



Mask

Kerry Nietz

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Radial is a Collector. The instrument of the will of the people. You get voted away, Radial makes you disappear. The system works, and he is its servant. The rule of the people is the highest form of human government. He is a believer -- until he is asked to collect someone who should never, ever be voted away.

Mask Details

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Author : Kerry Nietz

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From Reader Review Mask for online ebook

C.O. Bonham says

Mask by Kerry Nietz is a dark look at what can happen when society takes democracy too far.

Radial Crane is an Incon Collector. When someone becomes an Inconvenience to society they are voted out and become an Incon. They are collected. What happens to them after they are collected is a mystery. Even the collectors are kept in the dark, well this collector is anyway.

Radial slowly but surly begins to question the system. And as every Dystopian reader knows, questioning the system is first step to becoming a hero.

Why four stars?

This book is a little on the dark side, but then so is most dystopian fiction. My real complaint is that it was so short. I felt like there was more that could have been explored, about the wider world, the voting system, how they got to that point, what happened next. Maybe in a sequel. Don't dystopians usually come in trilogies?

Richard New says

The story, *Mask*, by author Kerry Nietz, is a thought provoking tale of intrigue, corruption, and innocence. A dystopic tale of the near future where the “vote” of a partitioned America mandates the name of convenience. Voted as too dangerous, too wrong, or too inconvenient, whatever it is gets removed and—disappears. Forever. Businesses, objects, people—if it's voted incon, it's gone.

A *Mask*, trained and equipped to handle anything, arrives in the dark of night and removes the incon. Whatever, or whoever, that may be.

Thoroughly creepy and imaginative. Entertaining and well written. Solid characterizations and an intriguing plot. Family friendly. A good, clean read.

Marie Still says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher... thanks!

This was my first experience with Kerry Nietz and he didn't disappoint. A unique future world where voting decides the fate of everything, including people. It was an eerily realistic look into the evil side of humans. The story was interesting, fast moving and I ended up breezing through the book in two days. The only thing I didn't like is the characters lacked depth, I found it hard to connect to most of them.

John Otte says

Excellent book that postulates an interesting end to the American experiment in voting. What if you could vote someone away who has become inconvenient for you? What would that look like. Kerry does an excellent job putting that world together in the near future. I saw a few of the twists coming at the end, but that didn't ruin anything for me. The door seems to be left open for more stories. Maybe. It would be an interesting world to visit again, that's for sure.

Gretchen says

Who doesn't love an everyman turned hero story? Radial is the Mask. A Collector. Not exactly sure what his exact purpose is, Radial knows he has an important job, and that it keeps him immune from the dreaded "vote". By day, Radial mans a grill cooking up beef and chicken for his customers. By night, he's a "Collector", a mysterious position that involves donning a mask and taking people who've racked up too many negative votes.

Set in a dystopian near future, the country once known as the United States has devolved from a representative democracy to something akin to mob rule with people's lives determined by "the vote", which is something of a popularity contest.

While I liked the overall story both the plot as well as the moral and political themes, I felt it was rushed at the end. This is what took away one star. I would have liked to have been introduced to Uncle Saul much earlier. He both taught me and left me with questions. While I loved the story, I felt that I needed more details. More answers.

Janet Sketchley says

In an unspecified year in Earth's future, after natural disasters and the breakup of the United States, the country of PacNorth includes at least part of Washington State. Overpopulation is a global problem, and in PacNorth it's controlled by popular vote. Rack up enough negative votes against you, and you're tagged "incon" (inconvenient) and you disappear.

Radial Crane may be the one who "collects" you, but you won't know it's him behind the mask.

He's good at what he does, and we see that in the opening pages. He obeys orders and asks no questions. Until it becomes personal. Until he does the unforgivable and rescues an incon he's supposed to collect. And until he begins to find out what's really happening behind the scenes.

