



## The Suicide Collectors

*David Oppegaard*

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## **The Suicide Collectors** David Oppegaard

The Despair has plagued the earth for five years. Most of the world's population has inexplicably died by its own hand, and the few survivors struggle to remain alive. A mysterious, shadowy group called the Collectors has emerged, inevitably appearing to remove the bodies of the dead. But in the crumbling state of Florida, a man named Norman takes an unprecedented stand against the Collectors, propelling him on a journey across North America. It's rumored a scientist in Seattle is working on a cure for the Despair, but in a world ruled by death, it won't be easy to get there.

## **The Suicide Collectors Details**

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Author : David Oppegaard

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## From Reader Review The Suicide Collectors for online ebook

### Josh says

Eh.... This book is a poor attempt at a mix of The Road, The Happening, and a little like the Matrix.

The part like The Road: 1. a world where most of its inhabitants are dead. 2. A cross country road trip to find a population. 3. Marauders and crazy people. Where it fails: Cormac McCarthy was so visual in his storytelling that I felt like I was there. The Suicide Collectors starts off well with its visualization but about half way through it gets lazy with its description.

The part like The Happening: the suicides. People being driven by an invisible reason to kill themselves. Well there's the jumping, the sleeping pills, etc. I was fine with the copycat of the movie until it came to the part where the guy shoots himself in the head and one by one people pick up the gun and follow suit. Ugh!!! This is an exact rip off of the movie!!!!

The part like The Matrix: the dream sequence with pops and "the source"

If started off sooooo promising in the beginning but about 2/3 of the way through you can tell the writer became bored and was trying to hurry it along. For example. Once he gets on the ship he miraculously has everything he needs.

I love post Apocalyptic books and this one looked promising but fell very very short

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### Ryun says

Feeling a bit too optimistic as of late? Thinking that nothing can get you down? Try David Oppegaard's THE SUICIDE COLLECTORS on for size! It'll get you back to earth like the rest of us.

It's set in a future in which the apocalypse took the form of "The Despair," an overwhelming urge among 90 percent of the world's population to commit suicide. Our hero, Norman, and his wife are managing to survive in a slowly dwindling Florida community, when she finally gives into the suicidal despair that's infected nearly everyone else. One note about these suicides: When people off themselves, the relatives aren't allowed to bury the bodies — vehicles with strangely garbed creatures called "Collectors" show up soon after to take the corpse somewhere. So the Collectors show up to take Norman's spouse, and he's got no time for complicated plot devices — he just wastes them with a shotgun and buries his bride.

More: <http://www.bookgasm.com/reviews/sci-f...>

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### Jenny says

The Despair has swept the world led by the mysterious Source and only 10% of the population has survived. Great start, but for various reasons this one didn't take it's second breath.

The Suicide Collectors could have been a much better story if the author had bothered to spend a little more time and speculation on the cause of the mystery. There are far too many unanswered questions for my liking, the biggest of which is: How do the Collectors know that someone has just killed themselves (the Source tells them isn't good enough), and if they can know this, why can't they 'know' where Norman is? And why collect the bodies at all? And why, oh why, when the world has gone to hell and only crazies and wild animals roam the land does the main character wander off without bothering to take his gun? And if I thought I'd be at least given a real clue to what the Source is by the story's end (sorry, a big, black hole doesn't cut it), then I was sadly mistaken.

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### **Hank says**

Not as bad as I expected but certainly not a book to recommend. The story is fine, good concept and the characters are very easy to buy into. Character development is also decent to good, Norman being the main growth/transformation vehicle. The world building was simply awful. Knock Neal Stephenson all you want for overly descriptive minutiae, at least he creates reasons for his imagination. Oppegaard seems to hastily invent random unlikelyhoods so his plot doesn't fall apart. Highways made of some magical substance (this is a sci-fi/horror book) that doesn't erode while houses sag and fall apart within 5 years. Density grenades and card keys that open any door appear at the end of the book to attempt to create some sort of believability on the final quest. Bad guys that oscillate between hatred/revenge and zombie like uncaring depending on....something?

The writing, was also decent and it wasn't a hard book to finish, it just didn't take me anywhere or fulfil any sort of satisfaction in having read it. Seriously bad world building. 2.5 stars rounded up because I did like the premise.

