



The Killing Circle

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What are the repercussions of calling another story your own? Patrick Rush, journalist, single father, and failed novelist, joins a creative writing circle in an inspiring atmosphere of menace and fear. Throughout Toronto, a murderer strikes randomly, leaving bodies mutilated and dismembered, and taunting the police with cryptic notes.

The group reads each other their own dark, unsettling tales. Angela tells of child-stealer Sandman. Patrick, though, finds fantasy and reality blurring. Is the maniac at large the Sandman? What does Angela really know? And does the killer stalk his pursuer? Only when his son is snatched does Patrick journey toward the elusive figure.

The Killing Circle Details

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Author : Andrew Pyper

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From Reader Review The Killing Circle for online ebook

Brian says

This book is the epitome of the M. Night Shyamalan problem. A good mystery can become great if the twist/ending blows your mind. On the other hand, it can stumble and spit on everything you just read. Guess which one this is?

Now then, up to the last twenty pages of this novel, it is absolutely engaging. The oppressive atmosphere of the Sandman serial killer is visceral and constantly is blurring the lines in the character's own mind of whether the Sandman has actually left the page and begun killing in the real world. From that angle, it's a great work. You can't ask for much more in a mystery than great atmosphere, an interesting main character, a seriously threatening and terrifying killer, and constant page-turning.

Well, yes, you can. You can ask for the ending to make sense. I won't spoil it, but there are two twists at the very end of the book that are patently ridiculous. Neither has any lead-up whatsoever and just left me frustrated with the author for throwing away all the good will he'd built up. I mean, it's a mystery novel so theoretically you don't NEED a twist. I'm of the opinion that a good mystery novel shouldn't let the reader automatically know whodunnit, but should be within the realm of possibility. If I'm left going, "...what" there's a problem.

Monique says

This book was a pleasure..I am so glad I stumbled on this book and didn't return it after having it in my to-read pile for weeks now..I was pleasantly surprised by this book as it was well written and engaged my interest whenever I had a spare moment--love a book that I cant wait to get back to--love to be engrossed in a great book! And the subject matter of this one--a wanna be writer and his desperate journey to become an author is a touching one indeed..I truly felt his longing and brilliant description of the wanting to be among the names in the library, the mother of your own brainchild naked and open to criticism from the world not just your own inner thoughts..it was touching indeed and I loved the way its written with a main character you feel like you really get to know..The book is about Patrick, a widowed single father who writes a literary critique column then later a television reviewer who secretly longs to write a novel but feels he has no story to tell, no inspiration and to get inspired he joins a writing group of seven other aspiring authors to share their works, get assistance and feedback..Patrick goes without much hope or much to say and meets his muse (reminded me very much of The Mentor by Sebastian Stuart) and is drawn to her spooky tale of a terrible man who does terrible things..The book takes off from there as Patrick sneakily steals the other writer's haunting story and claims it as his own (every writer's worst nightmare) and from there he also inherits the creepy villain in the story intent on haunting Patrick and causing him to lose his job and eventually his sanity...The creepy villain "The Sandman" was sufficiently dark and mysterious enough but still not enough backstory and in depth killing descriptions for me..I also felt the last part of the book was not as strong as the first 100 pages that had me compulsively reading into the night..Overall though I would DEFINITELY read more from this Canadian author as I love his wit and writing style with its subtle humor and dark intelligence..I thought for a while it was a five star and though I knocked a star off (hard to knock me all the way out really) I will remember and recommend this book for sure...Oh to be a writer, how far would you go...ah reading and critiquing will do for a while, until my story comes.....great book.

Crowinator says

I won this through the Goodreads giveaways and I'm so glad. I stayed up all night to finish it, which I haven't felt compelled to do for a book in a long time, and I found it unnerving enough that I had to check the lock on the door and look in the closets about halfway through. I naturally have an overactive imagination anyway, but I haven't been this creeped out by a book in years. The story is intricate and nonlinear, and even though the narrator Patrick is kind of distant (which is appropriate for his character), the present tense narration made his story feel very close and immediate. That was especially good for the scary bits when Patrick felt someone had been in his house or in his yard or following him. The way the writing circle worked in and the novel that Patrick writes -- the idea that our lives, our identities, are stories that can be told and therefore stolen -- gave the book depth, as well. I couldn't guess where the story was going so the ending had real impact. This was a great, chilling read and I'm going to have to look up Pyper's other books.

