



Cages

Chris Pasley

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As long as Sam Crafty can remember, adults have feared their children. Since the Outbreak ten percent of all teenagers transform spontaneously and without warning into horrible, parasite-spreading Beasts. This monstrous tide threatened to destroy the world, but the survivors persevered and kept the parasite at bay by creating Quarantines, rigid prisons to hold their children through volatile puberty into the safety of adulthood.

For Sam, incarceration is freedom. The child of damaged Outbreak survivors, he relishes the day he can unleash the tricks his brother James taught him and make his mark on the world. The tyrannical principal who would happily see him dead? A worthy adversary. His chemically-obsessed roommate who keeps trying to build a dirty bomb? A useful pawn. His own debilitating fear of becoming a monster himself? Well... he's not really ready for that one.

Cages is a deceptively easy to read page-turner concealing a deep coming of age story. How do we develop our own identities among a sea of external influences? Will we take on our parents' neuroses? Our brothers' lost dreams? Or... will we go wild?

Cages Details

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From Reader Review Cages for online ebook

Tammy K. says

This story is one that grows on you and gets better as you read.

Through most of this story I struggled to adjust to the authors writing style.

There were times I almost put this book down because the constant references to old books, political events, and even songs kept pulling me out of "the moment" of the story.

Another flaw in this story was that there were times during the middle of an action scene the main character would reflect back upon things that his father, brother and mother said. These distractions break the integrity of the scene and left me in a "What the hell0" moment.

If it were not for these breaks, I would give the story five stars.

Here is why I liked the book so much:

The characters are original, fully fleshed out. I was able to bond to them and see them clearly in my mind.

The authors take on parasitic zombies is fresh and stands out for its originality.

The plot plays out nicely, with a fair amount of twists that kept me entertained.

The settings were described well and easy to envision.

There is a cliff hanger ending, but that is to be expected in a first book of a series.

I recommend this book (series) to readers of the Post Apocalypse, Dystopian, Action Combat, and Horror genre.

Amber says

Yep good all round read liked the characters more than the actual story, liked the backgrounds to them, feel he could develop this more and maybe move away from the Zombie scene and have a more apocalyptic theme too many Zombies out their now, this stands out

Shawanda says

Honestly I hardly ever rate a book like this, this book just had too many issues for me. First, there were way too many grammar mistakes in the book. The fact that I had to read quite a few sentences twice to try and figure out what was trying to be said was rather annoying. Second, I didnt feel like the book flowed at all, way too much going on. Jumping from the main character, to his past, to supporting characters pasts, and then back to the present had my head spinning. Third, I am used to unanswered questions (obvious any good series will have them) but I find myself asking way too many questions. Nothing was explained well at all and the book just didnt flow and I need fluidity. The second book goes into the "maybe will read because the idea had potential & the author maybe learned from the first one" pile.

JK says

So like any book there are positives and then there are the negatives. Fret not, however, the negatives do not

weigh this down.

I always hate reviews when people describe the story and like to tell you what everything is about, so for the sake of this review, I'm about to hate myself...

This story takes place after a zombie outbreak. Don't roll your eyes, zombies are annoyingly overused these days, yes, but it's not all guts and blood. They actually take the back seat in this one. Really, the outbreak just allows for the setting we have here. So, tangent aside, this takes place in a world after a zombie outbreak. Society is back on it's feet, not to where it was before or anywhere close, but it's functioning. This virus is not like your typical zombie virus where you have an affected and they bite someone and they become infected and so on. It's a virus that lays dormant in the bloodstream of children. Yep, children. Kids don't just go around biting people and that's how it spreads. Instead, once the kids hit puberty and all those fun changes start to happen in their body, 10% of kids will mutate. The virus will take over and completely change the child - into a Beast. These are not the shambling humans with rotting flesh and a hunger for meat. No sir. Those are the Bitten. Those are what are created by Beasts. Beasts are horrific monsters that cannot be described... well, by me. I could describe word for word what the book does, but why spoil it? You read it, and then decide what's scarier - a shambling corpse, or even a quick one, or Beasts. I'll take a slow or fast corpse any day. So, the Beasts spread the active virus around. They create Bitten out of adults and they are the typical zombie you see.

