



Them

Katherine Applegate

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It is time to confront a strange new reality. Of the eighty people chosen to escape earth's final destruction, only a handful remain. They're all that's left of the human race. They've traveled 500 years into the future, and about as far as possible from the life they once knew. Now, marooned on a strange planet, they break into groups to explore. Jobs's and Mo'Steel's group discover what looks like a recreation of the Tower of Babel. Inside they find an alien creature -- wounded but still a potential threat. Meanwhile, another group discovers the tower, only they don't want to explore. They want to capture -- using violence, if necessary. Soon, the Remnants are arguing over what to do, and that could be a major problem. Because a ship of people five hundred years away from home should not be a ship divided.

Them Details

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Thistle says

****spoilers****

I'm this close to knocking this series' score down from a Liked to an Okay, just because of how darned short these books are. While they're YA books, they're about half the length of an average YA book, for no reason I can see (other than to stretch it out and make more money off the series). That annoys me.

Book 1: The Earth was destroyed, the last 80 people, the Remnants of humanity, were sent off into space in hibernation/untested tech.

Book 2: They land on what they assume is a planet, though one side is a black and white photo by Ansel Adams, and the other side is a painting by some guy whose name I don't recall. The survivors are rightfully confused by how this is possible.

This book/3: They discover that they're on a ship, a ship called Mother by its alien residents (residents, not crew -- it's a huge ship). The ship's 'setting' (human art used to create the setting) changed to [artist whose name I don't recall]'s painting of hell. Demons, people being tortured, stereotypical Satan (red, horns, forked tail). Fun times! Most of the plot was about the survivors trying to survive hell.

One point I hadn't mentioned in my previous reviews: Being in hibernation for 500 years, in a ship that has had almost no testing (there was no time for scientists to test much, the Earth was about to be destroyed), had some major effects on the last humans. Humanity had never had a ship for deep space travel before, let alone one that would go on missions 500 years long, so all the remaining people got a good dose of radiation. In one case, the kid developed an odd power from that (he could sort of blend into the background, though not really a conscious ability).

The hibernation failed in one other way: In one case, the kid was just as almost-dead as the others (hibernation slows all your systems down until you're nearly dead), but unlike them, he was awake the whole time. 500 years of not being able to move, not being able to do anything but think. He went insane and maybe developed some special psychic powers (as he's not really sane, it's hard to tell for sure what exactly is real and not real with him).

I had thought those two things were just minor subplots, so I hadn't mentioned them in my review of book 2. But they were bigger and bigger issues in book 3, so I'm laying them out now. I suspect they're going to become the main plot moving forward

Trihaly says

The story is finally starting to take shape. We are getting a few answers and a lot more questions. I am still uncertain how I feel about this series but it's certainly raising a few interesting questions and forcing me down some interesting thinking paths. I can't wait to see what else the universe has in store for humanity's last survivors! :)

Chris says

The story really expands in the third installment - introducing motivations from some of the characters we've seen remain largely in the background. The action increases threefold, with Jobs' group facing non-stop threats from the aliens and the environment of the ship itself. When they encounter the palpably disturbing Bosch demons, it's outright chaos, and becomes a real page-turner. Yago and Wylson's struggles for dominance as less interesting in comparison, but it's still obvious the buildup to the bigger picture is incoming.

Z says

Yes, here is where things start to get really weird. The Remnants find themselves trapped in sick and twisted paintings, and there are aliens chasing them, and the baby is insane. Actually, everyone is a little insane, including 2Face. Surprisingly, though, I found that I enjoyed this a lot more than I did the first time I read it. When you stop being confused by the artificial environment and remember to focus on the people, things work a bit better.

Krystl Louwagie says

Still good-though plot/action wise, I'd say this book was a bit lower, it kept my attention because of it's use of painting I'm completely familiar with, one that got a lot of attention was one of my favorite paintings (the creepy likes of Bosch!!), so it was really cool to recognize and visualize that so well. Once again, these books have great visuals and I'd love to see them made into movies or a very well done series!

