



The Garden of Darkness

Gillian Murray Kendall

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The Garden of Darkness explores the journey of four children who, after surviving a disease that seems to infect all but one adult, hope to find meaning by joining forces with this sole remaining grownup who says he possesses a cure. These children discover, however, that the greatest meaning of all lies in the friendships they forge during the journey itself. This groundbreaking Young Adult novel shaded with despair like that in *The Road* and hope and renewal like that found in *The Hunger Games* shows the courage, tenacity and, finally, love necessary to create a new world from the ashes of the old.

Their families dead from the pandemic *SitkaAZ13*, known as Pest, 15-year-old cheerleader Clare and 13-year-old chess club member Jem, an unlikely pair, are thrown together and realize that, if either of them wishes to reach adulthood, they must find a cure. A shadowy adult broadcasting on the radio to all orphaned children promises just that — to cure children once they grow into Pest, then to feed them and to care for them.

Or does this adult have something else in mind?

Against a hostile landscape of rotting cities and of a countryside infected by corpses and roamed by voracious diseased survivors, Jem and Clare make their bid for life and, with their group of fellow child-travelers growing, embark on a journey to find the grownup they believe holds the cure. Their only weapon is Clare's dog, Bear.

But Clare and Jem, as well as their followers, are hampered by the knowledge that everything in this new child-led world had become suspect—the love of diseased adults, alliances, trust, hope. As Clare and Jem learn to stitch wounds, skin deer and survive in the ashes of the old world perhaps it is no surprise that they begin to find that friendship is as redemptive as anything they seek—that friendship has its own kind of healing power. And, at the end of their journey, in the face of the ultimate betrayal, they discover that out of friendship can come love.

The Garden of Darkness Details

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Author : Gillian Murray Kendall

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From Reader Review The Garden of Darkness for online ebook

Jenni says

I absolutely loved the sound of this book, particularly the mentions in the blurb of friendship and very different teenagers being thrown together in the face of such adversity. I'd not long read a grown up post pandemic novel and loved it (Station Eleven) so was eager to read another such title.

The book primarily follows Clare, she's fifteen years old and all too close to adulthood – the time when Pest will catch up with her (it catches up with everyone eventually you see). To begin with she's on her own, remembering the demises of those closest to her and trying to work out how to exist in this new world. This beginning is brilliantly claustrophobic – I loved the way that Clare doesn't fall to pieces or turn into some super strong survivalist. Instead she falls somewhere between the two, having moments where she shuts down and moments where she manages to work out a next step to take. Then, slowly but surely she meets others – Jem first and then other little groups of children – and they begin to work together both to survive and to try and find the cure being promised to them. For me the book really began to shine once Clare was with the other children.

The book also follows the Master, the voice in the radio promising a cure to all children who are hearing his broadcast. Very quickly we realise there is something seriously weird about this man, this only increases as the book progresses. I found that when it became a Master chapter I was willing it to end quickly – there was something so incredibly unsettling about him. If anything this was the part of the book I enjoyed least, whilst I know there is a need for peril I'm not sure the true level of wrongness about him was really necessary within the book.

One element of the book that did surprise me was the presence of the Cured – adults who, when the pandemic first broke out, received a supposed cure that left them in a zombie-esque state. I enjoyed the dilemmas that the Cured brought to the young people, but at the same time felt like a number of the scenarios were quite familiar to me.

Whilst I generally enjoyed this book it didn't do a brilliant job of capturing my attention. It took me over two weeks to read it – by my standards this is virtually glacial. I found I could only read it in smallish chunks, maybe to do with my intense dislike of the Master, and then once I'd put it down there was no great pull to pick it back up. Interestingly there was never any question of my not finishing the book – there was obviously something hooking me to it, I think this was the central focus on Clare and the other children. I did genuinely care about them to some extent.