So, society can just let these kids run around and do what they want. Once a kid hits puberty they are sent off to quarantines. These aren't just a cage and everyone fends for themselves, society is actually smart here. They send them to these school/prison hybrids. The kids still go to classes, take part in activities, sports, and all that jazz. They just live at school now and have armed guards around 24/7.

This is where the story starts, with one right bastard of a kid, Sam, entering quarantine. I say bastard because really, what teenager isn't? I really just mean smartass there. Anywho, this is a first person account of Sam's time in the quarantine and his journey to learn who he really is. He's just as confused as any teen, with so many people trying to influence who he is, and add to that that any one of the kids walking around him could become a monster at any time... well, things just aren't easy for him.

It took me talking to the author to really understand what the story was about. I read it and I just felt clueless, wondering where the plot was. It's about kid, that's the plot. I guess I really haven't read any coming of age stories nor do I really understand teenagers. I kept expecting Sam to just act rational and when he wasn't, well, I was confused. Call me stupid. Yeah, go ahead. Kids make no sense to me. You really do get to watch this kid try to figure out who he is and how major adult roles have played a part in who he is. I'll say kudos to that.

The ending closes up the story here pretty nicely, but at the same time it is open enough so that if the author wanted to do more with the character or universe he's created he could. There are minor questions that you could ask about it, but nothing you would feel was a plot hole. It's a precarious balance and one the author didn't have trouble with.

Now, the negative. Remember I said there were negatives? The review seemed like all was happy and super positive, but it's not. The major drawback I have with this is that I feel like the story is a little broken up. It

feels like there is an "Event A," "Event B," "Event C" and so on with little in between to keep things flowing. I would have liked to have seen more development to make these events have more meaning. I'd like to have seen the whole thing drawn out over a bit more time so that we could have really felt the effects of everything that happened.

... I think that's it for the negatives. Huh.

So overall, it was a good read. You get to actually see what makes Sam who he is rather than just be told who he is. The backdrop of the story and how the world became what it is, is just flat out awesome. It's something super unique and it has me wishing the author will do more with this story. My only issue with the book is something a lot of first time authors have so I can't really be too bummed about that. I'd say read it!

Michelle says

ehhhh - best word for this book is ehhhh.

I did finish it. it was a an alright read till about 80% of the way threw - then it just all went to hell. Every thing got weird, nothing had an explanation or had too much explanation. After Sam got let out of the bell, the book turned to pure crap.

Not worth the time and energy. Don't bother.

Emily says

This book wasn't bad. It wasn't great. Overall it struck me as mediocre. The premise was an interesting one. Set in a post-zombie-apocalypse world, the parasites that cause the infection live in children and each child has approximately a 10% chance to become a monster called a Beast during puberty. Beasts create bitten, otherwise known as traditional zombies. Not to mention slaughtering pretty much everything in sight.

So, the solution? Lock kids in a mix between a high security prison and middle school/high school. If they turn, kill 'em.

Sounds good.

It was interesting, but not captivating. I debated putting it aside for other books I wanted to read more but felt that I owed it to the story to finish it.

The writing style wasn't my favorite. There's a lot of telling instead of showing and a lot of random flashbacks that are not outlined as being different from the standard timeline. No large breaks in the page, no asterisks, no nothing. One paragraph is present, then suddenly we're in the past. It's jarring.

The characters were another issue for me. Even the main character comes off as somewhat flat and not well rounded. The 'bad guy' isn't one dimensional, but the development of his personality and actions is very

predictable. There were no characters in this book that I could really connect with, which is an issue when you've got a coming of age book. You really have to feel and sympathize with the characters to get something out of that sort of story, and I just didn't. We meet a lot of characters through the course of the book, and virtually none of them are fleshed out beyond a few sentences about how they interact with the main character. Again, nothing to really draw the reader in.

Strangely enough, I felt no sense of danger reading this. The atmosphere just didn't grab me. Even the end of the book, while open to a sequel, didn't leave me with any interest to continue with the series.

It's worth a read if you like the teen coming of age genre, I suppose. It was short and it was cheap. So I don't feel like I wasted anything. I got through it in a day.

