

Let Them Whimper: A Fully Justified (In No Way Personal) Argument for the Abandonment of Humankind

K. Enterante

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In the surprising dystopian novel Let Them Whimper, human imperfection might make the species worth saving after all.

In K. Enterante's shocking science fiction novel *Let Them Whimper*, a handful of unlikely heroes fight to stop a bizarre apocalypse.

Despite being advertised as the end of the world, "Cockadoodledoom"—a massive, tornado-like entity that hits California—doesn't seem to do much damage at first. But ten years later, a virtual paradise called Eden's End has bloomed in California, drawing in visitors without necessarily giving them back. Meanwhile, a select few seem destined to save the world whether they like it or not; they converge on Eden's End to prove that human beings deserve at least a chance to avoid their impending, unpleasant fate.

The story tackles a wide range of timely topics, from climate change and pandemics to political division and the weaponization of the internet. Its labyrinthine prose and occasional multipage paragraphs are challenging. It includes disturbing yet arresting imagery, as of an ever-smiling creature with a body composed of intelligent bugs who mutates and torments his victims. And there's humor derived from crude, adult, and dark subject matters, including treating the sexual assault of a minor as humorous while delaying the reveal of the true toll of that abuse, and with an outdated spelling of "Muslim." These factors suit the cynical tale, in which Americans' lack of empathy may have doomed the entire world.

The fact that the story's villain is also its narrator has intriguing implications for how the rest of the characters' personalities and motivations are depicted. Individual characters range from sympathetic to repugnant; all are memorable. Don is a self-proclaimed writer who infiltrates a doomsday cult in search of the "best book ever written"; Trent is a disturbed man who both resents and wishes to protect his disabled brother Calvin, who disappeared in the wake of Cockadoodledoom; and Gary is a secretive, abusive school principal with a balloon fetish. Elsewhere, Love is an imprisoned hacker who seeks help from her ex-girlfriend, Yew. Love and Yew are introduced later than the rest and are less developed. At times, this group is its own convincing argument for human extinction: self-centered, directionless, and cruel, they contributed to the retrogressive state of the nation. But when humanity is threatened, they rally to exhibit profound insights—perhaps enough to win their undeserving species the opportunity to fix what it broke.

For all its sarcasm and misanthropy, the dystopian novel *Let Them Whimper* is, in a roundabout way, a story of hope. It suggests that human beings might turn their innate selfishness toward the greater good.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (January 16, 2024)

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