The novel is written in the present tense, with a stream of consciousness feel as Radial tells us what he sees as he moves through this disturbing future world. I enjoyed the immediacy of it, and the puzzle of trying to figure out what was going on. Some of the technology sounds fantastic, and some is better left un-invented.

From the cues Radial gives as he moves through what used to be Seattle, I think readers who know the present-day city will be able to recognize key landmarks. If I ever get to visit, I'll want to go through the book again first.

The three novels in Kerry Nietz's DarkTrench Saga have each been finalists for EPIC awards, with book 3,

Freeheads , winning an EPIC 2013 eBook Award in the Science Fiction category.

Mask looks destined to follow that pattern. The ending hints at a possible sequel, but the final pages offer a sample chapter of his next novel, which looks like a step away from the dystopian Earth theme: *Amish Vampires in Space*. I kid you not. The author's note says "because someone had to do it." And because Kerry Neitz is that someone and I like his writing style, I expect I'll give it a shot.

You can learn more about the author at nietz.com and read interviews with him at The Barn Door Book Loft and at Trish Perry's blog.

[Review copy from my personal library.]

Alongcameastory says

It was a good read I read it and my 15 year old brother read it and we both liked it

Gretchen says

This is a review of the updated 2016 edition of *Mask*. Who doesn't love an everyman turned hero story?

Radial is the Mask. A Collector. Not exactly sure what his exact purpose is, Radial knows he has an important job, and that it keeps him immune from the dreaded "vote". By day, Radial mans a grill cooking up beef and chicken for his customers. By night, he's a "Collector", a mysterious position that involves donning a mask and taking people who've racked up too many negative votes.

Set in a dystopian near future, the country once known as the United States has devolved from a representative democracy to something akin to mob rule with people's lives determined by "the vote", which is something of a popularity contest.

I liked the overall story both the plot as well as the moral and political themes. I would have liked to have been introduced to Uncle Saul much earlier. He both taught me and left me with questions, however, the updated version of *Mask* makes for a much clearer ending and for the story to serve as a solid single volume dystopian, something quite refreshing in the sea of dystopian trilogies. The reworked edition made the entire story clearer and more engaging. It also elevated the the book from 4 to 5 stars.

Kat Heckenbach says

Reviewing this is really hard. I adore Kerry Nietz's writing. His Dark Trench series is one of my all-time favorite sci-fi series ever. And the writing itself in *Mask* is right up there. The voice--that voice at which Nietz is a master--is there. Different from Dark Trench, but just as strong and compelling. I read the entire book in less than two days. Couldn't put it down.

The main character Radial and the eventual sidekick Darcy were awesome characters. Fully fleshed out and characters I very much cared about.

The story itself is dystopian, Big Brother (or in this case, Big Sister) watching. However, the concept of "voting" is new and unique. I think there is MUCH to be thought about when it comes to the theme(s) Nietz

chose for this story. And the secret Radial discovers...creepy.

However, the issue I had (and why this review is four stars instead of five) was this story felt like it really needed to be stretched out into either a much longer book or a series. Everything happened rather fast, some of it a little too easily, and there were story threads and characters that I would like to have seen explored more. It is a strange comment coming from me as I have gotten rather tired of every speculative book out there being part of a series (usually one that is a book or two too long) and it is a breath of fresh air to have a sci-fi book that actually is a stand-alone! So, what do I do? Complain that I finally get what I want. But this story has the potential to be much more intricate, and Nietz has what it takes to meet that potential.

Aj Torgerson says

Not quite as good as the Dark Trench Saga, but it was a great book about the man behind a Ninja mask. He takes the unbeatable anonymous hero and shows you see all of his struggles and thoughts.

Pete says

In a future world where disaster (unspecified but not important to the plot) has left cities cut off from each other and resources scarce, overpopulation is the most pressing social problem. The solution: each citizen maintains a personal vote count. Anti-social behavior will result in other citizens `voting' negative points. When a citizen's votes reach a critical level, a `collector' is dispatched, and he or she removes the offending citizen and delivers them to a re-processing plant where they are destroyed--population problem solved :-).