Michelle says

I really enjoyed this book. It's set in the post-zombie apocalypse and has a lot of twists. The zombies are different than other books I've read and I honestly liked that a lot. The main character is a feisty teenager who likes pranks and being the center of attention. He's very smart and that gets him in trouble at times. If you enjoy zombie books, I highly recommend this one. Just don't go into it expecting other books you've read.

Cheryl Casey says

PROS

When I got into the meat of this book, I had this impression of the horrors of reading *Lord of the Flies* when I was younger. Like in a normal situation they would have been mostly OK kids, maybe a few jerks, but their environment and emotional stress had them turning to extremes in dealing with each other. We're given a good hard look at the characters and what has driven them to their places in this book. The ending wrapped up that particular situation pretty well but I do want to know what happens next, where the kid goes from there. Will definitely buy the next book.

CONS

Only one, really - Needs more editing. It is well written and there are no problems with the grammar. It just seems like when sentences were being revised, words became orphaned or weren't changed to the right tense. Several out of place words where another one was meant. Those are things that my brain usually glosses over when I'm drawn into a story but there was something that needed to be corrected on just about every other page of my kindle version.

Edit: I came back to change from 4 stars to 5 stars because 1 month later this book is still coming to mind sometimes and I wind up wondering if book 2 is close to being ready (no rush, haha).

Jon says

This was an interesting book. It was yet another post zombie-apocalypse YA book, but had some original elements in it. The focus wasn't so much on the zombie's per-se, but more on the environment the characters found them in, and the effects of control on a population. It was interesting, like I said. Not spectacular, and I'm not sure if the world is interesting enough for me to continue with the series, but I'm not horrified I read it.

Michelle Bacon says

this book started out having promise for being original and a good plot. too many characters with little known background and a lack of story flow had me bored pretty quick. the flip-flopping of the story from past to present made it hard to get into. probably won't read the rest of this series.

Kara says

Bookshelves are flooded with post-apocalyptic-zombie tales these days, so in order for one to stand out it needs a unique take and Cages does it. The story begins years after the chaos of a zombie-like Outbreak as Sam, a son of Outbreak survivors, enters Quarantine as all teenagers in this new America do. Every teenager has in him the possibility of becoming a terrifying Beast whose sole purpose, aside from causing death and destruction, is to spread the deadly parasite. So teenage years are spent locked up in a school filled with armed guards in an effort to prevent another Outbreak.

As a reader being introduced to this new world, what struck me was how teens treated Quarantine - not with fear (they are, afterall being locked up with fellow kids, any of whom have the potential of becoming flesh-ripping, bone crunching Beasts) but more as a right of passage. This is Sam's time to discover whether he is man or Beast, good or bad, reliable soldier or student rebel. The setting - basically a child-prison - is perfect in creating a tension-filled no-hope-for-escape feeling, and the gory descriptions of Beasts and the Bitten are fantastic, but the real story is Sam's and the choices he makes. And Sam's final choice, revealed on the last page, left me screaming at the author: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?! Luckily, Book 2 is in progress...

Natascha says

"Same as it ever was. Except this time we get to shoot them."

Now that is quite a different take on a zombie story! One I haven't seen before in that way.

Over twenty years ago, there was the Outbreak. People turned into Beasts – real "beasts", and we're talking claws and wings here – and spread the disease. After they got it under control, they found out what triggered it – puberty. So, after middle school, kids don't go to High School anymore, but into Quarantine where they stay until they're eighteen. Until then, they have either turned into Beasts themselves and were shot, or they have survived.

I got this ebook as a free download from Amazon a while back and first, I wasn't so convinced even though the story sounded good. And during the first chapter, I had a bit of a hard time getting into it really, because it was such a different zombie universe than I was used to. But it quickly picked up and I wanted to know more about life in quarantine, who would turn into a Beast, when and how, and of course if the main character, Sam, would, too.

I don't want to spoil the story for anyone, so I'm not saying how it ends, just that it leaves space for more. And to be honest, I'd love to read it. So, 'Cages #2', I'm waiting!

Chrystal Roe says

Wow

This is a scary book. In this society the scariest thing out there is a teenager. Not a particular one but teenagers in general. Because you never know which one will get you.

