

song of the living dead



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The zombies rose and walked, the country went mad, and then the zombies laid down again---all without committing a single act of violence. "Song of the Living Dead" is a satire and an elegy, a patchwork oral history of the strangest plague in world history. While scholars, politicians, and common citizens share their insights on this fictional madness, the restless dreamer Lionel tells his own story. Traveling randomly across the east with a group of close friends, he witnesses first-hand the nightmarish confusion that the living dead bring upon the land. It's a story of one man's despair over his country's inability to unite in crisis, a tale of sudden, random violence and illusions of America's greatness gone askew. When the zombies rise a second time and become anything but docile, the tale becomes even darker, as Lionel struggles to understand the design of a universe lost in the realm of B-horror movies--and more vivid real-life tragedies.

Song of the Living Dead Details

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Author : Soren Narnia

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From Reader Review *Song of the Living Dead* for online ebook

Eric says

Soren Narnia's *Song of the Living Dead* is a somewhat soulful, and rather artful, lament about the loss of innocence that comes from seeing and experiencing the horror of something difficult to describe or understand. In this case, viewing the country you live in through the slowly degrading lens of untainted innocence as you learn the true horror that there is no body of people, governed or otherwise, that will either seek their own selfish pursuits in the midst of an epidemic of chaos, or will use that chaos to gain a foothold in a useless power struggle for a temporary reign over the living dead.

Song of the Living Dead is not a zombie story in the typical sense but, as the author suggests, is a satirical commentary on what drives each of us to find some semblance of a life from day to day, what fulfills us, and how in the midst of pain and chaos we strive to find meaning in each other. Here, the zombie epidemic is an allegory of the corruption and degradation of America and its values; the loss of the innocence of youth in such a world; and the terrible reality that we live merely by the sheer fact that death has not come for us in any untold number of ways, most of them completely meaningless. It is more of a broken poem of scattered narratives that aren't all that exciting to read, weaved into a relatively uninteresting story - if the reader remains in the shallows of Narnia's writing. But if the reader attempts to examine his suggestions, and allusions hiding in the deep, the experience will be much more rewarding.

Narnia has constructed a story with some interesting depth, in that he's written an elegy for our own hopeful blind ignorance that the world is truly beautiful. This satire does, in fact, sing to that beauty, though it also recognizes that that voice sings from the throats of those who walk both *with* and *in* darkness, and finds that we are each capable of both song, and terror.

Shannon says

I had accidentally sent this in a box of books to my husband in Afghanistan. I wondered where it had gone to until he called one day talking about it. He really liked it and said that the end messed (wasn't exactly his word but I cleaned it up) him up.

I have to agree. The story is good and the pacing is smooth but when I read the end it brought on the WOW factor.

He and I are both zombie fans and we appreciate the different angles authors are throwing into the mix; this one included.

Craig says

Goodreads First Reads copy

I found *Song of the Living Dead* to be a highly enjoyable read. The author flawlessly gets the reader to delve deeply into many philosophical and psychological issues facing society in this day and age. I was stunned by how engrossed in the story I became. The complete, out of right field twist at the end of the story absolutely floored me. I never saw it coming.

Truthfully, the only thing that kept this story from being 5 stars was the beginning. It took me a bit to get into the flow of the story. At first I was a little put off when it kept switching viewpoints between all of the characters. This is not a style I am used to, so it required a little acclimation. Overall I would recommend *Song of the Living Dead* to all fans of Soren Narnia as well as readers who enjoy satire and horror stories that make you think, exposing aspects of life you may not be aware of.

Therese says

This is a zombie novel, but a very original twist on the genre. The narration is film-documentary style, switching back and forth between the different characters. The characters are group of seemingly incongruous friends: A waiter and his artist girlfriend, the 17-year-old daughter of their neighbors, an AWOL military guy, and a 60-something bearded professor. In the aftermath of a zombie uprising that has disturbed the country and shut down the economy 9/11-style, they wander through the Eastern US. Strangely, the zombies are totally harmless and defenseless for the most part ... until one day, they're not.

I got hooked on the story pretty early on, when I realized some parts of the book were actually funny, and it's such a different thing from any other zombie story imaginable.

