



The Listeners

Harrison Demchick

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Before the plague, and the quarantine, fourteen-year-old Daniel Raymond had only heard of the Listeners. They were a gang, or at least that's what his best friend Katie's police officer father had said. They were criminals, thieves, monsters--deadly men clearly identifiable by the removal of their right ears.

That's what Daniel had heard. But he didn't know.

He didn't know much in those early days. He didn't know how the plague began, but then, no one did. The doctors and emergency medical personnel said it was airborne, and highly contagious. They said those infected became distorted both inside and out, and very, very dangerous.

Then the helicopters came and took the doctors away, and no one said much of anything after that.

Except the police officers. They said they'd provide food and order, in exchange for guns and, ultimately, anything else they felt like taking.

Daniel's mother went out for toilet paper. She never came back. He hasn't heard from Katie since the phones went dead. And with his real family gone and surrogate family unreachable, Daniel, scared and alone, has nothing except the walls of his apartment, the window shattered, the poisonous air seeping in.

That's when the Listeners arrive. Derek, the one-eared man with the big, soulful eyes, promises protection, and hope, and the choice not to sit alone and wait to die in some horrific way. He offers a brotherhood under the watch of their leader, the prophet Adam. He offers a place in the world to come.

A harrowing work of literary horror, *The Listeners*, Harrison Demchick's electrifying debut, is a dark and terrifying journey into loneliness, desperation, and the devastating experience of one young boy in a world gone mad.

The Listeners Details

Date : Published December 17th 2012 by Bancroft Press (first published November 27th 2012)

ISBN : 9781610880817

Author : Harrison Demchick

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Horror, Fiction, Unfinished

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From Reader Review The Listeners for online ebook

Tiffany says

I was thrilled when I won this book in a giveaway, because I have become a fan of Dystopian fiction this past year. I went back and forth from being very interested in this book to being frustrated, because the story line “jumps around.” The premise is fascinating and the writing is very good, so I will give this book 3 stars.

Jessica says

This may be the best horror novel I have read.

The author is an artist with words. He creates a hauntingly beautiful life from a point of view of a 14 year old boy living in a world dramatically changing. Pay attention to the details as you will be rewarded throughout the book which adds a sense of urgency to what is taking place.

I will be reading this book again and hope the author writes more novels.

Mrs. Kenyon says

Daniel Raymond is alone. His mother left their apartment for toilet paper and never returned. If that is not bad enough, the borough has been quarantined because of a plague with zombie like symptoms. The only information he receives is from the television which reported the doctors and medical personnel being removed by helicopter after the government decided it was too dangerous to assist the local residents.

Danny doesn't know who to trust. The police offer food and protection in exchange for guns and anything else they want and a group called the Listeners offer protection and a new family. Daniel chooses to leave the apartment and join the Listeners, but he continues to doubt his decision and their motives. The Listeners say the police are corrupt, but some of their own members are testing the limits of their new power.

Harrison Demchick leads the reader to question the power of local government and to realize the difficulties in containing a plague in a modern city. Daniel has lost the only family he has known and must learn to make choices in a world where all the choices are tough. Will the plague be cured, will the quarantine be lifted, and will Daniel live long enough to find out? The Listeners spins many tangent story lines that slowly weave into a cohesive tale that leaves the reader with many aha moments.

Lorina Stephens says

Harrison Demchick's *The Listeners* is a novel which, in this reviewer's opinion, could have been great, breaking all borders of genre. Alas, it falls short, due I believe to lack of good developmental editing. Certainly Demchick demonstrates he is a literary adept, with several passages that are breath-taking in their impact, and his concept is a new perspective on the much-overdone zombie apocalypse trope, enough so it kept this somewhat jaded reviewer reading. That says a great deal.