Caitlin says

3.5 stars this time, mostly because the book didn't lodge itself in my conscious memory as much as the first two did. That said, I ripped through this one: the series is really starting to find its legs as far as the worldbuilding and interpersonal dynamics of the Remnants.

If I had to sum up the tone of #3 in a word, that word would be "intense". The Remnants, now divided into two groups, have to deal with both the murderous alien Riders and the surreal landscape the ship has created for them. The good news is they know now it's a simulation derived from the data aboard the Mayflower; the bad news is that the simulation becomes increasingly weird and dark as the ship switches from Brueghel to a Bosch-inspired vision of hell complete with twisted demons.

I didn't find the demonic hellscape as existentially scary as the more sci-fi horror elements of the last book, but it still made for intense reading as Jobs and the others in one group fight against these monsters intent on killing them in horrific ways, ways that almost succeed. It's a more visceral, slasher-inspired horror that reminded me a lot of the Hel sequence from Everworld #4.

Where this book really hooked me, though, was in the power struggles between Yago and 2Face as they deal with the threat of the Riders: KA's analysis of how this external threat pushes the Remnants to their limits and drives them almost to moral breakdown, *Lord of the Flies* style, is incisive and realistic. I liked also that Tate remains a voice of morality throughout; the story doesn't simplistically divide the groups into scoundrels on one side and heroes on the other. I hope the later books continue the theme of moral ambiguity and rough decisions, because I will always be here for that.

Paul says

Review written: sometime before September 16, 2015

Them by Katherine Applegate

Why I read it: Finishing up on the last of KAA's key 90s Scholastic output.

Rating: 3/5

What I thought: I think this one was pretty interesting, opened up the story a bit, more weird messed up stuff happened. I just have trouble working out anything to say about these books even after I've read them – ultimately they're just too bizarre and odd and disgruntable and unsettling for words. Plus I already know a bunch of stuff that makes me not so inclined to get all that invested. A shame really. On the plus side, KAA is very good at balancing all the different characters and using third-person perspective, even if I wish she hadn't used a line from each chapter as their subtitle.

Swankivy says

It's starting to get really insane.

Jackie Krasuski says

The idea behind these books really got my attention because it is life after the end of the world, however after the *Animorphs* series and *Everworld* this was quite a letdown. Besides that, the whole end of the world thing is becoming a real redundant theme lately.

Julie Decker says

The remaining humans are divided. Even though there are so few of them left who survived Earth's demise, they are fighting among themselves, and Yago--who used to be the president's son--wants to take the fittest as part of his group. He doesn't want anyone who is warped by whatever happened to them in space, so no mutated people allowed. (Even though Edward appears to be developing a useful ability to blend into whatever is behind him.) Tamara's baby is able to fuel its mother and give her an amazing ability to fight, and it wants to be paid for this (and guess what it wants to eat?). But what are they fighting? Riders. Creepy

creatures that attack on hoverboards. Other creatures may be more likely to ally with them, and Jobs and Mo'Steel are ready to check that out, standing up for their own group and exploring the surreal, human-art-inspired planet which has turned out to actually be a ship. But what, or who, is the "Mother" that is trying to communicate with them? Who are their friends, and who are their allies? Ask the two groups of humans. They may have different answers.

First, I really enjoyed that again the humans are threatened by each other just as much as they are by alien intelligences. They just can't get along, even if it means death. Yago is brutal and cold, and Jobs and Mo'Steel still have personality even though they're the blander good guys. 2Face is an interesting character; I really wanted to like her. I like how, just like *Animorphs*, kids are taking the lead on some of these terrible decisions. And it's pretty cool that even though some people are developing weird superpowers, not all of them are great and not everybody got one. The plot got a little convoluted with two groups doing their thing separately and so many characters to keep track of, but it's still really strong at this point.

Shell Hunt says

Copy and paste the two previous book reviews.

Applegate sure has a way with words. They are simply put and so addictive.

In "Them" stuff actually happens. The plot is worked and developed into more than just survivors. Really this series should be like five books and not 14 short stories because this is book three and this is where the plot grows.

