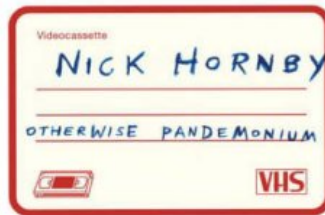
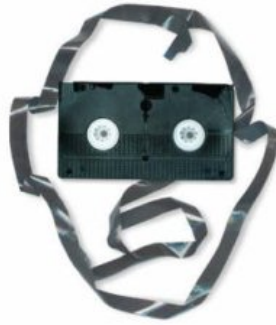


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Otherwise Pandemonium / Not a Star

Nick Hornby

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Otherwise Pandemonium / Not a Star Nick Hornby

Otherwise Pandemonium features two Nick Hornby stories, both packed with the trademark wit and poignancy that have made him one of the UK's most popular writers. The first one was previously published in *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales* (Penguin, 2004), the second one was written specially for this volume.

Otherwise Pandemonium / Not a Star Details

Date : Published 2005 by Penguin Books

ISBN : 9780141022512

Author : Nick Hornby

Format : Paperback 64 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Otherwise Pandemonium / Not a Star for online ebook

Malka says

Always love his craft. Two stories in this volume, one originally published in McSweeney's, the other written specifically for this edition. Both variations on a theme. One with quite self-aware structure, almost like a literary closed circuit.

Christopher Febles says

Ok I sort of cheated. Really short book that I killed in a day. But it's an author I like. Cool stories. Needed this one to complete my goodreads goal and I'm still about 300 pages away from finishing the Follett book

Ploni Almoni says

Not sure that the short story is Hornby's best medium.

Laila Blake says

I'm a fan of Nick Hornby's. I think he's a genius when it comes to dialogue and he is a keen observer of the smaller, more intimate part of the human condition. He doesn't do literary grandstanding, he makes you laugh and cry and full of feelings and I think his quality is generally underrated.

But these two stories were a big strange.

The first one is about a woman who finds out that her middle-of-the-road son stars in porn movies because he has a ginormous cock, and the whole thing leads her to a sweet little epiphany about her life. This one had an amazing beginning. It's very funny! I think it trickled off a bit towards the end though.

The second one reminded me a lot of "Slam", the same teenage boy voice who is so much smarter than any grown-up and certainly every writer who ever wrote a book (so basically like every 15 year old boy), the same single -parent mother family situation and the take on time travel. It has a pretty good premise, but I feel like it would have been better as a full book, and as a consequence feels cut off and unfinished. But that wouldn't work because, again, it's so much like "Slam". Still definitely worth a read, though.

All in all, 3.5 Stars.

Evan Micheals says

Two short stories in my further quest to complete all that Hornby has written and the first book of his I have

read in 2018.

Not a Star follows a family discussion when a family member is found to have been in a pornographic film and the implications of explaining certain personal anatomical features of the star and how they might have been inherited. Well and sensitively written with dignity and humour portraying a normal family discussing something embarrassing and potentially difficult. This is Hornby at his best, writing about the complexities of everyday suburban life.

Otherwise Pandemonium is a quirky, but forgettable story about a kid who buys a magic VCR that you can fast forward live TV, up until nuclear Armageddon in six weeks time. Brain chewing gum at best.

Spencer Fancutt says

Nice little short stories, the second of which is by far the better of the two- an amusing take on a family finding out about the son's job as a porn star. A quick read for an idle half hour.

David Bril says

This is another Short Story that Nick Hornby has written, that appears in a few collection novels and but also got published on its own as part of the Penguins pocket collection. Of all of Nick Hornby's short stories to date, this is likely my second least favorite but with that said though it is still an often funny, surprisingly sweet and sorta scary little tale.

It tells the story of how a young man lost his virginity, thanks to his knowledge of an impending apocalypse. Oh yeah Hornby is as witty as ever as you can see from that description. Basically a high school aged boy who has just moved to a new town and school, ends up buying a VCR, that he can fast forward into the future. It also tells the story of how he meets and falls for a young lady in the same band class as him. Hornby has some interesting things to say about knowing the future, changing the future and how the earth is doomed! The ending is a bit frustrating, even though we are warned in the first pages that it will be, but that is basically because Hornby is such a great writer, you want to know what more he could do with this fascinating story. It may be one of my least fav of Hornby's short stories but it is still a fantastic read, that adds another layer to an author who is one of our absolute best.

