter Death with a capital "D". Death as a person who has a personality. That's a challenge for any author because you have to choose what sort of person he'll be. Almost as important, you have to avoid ripping off the more famous versions of Death that appear in a variety of places ranging from Pratchett's Discworld series to Gaiman's Sandman or Anthony's Incarnations of Immortality.

To my relief, this version of Death is original.

Death's not the main character. He's defined in the experiences of other characters that meet him in one way or another.

The other characters are more important in terms of the progress of the story, and even at the end, but still Death's interaction with them causes their growth and changes, making him in many ways, the star of the show. If nothing else, he's at least the central mystery.

My bottom line: I enjoyed it a lot, and recommend it.

Fang McGee says

What if Death hated you and was an asshole about it? As with all Jonathan Carroll books, the magical realism is only a vector for rigorous discussions about love, pain, life, and yes, death, but the multiple first-person viewpoints proved choppy and, ultimately, unnecessary. The ending also felt rushed and a little too pat, as if Carroll grew tired of the meandering and decided to just barrel on through to the finish, devil—and Death—be damned.

Amanda Cogar says

This is a beautifully intricate novel with interconnected characters and relationships, all where death are concerned, embraced, or fought against. Death comes in a variety of guises in this somberly beautiful novel. To Englishman Ian McGann, death comes in a dream, offering to answer all his questions on existence but exacting a high price if he fails to understand. To Wyatt Leonard, a one-time children's TV host dying of leukemia, death appears in a surreal vision of a Los Angeles police officer, then as a friend who has previously passed on. For Arlen Ford, an actress burned out on the Hollywood fast life, death comes as the man of her dreams, a war correspondent just returned from a besieged Sarajevo. Action centers on the intersection of these three as they struggle toward an understanding of final things. The lean prose and

formal Viennese settings add to the autumnal atmosphere of this stylish, haunting novel. It's one you won't ever forget and a must have to your collection.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

A typically excellent Carroll offering, filled with vivid characters, wonderful strangeness and a vision of human life that is compassionate, hopeful but fully aware of the nature and persistence of evil. I really wouldn't be able to accept the upbeat ending from a lot of authors other than Carroll. He makes it work because he doesn't overplay the small victories we can win in the face of death and time and other adversaries (and indeed Adversaries).

Glen Engel-Cox says

Long time readers of my commentaries know of my fondness for Jonathan Carroll. He's one of the authors who I try to collect in first edition hardbacks, and I've even written an article in which I attempted to critically assay his entire *oeuvre*. So when I say I enjoyed Carroll's latest, no one is surprised.

Trying to describe why I like Carroll's writing, however, I find myself somewhat tongue-tied. I tried to pinpoint in my article, "The Importance of Details," as a level of description that he perfectly captures, just the right amount of intimate knowledge of his characters that draws a reader in. Sometimes these details are extraordinary, sometimes mundane, but they are never uninteresting.

Thinking about it, I realize that I did leave something out of the article that explains a large part of the draw of his novels for myself. I guess I thought it obvious in context, yet I should explicitly state it—Carroll's novels are fantasies that have a basis in reality. Unlike some fantasy novels whose entire purpose is action/adventure, Carroll's stories are serious studies into the nature of being human through the analogy of the fantastic. The difference is like comparing "Raiders of the Lost Ark" to something like "Bladerunner." While both are well-made films starring Harrison Ford jumping about, one is simply a fun-filled rollercoaster, while the other asks "what is it to be human?" Only one truly lingers in the mind's eye.

From the Teeth of Angels is the last (supposedly) of the interconnected novels that began with *Bones of the Moon*, and it shows its thematic basis a little more so than others, as if Carroll was dashing this one off without veiling his purpose as much as he did in other books. It just doesn't take very long for you to figure out that **From the Teeth of Angels** is about Death. Carroll has side-swiped the issue in other books (specifically, Philip Strayhorn's suicide in *A Child Across the Sky*), but herein he tackles it head-on. The premise is simple and silly out of context—what if you could ask questions of Death, yet suffer consequences if you don't understand the answers? A bizarre concept, yet Carroll makes it work because you believe in his characters, and once you believe in them, you believe in what is happening to them.

This got me to thinking about themes. What are the different ideas associated with the "Rondua" books? **From the Teeth of Angels** can only be about Death—it permeates the book. *Bones of the Moon* is about Guilt, I believe, specifically the guilt of a terminated relationship (in the extreme case there of an abortion). *After Silence* is about Trust, although it could be about Time as well. I think Trust because of the opening with the cartoonist wondering about his new girlfriend, and trying to gain the trust of her young son. The ending throws that theme off just slightly. *Outside the Dog Museum*, probably my pick for the worst of the lot, is about Glory. Carroll tries hard to portray the search for wonder, but when he separates it from conflict, it doesn't work quite as well. I'm not sure about *Sleeping in Flame*, *Black Cocktail* or *A Child Across the Sky*. I'll have to think on them. Perhaps it's time to write another article?

Dan Wilson says

I read this years and years ago, but had forgotten pretty much everything about it when I pulled it off the shelf this week.

Carroll is clearly a gifted writer, but his stories often feel unfinished to me. I don't mean that they need an extra draft, but more that they end as soon as things get interesting. This is especially the case in his short stories, but I found it to be true here as well. As soon as the concept behind the book is revealed, as soon as the characters have a chance to actually engage in a knowledgeable way with the world around them, the story ends. It isn't that the knowledge comes with the death of the characters, but more that the author isn't particularly interested in exploring that part of their stories.

In particular, the SPOILER ALERT idea in the final chapter of being forced to relive your life with the full knowledge of what everyone thinks of you at every given moment is a startling and interesting one, but all we actually get is a few paragraphs about the thoughts of cells and the root of Arlen's mother's resentment of her. In a more fleshed out book this part of the story could have been at least a chapter... hell, this concept could have filled an entire book as we went through formative incidents in Wyatt and Arlen's lives. Here, it's almost a throwaway moment.

In the same way, Wyatt's newfound "powers" are a fascinating concept that barely get touched on. Why even give him paranormal abilities as a result of his dreams with Death and the not let us explore them with Wyatt? Why not let us discover the disappointment of such useless power or see what Wyatt tries to do with such abilities rather than introduce them and then jump straight to dismissing them?

The book also suffers in my eyes on Carroll's reliance on "telling, not showing." The decision of having us read the story as letters or transcripts, or whatnot served to distance me as a reader. Also, it kind of falls apart at the end, as in the case of Arlen... she's been writing or calling Rose all this time, but Rose is clearly not the audience of the final chapter. So who is? Also, if we are reading journals and correspondence, then I would expect the chapters to read like journals and correspondence... but it never does. The language is too "writerly" to be believed. The voice of the characters is too obviously the voice of the writer, and accusations of Arlen being a bore feel flat when compared to the fairly complex and interesting person revealed in her chapters.

In the end, all I *really* took away from the book is "Death is a dick." This portrayal of Death, as a petty, vicious, sadistic bastard is interesting mostly in comparison to how the personification is treated by authors such as Piers Anthony (On a Pale Horse) or Neil Gaiman (Sandman). In this version of reality, suffering is a direct result of Death's disliking you. Death is not a release, or a natural part of life, but a sick and twisted psychopath.

It's a shame, because despite all this, I admire the way Carroll puts words together. I think that From the Teeth of Angels would have been an excellent character study for the author to help flesh out the population of a more interesting, more compelling book.