



## The House of Tomorrow

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## **The House of Tomorrow** Peter Bognanni

Sebastian Prendergast lives in a geodesic dome with his eccentric grandmother, who homeschooled him in the teachings of futurist philosopher R. Buckminster Fuller. But when his grandmother has a stroke, Sebastian is forced to leave the dome and make his own way in town.

Jared Whitcomb is a chain-smoking sixteen-year-old heart-transplant recipient who befriends Sebastian, and begins to teach him about all the things he has been missing, including grape soda, girls, and Sid Vicious. They form a punk band called The Rash, and it's clear that the upcoming Methodist Church talent show has never seen the likes of them. Wholly original, *The House of Tomorrow* is the story of a young man's self-discovery, a dying woman's last wish, and a band of misfits trying desperately to be heard.

## **The House of Tomorrow Details**

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Author : Peter Bognanni

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## From Reader Review The House of Tomorrow for online ebook

### Mr. Allain says

I usually find it easy to rate a book based on what it's trying to be - but I struggled with this one. I genuinely love the premise: oddball kid raised in the home of an aging wannabe-futurist finds an outlet in punk rock. Buckminster Fuller research? Check. Some fun, knowing references to punk rock? Check. Depth? ..... Check? Well, kinda...sometimes.....at least when the narrator is comparing and contrasting futurist ideology with punk-rock anarchy.

Then it does a sloppy pivot into YA...which would be awesome if it were handled well. Instead, it flirts halfheartedly with "sick teen" tropes and paints the female characters as imploding bundles of nerves in need of any male presence to calm and validate them - even an oddball teen kid who has barely stepped out of his Nana's geodesic dome...and of course...the oddball teen's new angsty teen friend does a lot of up-and-coming misogynist babbling.....

In Bognanni's defense, there IS a great moment when the protagonist calls out his buddy on the fact that all his objectifying talk amounts to a not-so-subtle cover for his own insecurity and inexperience.

In those moments, I started to feel like maybe this book WAS doing more things right than I thought. I mean, I think it IS important to understand the underlying pain that sometimes sparks people, especially teens, to spread ignorance, pain, and anger. I LIKE being challenged to process unseemly behavior in a character that I otherwise want to root for.

If the female characters hadn't been SO poorly written, I think I would have been inclined to read a lot more moments in the text as nuanced social commentary. As it stands, unfortunately, the misogyny just read as misogyny.

That being said, I'd be willing to give Bognanni another try. As I mentioned earlier - the premise was fantastic, and this book came out in 2010. That is a lot of time to mature and develop in a world that has gotten a lot better at encouraging writers to confront their personal biases and narrow lenses.

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### Liviania says

I find myself at a point where I'm impatient. As a child, I would read a book to the end, no matter what. As a teenager, I read through the first hundred pages, at least. Now? If I'm in the mood to read, I want something that has me clicking along by the first few pages. I don't have time to waste. Peter Bognanni didn't even try to waste my time. Within a few pages, I understood the relationship between Sebastian Prendergast and his grandmother. There's something uncomfortably close about them, but she's controlling and he's growing older and chafing. And then she has a stroke, right when he meets Jared Whitcomb and his mother.

The sheltered Sebastian is an interesting creation. He's been raised like an experiment, but eventually Frankenstein's monster has to go out and meet the girl. Punk music is the perfect vehicle for his growth. Punk, despite it's DIY, no-need-to-know-about-music attitude, often isn't for beginners. It's too much a reaction to other stimuli. But I totally believe that a teenager who needs to express something that's his, not his grandmother's, would be seduced as much by punk as by a fellow geek and the fellow geek's hot sister.

I'm a fan of character-driven works. If there are enough convincing relationships going on, the plot becomes a bonus rather than a desparately needed framework. As much as I love unintentionally funny Sebastian (on the character's part, not the author's), I also love the Whitcombs. Janice, Jared, and Meredith have all been through the wringer, but they want their family to be happy. They all try to martyr themselves a little for the sake of the others, but all of their ploys just intersect to make the household tense. Sebastian shakes them up just enough for them to see the ruts they're about to fall into.

But back to the music. I love music and I love reading about it. Some authors write music like they've never seen an instrument. Others, like Stephanie Kuehnert and Maggie Stiefvater, write it like it flows through their veins and drips out from under their fingernails. (For some reason, reading poetry\* makes me want to get figurative.) Peter Bognanni can write music. Once Jared and Sebastian form the Rash, they have to figure out something to play. Yet no matter how terrible their lyrics seem, I would love to see them perform. The music reads as fun and consuming.

THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW is a polished story about people with raw edges. There are crushed hopes and living dreams. There are characters straight out of an indie film who act like people you might meet in real life. It's an absorbing book that ends to soon. Everything came to a conclusion, but I could've kept reading. THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW kept me firmly in what I was doing in the present.

\*The poetry is William Wordsworth's PRELUDE. THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW is not in verse.

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### **Christa says**

This didn't seem like a book I'd like--teenage boy raised in futuristic geodesic dome by eccentric grandmother forms punk band with an angry teen heart-transplant recipient.

But, it grew on me. I will admit it took me awhile to get into it, and I did debate tossing it aside during the first 30 or so pages. What was the problem? I found myself distracted by Sebastian's very unique voice (imagine a kid who uses absolutely no slang and sounds like he swallowed a dictionary). Soon, though, I noticed I stopped paying attention to how he was talking and instead focused on what was going on.

Because the story is special one--what happens when a boy raised in a literal bubble is introduced simultaneously to the real world and punk music, by a sick kid who's mad at his family and the world in general? I really found myself feeling for all of the characters and really enjoying the realistic way the Whitcombs portrayed a family. Jared, the heart transplant recipient, and his sister Meredith could bicker like anything, but you could see they cared deeply for each other, and I found myself rooting for the very small acts of kindness they would occasionally share. And Sebastian, the main character, was both endearingly naive yet mature, a real kid despite his weird upbringing.

I really enjoyed this book, the relationships--everything about it. One of the first books in awhile that made me a bit sad to finish.

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### **Kelly Hager says**

I could tell you what it's about but it'll just sound weird and you'll think, "Yeah, that'll be fun."

Instead, I'm going to tell you what it's like. It's basically like if Nick Hornby, Douglas Coupland in his Generation X/Microserfs days and Tom Perrotta teamed up to write a book about a teenage boy and his introduction to punk music. It's a story about teenagers and it actually is like what it's like to be a teenager. It's a book that is pretty far outside of my experience (I could not tell you thing one about anything the characters experience in this novel) and yet, I completely get everything. It's got nothing to do with me, but it's my story. And I bet you'll have the same reaction, because everyone knows what it's like to experience something for the first time and get a thrill of recognition, that sense of "Oh yeah, this is what I was waiting for."

And without sounding lame (I hope), I was waiting for this book.

And this is Peter Bognanni's debut novel--I cannot wait to see what else he has in store for readers. (I hope he's more prolific than Hornby & Perrotta have been thus far.)

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### **Traci says**

I want to recommend this book but I don't want to say too much about it. I didn't read the back cover or anything and it was all a wonderful surprise. I read a lot of books and many are very good but only a few are this enjoyable. Check it out.

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### **Ti says**

#### **The Short of It:**

Brilliant, beautifully written and touching in a way that surprised me.

#### **The Rest of It:**

After losing both parents in an accident, sixteen-year-old Sebastian Prendergast lives with his eccentric grandmother Nana in a geodesic dome. Nana, who studied with the infamous R. Buckminster Fuller (architect, philosopher and futurist), continues to share his teachings by conducting tours of their very unique home.

Most people visiting Iowa come for other reasons, but every once in awhile they have a visitor or two, and that's enough to keep Nana happy. Sebastian spends his days polishing the dome and as he's gazing down upon the town below, it occurs to him that he hasn't seen much of it, or the rest of the world for that matter. You see, the dome acts as a barrier to all things. It protects him, yet it also imprisons him. In his sensible shoes and conservative outdated clothing, Sebastian finds pleasure in simple things, but he secretly desires more. When his Nana falls ill, he meets a family that helps him realize how special he really is.

This is a wonderful story and includes the most interesting cast of characters I've encountered in a long time. They are terrifically flawed. I seriously loved them all, which I almost never say. Bognanni manages to make them vulnerable in beautiful, subtle ways. The story is funny and sad and touching without being overly

worked. The transitions were effortless, or seemed so anyway.

I adored this book and this is Bognanni's first novel! It blows my mind. You know that feeling you get after reading a page or two of a new book? The feeling where you just know that it's going to be great? I had that feeling throughout the book and the ending did not disappoint. There is so much more to say, but it would be better to experience it on your own.