A good sci-fi story needs a solid premise and I loved this concept of voting. The main character, Radial Crane, by day is a short-order cook. As we move through Radial's work-a-day life, the effects of the voting system on people's behavior was palpable. Everyone lived in fear of being negatively voted if they offended others or broke societal rules. Voting was anonymous, done at home on vid-screens. Anyone could decide to vote you although those closest to you carried the most weight.

Citizens with low vote counts are tempted to canvass positive votes from others even through canvassing is outlawed and can result in negative votes. No one is immune, even babies and children can be `voted'. The world governed by the vote was an uneasy place to live and the author had me feeling anxious for all those citizens I met.

By night, Radial is a collector. He wears a specially constructed suit, undetectable by CCTVs, impenetrable, and loaded with cool weaponry. His face is obscured by a mask (hence the title) which is hooked to the master computer, Quantum, and provides him positional data and bio-feedback on the incons (inconveniences) he is targeted to collect.

The dichotomy between Radial Crane the cook and his alter ego when he pulls on the mask is extraordinarily well handled. I moved with him as he controlled tiny flying monitors to provide visual data on his targets. The soft female voice of Quantum in his ears gave a sureness to his collection tasks and it seemed natural that Radial would be detached and efficient as he went about his business. Directed to the targets by Quantum, the Mask uses hi-tech gadgets to trap and then immobilizes them with `trankers' which fly out from pods in his suit's arms and stun the victim on impact. Once incapacitated, the collector lifts the limp

incon over his shoulder and removes him or her to a waiting white van, which whisks them off to the processing facility. Other citizens stand by and turn away, fearful that they might become the next victim. Yes, I found myself thinking, that's exactly how people would behave--herd mentality.

When Radial's friend (someone he would never `vote' and who would never `vote' him) fails to show for work, it forces Radial to become emotionally attached to a victim. Later that evening, dispatched by Quantum to collect a ten-year-old girl who has been `voted' by her mother, Radial reaches breaking point and his questioning of the values of the voting system and the true motives behind Quantum lead him to break from his role as a collector.

The remainder of the story follows Radial and the young girl, who he rescues. As he learns more about the society he is helping to maintain, what is being done at the processing plants, and the real purpose and nature of Quantum, Radial challenges the validity of the voting society and turns its own weapons against it.

This is a fast read. The world building is well executed and cleverly shown through the daily lives of Radial and people with whom he interacts, rather than laid out as a narrative. Radial is a fascinating character. He relies on the Mask as a crutch to absolve him from guilt, and at the same time, it acts as a metaphor for the distancing of citizens from the society they have come to accept.

Thinly veiled references to belief in God as a key factor missing in the `voted-society' and a crazy techno-wizard we meet toward the end of the story seemed underdeveloped themes to me. But neither of these small niggles spoiled my overall enjoyment of the story--highly recommended.

Jennifer says

Radial Crane is a collector and it's his job to make those who are voted to disappear without question at night and by day he's to blend in with society. That changes one day when he's sent to collect on a job that shouldn't require his level of skill but light enforcement. Now the Mask makes a choice that will change the world and turn lives upside down. Can Radial find the source in time to save the world from doom?

Naneen says

Interesting premise

The premise is excellent - a future where there are too many people and not enough resources and there is a system of voting to remove people who are inconvenient.

I enjoyed how the use of the collectors elevated them from the masses - in a place where everyone voted on everyone else you can't really stand out and being a collector feeds into the human need to being special.

Towards the middle of the book the story started to flounder. Radial was slow to decide to become the hero. That it logical (it's a big decision for the character to make) but it made the story slow down.

All in all a fun read. And I still want to know what happened with the rest of the United States.

David Bergsland says

Another Kerry tale, excellent entertainment

A masterful storyteller does it again. Here's a Christian author telling a polished tale. Spiritual truth has little part in the tale, however. Nevertheless, this brings solid, comfortable entertainment.