Alana says

I read this a few years ago when I first started purchasing the Pocket Penguins, but recently, I needed a bit of a jump-start while reading another book that seemed to be taking a while, and so I plucked this from the shelf for some quick subway reading.

Otherwise Pandemonium consists of two short stories written by Nick Hornby, both of which are quite amusing.

The first is, in fact, called "Otherwise Pandemonium," where a teenage boy acquires a VCR with strange properties. Rather than simply record what he requests, it is able to keep on fast-forwarding... to the point

where he can watch the news up to weeks in advance. The question is, with the ability to see into the future, what happens when one sees something they would rather not?

The story is interesting in and of itself, but what really makes it (as what often makes Hornby stories and novels) is the voice of the narrator. A young kid in Berkeley, he has enough to deal with simply by virtue of being a teenager. His mom is a single parent, who he loves, but often gets on his nerves. He gets angry when she tells him that he's arranged a carpool for him to his band practice... Until, of course, he realizes that it's with Martha, a hot girl from school.

This is my favorite story of the two, mostly because I really loved the narrator. His tone was great and his perspective was realistic (such as where he stops and realizes he's telling the story badly because it's all out of order), and Nick Hornby really has a gift for creating delightful young men that might not have it all figured out, but we still find them endearing.

The second story in this little book is "Not a Star," where a mother finds out that her son is an actor in porn films. A nosey neighbor drops off a note ("*Does he get this from his Dad?!? You've kept it quiet if he does!!!!*") and a copy of the tape on the narrator's doorstep, claiming that her husband saw it at a buddy's house. Now, one can imagine the amazing ridiculousness of the situation. As a rather repressed mother who pretty much stopped thinking about her son's penis after his birth (and then just used it as a means of affirming "it's a boy!"), to now be presented with this tape is a lot for her to handle. Another thing that's hard to handle is seeing the tape and... well... seeing exactly why her big boy has a future in that industry. Hornby is great at capturing the incredible awkwardness here (being British certainly helps, I imagine), and it's certainly not your usual topic for a family meeting.

Overall, a lovely little volume... as are most of the Pocket Penguins.

Brianna says

I couldn't even finish this SHORT STORY book because it was just that bad. Going through the last SIX pages was just too much for me. It's so boring, so horribly written, and just not interesting in the least bit.

The first story seemed promising at first by the very first page, but then it just got confusing. Which, whatever, maybe Nick really thinks this is how young teens think? Just a jumble of thoughts and going out of order with things? It just didn't seem to fit with the story that was being told. You can add a thought pattern and personality to a story without it being so confusing and uninteresting. I think the concept was cool. A VCR that can tell the future!!! But it was just muddled around underage sex and some kid thinking he actually has the world in his hands because he saw the future? It was such a stupid story, and again was just drowning in underage sex, which was just really unnecessary and bizarre. I don't even think I was thinking of having sex at 15, maybe other people were, though?

The second story was just even weirder and made me super uncomfortable. A mom watches her son's porno and then wonders where he got his big penis from. Literally what kind of plot is that? I'll tell you; it's a stupid one. I mean, really, what's the point of writing about a mom trying to figure out where her son got his huge penis? Who even writes about a mom watching her son's porno? It was just super awkward and super uncomfortable and so not realistic. I don't think any mother would go out of their way to watch their child's porno and then figure out where they got that anatomy. Unless Nick Hornby has a pretty odd relationship with his mother, I just don't see anybody doing that. It's super weird, and if any of my family members started to wonder where I got my boobs from, I'd be really uncomfortable and would be upset that they would even ask or wonder that. It was just such a useless story and it was so boring.

Maybe I hated this book just because I have no interest in underage sex and mothers discovering their son's porno/genitalia. Whatever the reason is, I hate this book and I hate Penguin, a publisher I consider one of my favorites, for even thinking of publishing this. What a disappointment that this book is on a list in the back with stuff from Anne Frank.

Natalye says

"Not a Star and Otherwise Pandemonium" -Nick Hornby (2005)

I'm not certain why, but for some reason, I completely skipped over these stories, in spite of having read nearly everything else by Hornby. So I was excited to start in on them.