Kelly says

The Killing Circle by Andrew Pyper is an ambiguous novel. The novel opens with Patrick Rush, a widowed father and successful novelist going to a drive-in movie with his eight year old son. When his son disappears, we learn of Patrick's past, when he was still an aspiring author and joined a writer's workshop called the Kensington Circle. After a woman goes missing in his neighborhood, he and the other attendees believe there is a connection between a story being written by one of the would-be authors and these crimes. Patrick struggles with his roles as widower, father, failing journalist and would be author. He must examine the darker workings of his own mind and his past in order to understand who has taken his son and why.

I really had a hard time getting into this novel. However, I don't think it was the books fault, I think the failing was all mine. It is very well written, the narrative flows very well, the story is paced so to not give away anything and really keep the reader guessing. I think the problem was that I just couldn't connect at all with the main character. I really didn't like him very much. In fact I didn't actually like anyone in the book, with the exception of Sam, Patrick's son. I had a bit of trouble with Sam, I found him immensely likeable, but way too precocious for a kid his age. But I also understand that a boy raised from infancy by a single man, a reader, may just be that well spoken. I think I was supposed to like and empathize with Patrick, however, and I just couldn't. Its hard to feel involved in a novel like this when there is a disconnect of sorts between the character and the reader.

I would like to find fault with the ending of the novel, it is quite ambiguous and could be taken two ways. But I actually thought that was the best part. It appeals to the Pollyanna nature of readers such as myself, we can assume a happy Hollywood ending, and yet it would also appeal to readers who prefer darker and more realistic endings.

I think I just wasn't in the mood for this type of novel. This might have been a perfect read for a dreary stormy week, when after a long, cold, wet day, I could have curled up by the fireplace and read for hours. I can see how this book could have the ability to almost cast a spell over the reader at such times. Unfortunately, I was reading in the bright, hot and sunny dog days of summer, with lots of distractions. The atmosphere and mood just wasn't right, and my enjoyment of the novel suffered because of it.

The Killing Circle will be released on Sept. 16, 2008

Sebastien Castell says

Andrew Pyper's fluid prose style immediately grabs you and makes it easy to keep picking up the book. There's an ambitious story here that's worth seeing through to the end, though I found it difficult to really credit the characters at times. Motivations seem not just odd but almost trivialized--as if the narrative almost explicitly intends to ignore such issues. The ambiguousness worked in some places, less so (for me, at least) in others.

Laren says

After his wife dies, the main character joins a writing circle. One of the writers has a tale of murder which captivates them so much that our main character ultimately steals it and publishes a successful novel based on it. But when members of the writing circle start dying one by one, the remaining writers try to determine if the story was true or if someone is copying the novel while a shadowy figure follows them everywhere. It's an interesting premise, but the main problem is that I never completely bought the writing circle's extreme level of terror at the shadowy figure. Without that, their actions don't make a lot of sense. Also, without giving away the ending, I can say that the culprit didn't make a whole lot of sense either, and there is little chance of anyone figuring this out on their own as a result. I found it a disappointing read.

Trudi says

I enjoyed parts of this book very much. Andrew Pyper is a talented storyteller and I will continue to seek him out. He gets character development, understands the integrity of back story, knows how to draw out suspense and when to twist the knife in. All of these elements are on spectacular display in his latest novel *The Guardians*, but I did find them to be a little lacking here.

This is a good novel, and if you desire an original take on a whodunit mystery with some horror elements thrown in for good measure, there's a chance it will read as a great novel. I'm not a mystery lover so much of what Pyper achieves here stylistically was lost on me. The long drawn out approach to the missing and murdered, the red herrings, and the process of making just about everyone equally suspicious started to lose its charm for me about three-quarters of the way through.

I will say that this is an expertly plotted piece that hits no wrong notes. It is a unique premise blending several genres together in an interesting way. I love Pyper's insights into the psyche of aspiring novelists. The sequences describing the writing circle itself cast a spell on me that reminded me both of *Ghost Story* and Stephen King's novella *The Breathing Method*.