I'm sad that this isn't a book I'll be rushing to revisit or to recommend, though I'm sure there will be lots of readers who'll feel entirely differently about it (Goodreads already has a number of glowing 5 star reviews of this book).

Sarah-Jayne Briggs says

(I received a free copy of this book from Rebellion, through NetGalley, in exchange for a review).

(This review may contain spoilers).

The blurb for this book was one that particularly interested me. It was really easy to get into, though some of the formatting made it a bit hard to read.

I felt that this book has a whole lot of different plots/genres involved, apart from the obvious. There was a sense of chosen family running through the book, which was a really good thing. And I liked the fact that the characters had to deal with things like diseases other than the obvious, as well as the milder things such as lice and even getting hurt in other ways.

The characters were really easy to relate to in this book. Although they were all much younger, I felt that they came across as real people with real problems they had to deal with.

It was nice to see the animals in the book - particularly Bear and Sheba. I especially liked Ramah as a character. Even though she was very young physically, she seemed much more mature, though whether that was because of the disease or because she was always like that, it was difficult to tell.

I also liked the range of different reactions the surviving characters had. I'm not just talking about the Cured, though that was a particularly unique way of creating zombie-like creatures (and the whole Dinah thing really made me sad. I'm a sucker for the characters who push through darkness to retain some part of humanity in them). The variety of reactions was pretty cool, with the kids who treated it as a game, to the teenager in denial that he was going to eventually become sick. And the whole cult, thing, too - though all of the reactions were understandable in some ways. In a catastrophic event like that, people might well cling to someone who acts like they know what they're doing.

Although the storyline itself was easy to read, I found the formatting to make things a bit more difficult. It wasn't always easy to tell who was speaking well and there were some errors in the writing, too.

One of my favourite parts of this book was the relationship that grew between Jem and Clare. I would have liked to know more about the dreams and things - were they related to the disease? Or just in their heads? The ending was very bittersweet. I liked most of it, but one thing in particular made me really sad.

I would definitely be interested in reading more books by this author in the future.

Amanda says

Leeches? Seriously?

Booknerd says

This book...I hate to admit it, but scared the stars out of me. The Garden of Darkness authored by Gillian Murray Kendal sure knows how to make you scared of not only people but what may lie in the future. This book carries the theme of death like it needs that to breathe (of course books cannot do so, but you get the point) and horror. I have not been able to laugh at the characters, swoon at the males, (not even including Darien, but more about him later on) but instead I have been quietly screaming at the actions that happen to these poor characters. I find it funny what the small review says on the cover and I wish it was true: **“Keeps readers eagerly engaged (and maybe just a little bit terrified) until the stunning conclusion.”** The

underlization proves somewhat of a fact and I wish I was “a bit terrified” but that is not the case. This book is beyond creepy and here is when I explain why.

The Garden of Darkness starts out with the main character, Clare, and we see her trying to live a somewhat normal life as the horrible virus SitkaAZ13 or known as Pest takes hold of the world. Pest is a special virus that claims thousands of children and adult lives but there are those who receive rashes until Pest claims their body. They also consider people a threat, and attack if they find a healthy person. It is pretty easy to distinguish a person from a cured (a person altered by the virus) **“The man began to make his way closer to them, and Clare could see the weeping sores on his face, the redness of the pustules on his neck. The Cured looked up at them, his eyes almost closed by swollen tissue”** After Clare’s father and step mother die of the pest, she sets out to scavenge the city in order to survive the new world. Spending some nights in a cabin, safe and secure, she starts to wonder if there are other survivors and what of the-master-of-the-situation? He is the one who has the cure and broadcasts his address on radio to help children and she is determined to find him so she can be free of the rash that will turn to pest soon.