The story revolves, for the most part, around a young boy, Daniel Raymond, who finds himself adrift in a locked-down American city borough. There is the impression, through the boy's actions, he might be autistic, but that is never realized, so the reader is left to assume the boy is instead suffering from extreme shock. Simply put, the plot sees Daniel adopted by a quasi-religious male cult in which all followers, but for the leader, are relieved of their right ears so they might better hear the truth, or lies, we're not sure which because the lines become very blurred after awhile.

While the plague that destroys the city revolves around a zombie-creating virus, the real story is one of brutal survival and the bestiality of humankind, and ultimately becomes a vignette of gun-culture, jingoistic America. All very gritty and powerful stuff.

The actualisation, however, of the story is a confused and conflicting timeline that jumps so rapidly between past and present, without any linear landmarks in either period, that the story falters, stutters and several times comes very close to termination. Demichick's attempt to echo the protagonist's confusion and isolation through this timeline device is laudable, and with even a little guidance from Bancroft Press' editors would have been brilliant.

And while I'm greatly attracted to ambiguous endings because they often reflect life, Demchick's ending defies understanding and seems to completely contradict his protagonist's motivation. It's almost as though having gone on for too long (the story does tend to drag on after awhile), Demchick threw up his metaphorical hands and said, the hell with it, plucked an ending out of the air and tacked it on to his manuscript.

Having said all that, Demchick demonstrates clear promise as a writer, and I hope, with better editorial guidance, he will realize his full potential.

Kristin (Blood,Sweat and Books) says

Took me awhile but I finally finished this book. I can't say I loved it but least I got through it. Review to come.....sometime.....well possibly....

Review:

Sometimes no matter how hard you try to like something it might just never click with you. Unfortunately this was my problem with The Listeners. I tried longer than I usually do to "get" this book. I wanted to see what people were raving about, I wanted to be part of this mind blowing experience and yet try as hard as I might I never was privy to it.

The Listeners is about 14 year Old Daniel who is struggling to survive Quarantine after a horrific epidemic breaks out. This plague is nasty not only does it have symptoms very close to the Bubonic plague (pus filled buboes) but it takes the disease a step farther by having the infected not only go crazy but also rot inside and out. This plague was by far the most fascinating aspect of the book and I wish could of followed the disease more and The Listeners less.

Daniel left all alone after his mother goes missing during a supply run eventually meets up with a gang called The Listeners. All members have only one ear (the right is cut off) and claim this is to better hear the truth and not hear the lies. Their leader Adam is the only one with two ears but being the "Prophet" it's OK and is justified. Here is my problem with The Listeners. They actually sounded crazy and all I kept thinking was it's a cult how can you not see that?!?! I didn't like that after all Daniel went through he became a part of them. I'd hope he would be smart enough to realize they were dangerous. I guess that's how cults work though they

suck you in through friendship, safety, food and shelter and then one day Blam they have you suckered into believing their ways and cutting off body parts in allegiance.

Once Daniel is an Official member of The Listeners things go from bad to worse. I won't give away what happens but let's just say that it doesn't ever really get better. No happy, neatly packaged ending here, so be prepared to be left with lots of unanswered questions.

Overall The Listeners is a decent attempt to show what it might be like to slowly slip into insanity. The pacing flowed nicely and I could see great potential in the writing. While this book didn't work for me, I would recommend giving it a shot and seeing for yourself. I did like the Plague aspect of the story and because of the Author's attention to detail I did find myself feeling squeamish during certain scenes. All that combined would make me at least borrow a copy of the next book if it ever happens as I'm curious to see how things end up once those left realize things aren't exactly as Black and White as they thought. In the end I will be rating The Listeners ★★★.

E.J. says

Before I write anything else, I just have to say that Harrison Demchick is perhaps the greatest name of all time. Kudos to the author on that front.

Anyways, on with the review. The Listeners is Demchick's debut, and it follows a young teenage boy named Daniel as an epidemic 'plague' hits America. No one knows what started this plague, what spreads it or what cures it, all they know is that it is a highly contagious disease of which the symptoms are huge, exploding boils and a general crazy mentality. This isn't a down and out zombie apocalypse story, but it covers a lot of similar ground.

