



## Conception

*Thomas Norwood*

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**Conception** Thomas Norwood

THE NEXT STAGE IN HUMAN EVOLUTION IS ALMOST HERE... BUT WILL HOMO SAPIENS SURVIVE?

It's 2065. Environmental and social chaos are poised to disrupt all life on earth. Some regions are still controlled by their governments, others - beyond the walls surrounding the major cities - are controlled by gangs and rebel armies.

Dr Michael Khan, a brilliant geneticist struggling to save his wife, Annie, from a deadly virus, is recruited by a secret organization committed to bringing about the next stage in human evolution. *Homo novus* -- less greedy, more cooperative, more resistant to disease, and ready to take over the future once the rest of the human race wipes itself out.

When the military learns of Michael's research, he is hired to create genetic resistance to a weaponized form of Ebola being deployed against his country. However, the military has its own agenda, and Michael and Annie soon learn that nobody, not even their own government, can be trusted.

Now, with his wife and millions of his fellow citizens about to die, and his project hijacked for the ruthless objectives of war, Michael must find a way to save humanity from itself before it's too late.

## Conception Details

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Author : Thomas Norwood

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## From Reader Review Conception for online ebook

### Angel Geliique says

I wasn't sure what to expect when I began reading this book. What I got was an incredibly well-written, compelling story told from the perspective of a scientist (Michael Khan) striving to create a new race of disease-resistant, cooperative humans. Though well-intentioned--despite his own personal agenda--things don't go exactly as planned and before long, Michael is charged with terrorism.

This post-apocalyptic story is very thought provoking. Not only does it leave you pondering mankind's destructive decisions but it makes you question government motives and actions as well. It can be cynical at times, but sadly, realistically so.

I know I especially enjoyed this book because of my background in both biology and law. It was a real treat! However, prior knowledge in those fields are completely unnecessary, as the author doesn't get technical with biological terms and procedures. He does an excellent job explaining everything and creating a futuristic world that seems believable.

I'm looking forward to reading the next book in this remarkable series.

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### Iliana León says

I don't normally read Science Fiction, but this book really got me hooked. The characters were believable and relatable, the story was fast-paced and scarily realistic, and the ideas in it were things that I think we all need to think about: what will happen to the earth if we continue to destroy our environment, and how will it manage to continue to support so many of us? I'd recommend it to anyone, but especially lovers of sci fi or thrillers.

Disclaimer: I received an ARC of this novel.

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### Rebecca Rakes says

I get all the other reviews that stated this book was informative without being preachy. It was very well written and enjoyable. Not your typical cookie cutter book that wraps everything up in a too perfect bow at the end. It tells the story of a man, Michael Kahn, with a sick wife named Anne. We are shown how Michael gets put into an impossible situation in order to save her life. Lots of concepts and ideas about morality are shown but most of the time both sides are not glossed over.

Michael struggles with what he has done and will do to save the one person he truly loves. The part of the book I found most compelling was the amount of time he uses trying to save Anne and in turn almost neglecting her. Forest for the trees I guess. And this isn't lost on him either.

The scientific parts are just enough to sound convincing without making me feel stupid or confused. The trial lasted just long enough. The ending was satisfying.

The only reason it didn't get 5 stars was the sexual aspect of his friends and their church. I saw the value in it as to how society was behaving but I felt that it almost distracted from the book at times. It needed to go full

force and have Michael interact with it and go thru that inner turmoil or just leave it be. Anne was too nonchalant about giving Michael permission to have a one night stand when she obviously had years left to live.

I did really enjoy the way one, seemingly harmless decision led to so many other harmful and out of control situations. I liked the way it built on the character so you could understand how it got that way.

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### **Katie says**

I am absolutely wretched at remembering to write reviews (possibly even wretched at writing them), but I told the author (seems like a cool guy) I would...so here we are.

This book actually surprised me, it was just a random goodreads recommendation that sounded relatively interesting/useful. It only cost a few bucks on Amazon, so I figured, what the hell.

The structure was intriguing as it was sort of a story within a story.

It wasn't told in a boring from this time to that time chronological fashion, which was a nice change. It also managed to do this well; that's important.

The scientific jargon was a little hard to hold onto at times, but it wasn't terribly distracting. It did make me want to pick up some books on genetics to see if the stuff was actually realistic. I suppose that could also be taken as a positive.