Along her journey, three new characters are introduced. We welcome Jem, Mirri and Sarai with welcome arms as they introduce themselves and of course Clare is hesitant. Thirteen year old Jem, the leader, is a chess player but don’t let that label fool you; he is a genius when it comes to wounds and he is very protective. Mirri is seven and very friendly, which gets her into trouble later on in the book. Sarai is a very tough nine year old and can be bold at times. When the gang includes Clare as their own they start developing friendships, which makes them inseparable. With a world without adults, it makes sense how close they quickly become and I thought of them as a little family. Jem as the dad. Clare as the mom. Mirri as the little sister of Sarai because she is more mature. This book carries beautiful transitions as strangers to friends and I was surprised at the end of the book how everyone came together after horrible events.

Here is when the story gets screwed up so be warned: this is not light stuff. After getting a first glimpse of the master-of-the-situation let me just say, he is probably the creepiest character I have read. This guy is known as the master and what he does is he searches for children so that he can shelter them but don’t let that hospitality fool you. This guy is not here to save children, but save himself from developing the Pest and kids are the only source to that victory. There is one scene in particular that caught me off guard and made me shiver and quietly scream: **“He suddenly turned away and pinned Eliza to the wall. Britta and Doug looked on as he bent down and licked the blood off her arm, moving his tongue right up into the wound.”** A grown man licking blood off of a little girl...WHAT IS WRONG WITH HIM! I lost it, I FUCKING LOST IT! The children worship this guy for letting them stay safe and secure and they pay him back with this...ugh. Enough of the master for now.

During a scavenging mission, Mirri and Sarai come to find a pig and they welcome it as their pet which I thought was a cute touch but of course this book isn’t on the theme of cute. Then we meet Darian and I love how the book makes you think he is Michael, a guy that Clare loved. Darian seems like a nice eighteen year old and the wide smile that spreads on his lips just seem friendly. He even looks at Clare and it gives us a feeling that we may have a romantic moment later on...but no. All may seem peaceful with the gang and then this happened when Mirri and Sarai made a meal for Darian. **“Mirri was sitting close to Darian, and, while he was speaking, he absently began to finger a strand of her beautiful red-gold hair.”** In that moment, I knew he would be trouble. I was mad at Jem for not doing something about it but he clearly wanted him gone. The next day, was a wakeup call for me, as the reader, because Mirri is missing and so is the pig and who else? No one but Darian. The world isn’t safe anymore and a little girl who is not only friendly but so adorable would be prey so easily in this new world. Mirri is found but she will be scarred for life after this moment. Who wouldn’t be if you find yourself vulnerable because your legs are tied and so are your arms? Not to mention that your attacker has a knife and his shirt is all bloody? Poor Mirri. Thankfully Darian is taken care of but not by any of the gang but by a cured, Mirri’s mom in fact, and it was a great victory.

With winter just starting, the gang is ready to go find the master-of-the-situation and live with the company he has saved. Of course, we know it is a terrible idea because since learning about the Master, we want them

safe from harm but we can't yell at them and have them return to the safe side. As they head away from their home, they find themselves finding Ramah and Bird Boy. Ramah was a great addition to the team as she was very serious and rarely kidded around. What was interesting about her though, was that she knew topics that would and actually saves lives. Bird Boy was a great character too because he was so happy but his obsession with birds was quite weird. This makes it easier for everyone to take care of each other but their food supply will eventually run out. With that in mind, they head out all together and the team splits for a little bit. We finally get some Jem and Clare alone time, which I adored. They should get that spotlight because they have been there for each other. Upon returning to the gang they finally find themselves face to face with the Masters household.