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### **Chris Blocker says**

In many regards, *The House of Tomorrow* isn't a spectacular book. It follows a formula that has become trite in fiction. The story largely rolls out as most readers would expect from a coming-of-age story. Every time a new character pops up, you can guess the role they'll play. Stylistically, *The House of Tomorrow* doesn't stand out.

Despite its lack of surprises, Peter Bognanni's debut novel is still an interesting and entertaining read. Though it sticks with the formula and is peopled with predictable characters, the plot itself and the characters themselves are a joy to watch. This is a story about punk rock, geodesic domes, hero worship, education, and friendship. There's nothing formulaic about the individual aspects of the story, just the way they interact with one another.

Bognanni does a wonderful job crafting main characters who are believably human despite their strange circumstances. On the flip side, many of the secondary characters are used for irony and laughs. They cross lines, particularly in regards to religion, that make them overdrawn stereotypes. I get it, religion—especially youth groups—can be hypocritical and comical, but the lack of a character who countered this stereotype forced a lopsided story in this regard.

*The House of Tomorrow* is not one of the more memorable stories I've read of late, but it does stand out. Bognanni nails many of the aspects of adolescence that other authors miss. No, there aren't many surprises or unforgettable scenes, but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy the ride. I loved these characters and I really enjoyed watching their lives unfold. Despite the heaviness of the plot at times, *The House of Tomorrow* was a fun read.

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### **Sydney says**

stop that was so good

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### **Wendy Hines says**

Sebastian Pendergast has lived with his Nana in a geodesic dome since he was four years old. He never leaves the dome, working the gift shop while his Nana gives tours. She has homeschooled him all of his life with the futuristic teachings of R. Buckminster Fuller. She feels that Sebastian will pick up where Fuller left

off - hence all of the grooming.

Jared Whitcomb is a sullen, sixteen year old boy who recently had a heart transplant. He feels guilty that someone had to die so he could live. His language is vulgar and he smokes. He meets Sebastian when he and his family go on a tour through the Dome. When Sebastian's nana has a stroke, he goes to stay with the Whitcomb's for awhile.

There, he discovers things he has never known like soda, grilled cheese and punk rock. Sebastian also has a thing for Jared's older sister, Meredith, even though she doesn't really see him. She's too busy with all of her male admirers. Then, Jared and Sebastian decide to start their own punk rock band! They'll be famous and leave their miserable lives behind. The problem? Neither one of them is musically inclined, but they give it their best shot. The two of them, despite their differences, form a unique friendship. But will Sebastian want to return to the dome when Nana is better or will he prefer to start his own life out of the dome?

A compelling coming of age novel that will grasp your attention from the first page. I wouldn't say this is for young adults because of the swearing and smoking, but for a debut novel, Bognanni has written a superb novel. The characters are well-developed and you can feel their angst. I didn't know what a geodesic dome was before I read this novel, either! An original story with great characters and a unique plot that will have you waiting for Bognanni's next novel. A very creative and superb novel!

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### **Dorie says**

Great coming-of-age story about a boy who lives an isolated and home-schooled existence with his eccentric grandmother in a geodesic dome. One day while the Whitcomb family is touring the geodome, Sebastian's grandmother suffers a stroke and is taken to the hospital. This is the catalyst that pushes Sebastian out into the world, specifically into the Whitcomb family. Janice (the mother) is still reeling from a divorce, and her son Jared is recovering from heart transplant surgery. Jared finds Sebastian's upbringing extremely weird, if not cruel, and introduces him to the joys of punk rock. The two become friends and decide to form a punk rock band. The character of Sebastian is amusing, speaking like a scientist much of the time, almost as if he sees the world from an outsider's perspective. Jared is the rebel, full of anger and humiliation at his physical limitations and weakness, but also a very lonely, confused and hurt boy. The friendship between Sebastian and Jared is the heart of the story, as well as Sebastian's growing crush on Jared's older sister. I really liked this story and look forward to more from this author. Recommended to anyone who enjoys quality young adult fiction.

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### **Dalton Gregory says**

The House of Tomorrow is a coming-of-age novel with a virtuoso twist and a hint of science fiction. I heard about it in-class, from my teacher, Claudia Swisher, coupled with a book trailer on YouTube.