I did appreciate the ending (view spoiler)

All of this to say it's my fault that this book didn't get a higher rating, not Pyper's. Recommended.

N says

I'm glad that *The Killing Circle* was my introduction to Andrew Pyper, as by most accounts some of his other pieces are better. Perhaps I've been reading junk lately (coughLuckiestGirlAlivecough), but I found this engaging and innovative. I don't even have time to get into an in-depth look because I'm already reading *The Demonologist*, so here's the short version.

Strengths:

- I love stories about writers who question reality (because who doesn't when he deals with literature all the time?)
- An excellent story within a story
- Fantastic characters, with excellent backstories
- The relationship between Sam and Patrick was completely realistic
- The very end of the ending was well-crafted, although I usually hate those endings
- The Len reveal was great

Faults:

- The suspense was, at times, unnecessarily drawn out (How many times can one realistically chase a shadow?)
- The focus is unclear--are we to believe the supernatural is possible or not? In any supernatural suspense text, there needs to be a tipping point where the reader/viewer realizes "Oh shit, this is for real!" after being toyed with during the exposition and rising action. Here, we lose that excitement.
- Angela's motives are unclear--what does she get out of this? I liked it better when she was some kind of literary succubus.
- The William and Raymond Mull storylines weren't explored enough, in favor of Patrick running around chasing shadows. William seemed awful, so what did Angela and Len do that was so horrific, it shocked even William?

In the end, I really admire and enjoy Andrew Pyper and have already taken out two of his other novels.

Eduard Tatomir says

[The Sandman was

Bill says

I loved *The Guardians*. I am surprised at the average rating of that book here, and I gave it a well deserved 5 star rating. It hit all the right buttons for me.

I wish I could say the same thing for *The Killing Circle*.

While I thought the entire concept of the novel was excellent, I found the pacing was rather uneven. I'm not sure why I found that, perhaps there were a little too many introspective insights by the main character. I just found the story's momentum seemed to suffer for it.

Regardless, Pyper is a fine writer, and you're best to check out The Guardians for evidence of that, particularly if you enjoy Stephen King's nostalgic stories.

I'll definitely read more of him.

Ricardo Mendes says

O círculo da morte despertou a minha atenção pelo seu nome e sinopse que me fizeram acreditar que se tratava de um thriller sombrio e sangrento, mas rapidamente apercebe-se que se está a par com um thriller psicológico despromovido de acções violentas e sangrentas.

Mas como sou também um leitor apaixonado de thrillers psicológicos este livro não podia ser mais indicado. Andrew Pyper apresenta-nos a história de um escritor, Patrick, que busca ajuda numa oficina de escrita para resolver a sua falta de criatividade.

É a partir desta oficina que a trama se desembaraça na nossa mente. Um livro que expõe a arte de escrever, de plagiar, de matar, de confundir, de ter medo daquilo que mais temos medo.

Desde as primeiras páginas, em que o filho do protagonista é raptado, passando pelo retrocedimento no tempo e a inevitável e tão aguardada volta ao início o leitor é magistralmente acorrentado a esta história onde a lucidez e a loucura andam de mãos dadas atormentando Patrick e o leitor.

Linhas ainda para louvar a exímia escrita de Andrew Pyper que de forma tão simples, palavra a palavra, solidifica uma leitura rica e bela.

Corey says

Ah, the life of the lowly author who realizes that his output is not one that reaches the subjective level of high art, but rather belongs quite snugly under that dreaded (and equally subjective) label of popular fiction. What a crushing blow to the psyche it must be to aspire to join the esteemed ranks of Bellow, Roth, and Findley, and instead find oneself lumped in with the likes of Grisham, Koontz, and Patterson.

Canadian author Andrew Pyper has been battling with this conundrum for quite some time now. A writer with a poet's eye for atmosphere and an entertainer's skill at building crackerjack entertainments, Pyper has found himself more often than not consigned to the shelves of popular fiction. But a) why should that be considered a bad thing, and b) who ever said an author couldn't be both? It's a hoary old chestnut (but true nonetheless) that Charles Dickens wrote his stories to entertain the masses, and his artistry was only truly understood and appreciated through the passage of time.