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### **Erin says**

The Suicide Collectors is a good book full of horrible things. I mulled it over, and that's really the only way to describe it.

In Oppegaard's dystopian world, the entire planet has been gripped by an epidemic called The Despair. Ninety percent of the Earth's population has committed suicide in the past five years since the "disease" started to spread, leaving the remaining survivors left to deal with the crumbling society and the most ominous force of all -- the Suicide Collectors, shrouded figures that appear to collect the bodies of those that have died in The Despair.

The premise of this book is right up my alley -- I love a good disaster/end-of-the-world story, and this one is very original. But I had a hard time getting through it at times because of some of the stark horrors Oppegaard hides like Easter eggs throughout the text. They aren't gratuitous -- they really paint a true picture of the atrocities of life in this new world -- but many were hard to deal with. I wouldn't categorize The Suicide Collectors as a horror novel, but it's defininatly not for the squeamish. Rather than drawing attention to the most appauling things in this new world, Oppegaard slides them in casually and without any fanfare,

reinforcing the feeling that this is the way the world is now. So deal with it.

I give the book three stars because, for me, personally -- it was a little grim. The ending also made me anxious for the fate of one of my favorite characters rather than hopeful, and that's not the way I like to end a story.

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### **Jennifer says**

This book makes no sense.

While in some respects the premise of all post-apocalyptic fiction makes no sense in real terms, a good novel will create a world or a sense of mystery that is both interesting and internally consistent. *The Suicide Collectors* does not accomplish this.

The premise of this book is that a mysterious Despair has overtaken the world which leads people in the billions to commit suicide. Robed Collectors then arrive to steal the bodies of the suicides. No one knows where the Collectors come from, how they know about these suicides, what they do with the bodies, and why they do not collect the bodies of people who die naturally.

The main character is Norman, a man who resists the Collectors by killing one when his wife commits suicide. He is heralded for his moment of resistance, but somehow I was never able to get particularly excited about this moment. In the end the book is based around Norman's quest to get from Florida where he lives to Seattle, where he has heard that there is an actual community of people who are working on a cure for the Despair.

Perhaps I ask too much from my fiction, but there is no logical consistency in the consequences shown from the almost complete depopulation of the country. The Despair has been going on for at least five years, but somehow there is still running water in Norman's home in Florida. There's somehow enough accessible gas for Norman to fly from Florida to Kansas and then drive from Kansas to Oregon in his quest to go to Seattle. There are all sorts of other oddities which basically allow Norman to move across the country from strange group of people to strange group, but without having any struggle to acquire resources or actually survive. He seems to survive by magic. Perhaps the story should be retitled *Deus Ex Machina*.

Once he arrives in Seattle, you expect to find out who the Collectors are and what the Despair is. It seems that the Despair is a cosmic bug zapper (called the Source) giving out really bad vibes from a hole in the ground and the Collectors are psychically connected to it in some bizarre way. But (!) - they can snap out of it! Maria, a female character who makes a cameo in the story in order to 1. explain how Collectors can be detached from the Source and 2. sleep with the hero, is a former Collector.

Really.

The ending of this book is almost exactly the same as the ending of *The Road*. The ending of *The Road* was not very satisfying as an ending, but at least that was beautifully written.

This is not a good book. There is an idea here that could have been formed into something a bit more elegant and complex, but misses the mark.

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## Richard says

*This was the SciFi selection for the Goodreads SciFi and Fantasy Book Club for the month of March 2009. Visit this link to see all of the discussions, group member reviews, etc.*

Well, I waited too long to write this to remember all the details of my complaints, but this basically felt like a mostly-tolerable first effort.

The nature of the apocalypse is never adequately explained, and while that might be fine in some cases — allegorical, or magical realism, or somesuch — it really didn't work here. There was no hint of out-of-the-ordinary story telling going on until the finale started slipping conveniently over such matters. It seemed like the author simply lacked the discipline to finish the story in a manner consistent with the setup.

The author has enough skill in character development and storytelling that he's certainly worth following, but this volume should have been shelved for a decade and then reconstituted with more mature skill.