The story itself was fast paced and, I think, compatible with certain interests that are still popular in the mainstream. It even has a little courtroom drama, so it appeals to a wider range of possible readers.

This book approaches issues of genetic modification, environmental collapse, etc. in pretty predictable ways, but that doesn't stop it from bringing something new to the table. You can read it for yourself if you want to know what the new is.

I was thrown for a loop with the whole laboratory tests on primates bit. I wanted to be mad that they were doing tests on them, but then I felt like I couldn't get too mad because of the way the issue is addressed later in the book. I was confused though, considering the overall story...

For those of you that care about grammar, typos, etc. you will be happy to know this book is very tidy. There were only a few times I had to slow down and ponder what was actually being said (that may just be a...we don't say that over here kind of thing though).

Overall, I think the book is well worth the time it takes to read. I look forward to the second book.

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### **Thorn says**

Of the many book giveaways I entered on Goodreads, Perfectible Animals was one that caught my eye most. I admit that I do judge books by their covers, and have found many great new authors that way. So when I saw the name of this book, followed by the cover, and then finally read the blurb, I was very interested. When I found out that I had won a copy (a personalized one to boot), I was ecstatic. It finally arrived right

during finals week, and I longed to read it but new I couldn't just yet. Today I was finally able to pick it up, and I only put it down once I finished it.

Michael Khan is a scientist looking to save his wife from a deadly virus, and wants to save the rest of humanity in this almost apocalyptic future. His research constantly seems to be on the verge of breaking through, but he also has troubles securing the funding needed to continue. As he does everything he can to secure the financing he needs, he watches as the world turns more and more upon itself, causing him to struggle even farther to finish his work. Even when he finally finishes what he starts years previously, not everything is as perfect as it seems. His "children," the results of the first run of humans who are genetically modified to resist all diseases, accidentally create super-diseases that put themselves and Michael at a great risk from the government. He is under scrutiny from those he is forced to work under. And despite everything, his sickly wife keeps getting worse.

Thomas Norwood's first book is everything I was hoping it would be. Despite the main character's driving force be his wife, it's not sappy and doesn't overly delve into the romance. Character interactions are real; heartfelt and also confrontational. Despite the fact that his wife is dying, they don't spend the book cuddling and trying to make it appear right. Khan puts his life to saving hers, and in turn doesn't appreciate the time they do have, which leads to strain. Friends don't always turn out to be what you think, and bitter rivalries cause major conflicts. Despite the book looking like it would be filled with a lot of scientific jargon, it's a very easy read. Norwood makes sure you understand what's going on without dumbing it down, while also teaching you a little along the way. The book is also a great reflection of what is currently going on in the world, and doesn't seem like too far of a stretch to believe any of this could happen in the near future. My favorite thing I can recommend to a potential reader is that there is no need to worry about reading an unfinished series. Though Thomas plans to write two more books, *Perfectible Animals* ends on such a note that it's ambiguous enough to lead to more books, but also has such finality that it stands well on its own.

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## Lee says

This was a surprise read for me. I picked it up either cheap or free from Amazon to fill my Kindle with back up books should I ever find the day with nothing to read. So I sent it to my phone kindle app for those rare times where my Kindle isn't with me, like eating breakfast in a hotel. From 'backup' up book status, this soon moved to 'I wonder what is going to happen next' status.

The book's genre is hard to pick, not quite dystopian, is probably the best one I can come up with. Based in the very near future, the world is a pretty shitty place, but Norwood cleverly doesn't change a lot, it is easy to envisage this future in 30 or 50 years from now. Basically as global warming kicks on and sea levels rise, life becomes tough for us homo sapiens. Based in Melbourne, Australia, Norwood tells a scientific tale of woe. As food runs low, cities set up de-reg zones for the poor and corporations take over the running of countries. The main topics for discussion are global warming and stem cell or gene modification. Our main character is a scientist who is trying to produce super babies that will allow the human race to carry on whilst disease starts to wipe out the 'normal' homo sapiens.

Norwood must be a specialist in the field of genetics, because he tells a very believable story or gene modifying that is detailed yet doesn't lose the reader in ridiculously long unpronounceable words. I have to say, there is 'some' soap boxing with political statements, but it isn't over the top.