Take Pyper's debut novel *Lost Girls*, a story initially marketed as a John Grishamesque legal thriller. Using the well-worn plot device of a lawyer, Pyper wove a story far more thrilling than anything Grisham ever produced, layering on the themes of death, loss, grief, and memory with an artist's touch. *Lost Girls* was an 'entertainment' in the sense that it followed a linear plot, had exciting characters and plot twists, and was in every sense a 'page-turner'. But it was 'literary' in its complexity of character, its crafting of mood, its evocation of dread. *Lost Girls* was to a John Grisham construction as a microbrewed lager is to a can of Busch Lite; the ingredients are more or less the same, but only one shows care, craft, and character. Only one, in other words, is really any good.

Pyper belongs to the rarified sphere of thriller authors who bring far more to the table than a performer's understanding of how to draw an audience in. Like Walter Mosley and George Pelecanos, Pyper writes novels that exhilarate first and foremost, yet explore themes that would cripple lesser writers. No one of any sense would write that Mosley's Easy Rawling novels were simply mysteries that, once solved, were to be tossed aside. They aren't confections filled with empty calories. They stick with you; big juicy three-course meals.

But maybe I'm reading too much into it. Or maybe I'm overcome with gratitude that finally, someone has written a novel with a book reviewer as the main protagonist. Either way, *The Killing Circle*, Pyper's fourth novel, is his best to date.

The hero is Patrick Rush, a former National Star book reviewer who has slowly descended the hierarchy of the newspaper to become what is surely the nadir of journalistic identity, the television reviewer. Stuck watching taped programs with titles such as *Falling from Buildings!* and *Animals that Kill!*, Patrick longs for what every book reviewer secretly wants; "I longed to be an embossed name on a spine, to belong to the knighthood of those selected to stand alongside their alphabetical neighbours on bookshop and library shelves. The great and nearly so, the famous and wrongly overlooked. The living and the dead." Patrick suffers from a malady common to the frustrated author; "I could no longer open the Book Review of the Sunday Times without causing physical pain to myself. The publishers. The authors' names. The titles. All belonging to books that weren't mine." No self-respecting book reviewer (or wanna-be author) will be able to resist Pyper's accurate and caustically funny depictions of the deep-seated cravings for fame common to every person who has attempted to pen a story of their own.

The problem for Patrick is not the drive to write, but rather the fact that he has nothing to say – although if you consider that he is now writing his story (or is he?), you must then assume that something interesting must have happened. Patrick joins a writing circle to help jumpstart his writing, but instead of finding an avenue into his own stories, he finds himself entranced by the disturbed writings of Angela, a member who tells stories of a childhood tragedy and a "terrible man who does terrible things." While Patrick worries that assuming that Angela's tales were based on fact would reveal himself as "that most lowly drooler of the true-crime racks, the literal-minded rube who demands the promise of *Based on a True Story!* from his paperbacks and popcorn flicks," there are eerie parallels in the story to certain news items making headlines.

It spoils nothing to reveal that the terrible man does show up and begin committing terrible things, as Pyper expertly turns the screws on the suspense, and takes a few unexpected turns along the way. *The Killing Circle* offers some sick and twisted fun, especially when Patrick realizes that he is living "[not] the life of one who writes or even writes about books, but a malingering lowbrow who wrongly thinks he deserves better. No wonder, when his life decides to assume the shape of literature, it isn't a novel of ideas, but a chronicle of murder and suspicion... A bloody page-turner."

An author becoming a part of his own personal horror story is not exactly a new literary theme – Stephen

King (talk about a thriller writer with talent!) has created an entire cottage industry around the conceit – but Pyper layers his serial killer tale with a meta-layer on the importance of stories themselves to the individual. Are the stories we live important to others? When is a story truly our own? Are we even the main characters in our own lives? As Patrick muses, “Nobody lives their life as though they’ve only been cast in a grisly cameo.” Pyper takes full delight in keeping the reader guessing as to the true identity of the killer, so much so that Patrick himself cannot guarantee that he’s not making the whole thing up. He might not even be telling the story, if it’s his to tell at all.