Melanie says

When the zombie apocalypse hits, it isn't in a way anybody expected. The world is infected by a parasite (though there is no mention in the book where it came from) which turns teenagers into Beasts: giant monsters of incredible strength and savagery with deadly spines growing on them. Their one goal is to bite adults, creating Bitten who then go on to spread the virus by infecting more teenagers.

25 years later or so, we join Sam Crafty as he starts at his new school. Quarantine Dekalb #4. They lock all the teenagers who've reached puberty up in school together to try and contain the problem, making them less likely to start another Outbreak. Because even though the worst is over, a teenager can still spontaneously turn. And quite often seem to in this story. There are armoured doors into each classroom, tight restrictions on movement, and flame-throwers on the stairwells.

Sam goes in determined to cause trouble, though I don't really know why. He seems to think that it will win him respect with his classmates, but none of them seem at all bothered and he doesn't seem to learn this. Most of his pranks seem to backfire and he just ends up getting *himself* into deeper and deeper trouble, yet he keeps pushing, keeps thinking that the next one will work as long as he makes it bigger and better.

It was interesting seeing the methods thought up to try and contain the teenagers. Cages, bars, doors and guns seemed to be the main ones, and while I kept thinking that there must have been a better way to educate youngsters that would put other people in less harm I couldn't come up with much. Except that they'd probably not have teachers actually in the classroom. They'd be doing it over some kind of link. Who cares if the kids are listening or not? Just teach them more stuff when they're out of the danger zone and can actually be around other people again!

Honestly, I wasn't a huge fan of the writing style. There was a little too much description for my liking; every time a new student was talked about, a little story about something that had already occurred between them and Sam was included. And there were lots of flashbacks, sometimes switching between the past and the present several times in the same chapter. I think this could have been cleaned up and been slightly less

jarring if the longer flashbacks hadn't been separated down into parts.

This book, though, is an interesting idea: it's like zombies, but mega. And there is some mystery, because teenagers are 'going Beast' more often, changing more quickly and into deadlier versions, and the end almost made me want to know what was going to happen in the next book.

Almost.

Because in all honesty I never really connected with any of the characters, and the central four - Sam and this three room-mates, Remi, Ben and Dave - were a little bit flat; indeed, Remi seemed the most rounded character, probably because he was the only one you really got to know. It was quite interesting reading about his life outside of the Quarantined zones, and he actually had a passion for something, grounding him in a way the others weren't.

An ok book, but not a series I'll be carrying on.

Claire Riley says

This was a really cool, and totally new approach to zombies and beasts, and something that I give the author huge props for. He combined them into one fluid storyline, which worked really well, once I got my head around it.

The main problem for me came with a couple of things. For one there was a confusing timeline of events...there was no gap between reading segments. So one moment it was the present and in the next line it had jumped forwards a couple of weeks, and at one point months! There were a few editing issues, where I was pulled out of the plot because of typos and such, but I'm a big forgiver on things like this since I don't remember the last book that I read that didn't have some typos/grammar/punctuation problems, and I'm talking self pubbed AND traditional!

There was also a couple of plot fails for me too. And though the author explained the situations and gave reasons for them, it still just didn't work for me. For instance the Blind Hall just never really made any sense to me, no matter which way I looked at it. How could they be under quarantine and lockdown if they could go their and smoke crack and have sex? It was just confusing, and i couldn't understand why Conyers the man in charge of the Quarantine would allow it. Because that's what he was doing...allowing it. And for what? Some extra cash? Naaa, that didn't work for me at all. That character was so far in to keepign himself safe that it just felt odd to me every time any of those scenes came up, and pulled me out of the story.

But for the good. Again, the theory behind the Beasts and the Bitten was awesome, and I really liked it. I even quite liked the Quarantine idea. There was a lot of backstory at high emotion times, but I felt that it worked, though closer to the end it was a little too much back and forth for my liking. The characters were interesting and I felt real emotions for these kids, and really wanted a better outcome for them all. The writing style was great too. Just the right amount of imaginative descriptions mixed in to the style, and I really enjoyed some of the more descriptive lines of the book to describe certain things.

Overall I give it 3.5, but I'll round up to a four because once it got to around halfway, I couldn't put it down

and had to find out what happened next. Plot fails or not, that's the sign of a good book.