A minor point: I do appreciate the author's willingness to entertain tough developments. His use of euthanasia is well done, although the moral quandaries should have been at least alluded to. Dialog isn't necessary — for example a sigh, a delicate silence and a frown would adequately communicate the difficult decisions that the author elided.

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## Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

Some time in the not-too-distant future, everyone in a popular night club in Tokyo committed suicide. Not long after, suicide rates around the world started climbing. Tokyo was only the beginning of a world-wide Despair. Depression, hopelessness: it sends people hurtling from the tops of buildings, dashing in front of trains, swallowing pills, slashing wrists. Your friends, your family - at first people are constantly calling each other, checking that they're still alive. After five years, there're aren't many people left in the world. The Despair, as they call the phenomenon, has decimated the human population.

In a small town of four thousand people in Florida, only three remain: Norman, his wife Jordan, and their only neighbour Pops. Returning from the river where he goes fishing, Norman finds his wife has killed herself - and when the eery Collectors come to take her body, Norman refuses to let them have her and kills one of them.

The town is falling back into swampland, there's barely any food to be found or scavenged, and it's only because of the generator and Pops' handy mechanics' knowledge that they've survived so far. Yet the Despair hasn't gripped Norman or Pops yet. With nothing left, Norman starts thinking about the drifter who came through, telling tales of a Dr Briggs in Seattle who had a community of survivors going and was working on a cure.

Norman and Pops set out on a cross-country journey to Seattle, encountering pockets of survivors along the way, some friendly, some dangerous, some flat-out crazy. Kids who were born just before or at the beginning of the Despair, parentless, have banded together to commit merciless atrocities on the few other survivors. A cult in Utah that worships what they call the Source (the source of the Despair), commits ritual suicide, samurai-style. And the Collectors have put a bounty on Norman's head.

Before you start thinking that this is a rip-off of *The Road* and the movie *The Happening* combined, Oppegaard started writing this five years ago and it underwent many changes. It does share some similarities, though to be fair road trips are fairly common to the post-apocalyptic fantasy genre - this one is more sci-fi because of its futuristic setting and technological advances, as well as the spooky Collectors and their "source".

There's plenty of mystery here to spice it up and keep you wondering, and that looming helplessness that's more prevalent of sci-fi than fantasy. Some of the encounters, like the Utah cult, reminded me of an even scarier cult in *Consider Phlebas* (great book by the way), but I don't want you to think that *The Suicide Collectors* can't and doesn't stand on its own two original feet.

It's also a very visual book, descriptive and very moored in the present of the story. Norman's a likeable guy, and named well: he's very normal. He's also not as well developed as I would have liked, and that's often a flaw of the Quest narrative structure, because plot tends to take precedence - though it should be the other way around, really, because what better way to get to know someone than on a road trip?

Because the world has collapsed due to mass suicide, rather than a war, it's still quite intact, though vegetation is reclaiming its territory. It's also surprisingly clean: a reasonably well-preserved ghost town of a world. Probably the biggest quibble I have is to do with the discontinuation of produced goods - fuel, food etc - and the processing of things like sewage. At times a more advanced technology, like hydrogen cells and a few vehicles that can run on water, helps explain things, but there were other logistics that I thought would have to be impossible because no one's running anything, maintaining anything, making anything, anymore. It's just a quibble.

I'm a big fan of post-apocalyptic fiction, whether it's fantasy or sci-fi: for the questions it raises, and the issues it explores, and the way it strips humans down to their bare essentials, letting us see ourselves without present-day superficialities. With the Despair, perhaps it's because of our innate contempt of suicide, being within our control, that it's hard to fathom a situation where that control is seemingly absent, and be able to empathise - it left me a little cold. I loved *The Happening* because, well, I don't want to give it away, but it did have an exterior force making things happen. In a way, precisely because the Despair is internal, not inflicted like a virus or a compulsion, it makes it less sympathetic. Does that make sense? It's hard to figure out just what it was that left me somewhat cold.

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### **Brad says**

When I read that *The Suicide Collectors* was the story of a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by "The Despair," which drove billions of humans to death by their own hands, I thought, "Whiz! BANG!"

And that's exactly what I expected.

I expected a world that went out with a bang. And I expected bangs to greet me throughout the book and a nice big bang to end the book.

None of those bangs came.