Pyper does a splendid job of lampooning the literary types who dismiss popular fictions while at the same time straddling both worlds. *The Killing Circle* is a terrific thriller for those who want it simple, and an intricate exploration into personal myths and stories for those who demand a little more meat on their bones. Scary, original, and unsettling, *The Killing Circle* is a treat.

Jess says

Wow. This book took me a day to finish. Once I started it, I could not put it down. The main character of this story is a man who wishes that he could write a novel, so he joins a writing group. This group contains a variety of people whom all have their own stories and secrets. One woman in the group reads a story she has written about a stranger who does bad things, and he is called the sandman. As the story continues, it seems the Sandman is real; and begins to kill again.

This book really freaked me out. It wasn't a typical storyline that involved gory details and the obvious tell tales of the identity of the killer. This story went beyond that and had a way of building up the suspense; the killer lurked in the shadows or the main character thought he saw something, but did he really see anything at all? Then there was the idea that maybe the main character was a little crazy and nothing was really happening at all. There were misdirections, lies, twists, and at one point I just said out loud "what the fck?"

If you read this book though, I would suggest not reading it at night.

Bonnie says

Feb. 28 update:

I have come to the conclusion (late, in this case), that one should begin a review by making a positive, or at least, a neutral statement! And I would like to add that I actually rated this 4 1/2 stars. (The following is the intact version of my original review.)

I want to say at the outset, that I wasn't sure whether or not I liked the ending of this book. At first, I was disappointed. Not with the-who-dun-it part -- which was a bit of a surprise -- but the after-we-find-out part. So I thought about it for a while, and I have come to the conclusion that the ending is not as ambiguous as I first believed; but to say anything more would spoil the story.

Told in two chunks, the book opens in July 2007 introducing the reader to single Dad, Patrick Rush, and his

precocious eight-year-old son Sam. In the first nine pages, Andrew Pyper hooks his reader; then he takes the story back 4 ½ years in time.

Grieving for his wife, Rush slowly spirals down in his journalistic career from literary columnist to that of the lowly TV critic. Even at his height, though, he believed: None start out wanting to review books, but to write them. To propose otherwise would be like trying to convince someone that as a child you dreamed of weighing jockeys instead of riding racehorses.

When he comes across an ad for a writers' workshop, he answers it: I want to write a book. The problem: he is the only one in the circle who doesn't have a story to tell. But Angela clearly does, although it isn't clear whether her story is based on reality or fiction.

Meanwhile, a serial killer is on the loose, close to home in Toronto, and the events seem uncannily close to Angela's story. After the writing circle ends, the killings stop.

Then Angela is suddenly out of the picture, and Rush, who had secretly been recording her readings, goes on to steal Angela's story. By 2007, he has achieved his dream, to write a best-seller – and obviously, someone isn't happy about this, because Sam is kidnapped.

Throughout this well-crafted story, Pyper keeps us guessing at who might be real, who might be the killer, whether or not the protagonist is going crazy, and is therefore suspect – even Patrick wonders if it's all in his grief-stricken mind. And when is a story truly one's own? By putting the narrator into the line of suspicion, along with all the other members of the writing circle, Pyper adds another dimension of suspense, and brings us full circle to a well-plotted conclusion.

Told in four parts, the Killing Circle is a gripping, complex, literary thriller.

Bill says

I much preferred The Killing Circle to Andrew Pyper's Lost Girls. This seemed more polished and maybe straight-forward. I liked the tension, the creepiness. Patrick Rush, a single father and frustrated writer, joins a writing group. While the group doesn't actually inspire him, one story, by Angela, draws in all the budding authors. It tells the story of The Sandman, a killer who stalked a small town killing children. Is Angela telling a story from her past? In either case, killings begin in Toronto, members of the group notice a presence following them. Rush begins to see this stalker as well. Is the group in danger? The story progresses at a steady pace with Rush wandering between reality and fantasy? Or is it all reality? There are many typical horror elements in the story; why doesn't Rush tell everything to the police? Why does he feel he should investigate on his own? However, it is a horror, thriller, so these are expected. Pyper has a nice grasp on the way to build and hold tension. Very entertaining and spooky story. Well worth reading. (4 stars)