I think what I enjoyed the most is the telling of a story about a human condition that affects most of us. The ability to '**not see**' those suffering more than us. The irony was not lost on me as I walked past a woman sitting on the footpath begging for money as I entered the coffee shop for my latte and caramel cake. Whilst I comprehended the scene, homeless woman begging, I had no emotional response to it and somehow the irony only came to me like a fist to the gut, when I felt emotion as I read parts of the book where those that 'have' justify the extermination of those that 'have not' to ensure that they still survive in relative comfort. Like latte and caramel cake.

Back to the book. I was pleasantly surprised at the easy written style of this story and whilst there are a couple of rough patches, Norwood is brilliant with lab scenes, but his courtroom or interrogation scene writing needs some hard edgeness added. Overall it was a good read and one that definitely has me wanting to read the next installment.

So i was expecting a 2.5 - 3 star read and I am happy to report 3.5 - 4 star rating.

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### **Nickie says**

I've been reading a lot of YA and NA fiction lately, so when Thomas Norwood sent a review request for his adult sci-fi novel *Perfectible Animals*, I was ready for a break from the YA world. Plus, it's sci-fi! How can I say no to that?

Geneticist Michael Khan lives in a future version of Australia where the economy has been ravaged by environmental disasters. The 'haves' live safe, secure lives within the government secured borders of the cities. The 'have-nots' eke out an existence in an inhospitable world controlled by cartels and gang violence.

Michael's genetic research begins as an effort to cure HIV-4, a mosquito-born variant of HIV that's affect thousands, including his wife. However, his research for a cure has lead to a puzzling side effect-- animals medicated with his treatment become placid, cooperative, and friendly.

Michael's hopes for curing HIV-4 seem to be crushed when the military buys his research company, but he remains determined to search for a treatment for his wife. When Michael discovers that the government may have immoral uses for his vaccination, he must decide between trying to save his wife and protecting his countrymen from themselves.

#### **What I liked about this book:**

While the blurb got me interested in the story, Norwood's writing is what sucked me in. Norwood does an excellent job balancing suspense, action, intrigue, and science fiction. The technology introduced in the book is far away enough from what we have today to be intriguing, but close enough to our lives to be believable.

I also enjoyed reading Norwood's take on how environmental disasters could shape the future (which seems to be a trend in newer sci-fi novels). He tackles questions of class-ism head on, and throws the main character into difficult moral dilemmas.

Without including any spoilers, I loved the ending -- Michael stays true to his beliefs, and I can't imagine the story concluding in any other way.

What I didn't like about this book:

The book is narrated from Michael's point of view, so the reader is constantly given Michael's line of reasoning and justifications for his actions. (SLIGHT SPOILER) However, in his quest to find a cure for his wife's illness, Michael engages in some dubious experiments but is always able to explain away his actions. I think Michael was intended to be a reliable narrator, but by the end of the book I found myself questioning his motives and actions. I would have loved to see another perspective woven into the story to allow the reader a glimpse of Michael as the world sees him instead of experiencing Michael through his own thoughts.

Final verdict:

If you're a fan of genetic engineering/sci-fi books, this is a fun read. There's some implied sex, a little bit of language, and some violence, which skew this book more toward adult and NA readers.

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### **Allan Dyen-Shapiro says**

Full disclosure: Tom is a critique partner; I read an early draft of one of his chapters on Online Writer's Workshop several years ago and since then have critiqued several drafts. So, although I'm not his neighbor or his cousin (he's Australian, and I'm from the US), in this world in which one can get to know someone online without ever having been in the same time zone, he's not a stranger.

That being said, I think any science fiction fan will find this book worthwhile.

Imagine a world in which catastrophic climate change and biowarfare has left a fragmented world of fractions of today's nation-states, powerful corporations, and disorganized anti-establishment groups. Envision a scientist--a quiet critic of the system but comfortably living ensconced within a protected upper class enclave in what's left of Australia, albeit a police state with a sham facade of democracy that answers to the military. He is close to a solution: modifications to the immune system that would protect against rampant natural and engineered viruses, with the modifications having the side effect of enhanced cooperativity. The rub--protection against bio-weapons augurs against corporate profits and military dominance. Cooperativity would be worse.

Michael Khan is this scientist. With his wife dying of a mosquito-transmitted retroviral disease, the company he toils for short on funding, his best friend withdrawn into a religious cult that is hiding out the inevitable apocalypse on private islands, and refugees reduced to barbarism in non-protected areas tugging at his heartstrings, he's faced with a conundrum: how to deploy these modifications? And should the next generation be engineered with these modifications? Is that the Nazi dream of a super-race or the only hope for mankind?