It's peculiar. I do not know if this book is formally classified as a coming-of-age novel, but it has all of the elements you'd expect from one. But there's one thing that makes it different from other novels of the same vein: I didn't care about the protagonist, Sebastian. One would think that in this kind of novel, a 17-year-old male student would be able to empathize with Sebastian, but I just *didn't*. Sebastian is an isolated kid - he's spent nearly his whole life living in a giant Geodesic dome with his only company being his grandmother

and the various tourists that are drawn to their strange home. As a result of this isolation, he's not like other kids, and while that sounds like a pretty good premise for a coming-of-age story, I do not think that it resonates well with the majority of teens in the expected audience. I think, if anything, this novel would have a powerful appeal to homeschooled teens, and I'm tempted to recommend it to some friends of mine who come from that kind of background just to see what they think.

I'm not saying the novel wasn't good, however. I genuinely enjoyed it, I just could not make myself relate to the protagonist, and this prevented me from ever achieving any sort of suspension of disbelief. Personally, I felt that Jared, Sebastian's first "friend," was a much more dynamic, interesting character than Sebastian. But I wasn't completely detached from the story. Sebastian is an aspiring musician - in the novel he learns to play the bass guitar, which is actually the instrument that I am the most well-versed in. I found the virtuoso portions of the novel to be surprisingly believable, and I think these scenes allowed Bognanni to really flex his literary muscles - there was a section of the book describing Sebastian playing the bass in a forest that gave me goosebumps.

One small disappointment I had while reading the novel was when I realized that the book was never going to take a serious Sci-Fi turn. The book trailer I watched when I heard about the book had me under the impression that it was going to be more surreal than it was. I don't think this is really a fault of the book, though, but rather, the video, so while I was a bit disheartened, I'm not going to hold the realism against the novel.

So in summary, I liked this book, I just feel like I wasn't *meant* to read it. I think this book is powerful and could easily be a favorite when read from the correct background. If I had the history to truly appreciate this novel for what it's worth, I think it would be one of my favorite novels. But I don't. I can't give this five stars because I don't feel I got the full package from it, but I definitely believe this book is capable of giving someone that experience.

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### **Karen Germain says**

I picked up Peter Bognanni's debut novel, "The House of Tomorrow" after reading multiple positive magazine reviews. I'm happy to report that this was a wonderful first book by an new, original voice in modern literature.

"The House of Tomorrow" is narrated by Sebastian, an orphaned teenager living with his new age spiritual grandmother in a geodesic dome. The pair live alone, mostly cut off from society except for giving weekly tours of their usual home, which supplement the grandmother's Social Security income. Their way of life is in peril, when Sebastian's grandmother suffers a stroke during a tour and the dysfunctional family visiting the dome take Sebastian into their care.

Bognanni creates wonderful, rich characters that manage to feel very real, despite their rather unusual circumstances. In particular, Sebastian is a sweet boy, desperate to make friends and find a place for himself in a world that is constantly shifting around him. This is a story about family, friendship, faith and love. A story about finding a place to belong.

I thoroughly enjoyed both the story and Boganni's writing style. It's quirky and unique. I couldn't put it down and despite being on vacation in Europe for the first time, found myself wanting to stay in and finish the book!

I highly recommend "The House of Tomorrow" and look forward to Bognanni's future novels.

Please visit my blog for my England trip report and book related things!

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### **Oriana says**

Ah, the power of a good endorsement (by that girl Riva Galchen [sp?:]) and a great price (\$1).

This was a nice little book. Which is kind of a dickish thing to say: since the book is over three hundred pages, I mean "little" in the patting-a-kid-on-the-head kind of way. Maybe this is a result of everyone always ragging on me for rating everything too high? Maybe I will feel guilty later and bump this up to four stars? But it really was just a solid, average book.

It kind of follows a template, in a lot of ways. It stars sixteen-year-old Sebastian, an idiot savant who has spent his entire life living with his Nana in a geodesic dome just outside of a city in Iowa, his only real contact with others being when people come in to tour the dome. Nana is obsessed with Buckminster Fuller (you know, maybe I would have connected with this more if I knew more about him? not sure), and has home-schooled Sebastian to share many wonky ideas which were ostensibly passed down from "Bucky".

