



# All is Silence

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Awards: 2015 WATTYS-Dream Collection. 2014 Dante Rossetti YA Dystopian. IndieReader NextPicks #1-April 2014. 2015 Cygnus YA 1st place.

In a future that could be ours, Lizzie, a suicidal teen-age girl, barely navigates her own life. Then everything falls apart. In an apocalyptic land nearly deserted by disease, she lacks reasons to live until a shocking turn of events reveals a phone number. Her call pulls her dangerously cross-country to meet a stranger she thought was dead.

In a world where there is plenty of food, plenty of gas, plenty of space... fear, anger and a lust for power still control the patterns of human life.

## All is Silence Details

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Author : Robert L. Slater

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# From Reader Review All is Silence for online ebook

## Mel says

I liked All Is Silence. It held my interest. There were a few things I'd like to see done differently if there is a sequel. Or, if this is series. Lizzie was the only character that was somewhat fleshed out. We learned a little about Zach, Nev, and Jess. But not much. Maybe we could if a character wasn't introduced every two minutes? Spike, Saj, Rachael, CJ, Duke, Charley, Glen (who served no purpose, really) BeeGee, Blackhawk (hopefully I'm remembering the name correctly), etc. Lizzie wasn't a likeable character. But maybe a sympathetic one. Her mom made poor choices in men, a rape was alluded to (during and after someone else attempted to rape her), she had an STD and was told she couldn't have children. She is suicidal and was before the plague. Her family is dead. All by the age of 17. Maybe I wouldn't quite be myself either. I do think it's safe to say her character was the same pre apocalypse. We also don't know too much about the sickness that caused this pandemic. It would have been nice to. We don't know why certain people don't succumb. But, aren't themselves after recovering. The book starts with Lizzie trying to survive. Her mother and brother die at the very beginning. She contacts her long lost father. That starts a journey for them to meet each other. I didn't take too much of an issue with the teenage sex and drinking. Self destructive behavior tends to start early. Not a bad read. But, it could have been better.

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## Liz Pitcher says

This book had a solid beginning. The reader is introduced to Lizzie. She is a teen with a difficult life who is damaged by the loss of her whole family. Because almost everyone is dead she reaches out to anyone who is still alive. That's where things go downhill. When I say that Lizzie reaches out to everyone I means EVERYONE. There are so many characters in this story. Every character is introduced with some form of back story that has no purpose for the story.

I went into this book thinking I was reading a new adult dystopian book. I didn't realized I would be getting a YA road trip. Lizzie feels the need to contact her father whom she hasn't known for most of her life. Surprise! He is alive. Lizzie jumps right in and calls him Daddy. That really drove me crazy. She is way too personal with the man who abandoned her.

Anyway, for some reason almost all of Lizzie's friends are still alive. There is some alluding to that this may be a result of some class trip they all took together, but that plot line never comes to fruition. Lizzie decides to go on some crazy road trio to meet her father in the middle of the country. I think that's enough motivation for the book, but there's more. Lizzie is also outrunning someone who wants to revenge murder her! All of the characters drive around the country and get into lots of trouble and meet lots of people and almost die several times. Everyone's loyalties are constantly changing FOR NO REASON!

I could keep on going but I won't. This book was not for me.

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Janell Sutherland says**

As far as post-apocalyptic novels go, this one is pretty realistic. It's set just a few years in the future, so there's not a lot of world building so much as there is world deconstructing. It's an action-packed road trip with a clear vision.

Lizzie is a teenaged girl who's already had a rough life. Her father disappeared, her mother dates jerks, she's been abused and attempted suicide. As the book opens, her mother and younger brother are dying from a mysterious disease that kills 99% of the population. She ventures out of her house to find her world is abandoned, silent.

At first, Lizzie rescues animals and scavenges for food and cell phones. Just when it seems that she'll lose contact with the outside world entirely and have nothing to live for, her old friend Zach appears. They settle down for about a day before they discover other people, some good and some bad. Almost from that moment on, the author builds suspense with each scene.