By grows, I mean nothing is really resolved in this book. There is only growing tension and a glimmer of why this is happening.

The only thing I have a hard time with is related to my personal preference. Sci-fi books are hard for me. In describing sci-fi, fantastical characters; my brain shuts down. Don't make me imagine super complicated aliens or even two different species of aliens. My imagination is not what it used to be.

Three books down, 11 more to go. I'm excited to see where this is going.

Azri says

The start was a bit rough for me but by the end it was definitely my favorite book in the series thus far. I liked getting to see a bit deeper into the oddities in the story-the baby and Tamara, Billy, the Riders, and the crazy world in which everyone had ended up. I look forward to discovering even more from here onward!

So tired.....I fly out of Japan in about 12 hours. I'm going to miss this crazy place.

Christine V Mae Gaskins says

The last humans alive, sent 500 years into the future under hibernation, are picked up by an alien ship. Mother, the ship, is confused and attacking them through created life of painting files taken from earth. Blue Meanie, Four Sacred Streams, who wants mother helps the earthlings fight Bosch's Hell creatures. There are Rider aliens with two heads, one a mouth and the other eyes, that ride hover-boards, attacking the last remnants of man-kind.

Kodi Rudman says

The book i am reading is called Remnants Them by Katherine Alice Applegate. The genre of the book is science fiction and is one of the best ones i have ever read. I have not been able to get far with it but so far i have been able to find out that the characters have real unusual names like Jobs, Eeyore, Olga, Mo' Steel and a bunch of others. But in the beginning there is a ship like structure in the sky that is broken down. And it has sent things down that are weird in a way. Like Mo' Steel was cut and someone ran and grabbed a rag off some random person and the person acted like it did not even see him. And the rag grew right back over its head. and thats as far as i have gotten in this book.

Zoe G says

I wasn't a big fan of this book because I didn't like the characters and the mood of the story. For example, when the baby needs to eat a human to survive and they had to sacrifice someone from the group so they all wouldn't have to die. The word choice that the author used was very descriptive and helped me to visualize all of the scenes which i liked.

Wendy says

In this third book of the series the group of survivors sets out to explore the new world they have landed on. Soon after the set out they discover that this is not a planet, but a ship. A ship large enough to hold worlds, that seems to be controlled by a super computer who is using their own data stores from Earth to create an environment for the survivors, based on artwork. But the artwork it chooses is a combination of artists who created paintings of atrocities that only a crazed mind could create.

What was one group of survivors becomes two separate factions. The normal group and the misfits. Who fits where is slowly determined by emerging mutations and each individuals desire or resistance to follow the self appointed leaders. Jobs, Mo-Steel, Olga (Mo-Steel's mom), Violet and Billy Weir form one group. The others form another, although some do not fit in as well as others. Tamara, who was pregnant when the shuttle took off from Earth, and her 'baby' that was born while the others were in hibernation, seem to be an entity of their own. 2Face who is taking care of Jobs younger brother Edward, finds herself fighting for her very life when the baby demands a human sacrifice. And Edward seems to have developed a mutation to camouflage himself that is becoming evident to the rest of the group.

While these two separate groups battle demons straight from the crazed mind of a long dead artist from Earth, as well as the every present Riders, they make startling discoveries about the ship that they are on and wonder if they can indeed survive.

Mike says

This book was phenomenal. Absolutely phenomenal. This is the third book in the Remnants series, and although I enjoyed the first two, I'll confess that I couldn't really get into the story. It just felt like extended exposition, without really focusing on plot. But this is where the series sheds that image. Not a whole lot happens - probably a symptom of the tiny length of these books - but the events that did happen were put to a good and exciting use.

The thing that really stands out to me about this book was its originality, the unique way that it handled and averted post-apocalyptic tropes. I won't tell you exactly how, since it's pretty spoilery, but this is definitely a new and different reading experience. It's also *scary*, intense and frightening in a way that you don't see very often. As usual, Applegrant really delivers in the darkness department, making the experience all the more different and enjoyable.