Then the shit really begins to hit the fan as, after the evacuation of the doctors and a lengthy quarantine, the governmental aid begins to disintegrate, forcing Daniel's mother to leave their apartment to try and find some toilet paper...but she never returns. The boy, alone and overwhelmed, becomes momentarily robotic; he carries out his daily routine of eating his breakfast, lunch and dinner and going to sleep at his usual bedtime. That is until one day, as he peers through his kitchen window at the decaying world outside, he is shot at by a dying man driven insane by the plague from the street below.

Police are nearby and manage to kill the sicko that fired the gun (a 'sicko' is what the infected people are affectionately dubbed). Using the ruse that they are checking to see whether he is hurt or not, the policemen demand that all firearms Daniel or his mother own are to be surrendered to them for safety precautions...before promptly leaving without offering any further support.

Before he can think too much on the possibly heartless intentions of the police, a couple of members of the 'Listeners' enter Daniel's apartment. The Listeners are a one-eared gang who purposefully pull a Mr Blonde on themselves to symbolise that they only listen to the 'truth', and that they reject the lies that the government and police forcibly feed America; one ear remains to hear the truth, one ear removed to block out the lies. They believe that the police are worsening matters and that they should fight not only against the illness, but the law too. Coincidentally, these Listeners witnessed what had just happened to Daniel and decided to follow suit in order to see what damage the cops had left behind. With the cold, uncaring cruelty of the police still fresh in the teenager's mind, the two gang members spy the perfect opportunity to recruit him as a Listener, and lead him to their hideout.

The rest of the novel is like Lord of the Flies meets 28 Days Later as Daniel settles in with a gang of

murderers, thieves and psychopaths amidst the backdrop of a hellish apocalypse. Although hesitant at first, the easily manipulated teenager soon sees this paranoid, violent cult in a new light, and begins to accept their hatred for the police as well as the sickos.

To read this review in its entirety, go to <http://http://www.dystopic.co.uk/the-...>

CJ says

I love a happy ending...Unfortunately this does not have one.

OpenBookSociety.com says

Brought to you by OBS reviewer Sammy

Beware of possible Spoilers

I'm Not sure how to rate this book, the writing is wonderful, the story had so much potential and at times was very interesting, but I had a very difficult time following the story line. So, because of the wonderful way the writer had of expressing things I'm going to give the story 3 stars.

Here are a couple of quotes from the book, the author starts with these amazing poetic type expressions such as,

"His breath catches halfway through the exhale, like a thin shirt on a sharp twig."

and he literally continues with this incredible writing style throughout the book. Here's one from closer to the end.

"The water crashes you into bodies; it pushes you into a rip tide of offal; the putrid meat of death and decay swallow your face, and you can swim for the surface all you want, but you're too far down to even know what that is."

The way the author describes things you can see the blisters ready to pop, and smell the rotten bodies, feel the rain as it soaks the characters faces. Fantastic writing. 5 stars for his writing alone.

The story and ideas seemed wonderful on the surface, but so many things were repeated or not finished, half the time I couldn't figure out if things were real or if the main character was having flash backs, imagining things or if they were just delirious. Also, the story had many timeline issues. A very difficult story to follow. Saul had some very, ironic, funny lines in the story, but it doesn't go anywhere, except the last part of the book where his saying is written on a wall, but we really don't know what happened to him. There were so many things that just ended in a way that didn't seem complete. Katie, was she sick, did she die, did she go with the Listeners???? It was unclear. As for the plague, I wish the author would have told us more about it, oh there were a few experiments but it didn't go anywhere.

In the afterword, it explains that this book was a series of short stories that the author wrote and put together in one book, that's what it felt like while reading. Several, really well written short stories thrown together trying to make one full length book. I was so glad I read that part because I was so confused while reading,

especially after reading the 5 star reviews about what an awesome story it was. While I believe it could be an awesome story, for me I couldn't catch the flow of this story and it was missing a cohesiveness that seemed to be beyond my grasp. I will be looking for more books by this author because even with the issues the story had, his ideas and writing were fascinating.