Eventually the novel becomes a road trip where Lizzie, Zach, and an increasingly ragtag group of survivors encounter snow storms, religious enclaves, and more than one type of doomsday survivalists. I liked seeing the different types of mini-societies that sprang up. This is set in that in-between time, after the collapse but before the rebuilding, when ordinary people are scrambling for survival and opportunists are reaching for power.

The author gives each scene enough detail and emotion to keep the reader fully engaged in the moment. The action began slowly but built up throughout the book, and the final third made my heart pound. The cast of characters was maneuvered carefully as it grew, splintered, and reunited over the course of the book. As this is the first in a series, I was worried that it would end in a cliffhanger, and I give credit to the author for making me care.

On a personal note, I have lived in three of the cities mentioned in this book. So far, the locations have felt real, and the spirit of the towns felt true. I'm curious about how Provo will be portrayed in the next book; I'll have to wait until next year to find out!

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## **Mike Hartner says**

I bought this book at a Conference in September, and put it aside shortly thereafter. Started to read it in mid October, and then, very reluctantly, put it down.

You see, this book is the story of Lizzie, and her ragtag friends, in a post Apocalyptic world that has killed off quite a lot of population, and made even more of the survivors act like zombie animals. And that is not my normal genre.

But, I found the time to finish it this evening. Took it to the hot tub, and read it in the comfort of my home. And I'm hooked. All is Silence is the first in a series of books, and is a fantastic introduction to an apocalyptic world.

Pro: It deals with the disease, but there aren't large numbers of graphic scenes, and nothing gratuitous.. Which makes it easier for the squeamish like myself to get through. LOL!

From the intro, Robert Slater's vivid story telling had me rooting for her and her rag-tag set of strays. GOOD JOB, Rob, and I look forward to Book Two.

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## **Eddi Vulic says**

I'm not usually a reader of post-apocalyptic fiction, but *All Is Silence* is a good yarn. The action is fast-paced and the characters are believable and compelling. I quite liked the town of Bellingham as a character--there is enough detail for the reader to follow our main character as she navigates the ruins of her hometown and come to grips with the end of the world as she knows it. The idiosyncracies that make living in the Pacific Northwest come across even as Lizzie tries to deal the new reality that has replace it. The author has a good sense for the age-group he is writing for (high school and up), capturing their voice as well as their connection to a nostalgia for what has been lost. The author has thought out the implications of his apocalypse well in a variety of places throughout America, and so has prepared his world for a series of sequels in which these visions collide with each other. Even if you are not typically a fan of the genre, you can find yourself immersed in the world of *All Is Silence* as I did.

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## **Olivia says**

It's been a while between apocalypses for me. I'm happy to say that '*All is Silence*' was a great reminder of why I love this genre of fiction.

The world that we're introduced to is dark, bleak and definitely silent. I particularly liked that this story starts us off at the very beginning of the 'end'. The reader isn't given too much information about the 'pandemic' but I liked this. It felt more genuine that a teenage girl wouldn't have all the answers on why everyone is suddenly dropping dead.

The first part of the book gives off the feeling of loneliness perfectly and the cast of characters that we are continually introduced to do a brilliant job of lifting that lonely feeling and sucking the reader in emotionally. My one critique is that I wish there was more dialogue in the story between the characters and that the dialogue that was there be more charming and funny. I had trouble feeling the personalities and bonds between people. I like to read a character and know exactly why the lead male is interested in her or why her best friend adores her and I felt that didn't happen in this book.

The action and suspense were great. I really liked that the story alternated between different characters points of view, it made the story flow better and added to the suspense and intrigue.

Overall i really enjoyed it and would be interested to see where the story goes.

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## **Joe says**

This was a very "fun" story to read! I enjoyed the authors take on teen angst and the current trials and tribulations experienced by less than mature individuals. The slow painful growth of the characters shown as they progressed from selfish people to a group that relied on each other for support and a future was nicely done. There were some inconsistencies in the nomenclature of weapons and automobiles, and a lack of background on the virus itself, but overall a solid read. I finished the novel in approx. 3 hours!

