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The Corruption of Zachary R.

Douglas Richardson
Weak Creature Press (September 2009)
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Reading about the madness of a fictional character is one thing, but author Douglas Richardson takes us right into the whirlpool of insanity in this strange and squirmy novel, *The Corruption of Zachary R.* The evolution of madness can often be traced to genetics, but then there are many cases of just dumb luck. Zachary R.'s mother suffered through horrible nightmares, while his father was so enraptured by the game of chess that he virtually checked out of any part of his life that didn't include a bishop or a pawn. Emerging from this sad union is Zachary R., whose life seems destined to tumble down its own stairs.

Zachary meets a woman in his apartment building and eventually fathers a daughter with her. But it's safe to assume he won't be appearing on the cover of *Parenting Magazine* any time soon. Zachary is doomed by so many outside forces that even he is sane enough to see that he is on an inexorable path to madness.

There is a certain yin and yang to Richardson's work that moves us to quickly invest ourselves in his characters. The novel sails along in short bursts of revelations. At times we are treated to some of Zachary R.'s stream of consciousness, but Richardson is too good a writer to make this a daunting task to read. He writes with a poet's heart and a suspense novelist's eye. The reader will soon realize that Zachary R. is on a fast track to disaster, but willingly goes along with him, wishing to help at every turn.

Oddly enough, *The Corruption of Zachary R.* is a breezy read; this is almost like taking the scrapbook of an unknown family and quickly fanning through the pictures on the pages. Also surprising is that this potentially morbid story is buoyed by much humor. Richardson manages to ratchet up the laughs even though both ends of the bridge to sanity are collapsing. Most readers won't forget this novel any time soon.

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