But this book's strengths really lie in its characters. As is typical, the characters were well-developed, and their interactions interesting. This one was also pretty deep, in a number of ways, mostly involving 2Face. (Who is awesome). They were surprisingly complex and introspective for a kids novel. I mean, look at this stuff, just look at it:

[2Face] had made a virtue of being a freak, back on Earth. In a place where ugliness was merely a curable medical condition, her jarring, disconcerting face was almost a statement: Look, here's pain, here's ugliness, deal with it.

There's more, but it's more spoilery stuff. The entire book is filled with wonderful 2Face moments like that, as well as some pretty interesting bits from other characters.

As you can see from above, the writing is really good - it's sorta simple, sure, but it's effective, and it's never awkward. I'm finding little to say that's new about Applegrant's writing, since I've read so much of it. But it's good, as normal.

That being said, it does read a bit old for an MG book. It's not that it's disturbing - it's scary, sure, but no worse than Animorphs - but things are a bit complex for a kids novel. The vocabulary is also bigger than what I'm used to seeing from Applegrant, with a couple of words that even I didn't know. Based on what happened in Isolation (if you're curious, I have a rant saved up about it), it was already obvious that it should've been a YA book, but there are even some signs this early on.

But it's still a good book, one that I would recommend. People will probably find it bizarre, but I loved its originality and character interactions. It's all wonderful.

Statistics:

(Just some things I'm keeping track of, more for my own benefit than yours.)

Body count: 0 That's a first, and probably a last: NOBODY DIED! NOBODY died in a Remnants book!

Holy fucking shit!

Horror count: Infinity, but we'll treat it as 10 (Because how am I supposed to count everything from the Bocsh paintings?)

Plot hole count: 0, once more. I'm starting to suspect that the number of plot holes in this series was grossly overestimated by its... fans.

'Marry me and live on a hosueboat' character of the day: 2Face, forever and always.

Angel says

Do I remember characters and events in the Animorphs being much more described? Such a sci-fi needs much more description to be able to imagine the scene well.

The end was explanation was somewhat good.

Stephanie says

[Maker, and Mother (hide spoiler)]

Julie says

This book is less nightmare fuel than the previous -- mostly because the particular surreal human/animal imagery evoked here doesn't shake me as much as, frankly, anything to do with Tamara. Although that shot of Edward on the cover is horrible, eugh. I felt bad reading it in public and subjecting the woman beside me to this creepy child staring at her.

What I like about *Them* is that the worldbuilding questions/mysteries are being addressed at a fairly good pace: you already find out what the deal is with the environment the Remnants have ended up in, and it's a particular trope that I like. (view spoiler)

The two absolute stand-out elements of this book, in my opinion:

- Mo's breakdown. I? LOVE HIM? SO MUCH? ALREADY? I'm predictable as all hell, but he's just such an interesting character: a mathematical savant who's obsessed with physical thrills rather than technology, very emotionally cold and prioritising the here-and-now, to the extent of rationalising away the death of his father... but also inculcated with superstition and religion via his Mexican Catholic grandmother. Brave and stalwart until he suddenly isn't, at which point the foundation seems to tremble underfoot as Jobs realises his best friend isn't as untouchable as he seems. (Their relationship is nice: warm and fond and understanding of each others' strengths and weaknesses. The way Mo calls him 'Duck' is so adorable.) Also HE'S SUCH A MAMA'S BOY. Just, I will always love Applegate's wise-cracking Hispanic men. (Now, if only they weren't always the sidekicks...?)

- The Blue Meanie. (view spoiler)

Random spoilery thoughts/reactions:

(view spoiler)

For those interested, here's the relevant pieces of art for this book:

- Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Tower of Babel, Netherlandish Proverbs, general medieval view
- Hieronymus Bosch: The Last Judgment

It's another 3.5 stars probably -- I feel like I should round up to 4, because there are elements in it that I liked more than the first two books and I feel like we're finally having proper character beats and development from people like Mo, Violet, and 2Face, but it's not blowing me away yet.

Favourite quotes below:

(view spoiler)