Right away, they see children playing. Friendly play like it was back before Pest came. They are mesmerized because they thought children were gone and right in front of their eyes are children at play. With the Master gone, for now, they are moved in a room big enough to hold Jem, Clare, and Ramah and without taking chances they go searching for secrets. As they explore the rooms, they find interesting and yet horrid objects and artifacts: paintings that have little girls with blue eyes, blue eye dolls and a scrapbook filled with morbid artifacts. CREEPY! A question starts to enter your head "Why is the master obsessed with blue eyes and children?" Time is running out though because Clare has started to show symptoms of Pest. Right on time, the Master shows up and is anxious to help her out but prying in on his secrets, they know better. So it becomes a game of protect Clare until she dies. Thinking of her friends though, she pleads to him and let her friends go and he can use her. It never works that way though. Usually never does so it wasn't surprising to see everyone tied up. I had a feeling that she would be saved but then she would die of Pest and surprisingly that was not the case. It happened really fast though and I was surprised how quickly Pest can be cured. With such a horrible disease, it is really quick to get rid of.

The verdict: The Garden of Darkness may have a light cover but it is a surprisingly dark novel. This book deals with death and lots of versions of it: hangings, cannibalism, human and animal corpses, etc. I was surprised how dark it was but there are also tender moments such as friendships and family. This book also has good character development and it was nice to see the characters adapt to their surroundings. If you enjoy a somewhat short book with horror appeal to it I'd say to challenge yourself with this.

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Bee says

I really wanted to like this book. The premise seemed very McCarthy's The Road, couple of people (in this case kids) with not really a goal other than survive the exposure and not get killed by freaky people who want your food. Replace freaky people with zombies, walkers, undead, infected, or whatever else they call them and you get the basic premise of what this book is about.

The idea is not original, but that in itself doesn't always necessarily mean the book is bad. But The Garden of Darkness doesn't bring anything fresh to the table and I think that's where the problem lies. Because having to read another book about the end of the world gets a bit boring after a while.

The style is very distant which makes any action or dramatic scenes dull and disconnected. The fact that

nothing really happens makes it dull and disconnected.

It isn't a complete waste of paper though. The final chapters (when stuff actually happens) are more interesting, and a few twists – which most readers will probably see coming from miles away – do add to the suspense. But this doesn't make up for the previous 2/3 of the book that lacked any kind of interest.

Sally906 says

THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS is very, very dark...not a book to read at night before you go to sleep. I can vouch for this because for the first time in a very long time my heart was pounding and I felt very, very upset at what I was reading. The 'baddie' in this story is heart wrenchingly bad; It is wonderful when you are so sucked into a story that you are so at one with events. Despite the, at times, overwhelming darkness of the story the actual plot was very believable – an out of control virus wipes out everyone over the age of 18. Everyone is infected as spots on their tummies ascertain, but until kids turn 17/18 the virus just lies dormant. Surviving children gather together for survival – some don't even get to do that and there is a heartbreaking scene of a young child dead in its house not because they had the virus but because it was left all alone and was unable to care for itself. There is also something worse than dying, being a Cured. In the last days there were announcements that there was a cure which sent hundreds of affected people to receive the vaccination. The result was not death, but the total breakdown of their sanity – the recipient became a stark crazy lunatic with no remembrance of what they were like before and an urge to kill. Children did what they had to do to survive, sometimes what they did were unpleasant, such as kill an animal to eat, or kill a Cured. In fact this portrayal of the children is a huge plus in this story because there is growth in all the characters; a cheerleader and a chess player can work together against all odds to create a life out of the tragedy. At the same time the characters are realistic – these are children – a little girl IS going to be distracted by a toy rather than food, cleaning a toilet? Well not so much. Neither are the children stupid though – there has to be something wrong with the only surviving adult who is offering them help – stranger danger kicks in. The little band of survivors makes their way to his location hoping for the cure and at the same time scared of what they might find. As the book progresses his intentions become clearer as his story of life in his haven is interspersed with that of the little band. The end is very reasonable – of course there is a cure but it comes too late for adults – there had to be a cure otherwise there would be no future, as each of the children reached the age of 17/18 the virus would bloom and they would die. At the end there are a few loose ends, however, having said this, if you think about it, the end is really the new beginning. THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS is a very good read for teens and adults alike, it is about survival against all odds and creating family to replace those who are lost. Believable characters, a great story and a feeling that you have travelled to hell and back with Clare, Jem and the others by the time you reach the end. Oh and keep an eye out for Dinah – so terribly sad.