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## Heather says

I received this book free from goodreads for an honest review. I really enjoyed the story. The characters were flawed and complex, yet they had redeeming qualities. It was a smooth and easy read, fast paced; with a well defined plot. I look forward to the next installment.

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## Leylan says

I could not put this book down. I really liked it a lot. The story is based on a flu like pandemic taking over and eradicating much of the population. It starts off with the Lizzie and her resistance to the virus. Through a series of plausible events she meets with other survivors and set off in search of her father. It is truly a fight for survival from illness, rogues, collectors, mentally unstable and rabid dogs. All bases are covered from the looting of stores, rationing food and personal relationships and new families formed. It definitely made me think of scenarios if this should happen in real life.

However, there are still some unanswered questions in regards to the fate of the group. What will happen between Lizzie and Zach? What was going on between Jess and Mannie? Duke? and the babies? I think that was a major cliffhanger in the end. I think it could have made for a longer book. It has all the good qualities of an apocalyptic end of world scenario that is completely plausible. It makes sense and it does not have any of the far fetched zombies roaming around. He does get close enough with "dog people" but with a chance at redeeming their humanity.

Highly recommend it. It has enough action and suspense to keep you on your toes. The ending may be a lacking a bit, but the rest of the story make up for it.

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## Checkman says

Well I caved. After several years of *not* reading YA novels (though I have watched many of the movies) I have finally read a YA novel. Why? Well I'm a fan of the Post Apocalyptic genre and most novels of that genre are now in the YA field. Second of all I'm tired of the zombie genre. Still a fan, but it's become overdone. Way too many cooks now and it's tired (I'm still watching "The Walking Dead" however).

When I learned about Mr. Slater's old school take on the post-apocalypse (i.e. no zombies) I decided it was time to wade into the YA field. I'm forty-six years old and the father of a daughter who is a college sophomore and a son who is a junior in high school. It's been approximately thirty years since I was a young adult. So naturally I'm going to look at this novel with the perspective of an old(er) individual. It is interesting to note that many YA novels are written by adults in their thirties and forties. Not really sure what that signifies, but it is an interesting observation nonetheless.

Let's begin.

## SYNOPSIS

When the novel starts there has been a super disease that has killed off approximately 90% (+/-) of the Human population on Earth along with various simians. The origins of the virus are unknown - so far - and

it's uncertain if the virus has run its course or if it will return. So far nothing real unusual. We've been here before in *The Stand*, *Earth Abides* and *The Scarlet Plague* to name a few.

## CHARACTERS

Of course this is a Young Adult book so most of our primary characters are in their late teens. I get the impression that most YA protagonists are somewhere between sixteen and eighteen years of age.

The main character is Lizzie. She's a seventeen year old female. When the story begins most of her family has died or is in the process of dying off. She's from the lower rungs of society and what is known as a "at risk" teen or a troubled teen. She's been the victim of sexual assault in the past. Her father is absent. Her mother has trouble maintaining a stable relationship and Lizzie smokes, drinks and basically doesn't take care of herself. She's angry, struggling in school and suicidal.

Since this is a YA novel there has to be a romantic triangle. So there is a Zach and Nev. Old friends of Lizzie's, but when the story begins they have gone their separate ways. They survive the pandemic and reunite.

Mannie is Lizzie's absent father. He is a park ranger and living down in Texas. He is also a former U.S. Army officer who experienced combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and is a recovering alcoholic. He is able to make contact with Lizzie and they agree to meet in Salt Lake City.

Jess is another old friend from Lizzie's childhood. Her family moved back to Texas a few years before the pandemic, but she and Lizzie have stayed in contact. Mannie retrieves Jess and they make their way north to meet Lizzie and her group in the vicinity of Salt Lake City.

As the story progresses we are introduced to a dozen or more different characters. Mostly adults but also some teens, but the characters described above are the primaries. There are other characters best described as supporting roles.