From beginning to end, *The Suicide Collectors* is a tale of a whimper. There were promised moments of action and mayhem that were solved by relationship building and talk (a rather novel and welcome approach). Other bits of action were seen in the aftermath of burning cities or half-conscious escape attempts. And the only moments of action the characters actually engaged in were a barely rousing fight against wild dogs and a couple of moments at the explosive end of a missile. All decidedly whimperous.

But this isn't necessarily a condemnation.

One can't help wondering if David Oppegaard had T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" in mind while he was writing *The Suicide Collectors*:

*This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

If he did have Eliot in mind, Oppegaard achieved the whimper in his debut novel, and the intention can't really be argued with. There are too many post-apocalyptic novels that are about the bang, and it is important to consider the possibility that a whimper is likely.

Much of what gives *The Suicide Collectors* its whimperousness is its main characters. Norman, Pops and Zero aren't the sort of people to seek the bang as their first resort to solving problems. Norman is capable of the bang, as we see with the opening act that sends him on his journey, but he'd rather choose diplomacy or running to any sort of violent resolution. There is no Schwarzenegger style, gung-ho, action hero, and even when that sort of thing becomes a possibility it is delivered without bangs -- literally.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough going on to support Oppegaard's whimper. A whimper requires more work than a bang, both in reality and in fiction, but Oppegaard's pacing, characterization and tempo offer a classic example of how to support a bang rather than a whimper. Oppegaard's *The Suicide Collectors* feels like a Hollywood action film -- only without the pizzazz and pop.

For *The Suicide Collector*'s whimper to be fully successful we needed more about Norman -- his background, his thoughts, his motivations, his relationships -- we needed more time with Zero, more time in each of Oppegaard's five "lands," more time in Seattle with Dr. Brigg's, and more time at every turn of the tale to find our footing and truly engage with the whimper.

Oppegaard doesn't give us that, and he lets us down. There is so much potential in *The Suicide Collectors*, so much that needed to be said, but little of it ever was.

With a minor adjustment or two, I can see *The Suicide Collectors* making an outstanding sci-fi movie, one that will best the book for quality, and that's a shame because Oppegaard's plans were sound. It was the execution that let him down.

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## **Danielle says**

This book was good, but the more I think about it the more unhappy I am with it. The set-up was great: some unknown Despair is overtaking the world and mysterious beings come collect the dead. The plot execution could have been a little better.

On the positive side, it was delightful to read. The words and smiles chosen really evoked a sense of what the characters were experiencing. I actually grimaced and set the book down a couple times imagining just how hungry a dog would have to be to eat a screaming baby, or how much I would have to fear my life before I could beat a dog to death, or just how bad things would have to be before I'd smother someone.

Overall I enjoyed it, and it left me wanting more, but it left me wanting a little *too much* more. The story was great while I was reading it, and I suppose it was realistic with its revelations about The Source. If I were a character in the book, I couldn't possibly know more than was divulged, so it stood true in that respect. But it would have been nice to have more answers. If this was my only problem with the book, I'd probably have still given it 4.5 to 5 stars. But.....

...the last 25% of the book went a little weird on me. From the point where Norman reconnects with Zero to the end of the book, I just wasn't satisfied with the explanations. Zero was still alive? On a boat? Going to The Source??? Norman was trained on some random boat-navigating equipment and pulled a Juliet and happened to end up on the same boat in a body bag? Seemed far to convenient, and I held out for a better explanation, but none was ever delivered.

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## **Erika says**

I wanted to really like this book just because the premise was so fascinating. But I think this dude had a deadline he was about to miss because he ended it very abruptly, without explaining anything, and it just didn't gel with the rest of the book. It was a little like drinking a decent cup of coffee. It's doing its job, it tastes pretty good, but you put it down for a minute and when you pick it back up it is cold and more bitter than you thought previously. So you stop drinking it and get another cup. I'm ready for my next book.

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## **Mike says**

There's going to be some varying opinions on this book. Mr. Oppegaard spins a pretty interesting tale and paints well with words. He tells a tale here of human civilization in the decline, several years in the grip of a world-wide loss of heart known as "The Despair", and the Collectors who gather those who have taken their own lives, but mostly he tells of a small odyssey of three misfits in search, first of a cure and later of different sort of ending to the Despair.