B – Great. I really enjoyed reading it and it is a book I will be recommending to all my friends who like this genre.

With thanks to Rebellion/Ravenstone and the author via Netgalley for my copy to read and review.

Jared Conti says

Gillian Murray Kendall's *The Garden of Darkness* blooms with subtlety. This post-apocalyptic young adult novel is like a little plot of land: you till in early Spring, plant your seeds and sit back to watch it grow. In an age where these end of the world novels are shooting up like weeds, *Garden* blossoms and crowds out the others, soaking up the glory of the sun for itself. Sure you've got to water and weed it, but in the end, you've quite the bumper crop.

As an overburdened field suffers from loss of nutrients, we get your obligatory plague decimation—but there's a twist: the Cure. Of course, if you happen to weather the plague and get said Cure, you've become a stark-raving lunatic, much creepier than being a zombie. If you're a kid and haven't yet succumbed to the plague, you now have to overcome the Cured and the day-to-day survival of a fallen world.

There's a certain honesty here in the way different children handle their new-found lifestyles. It's not just about missing their folks, it's about how they deal. Our heroes are at times child-like, but not childish. The fact that survivors mentioned child services more than once was interesting, as were the way suicide and death in general. Much love to a character's lethargy in response to basic hygiene. Too neat.

And although the main character wore her crush's letterman jacket for the entirety of the novel, it acted as a tether to the former world, but not in a gooey, overly sentimental way. There is the slightest hint of love story taking place here, too, but it is deftly handled as mild flirtation. Without the pressures of societal norms and high school drama, it allows itself to develop naturally.

Character development is spot-on as more and more hangers-on are introduced into bands. They balance well, unlike typical adventure novels where particular characters have special skill sets. Here, they just are: kids will be kids. Even the behemoth of a dog, Bear, our main character befriends early in the story, isn't used as an easy way out of harmful situations.

Two of the more stellar plot points to note:

Not giving anything away, but there's a grown man who deems himself "master-of-the-situation" whom is gathering children to his aid. As the book progresses, his intentions become clearer and it is compelling to see his chapters interspersed amid the novel as a parallel to our roving band of children and teens.

There's also an aside about halfway through highlighting characters which we'll never get a chance to interact with. As a brief interlude it was captivating to read of their ill-fated exploits in comparison to our main characters.

The ending sneaks up on you, and it's worrisome that loose ends won't be tied up. It was, however, clear, concise and a quite sharp way of ending things. It is beautifully wrought, and won't be tied up in another series where you get a book and movie deal.

And so we return to the garden aspect of this book. Its shooting tendrils sprout up time and again about the pages literally and figuratively looking for a way to grow amid the darkness. There is some good fruit here, and it should be eaten of heartily.

The *Garden of Darkness* by Gillian Murray Kendall is due out 6/25/2014 from Ravenstone.

Please read more reviews at theoracularbeard [dot] blogspot [dot] com

Brandy says

I don't know where to begin with this story; there is so much to say without giving away any spoilers. Which, by the way, there is one at the bottom. I can say with certainty that I absolutely enjoyed The Garden of Darkness. There was so much suspense that I couldn't stop reading.

The main point of the story revolves around a disease called PEST. PEST can hit a person at any age but many do not live past 18 and most of the adults with PEST have died. The adults who have received treatment for PEST are called The Cured; the cured are kept alive with a patch, similar to a smokers patch, that causes the wearer to go crazy and become violent.

Clare is the main character; she loses her family to PEST and heads out on a journey to find "The Master". The Master claims to have the real cure for PEST and he is the only sane adult left alive. Along her journey, Clare not only loses everything but she gains new friends, a new family, a dog & a new start to life. She learns the values of sticking together, trust, what it means to be a family & what love is.