Mr. Slater moves between Lizzie, Zach and Mannie when it comes to narrative.

## CRITIQUE

To begin with it's obvious that this is a book aimed at teenagers. There is the inevitable love triangle and the teens are the primary focus of the story. Adults are mainly supporting characters and many of them are very two dimensional. However I think that many teenagers view us in such simplistic terms so I can live with it.

I am not a teacher, counselor or doctor, but my work often brings me in contact with kids like Lizzie as well as other teenagers. Mr. Slater is a high school teacher and has real world experience with teenagers as well. He does a good job capturing their personalities and how they react with the world and each other. Dredging the depths of my memories I can find times when I also engaged in much of the same behavior. They're believable and even likeable. These kids aren't the savage little bastards from *Lord of the Flies*.

The kids in Slater's book are trying to do the right thing and making an honest effort to help others, but having just left childhood a few years before they're dealing with a handicap. As the book progresses we see the kids growing and becoming more sophisticated. Though I'm a father of two teenagers (who I love and I'm very proud of) I will be the first to admit that I often find teens to be incredibly unlikable and exasperating. As a middle-aged man there were times (reading the book) that I found myself growing impatient with the

characters and their focus on their feelings, but then I recalled what I was like at eighteen and I calmed down. I reminded myself that the book wasn't written for the parents of teenagers.

I liked the fact that Lizzie's father is one of the primary characters. An adult who engages in adult behavior. I get the impression that he isn't too far removed from me in years and though my life is very different from Mannie's I found myself being able to relate to him. I could especially connect to his feelings about the military having spent fourteen years in the Green Machine myself. Thank you Mr. Slater for throwing a token adult to your old readers.

Earlier I mentioned a few of the classics of the genre. "All Is Silence" is very much a part of that line. There is a the fast moving disease which wipes out much of Humanity leaving the survivors to struggle to stay alive and rebuild. There are the vast deserted stretches of territory and the empty cities and the initial fun of being able to have whatever you want. There is also the loneliness and the need to find others.

Mr. Slater takes a different approach to the scenario of a civilization destroying plague. Unlike "The Stand" which has the whole structure collapsing totally Mr. Slater has pockets of civilization surviving and not all parts of the United States and the world being hit as badly as other parts. In King's work Captain Trips is a biblical plague sent to wipe out almost all of the Human race. A viral flood instead of a watery flood, but just as effective. Written in the early seventies there is a real counter-culture vibe to Mr. King's work. A sense of glee in destroying modern society and it's government. The people in charge are incompetent (mostly) and the structure they run is corrupt and shaky at the best of time. Captain Trips brings everything crashing down.

Mr. Slater's slant is that while the pandemic is devastating, people are social animals and they won't just scatter to the four winds and quit. In addition the reader gets the impression that some areas are hit harder than others and some areas cope a little better than others. That's historically accurate. If you study the plague in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries you'll be surprised to find that while it was devastating (estimates are anywhere from 30-60% of Europe's total population was killed off) economies continued to function (albeit in a reduced function), wars went on and people continued to live their lives. In addition not all of Europe was effected uniformly. Things happen in patches and pockets. A battlefield is never carpeted with bodies and a an area that has experienced a devastating wildfire or forest fire will still have pockets where nothing was damaged.

Mr. Slater has not written a tale inspired by the Bible. There is no simple black and white in his story. Just people trying to survive and doing what they think is right - even if others might not agree.

I don't know if cell phone service and the Internet would continue to function though it is mentioned that the areas where modern technology (electricity and so on) isn't working are growing in size. The theory offered is that much of the west still has power (spotty though it may be) because there is more hydroelectric, solar and wind generated power.

Back east where coal, oil and nuclear provides more power it is believed the electrical grid is now down. Though I am uncertain as to the likelihood of such a state of affairs actually working as long as it does I acknowledge that it falls under literary license. Mr. Slater is writing for the tech generation and cell phones and the Internet are as much a part of their lives as television and Kasey Kasems's American Top 40 were for mine. I think he does that to ensure that his Millennials have a way of coming together - if only for this first installment. It will be interesting to see what happens in the next chapter.