Sebastian meets the Whitcombs -- mom Janice, whose husband has left her and who has turned for comfort to the church; daughter Meredith, a semi-slut who is both gorgeous and a bitch; and son Jared, a budding misanthrope and punk wannabe who recently had a heart transplant -- when they come in for a tour, which is the same day that Nana has a stroke. It is a great and wonderful coincidence that has brought these lonely, fucked-up people together, because they will all teach each other valuable lessons about love, compassion, friendship, and punk music.

See? The plot and characters are interesting and original, but it's really pretty formulaic, on a thematic level. It's for sure fun to see Sebastian and Jerad start a band, to watch Meredith soften and let people in, to learn about Nana's history with Bucky, to see Janice try to figure out how to be a single mom to these two difficult kids -- but it's not like you don't know where things are going to go. Plus there are some sizable plot holes, which drove me nuts because they just seemed really sloppy.

I don't know. I definitely enjoyed reading this, but I don't know that it'll stick with me for very long.

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### **Ericstiens says**

full disclosure: i'm friends with the author -- and I'm breaking with my "never write reviews of friends books in public" just because I liked this book so much.

first things first, As a YA book, this book gets five stars. It's probably one of the best YA books released this year. As an adult book, it's a little too saccharine at points, but you still can't fault it. It's like your favorite movies from the 80s -- a little too formulaic and a few too many scenes that are set up in either improbable or predictable ways just to tug on the heartstrings.

But really, if you're going to argue that detention never really looks like it does in The Breakfast Club, or that

the indie-rock record store nerd in *High Fidelity* is just a caricature, you're missing the point. (and incidentally, and this is NOT a backhanded compliment, the pace, reading level, and pitch-perfect dialogue in the book, along with its tenderness, reminded me most of Nick Hornby).

About that dialogue, Peter's strength has always been in creating lovable Midwestern misfits, but here he really takes it to the next level. Sebastian's innocent formality and Jared's sneering vulnerability are so strongly written and consistent, that their voices echo in your head long after you finish this book.

One of the nicest parts of reading Peter's writing over the past few years has been watching it evolve from just having a strong, unique, and funny voice to having an actual emotional center. Sometimes we can still see the adult narrator giving us the wink-wink-nudge-nudge for the line a character is about to speak, but the heart(breaking) life of all lonely teenagers everywhere shines through with enough brutal honesty in this book to bring a few tears to the eyes of even the most cynical readers.

The exploration of the sheer joy of making noise will ring true for any high schooler that ever indulged rock star fantasies, ever made a perfect mix tape (or playlist), or ever scribbled memorized lyrics instead of original words in a love note placed on someone's desk during study hall. Which is to say, pretty much all teenage boys.

If I could change anything, it would be to give a bit more attention to Sebastian's relationship with his grandmother -- the scenes in the dome moved me even more than the scenes in Jared's room, and sometimes I felt the geodesic dome/buckminster fuller conceit became just that, a conceit, and that it could have been a bit more tragic and a bit, well, fuller.

This isn't Peter's masterpiece - one hopes that is still coming - and that he explores the darker side of small-town white Midwestern teenage life with a bit less sugarcoating in a future book.

However, it may just be one of the fastest and most heartwarming books you read this spring. Strong voice and a narrative arc as unrelenting as a power chord. There may only be a few notes here, but they are played with honesty and manic energy. You'll know the chorus by heart by the second chapter, but I dare you to try not to sing along.

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## **Adam says**

If your parents die in a plane crash, and the Futurist grandmother who is raising you has had a lifelong passionate devotion to the teachings and person of R. Buckminster Fuller, you might end up like Sebastian Prendergast, a quiet, highly intelligent boy living in a geodesic dome on the outskirts of a small town in Iowa. The kid's rarely been into town, and has had interaction with other people only through the visitors that come to marvel at the spherical oddity of his home, but his heart is true, and his love for his grandmother is deep. As a result, when she has an unexpected stroke, Sebastian is thrown for a loop - he begins to question his upbringing, and whether or not avoidance of the world is a good idea after all.

Along the way, he's kicked out of his home, is introduced to punk rock, falls in love with a girl, and ends up serving a the crux of change, confrontation, and unleashed creativity in the lives of those he comes into contact with. I flew quickly through this book, earnest in my liking for this earnest and likable boy, rooting for him every step of the way. It's an honest exploration of the awkward, sometimes ugly world of relational

strain, family issues, and the teenage years, so if colorful language at times offends you, you might be better served by continuing to deny the reality of its existence.

An enjoyable read, for sure.

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