******SPOILER ALERT******

Along the way Clare and her new found family accidentally find a cure for PEST. They do not realize that they found the cure until after they meet up with the master. The Master lured kids to him by telling them he had the cure. When Clare and two of her family friends make it to the Master they quickly discover he gets pride out of killing children and watching them suffer from the disease. He then holds Clare & her two friends hostage. Sensing something wasn't right the rest of Clare's friends come to her rescue. They reveal that they have the cure and cures Clare from the disease. Clare and her friends wipe out the Master and bring his children back to their home where they can start a new life and population.

Karyn Buchanan says

Honestly, this book is unlike any other book I have read about the end of the world. It shows that love is a conquering force, and evil and darkness can be overcome. A wonderful cast of characters, especially Clare and Jen, and it shows how children can make a difference and don't always need adults. Really awesome book.

Kelly says

I enjoyed this. It's a solidly written dystopian YA novel with an edge of horror. If you liked How I Live Now, then this book is definitely worth a read.

Captain Doomsday says

Please note that this review is a modified version from my blog After The Last Day.

The Garden of Darkness explores the journey of four children who, after surviving a disease that seems to infect all but one adult, hope to find meaning by joining forces with this sole remaining grownup — who says he possesses a cure. These children discover, however, that the greatest meaning of all lies in the friendships they forge during the journey itself.

The Garden Of Darkness follows Clare, recent orphan and inheritor of a dying world, and Jem, a younger boy who has taken two even younger children under his care. When they hear of the Master-Of-The-Situation, the only remaining adult in the world, who says he has the cure for Pest, they begin a journey through a shattered civilisation that will have far-reaching consequences for everyone they meet along the way.

The Garden Of Darkness is a YA title, and it fits that mold well - while remaining accessible to not only its intended audience but older, more cynical readers like me. With the adult population of the world gone, what could have been, in the hands of a less talented author, an updated Lord Of The Flies, The Garden Of Darkness not only finds its own voice; it draws you in and makes you live with the sense of hopelessness the characters feel, while never once giving in to the bleak despair that older, more worldly characters, would surely feel in the same scenario.

The writing is short, sharp, crisp, and still, somehow, whimsical and uplifting. The plot meanders somewhat but never stalls, and sometimes the shortest scenes have the most to say. The relationship between Clare and Jem is masterfully handled. It never degenerates into the pap that almost any other writer would have come up with, and remains the anchor that holds the plot together - and moves it to its confronting finale.

The narrative does begin to wear somewhat as the plot tightens, and in the light of the earlier, unhurried sequences, the final act ends up feeling rushed, but still suitably tense.

A lot of the characters don't get all the page time they deserve, and some don't get developed enough to fully draw me in to their stories. Some characters appear only briefly to begin with before they resurface toward the end which I found a little annoying, though probably only because of my limited attention span.

Where was I?

Maybe, as a new father, the idea of children in danger with no adult to look after them helped to keep my interest levels in this work at a high. Or maybe its the crisp writing depicting an unforgiving world where the survivors still keep room in their packs for their favourite toys.

Where many of the post-apocalypse efforts of the current era seem to focus on the melodrama, The Garden Of Darkness examines the things that we take for granted and shows us their darker side.

In an era where we are constantly aware of the global warming debate, where the news keeps us up to date on the nuclear stockpiles around the globe, our children and teenagers live with the idea of the world ending. The Garden Of Darkness pulls no punches and that makes it a must read for teenagers and their parents alike.

GabiNarwhal says

I thought this was a really good book. I have to admit, it was like all of the other post-apocalyptic books, but

the author spun the story into something unique. I especially loved how the children are independent. The only part that I thought was not 5 star worthy was how Jem and Clare just randomly fall in love. Like seriously! How did that even happen?

Leeanna says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Leeanna.me.