Within the first few pages, however, I realized that I much prefer Hornby's longer work. While it's unfair to hold everything he does to the standard of "High Fidelity," I really thought these stories were kind of boring and a bit inane.

The first, "Not a Star," had an overall better meaning behind the writing than content of the writing itself. It was kind of eh. I liked the second story much better. In addition to it being slightly more innovative and entertaining for me, I am a fan of Hornby's Joycean way of writing, where he is able to digress to the style of a 15-year-old boy writing. This is similar to what he did in "Slam," when he wrote from a viewpoint that was representative of who he was portraying (namely with thoughts scattered all over the place) but still had his distinct voice in the words.

All in all, this is a quick and fun read, but nothing profound or new, and certainly not his best work.

Began: 1 May 2012

Ended: 3 May 2012

Edition: Kindle

Coenraad says

I've read this set of two short stories by Nick Hornby before, but I only remember 'Not a star', the second story. The first-person narrator is a mother who discovers her son has acted (very badly) in a porn film because he has ... um ... an unusually large endowment. This discovery set off a series of conversations and memories, elevating the potential bawdiness into a fascinating ode to family relationships. To manage this shift takes a gifted and insightful writer.

In the other story, 'Otherwise pandemonium', the first-person narrator is a fifteen year old boy. He buys a second-hand VCR that allows him to fast forward through network television and see the future. Although the narrator never really loses his fifteen-year-old lightness, the story becomes very serious. Once again, a fascinating premise leading to a much different story to the one a reader might expect in the first few pages. I am very inquisitive to see whether Hornby maintains this level of interest and giftedness in his novels.

Hornby se twee verhale wat hier aangebied word, verras telkens die leser met onverwagte verskuiwings, wat

logies en oortuigend is in terme van die verhaalgegewe. Ek sien daarna uit om sy romans op te neem.

Tima says

I'm bias and will 100% admit that. I have a huge literary hard-on for Nick Hornby.

That being said, I usually don't read many short story collections. This short book has 2 stories. The first one is his typical somewhat awkward/humorous and the second is totally different than anything I've read by him.

I thought I'd loathe it, the first few pages of the story were very..annoying? Scattered? Not due to bad writing but due to the narrator - which he constructed perfectly. But, in the end, the story was quite good and surprising.

Laura Flint says

Two great short stories by a fantastic author. An awesome sunny winter afternoon's read!

Matthew says

I knew from the plot summary that this book was going to contain two short stories, both containing sex. That made me nervous -- especially with the attention 50 Shades of Gray has been getting, I've been thinking about how confused most Americans are in the area of sexuality. In my opinion, sex is best experienced in the context of a loving, monogamous relationship. Besides, aren't most book jackets that mention sex just a red flag that the book is going to be gimmick-filled with attempted-shock-value? (I'm thinking of a Chuck Palahniuk book I read that seemed to be trying too hard to shock, and a sci-fi book that mentioned sex often enough that it felt like the target audience was hormone-filled teenage boys, or the thrift store in my town that is overflowing with used romance novels).

But Nick Hornby has never struck me as a writer who would put "sex" on the book jacket just to sell copies. And whew, I was right, these are two stories full of thoughtfulness, emotion, and character development. The son's barely-mentioned porn acting in the first story is simply the shocking catalyst for the real action of the story: the shift that takes place in the mother-son dynamic. The voice of the narrator in that story is so authentic, which really shows Hornby's skill at creating believable characters. The second story is probably closer to what we expect from Hornby, a young guy interested in a young woman who narrates the way his mind wanders (with a little twist thrown in). The two main narrators are world's apart in tone, context, etc., and I was invested in both. These stories are easy to care for and enjoy.

I give this book 5 stars and look forward to continuing towards my goal of reading every Horny book, yeah-ah.

John says

A short, light read by way of a change; and I haven't read Nick Hornby for a while.

The first story concerns a boy's "first time" and his life as a frustrated/frustrating 15 year old. He makes an unexpected discovery which involves his newly acquired video recorder which will eventually lead to the "first time". But it's not remotely what you'd expect. 3*s

The second concerns Mark's enormous pecker. The DVD/video player theme is common to both. To say more might well spoil the fun. Not a Star is very, very funny and I give it 5!
