

Exquisite Corpse Book Review

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Weekly Contributor: Writing Scene

Disturbing *and* could honestly put you on an FBI watchlist. *Exquisite Corpse* by Poppy Z. Brite follows four main characters—two are normal gay men who are desperate for love, the other two are gay serial killers. It has inspiration from the Jeffrey Dahmer and Dennis Nilsen murders, which makes this book all the more sickening.

Trigger warnings for this novel: Violence, gore, cannibalism, and extreme horror.

“I’m your nightmare. Did you think you were done with nightmares, now you’ve become one?” (Brite, 157).

To Potential Readers

This book has about 240 (uncomfortable) pages. It’s not a difficult read, but if you’re squeamish, this might not be the book for you.

This article will contain spoilers.

Themes

Exquisite Corpse allows readers to get into the head of Andrew Compton, the first murderer we meet. It explores the curves and loops in the twisted brain of a serial killer. The other perspectives are third person omniscient for the most part. It’s tough to think of themes for a book like this, but I found one that made sense to me.

Serial killers still enjoy the beauties of life, but in a much more disgusting way.

Throughout the book, we see how Andrew Compton describes his actions when they have to do with murders. It’s imagery that every book should have, Compton romanticizes it much more than any other person would. He gives the images of blood, skin, and organs such a delectable description that it almost seems like he’s talking about food (which is sort of food since he enjoys drinking the blood and the meat). Compton goes through these sexual acts with boys both before and after he kills them, explaining how beautiful it was to him. Jay Bryne, the other murderer, enjoyed eating them and savoring their decaying bodies. He worked like Compton, except he was doing it as an act of love and admiration... weird love language.

Final Note

This book is based in the time of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, so there is a bit of homophobia and insensitive comments. The story and perspectives are uncomfortable which works effectively for putting the reader in the character's shoes... not that anyone sane would want to be in the brain of these people.

I can't say I'd recommend this, but if you enjoy off-putting novels, this is the one for you.

"Soon they were picked clean, their bones an ivory sculpture-puzzle shining in the dark waiting to tell their mute love story" (Brite, 240).

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