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Sometimes when I finish a book, I feel ... gutted. In a good way. I'm sad that I finished the book. I'm sad that I won't get to spend any more time with the characters, watching them explore their world and grow in the process. I'm sad that my adventure in reading the book is over. I find it hard to start another book, because I'm still thinking about the book I just finished.

THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS made me feel that way. This book *got* to me. That's hard for a post-apocalyptic/dystopian book to do, because I've read a ton in the genres, almost to the point where they're all the same. To a degree, **THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS** is like a lot of what's out there: all adults are killed by a mysterious disease leaving the world full of kids. Some kids band together, some go it alone, some live, some die. There's usually someone smart who takes advantage of the chaos to create their own castle and rule like a king. And so on.

All of that, and darker, is in this book. But what's different about **THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS** is how it's written and the characters. Instead of employing the usual first-person point of view that's common, the author tells the story in third-person. This sort of keeps you from the full emotional impact of the known world ending, but then the little things really pop up and sucker punch you. Like when Clare realizes there probably won't be any new books written for a very, very long time. The author also sometimes gives hints as to when something really bad is going to happen, which got me. For example, saying that if Clare knew what was going to happen next, she would have enjoyed X moment of happiness. This tactic had me trying to flip ahead so I could find out right away what would happen, which is hard to do when you're reading an e-book.

The characters and the relationships they form are another great part of this book. I'm always critical of romantic relationships (and they usually don't work for me), so it's super refreshing to see friendship be so important. I think one of the themes of **THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS** is the family you choose. Clare nearly loses herself after her parents die from Pest, but when she meets Jem, Mirri, and Sarai, she has a new reason to live. And all of the characters were so distinct, so alive. Not just the main four, but all of them, from the gang of city kids to Ramah and Bird Boy. I could have read a lot more about every one of them.

For the first third or so of the book, I wanted **THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS** to move faster. It's somewhat slow at the beginning, setting up Pest, then following Clare's depression after her parents' death. But as I got further in, I started to enjoy the slow pace. The book does pick up after Clare meets those who will become her family. The action builds from there, to a showdown with a creepy villain. I rather liked that part, though it's hard to say why without spoiling everything. Let's just say the author doesn't take the usual route, and I enjoyed that.

THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS breathes fresh light into the post-apocalyptic/dystopian genres, and I'd

recommend it if you're looking for a new twist on the same old. Oh, I forgot to mention one more good thing -- this book is a standalone!

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Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

See more of my reviews:

Megan says

I feel like Gillian Murray Kendell wanted to create a grim, darkly realistic take on the already massive young adult post apocalyptic genre. A young adult *The Road* if you will. Which would have been pretty cool, but unfortunately Kendell misses the mark here.

The problem, the main one at least, is that she constantly pulls her punches. Maybe she was just too attached to her characters, I don't know, but she was constantly putting them in threatening situations and then pulling them out at the last minute.

Early on a little girl is stabbed, seemingly fatally. I was impressed. I thought, ok, this author is really going to look at what life would be like for kids in an adultless, post epidemic world. But no the kid turned out to fine, and was up and about in a few days.

This happened again and again. The characters would fine themselves in a terrible, dangerous situation but right before anything permanent could happen the author would pull back. After a while I stopped worrying that anything bad was going to happen. No matter how bad everything looked I know everything would be fine. Boring.

Add to this kids that do not act like like kids at all. A thirteen year old can apply stitches and diagnose meds. A fifteen year old cheerleader quotes Shakespeare. A seven year old constantly sprouts philosophic hindu musings. It's not even slightly believable. The stereotypical, one note main bad guy is barely worth mentioning and the ending is just ridiculous.

Overall it wasn't bad enough to stop reading but it was pretty meh.

Kristen says

It took me a while to get into this one. The problem with survival/post apocalyptic novels lately for me is the backstory kind of just bothers me. Flashbacks felt a little strange and I didn't gel with the MC right away. Definitely was kept on board by the villain of the story and how he had his own chapters.