Perfectible Animals is the story of what happens to Michael and what happens to the world. On the way, the questions of what it is to be a scientist and what it is to be human are posed, but left for the reader to answer.

And all that between the lines of a fast-paced, plot-driven thriller.

The closest comparison I can make, both in style and in ideas, would be to science fiction legend Brian Aldiss' 2007 masterpiece, *Harm*. If you liked that, you'll definitely like this. Greg Bear's *Darwin's Radio* also comes to mind as a good comparison.

A very quick read, but one that will leave you thinking.

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### **Trish says**

Wow! I only got this e-book because it was a Kindle Deal on amazon and although the subject itself interested me I wasn't expecting all that much - especially since this is the self-published author's debut novel. But not only is the story very well thought-through, colourful and thrilling, the author's writing style is also very elaborate and compelling which made me finish this book in only two days (although I had to work)!

Hence, Thomas Norwood definitely is an insider's tipp (although I hope not for long) and I can not recommend this book enough.

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### **Sarah-Jayne Briggs says**

(I received this book for free as part of Goodreads First Reads giveaways).

(This review may contain spoilers).

Genetic engineering is something that's becoming more common now. Designer babies and everything. Having said that, this book is more about the main character - at least in my opinion.

Michael was an easy character to relate to. I could really get behind his desire to make humanity better and the fact that his wife was the main driving force behind it just made the character even more likable.

The skipping back in time was a bit confusing and, in a way, I think it was unnecessary. Although it serves to set the scene a bit, it did throw me a little.

I particularly liked Michael's relationship with Annie. It came across as really sweet and realistic, even though there were some problems. (That actually made the relationship better - that it wasn't all sunshine and roses).

I did find the science parts a bit confusing at times, but I did particularly like the bits with the monkeys. It was sweet how they each seemed to have their own personality and how different they were because of the new cells that had been introduced.

When the children came into it, I would have liked to see more of them, rather than being told what they were like. They didn't actually appear in any scene properly.

The technology in this book was pretty good and it was interesting to see how things had developed - and

under-developed. I could actually see a lot of how the world ended up happening in the future of this world.

The attitude of the government and their decisions about what to do was sad, but really not that surprising. Michael's reactions to that was one of the things that endeared him to me.

The writing in this book was really good, though I did notice one or two errors. I hope there will be a sequel to this, because I'd really like to read it.

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## **Sandra "Jezanz" says**

### **INITIAL THOUGHTS**

I received this book directly from the author, in exchange for my honest review.

Approaching this book I was quite intrigued by the blurb, but was a little worried that perhaps some of the scientific/genetics talk would be over my head and I'll admit that about 56% of the way through the book I did feel a little overwhelmed by some of the terminology. Having said that I did really enjoy the book.

### **MY REVIEW**

The cover shows a "human" or maybe a "modified human" with genetic symbols also on the front cover. the font and the author name is in a computurised type of font which fits in with the book content as it is scientific in genre.

So we to begin with we meet Michael Khan a brilliant scientist who has been arrested on charges of terrorism. Michael is put through some extremely hard cross examination as well as having his head messed with as one of his co-workers is arrested and they are continually played off against each other. Then the story flashes back and we learn about everything that happens. At the end of the book we go back to Michael being questioned at court. Michael finds out for sure whether his colleague Justin has turned against him or not. Prospects seem to be looking up for Michael but then. . . well you need to read the book.

Michael may be a clinical, logical scientist but he has a wife with an auto immune disease he is also trying to cure with his genetic experiments. Justin his co-worker has a relative who is ill so they have that in common as well as working together. Also in this book there are two sectors of society, the haves within a segregated section of town and the have not's outside the gate. They are referred to the Regulated (inside) and the De-Regulated (outside). The world has changed dramatically after the horrific floods, food is in short supply. Michael's wife is really too ill to work but she volunteers at a medical clinic in the De-Regulated Zone, so they both have friends there. When the government decides to wipe out the De-Regulated Zone with a virus that Michael has worked on, both Michael and his wife try to vaccinate the poor people. Obviously that doesn't endear them to the government either.

Then mixed in with all the politics are the innocents that have been created in a scientific lab who yes are immune to viruses but can create worse if they are kept in close proximity to one another. they can be a death threat to "normal" humans. The government will want them killed if they find out before Michael can hide them. So Michael approaches some rather hippie friends of his and his wife who are part of the New Church Cult.