I recommend this story for mature young adults and adults who enjoy poetic writing, with interesting ideas, that their own imaginations can fill in.

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/th...>

Benjamin Ethridge says

Written with an Armageddon pen, envisioned with desolate wasteland eyes, and heard by a single, knowing ear, Harrison Demchick's *THE LISTENERS* provides a peep hole to a ravaged world of survivors living day to day with the burden of being human. With stylistic and emotional flourishes largely missing from the post-apocalyptic sub-genre, this is a novel that really shouldn't be missed!

Amy Lutchen says

Damn. What would you do?

The Listeners is one of those books that when you finish, you stare at the wall or the stain in the carpet and talk to yourself. Yeah, it's that kind of book-one that makes you really dig deep to evaluate yourself as a human being and decide what kinds of choices you might make when facing grim events. The amount of emotional and graphically oozing detail in this book is one that deserves high praises and I think that Harrison Demchick, the author, is here to stay.

Danielle says

Read This Review & More Like It At Ageless Pages Reviews

I'm sitting here with my hand over my mouth trying to process one of the most incredibly poetic, haunting novels I have read. And it's about a zombie plague. Try and picture that for a moment. Harrison Demchick has written a beautiful and disgusting, wonderful and horrifying book with a strong voice and lyrical quality and it's about the Apocalypse.

14-year-old Daniel is living in an unnamed borough, (it's Manhattan,) that has recently become victim of a plague that causes the victim to rot inside and out. Outwardly, the disease manifests as red, pus-filled boils. Inwardly, with a violent dementia and decline in mental faculties. So it's zombies, but not the way you generally think of them. These "sickos" can talk, use weapons, even be reasoned with...right up until they can't. Right off the bat, that's a whole lot scarier than the usual genre.

I'd like to start out that this review is purposefully vague, because *The Listeners* is hard to describe. It's far less about the plot, (although there is a good, solid one,) and more about a slow decent into insanity. Large portions take place entirely in imagination and Demchick lets Daniel's mental state dictate the actual writing.

As the Listeners exert control and the horror of the situation beats him down, the pace gets frantic with repeated words, asides, and violent imagery. This style will be very polarizing, but I found it effective and affecting. A scene when Daniel is inducted into the Listeners is particularly beautiful while being utterly tragic.

Daniel's mom goes out for supplies and never comes home. Three days later, corrupt cops show up to extort him for anything of value in the house in exchange for protection and a promise of food. They are followed by the Listeners, a cult that wants to take the city back from the police. They convince Daniel to come with them and join their ranks.

The Listeners are fishy from the start. Their prophet, Adam, is the only one with two ears. Everyone else cuts off their right in an initiation ceremony, to better hear the truth and not hear the lies. They live in an underground bunker that someone built under a supermarket. Like most cults, their morals are black and white, and they regard all cops as evil enemies to be destroyed. Daniel is conflicted, as his best friend Katie's father is in the police and he trusts him. Through isolation and manipulation, the Listeners convince Daniel, only 14 remember, that theirs is the only right way.

This is NOT a happy book. Just when you think you have the ending pinned down, another twist is thrown out. People die, graphically, and the people left don't have anyone else's best interests at heart. Maybe the people gone didn't either. The story is broken into two parts, each with a gut-wrenching climax. Part one is Daniel's ascension to Listener, with little in the way of action and sickos. Part two is more on daily life in the city, as he goes on patrol and searches for answers raised in part one. These parts are punctuated with "respites", chapters following other characters around the city. They give a welcome depth to the world. Despite following a vast range of people: a business man outside the quarantine, a family man inside, two police officers, an infected brother, an abandoned nurse, and a mother/reporter, all the respites explore the same themes of insanity and survival.