Patrick says

This is the second short novel I've read by an author who I discovered (as previously noted) by accident. I picked it out from the Kindle store because it seemed to relate to one of my favourite episodes of his Knifepoint podcast: an unusual story in which the narrator describes a collection of acclaimed horror movies and how their creator came to terms with an actual occurrence of something previously in the domain of fiction. There, as here, the problem is a worldwide zombie uprising, but one with a difference: the revived walking dead are entirely non-violent. They simply get up and shamble about, and aside from a slight tendency to accumulate in groups, they show nothing in the way of intelligence or motivation.

The book is broken up into short passages, and for the most part each section is narrated in the style of a confessional documentary by one of a handful of different characters. Occasionally another voice will break into the text to add something in the way of broad background texture, but for the most part the plot loosely resembles one of John Wyndham's 'cosy catastrophes': it is clear that something big and terrible has happened, or is about to happen, but the reader follows events from the point of view of a close-knit group whose moment-to-moment lives are actually not too bad given the state of things.

(Incidentally, I understand that 'World War Z' by Max Brooks has a similar structure; I haven't read that book, but it's interesting to note that the 2003 publication of 'Song of the Living Dead' predates it by a few years.)

And so the little group bum around on a strange sort of road trip. Some of them, like Ronald, are fleeing something: he's gone AWOL from a US Army which, after a series of controversial events, has recently effected strict sanctions for those caught fleeing. There's Lionel and Athena, a couple who seem to be holding the whole thing together. There's Melissa, a girl in her late teens, and Everett Mouses, a college professor in his sixties who seems to be taking the chance for one last adventure before retirement.

At first it isn't entirely clear how the group met, or what they are planning to do, if anything. But as a narrative vehicle for the experience of a transported country, it's a pretty good one. Perhaps the best you can say about it is that it makes a really weird concept essentially plausible. As a reader, I didn't really stop to think too much about the whole zombie thing too much because I was fully engaged with what each character was feeling at the time. That gave me mixed feelings about the sections which described the progress of the plague from an abstracted, national perspective.

The book explains that the reaction of governments around the world was one founded on violent repression and brutal execution of the zombie hordes, despite the lack of any proven threat. This makes for fine drama, but I wonder if it doesn't sell short the dramatic potential of the novelty of the situation. Put it another way: what happens when the first celebrity zombie appears? What efforts could we have made to communicate or engage with the zombies before destroying them entirely? The book suggests that there's something more going on inside their heads than we can see, but it doesn't dwell long on this suggestion, and ultimately the story finds it hard to ever quite transcend the trappings of the horror genre.

That said, it's absolutely worth reading. I did mention 'plausibility' earlier, but I rarely find that finding something unlikely makes it less believable as a piece of fiction. The writing here is generally very good, and it's compelling enough that I finished the whole thing in only two or three sittings. It feels like an experiment of sorts; occasionally incomplete but brave and thoughtful regardless. There's a real sense in which the author is both invoking the traits of the genre as well as trying to do something a little different. And in a couple of places I was intrigued to note the traces of other, more experimental ways of looking at horror fiction, ways which are only described here but which still lingered in my mind for long after I set the book aside:

'If it were a movie, it could end with three silent minutes of zombies and their meaningless shuffling, just the sound of the wind over a protracted montage of the earth finally possessed by a race that didn't even care to own it. Three minutes of montage, and then a black screen. If it were a book, it could end with ten, twenty unbroken pages of images of that sea of biological persistence, covering the land and caring nothing for its past. And when the reader closed the book, a good writer would have made him think: How peaceful. How perfect. How darkly beautiful in a way that can't be put into words.'

Jaime (Twisting the Lens) says

I won this through GoodReads FirstReads. Did Not Finish

The idea of this book was intriguing, as it approached the zombie realm in a different, almost sensitive, way. I appreciate that Narnia did things differently through both the story and the writing, and I give credit for not just cranking out another run of the mill zombie book. However, I found it hard to read because of the choppy nature of the writing. In what reads like a journal or a play, I just could not get wrapped up in what was going on due to the constant thought changes. I usually give books I do not finish one star, but I am giving this two stars because it really is different. I am sure that many people will love this book, as long as you like an almost avant-garde writing style. Maybe I will try reading again later on and discover what I was missing.