## CONCLUSION



Well there it is. My first YA novel. Not bad and actually pretty readable. Fast and easy but it holds your interest. Owes much to *The Stand*, but I think it approaches the scenario a little more realistically. What "All Is Silence" doesn't have is the power of pathos and loss that Mr. King conveyed so well in his book. Since we join the characters after the pandemic is (mostly) over there also isn't the sense of horror and fear as it is realized that the disease can't be stopped. The disease has won. Let's move on. The characters recover and move on. However they're younger and we've all heard the saying (or a variation on it) that kids are flexible. This is a book about kids making their way in a post-apocalyptic world.

I'll be looking for the second installment for I'm interested in sticking with those kids.

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## Sally Ember says

Robert Slater was a guest on Episode 36 of my talk show, \*CHANGES\* conversations between authors, in July and offered to gift me his ebooks since we both write science-fiction and had had a fascinating discussion on my show about utopian vs. dystopian futuristic speculative fiction (I write utopian in *This Changes Everything* and the other ebooks in "The Spanners Series," whereas his series, which starts with is definitely dystopian and apocalyptic).

Thanks, Rob, for the gifts, because I really appreciated reading book 1 of "Deserted Lands" and look forward to reading book 2 and beyond.

The main teen and young adult characters in "All is Silence" are well-drawn, interesting, and non-stereotyped, a welcome change from many YA books these days. They are imperfect, struggling with a horrible situation on Earth in "now" times, and trying to make the best of many bad-to-worse circumstances. This first book in the series is part set-up, part reactions/responses, part road-trip and mostly establishing the characters and relationships, which Rob does very well.

Rob explained in his intro and in our conversation that he has taught in "alternative" USA public high school classrooms for many years and decided to base the series' main characters on some of his actual students. His realistic perspective and experiential background for knowing teens shine through and make for excellent story-telling as well.

The other characters are not as well-drawn and there are a lot of them. Some only appear briefly, so their 2-D nature can be forgiven. But, some are reappearing or their types keep appearing, and those I have a harder time accepting. He has taken on a massive task, to sweep through many parts of this disaster and explore how a variety of people and groups react, interact, and then respond to their interactions, so I don't know how he could have done it a lot better without writing hundreds more pages.

Maybe I have such an intense dislike for all things and people military, violent, and mean-spirited, especially those that exhibit extreme selfishness and aberrant behavior in crises, that those characters really bug me regardless of how well-drawn they are or are not. Mea culpa.

Rob also creates scenes with great tension, dialogue, realistic conflicts and emotional resonance frequently, and not just for his female older teen protagonist, which I admire greatly in a writer. Furthermore, Rob sets

up situations and introduces characters as we go along that are drawn briefly but reappear without being heavy-handed; their significance and return are not trite or obvious: well-done!

At a time in my life that I don't usually read much due to my own writing schedule and challenges or want to finish most books I start, I read this entire book and want to read the next one.

That says a lot right there. Thanks, Rob! Memorable characters, good story, good writing.

My critiques: 1) Most of the "horribleness" was too-easily cleaned up, a lot of it too quickly. I know it's hard to dwell on the grotesque, difficult or awful, especially in YA books, but Rob's approach was a bit too facile in many places. I say: if you have the stomach to set it up in the first place, have the guts to describe and deal with the aftermath in a bit more detail; take more time with it.

2) Along with that, the characters' inventiveness and resourcefulness often seemed a bit too easily accommodated and things come to them quite conveniently and easily, in my opinion, for the circumstances and for the general level of their intelligence, ages, and situations. How calm would I be, how clearly would I be thinking, how well would I cope? are the questions I kept asking, and my answers were always: not as well as they are.