Will the Cult help hide the kids? Why doesn't Michael and his wife hide too?

This book definitely lives up to the genre classification that the author gave it as a Technothriller. It's not necessarily a book that I would have chosen by it's genre but after reading it I have to say apart from the odd confusing scientific talk I did enjoy the book. The rest of the book is good enough to read that you get past the difficult parts.

So did I enjoy the book? Yes I did enjoy it though as I have said there are more complicated sections of the book to get through. The book is totally worth sticking with though. Would I recommend the book? Yes, I

think it would appeal to adult readers or older teens that prefer a more involved plot. Would I read a BK#2? Yes please! If you are reading my Review Thomas Norwood, I'd love to be added to your reviewer list for Bk#2 if you have one. Would I read other books by this Author? I would certainly take a close look at anything written by this author.

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### **Jo-Anne Pfoh says**

I purchased this on-line because I have been coming up dry on contests as of late and I was looking for something new. The title and summary caught my eye and although I was not familiar with any works by Thomas Norwood but I decided to give it a read. I was not disappointed.

Global warming has all but destroyed man's ability to produce enough food to sustain it's ever increasing population. A multitude of city-states have arisen and are at war over these resources. Diseases both natural and man made run amok. Scientists are trying to manipulate the human genetic code to make it resistant to all forms of disease natural and man-made.

Scientist Dr. Michael Khan sees an opportunity to improve the human race by making them more co-operative and disease resistant. His motives are not just to save the human race. His wife is dying and he is racing against time to save her and develop a new kinder species before times runs out on them all. The government has other plans.

Can people we modified? Should they be? Is the human race willing to be saved? Should they be?

I found this book to be extraordinary and a bit terrifying at the same time. The characters were well laid out and each had their own moral compass which I enjoyed immensely. I am not a book critic, English major, scientist or historian. I just like to read books and be entertained and this book did just that. I cannot wait for the second installation. I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a good read regardless of genre.

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### **Gina says**

I was very impressed with the imagination used to create this book. I was especially impressed that this was a first book. The author built strong characters who you instantly cared about and could relate to. The book also makes the reader consciously aware of how we are damaging our planet and changes need to be made sooner rather than later. I'm looking forward to reading book 2.

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### **Susan says**

A good, fast read that in all probability as to what our present day society may be facing in the near future--environmental disasters, medical situations that cannot be contained, a governmental conspiracy of self serving people.

The teaser to get me to read "Perfectible Animals" was a free (what I thought was a BOOK) download of "The Last Reader". The title is what hooked me--I was expecting a full length (I hadn't looked at the bottom

of the screen) novel along the lines of "The Book" by M. Clifford, or "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak (two of my favorite books). When I realized it was only a short story, I felt like Burgess Meredith did in the Twilight Zone episode entitled 'Time Enough at Last'.

I was almost as devastated as Henry Bemis (Burgess Meredith) was at the end of that episode of TZ!! I believe Thomas Norwood SHOULD flesh out this short story ('The Last Reader') into an amazingly wonderful novel.

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### **G.G. says**

I received this ebook free from the author in exchange for an honest review.

The idea behind the book was great. The protagonist, a scientist, is looking for a cure for his wife's disease. His research has to do with the immune system, which leads him into different unwanted situations, where people lie to him to get what they want.

With this, it is easy to realize that no discovery is evil in itself. The way people are using it sometimes is.

The story is quite realistic. It takes place in a near future where global warming has melted all the glaciers, raising the water many feet, thus destroying many inhabited areas. It's rather chaos everywhere except in cities, which have surrounded themselves with barricades to protect themselves from the people outside.

I am a fan of first person POV so I was already sold. In this case, it helps understand the feelings of the narrator (and his motives). The author did a good job as you can feel the stress Michael is in not only to save his wife but from protection his research also. Michael is human, with qualities and flaws. (I can't say much without spoiler, so I will leave it at that.) The twists are well done and the story flows smoothly. What he does, and why he does it, is plausible and not far-fetched. There were parts where I was a little lost since I don't know much about research in general, but the way Norwood Thomas puts it down seems true enough for me to believe he knows what he's talking about. Overall an entertaining read. I would recommend for people who love dystopia mixed with a little bit of sci-fi, and for anyone who just wants to read a good story.

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