Kristin says

I won a copy of this book here at Good Reads. I was excited when it came in the mail and started reading it right away. I wasn't able to finish the book however. I didn't like how the book was written in journal entries (it appeared to be written in journal entries or other such format and that really bugged me).

Nikki says

Before this book, I had never read a zombie book. What I expected out of a zombie book was the typical horror-story, scare-your-pants-off gorefest that every zombie movie I had ever heard of was. I was warned that this book was different, but I didn't imagine how different it could be.

Soren Narnia did a wonderful job on *Song of the Living Dead*. In the story, there has been a so-called zombie outbreak, though the zombies simply wake up to walk around and die again. There is no violence, no gore, nothing. The story itself is narrated by Lloyd, who is roaming the country with his band of nobodies, including his wife, a professor friend, a teenage girl who he is close to, and a man who has went AWOL from the military. Though there aren't many zombie sightings near the beginning, there are more and more until you reach the climax of the story, which features hundreds.

I have to admit that the twist at the end really through me for a loop. It was definitely unexpected, and shed a whole new light on the events that occurred through the story. Though it is a short book, it is definitely worth the time to read.

Anna Degraff says

This zombie book is one of the best I've read. It takes on an entirely different perspective on zombies and was quite refreshing in that aspect. I was actually really surprised at how much I liked this one! So if your looking for something that surpasses the normal zombie throngs of books then I think you should really give this one a go. I'm quite happy that I did!

Erin Dunn says

I liked this book, but a couple of things kept me from loving it. First what bothered me was the format. There were no page numbers (only a tiny issue for me), and the short journal entries. I don't mind a journal entry format at all, but I felt they were too short and then would move on quickly to another person and so on and so forth. It was a little choppy for me and I didn't feel I had enough time to fully connect to the characters. With that being said, it was a good book. The plot was great and unique, which having been unique for a zombie book is quite an amazing accomplishment. Had there of been more of a character connection for me I would of given this book four stars, or possibly even five. Overall it was an enjoyable, short and easy read. I liked it.

Patrick D'Orazio says

I read zombie stories. Most of them are brutal, gruesome, and show the ugly side of humanity. Some make zombies the stars while others allow them to creep around in the shadows, puzzled at all the fuss being thrown at them when all they want to do is eat you and then be left alone.

This book chooses to have zombies in it as a plot device to develop an entirely different story. Like someone using the backdrop of WWII to do a character study of peasants living in rural France or a love story that has luscious scenery that sets the stage but does not really overwhelm or dominate in any way, *Song of the Living Dead* has a backdrop of the dead rising from the grave but the story focuses on the individual role players and their interactions with each other. The zombies, even when they turn violent in their second act are just bit players that makes no one run, flee, hide, or do much of anything but give folks an excuse to take off and ride around trying to discover themselves.

Something about the story made me feel as if a similar story could be told during the Vietnam war, with an AWOL soldier running away from the wrongs and atrocities he has seen while a few drop outs from society wander along with him, each trying to figure things out for themselves.

The writer never lets us forget about the zombies but they are in the background for most of the book, letting the characters stand up center stage. Only near the end does the brutal reality come crashing down on them, bringing the zombie invasion back into focus as the reality of their lives. Other than that, they are a on road of discovery and one after another, more of the people drop out of the story, taking their own paths and choosing their own directions. In the end, even our main character realizes that as much as he wants to wander, returning home has always been the best option for him.

The zombies in this book were a plot device and the author even admits that much in the story. Not that I was disillusioned by that--zombies are a creation developed not only for the horror they cause in us but also to give us plenty to think about: about ourselves, about those around us, our society...everything.

As other reviews said, do not expect your typical zombie story here. You will not get it. Instead, you will get one writers perception of things and how he sees the world we live in. And that, of course, is all you can ever hope for with a story you read.

Marie says

This was a very well written book. My favorite part was the breakdown of the outcomes of each character. I found that to be well written and really satisfying. I wasn't totally on board with the "twist" at the end. I rated the book as a 4 taking the very end out of consideration.

I think the story stands alone as well done and intriguing without throwing the possible curveball at the end. Sometimes a good story is just a good story.
