

Orphan Age

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AfterShock Comics (Jan 21, 2020)

Softcover \$16.99 (120pp)

978-1-949028-27-0

Orphan Age takes place twenty years after all of the adults in the world suddenly and mysteriously fell dead. Now, the surviving generation has inherited a society that's struggling to keep the spark of liberty alive in the face of threats from an unforgiving and tyrannical group of religious zealots.

A small ensemble of main characters allows for several points of view. They include Princess, a girl whose father was killed by the New Church; Daniel, who carries word of the danger; and Willa, a quiet drifter of unrevealed origins with strong survival skills. They band together on the road to a safe haven but find that they can't escape the coming war so easily.

This post-apocalyptic story is Western-inspired in its look and its "civilized folk versus rampaging invaders" theme. Stephen King fans might find some common ground with *The Stand* or *The Dark Tower*, but it also incorporates deeper ideas, like the ramifications of losing several generations' worth of experience, culture, and wisdom all at once. The characters face difficult decisions about whether to strive for a different and better future world or to simply try to restore the old one.

Notable for its dialogue and dynamic art, the book's biggest strength might be its pacing. It balances thrilling action scenes with sober, reflective moments, always propelling the story in a varied and effective manner.

Orphan Age is a perfect mix of Westerns, science fiction, and survival tales, adding its own unique notes and style to result in an entertaining story that lays the groundwork for an exciting new series.

PETER DABBENE (January / February 2020)

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