I guess, being a hard science-fiction sort of person, I expected things have a little bit better grounding in, well, reality. I'll let you find your own examples, but I think you'll wind up agreeing that the author knows how make scenes, and stitch them into a story, but just didn't have the knack yet on this one, of making the story into a coherent path that carries you somewhere awesome. (I think he'll figure it out.)

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### **Jody says**

What a book. David Oppegaard takes the dystopian novel and manages to create something new and horrifying. In the not-so-distant future, few people are left in the world due to wide spread epidemic called the Despair. There is no cure and no known reason why the majority of the human race succumbs to the Despair which results in suicide. To add to the creepy factor, Suicide Collectors show up to retrieve any body that died from a result of a suicide. How the Suicide Collectors know about the suicides, why they collect only the bodies of the Despair victims, and where they take the bodies are part of the mystery of the story. Be warned, though. If you want answers or a story with a tidy ending, you will not find it in this book. Instead, you get a story like the *Odyssey*, one of a journey both physical and emotional. Like Odysseus, Norman, the protagonist, faces monsters and receives assistance, while fighting his way to Seattle where rumors abound that a doctor has found a cure for the Despair.

Oppegaard's writing is crisp and clean and he writes only what is necessary. He successfully juggles adventure, love, horror, and suspense without sacrificing great writing.

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### **11811 (Eleven) says**

Read October, 2010 and December , 2015. Bumping it up to five stars. It earned it.

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### **Bandit says**

This was really good for a first novel and quite excellent for a random grab off of a library shelf. I do enjoy post apocalyptic/dystopian fiction and this was an interesting entry into the genre dealing with, as the title states, suicides. Strong characters drive the story across the country as we witness the devastation that 5 years can bring in the world that lost hope and desire to live. There are definitely some interesting ruminations on the phenomenon of suicide and the power of human spirit or lack thereof. Good writing and excellent pacing, very quick read, I finished it in a few hours. 3.5 stars rounded up to 4 for excellent debut effort. Recommended.

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### **Alice Lee says**

What a disappointment; I was all looking forward to my first GoodReads author read of the month too. So, just to cover the basics, this is a book about a future where the Despair "plagued" people and almost everyone started offing themselves, and then this One Man who was resistant and his buddy went on this journey across the Country, after hearing a rumor about some doctor who was working on The Cure. It's got a nice post-apocalyptic, dystopian feeling to it, at least for the first half of the book. It kept my interest, and I kept reading despite the subpar writing.

One trick I learned early on about reading this book was to just keep reading; don't stop and read that last sentence over, wondering why the fuck did the author just use an unnecessary and ineffective metaphor for

the fifth time in the past two pages. Don't stop and think to myself, "Really? You couldn't just end the chapter with a normal sentence that doesn't have DUN DUN DUN in the background?" If I ignore all that, it wasn't too horrible, and I *was* curious about the "Source" and the Collectors.

What finally made me roll my eyes was when Norman entered Seattle, and met Dr. Briggs. Now, everything started falling into place like the end of a B movie. The last hundred pages were just dumb, dumb, dumb. And in retrospect, there were a handful of things that I didn't buy but accepted based on suspension of disbelief in hopes that the ending makes it all worth it. Nope!

Oh, not to mention, his writing had nowhere the depth and finesse to make any bit of this book even remotely touching or depressing. I mean, I *love* end of the world, horrifying, depressing elements, and this book is supposed to encompass all three; I'm supposed to love it. It's like fucking up a peanut butter & jelly sandwich. How do you screw that up?

So here are the Goods and Bads of this book, in summary.

Good: interesting premise.

Bad: juvenile, amateurish writing, shallow characters, stupid plot development, stupid ending.

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### **Wayne Eury says**

Oppegaard struck me as a weak writer. I was hoping for more from this.

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### **Kelly H. (Maybedog) says**

There are some good things about this book and some really irritating things. I'll start with the good because David Oppegaard is on Goodreads and will undoubtedly read this review. I think it's well written, it flows well and it kept me interested. I wanted to know what happened next. The characters were believable and fairly fleshed out. Although post-apocalyptic novels are common and most involve journeys, I felt he handled it well. The premise is different and thought-provoking. I really appreciate that he was respectful of the problem of suicide, not judgmental. I am interested in reading more by this author.