Overall, the author's desire to resolve each conflict, difficulty or loss quickly superceded realism too often. I know I could be responding to this as an adult whereas a younger person or teen (the intended audience) might think it's all dandy and wouldn't want to have to face things more squarely. However, even though Rob managed more realism via his characters, I think he copped out a little in realism for the situations.

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### **Diane Ferbrache says**

After a pandemic wipes out 90% of the population in the US, a handful of teens from the Pacific Northwest have to figure out how to make it on their own. Food isn't an issue – just take whatever you want from the house next door or the supermarket down the street. Don't like where you live, just move in another empty house. Find a car you like, just take it. Need protection, go get some guns. But at some point the survivors figure out they need each other, if for no other reason than to protect themselves from the pseudo-governments that are cropping up.

A real page-turner of a story of teens trying to just get by and trying to help each other, especially Lizzie a suicidal teenage girl trying to find her father. Although this certainly sometimes stretches the bounds of believability, it's a dramatic story of survival where danger lurks around every corner and not all will make it through. Full of suspense and frequently violent (including an attempted rape, murder, and torture), this is not a story for the faint of heart, but more mature teens should enjoy the story. SPOILER: Lizzie's story continues in a sequel due out in 2015.

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### **Amanda says**

This is a great book. I love the main character Lizzie. She has been described as an anti-hero which I think is bang on. Robert Slater has really captured the troubled teenage girl. I fell in love with the character and I hope to see more about Lizzie soon.

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## Jamey Goodyear says

All is Silence is a post pandemic story written by Robert L. Slater. This is the first in the new series Deserted Lands.

Lizzie is a troubled 17 year old. At the end of a worldwide pandemic, she appears to be the last surviving person in the town of Bellingham. Amazingly enough 3 friends Zack, Nev, and Jess have also survived. While Zack and Nev's families had moved away from Bellingham, they were still close. Jess's family had moved to Texas. There is a brief allusion to a trip to Honduras they took together that may have something to do with their survival but that isn't pursued in this story.

Lizzie isn't all that likable, but her friends are solid and put up with her attitudes. She manages to get in touch with her dad whom she doesn't remember because he left when she was very young. They make arrangements to meet up in Salt Lake City. He's in New Mexico. On his way, he will be picking up Jess and bringing her along. None of Lizzie's friends have family anymore.

The story is about their travels. While Lizzie is definitely defiant and hostile, she impresses one with the compassion in her heart. She rescues trapped animals, a baby, an older gentleman, and makes a connection with a young boy that draws him out of the shell he was hiding in. On their trip south, the kids run into a small number of survivors, some nice, some not so nice. Her father and Jess, traveling north run into the same.

The plight of the players drew me in. I wasn't sure I was going to finish the story when I first started it. Their situations are believable considering they are surviving in the wake of the pandemic. The kids show amazing fortitude and courage. I would recommend this book. I believe that teens will like it as well as adults. And, I believe that there is encouragement for all written into this story. I will definitely be reading all future books in this series.

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## Georgina ? 2greekgirlsreading says

*? I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. ?*

4 solid stars.

If an epidemic occurred and wiped out 99% of the world's population what would you do?

What would you do if you were part of the 1% that survived and were immune?

Would you search for your loved ones? Would you want to continue, knowing everyone you possibly once knew is now dead?

**This story is set just a few years in the future, in a dark world where death and silence rule.** The book follows Lizzie as she struggles to accept this new reality. Yesterday she was just a teenager now she's a girl who has to fight to survive, to find her family, even to find the will to live.

How Slater portrayed the world was un-fucking-believable, it made it look so realistic. The way he described the feeling of loneliness and how silent the world suddenly is gave me chills. I think Lizzie was a very much likeable character, i really felt for her and the things she went through, throughout this book. Although i really like the story i had some problems with (view spoiler)

Overall even though i liked the story, i think i would have loved it so much more if i read it when i was younger. If you like post-apocalyptic y/a stories i would most definitely recommend you this one. It's action packed, full on suspense and with a story that feels so real it's close to terrifying.

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