I have two issues with the book, though they're not enough to downrate it. First, on an island of a million people, even after a deadly plague, everyone seems to come together too nicely. Any character introduced, Daniel will run into later. On one hand, it adds to the isolated feeling. On the other, of course the newspaper writer mentioned in the first respite, the baby, and the homeless man, will all end up at the same place 20 chapters later. It's convenient. My second issue is I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS and the author doesn't say if this is a planned series or a one off! If it is a one off, I will be so mad, because I need to know:

(view spoiler)

The Listeners is moving and powerful in a way I've never known a horror story to be. It's not traditionally scary, building far more on dread than boos, but I found it creeping into my thoughts after dark. It brings up a lot of questions regarding who the monsters are and the morality of survival. It must be experienced.

Sean Little says

Wasn't a bad book but the writing style was a pretty stream of conscious which I'm not a big fan of so it was more personal than substance for me.

Scott says

The Listeners by Harrison Demchick is a story of society breaking down. When the plague hits and his neighborhood is quarantined life quickly changes for a 14 year old boy named Daniel. Residents are encouraged to stay in their homes and that the plague should be contained shortly. His mother leaves the house to get some more toilet paper she never returns, leaving Daniel to fend for himself. After a run in with one of the infected and suffering from some police abusing their power Daniel meets some Listeners. Daniel has heard of this gang from his friend Katie's father who is a local police officer. The Listeners are said to be a group of violent criminals whose members all have an ear removed.

Daniel can't see anything wrong with them though. He is adopted by the group and goes to live in their base in the basement of a grocery store. Through this experience he learns a bit more about the plague and sees more of it's zombie like victims that the members call sickos. As Daniel is indoctrinated into the brotherhood he begins to believe in the message spoken by their leader, the prophet Adam.

This book tells a haunting tale of what happens when the police become the only authority and they are abusing their power. I was undecided on The Listeners trying to figure out if they were a force for good, a cult taking advantage of the terrible situation, or a criminal organization looking to muscle in and take the power.

As an unusual twist to the normal zombieish apocalypse story the infected are a background to this story. There are not ravaging hordes trying to overwhelm a small group of survivors, they are the reason for the breakdown of society and an obstacle to those who are trying to survive. The book follows Daniel for the most part with some offshoots following various other characters in the quarantine zone. The book does show a bit from all angles with random people trying to survive as well as a viewpoint from some police officers in the crisis area.

This book had me guessing throughout. I was constantly wavering on what I thought The Listeners were really trying to accomplish. It's a great book for people who enjoy post apocalyptic, zombie, thriller books. There is a bit of a surprise towards the end that really got me. This book will definitely not be for everyone, but it is worth a look to see if it clicks for you.

Book provided by a literary agent for a review.

mari says

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. It was such a beautifully, almost poetically, written zombie apocalypse novel. Its definitely not a typical zombie story. The infected are not dead. They are sick people, who's mental state slowly degenerates. They are covered in boils and highly contagious. They are a frightening addition to the horror genre.

Daniel Raymond is 14 year old, left alone in his apartment in the middle of the quarantined borough. He thinks of his mother, his friend Katie and their lives before the outbreak. Within the walls of the quarantine, the police have become corrupt, the people dependent on them for food and protection. There are also The Listeners, a band of boys and men with an ear chopped off that seem almost a myth, but who have an agenda of their own. Then there are the infected roaming the streets.

The story goes back and forth in time, and is sometimes interspersed with Daniel's dreams and what seem like hallucinations. It is very affective at portraying the madness and desperation within him to find answers to what is happening around him.

I realize that this review sounds a bit vague but I feel sharing even some of the plot gives away too much. You will enjoy it better if you read it without knowing what is coming next.

Jane Doe says

Loved, loved, loved the writing style of this author. The story had so much potential but didn't deliver, was hard to follow and had many many loose ends. I will read another book by him because even though this story for me missed the mark his writing is awesome.