That said, I have a number of problems with the book. First of all Seattle isn't on the ocean!! It's on Puget Sound, which is salt water, but it's no more the ocean than Hudson Bay is. I thought the ending was weak, I wanted more. I don't feel I got enough information. There were also lots of inconsistencies that irritated me. The book did make me think, though. I found myself pausing and staring into space imagining what I would do in Norman's situation, and that's what books are supposed to do. So overall, I think it was a decent first novel.

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### **Ryan says**

You guys already know this about me, but I'm not a huge fan of science fiction, or dystopian fiction. There is actually very little of either genre that I tend to enjoy, but when I do, I love them. I think I can still count on two hands, the total number of books or series that I enjoy from either genre. I first read *The Suicide*

Collectors back in 2009, when it first came out. I hadn't started blogging yet, hence I've never written a review for it before, and since I decided to dust it off, and give it another go, this is the perfect opportunity for me to convince you that you really do need to read this book.

It actually came to my attention because of the Barnes & Noble Book Clubs, which sadly are now defunct. They used to be a lively and engaging group of message boards, covering a wide swath of topics. It was on the Fantasy Board that this book was first introduced as a monthly read, and I jumped at the chance to get my hands on it. The cover was extraordinary, the synopsis had me hooked, the moderator seemed to be really excited about it (thanks Paul), and the author was from my home state of Minnesota. As soon as the book was released, I took a trip to Barnes & Noble, paid for the book, and had it read in one sitting. I was actually hoping to link that old discussion for you guys to read through it, but sadly they decided to not even keep the archives up.

I really don't want to go into too many plot points or character studies. You guys know that I normally don't really have that much of an issue doing that, but this is one of those books that you really do need to discover on your own, and it would be so easy for me to spoil something for you. I am willing to say, and it's even more so now that I've done a second reading, that Norman is one of those characters that you can't help but fall in love with. There is an inner strength to him, one that is not forced or contrived. He is one of those men, who may not be the most eloquent in verbally expressing how they feel, but you know that you can depend on them for whatever you need, that they are true "men" in every sense of the word.

The only other tidbit I want to throw out there is this, I love the way the author chooses to keep the cause of the Despair a little foggy. I've never been a huge fan of books, or movies for that matter, that feels a need to explain every little detail. I seriously doubt the characters are really ever going to be aware of every little nuance or piece of back history, so why should the reader. Some things simply can't be explained, there needs to be a bit of mystery to them, otherwise they just aren't that impactful. Explaining everything, takes away some of the punch. I think that was part of my problem with The Town that Forgot How to Breathe, it was too neatly wrapped up, too explained, hence it lost some of its mystery and horror.

So please, if you only read one book that I recommend this year, let it be this one. It's a gorgeously written journey, one that explores what it means to be human, in the face of overwhelming heartache and pain. It's a story that will stay with you for days after you turn the last page.

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### **Peter Derk says**

This was another book read for genre-expanding.

The basics of the plot: There's this great sadness, almost like a disease, spreading over the world and causing people to commit suicide. A lot of people. Like 90% of the world. Of course, there are some survivors, and they make a pilgrimage of sorts.

The story clips along, and it's like reading a good zombie book or post-apocalypse story. What's nice and different is that the author doesn't make every person into a complete asshole, which is unusual for the genre. It's more realistic in that sense. It kind of sucks that one of the best books of all time, the Road, fits into this genre and all others will be compared to it. Because let's face it, that book is fantastic and pretty tough to match up with.

There were three essential things about the Suicide Collectors that bothered me:

1. There's a female character who is 11, but she seems awfully mature for 11. I guess that might happen if you saw people killing themselves all damn day, but why not just make her 14?

2. The ending is a little unsatisfying. However, there is an ending, so props for that.

3. This is kind of a personal pet peeve, but there are two fairly long dream sequences, or what you might call dream sequences. I just have no patience for that in fiction. It's a made up story, so what is the point of a made-up story inside of a made-up story? Also, in literature, dreams almost always have some deeper significance, but it's sort of a cheat because that significance should come in the story, not within a dream within the story. It feels like taking a shortcut that I can't really abide by. Again, personal pet peeve, so if that stuff doesn't bother you, you'll be fine.

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