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People refer to the infected as "zombies" although that's not what they really are. The word zombie implies the infected have died and reanimated. The thing is, those infected with Mad Swine, they didn't die. They're still alive; they even breathe. They're just not human anymore.

No one really knows how or why it started. What we do know is that the H1N1 virus--or the damn vaccinations that everyone so anxiously lined up for hours to get--mutated in a bad way.

Now whether this mutation happened naturally, like the seasonal influenza does every year by changing its signature protein, or if it was the work of some mad dictator bent on bringing hell into the world by unleashing the bastardized disease, no one can say for sure.

For Matt Danzig and the small community of Randall Oaks, the only thing that matters now is survival in this new world.

Mad Swine: The Beginning Details

Date : Published by Chevron Books (first published July 31st 2010)

ISBN :

Author : Steven A. Pajak

Format : Kindle Edition 230 pages

Genre : Horror, Zombies, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Apocalyptic, Abandoned

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From Reader Review Mad Swine: The Beginning for online ebook

Crystle Couey says

its a good book so far, a little slow and not as much action as I thought there would be for a zombie book, I don't know if I would recomend it, but its not a bad book for it is.

Ganks says

Has been a good while since I have had the time to listen to a good audiobook. I do not have the time to read like I used to so I listen to audiobooks why driving to and from work. Just got started with this one and so far two thumbs up on the start of the book.

Will Wesson says

You can tell it started as a series of message board postings somewhere, because it hasn't been professionally edited. It reads like an outline before anyone the research is done. Medium low entertainment.

Patrick D'Orazio says

Mad Swine: The Beginning is a first person zombie apocalypse tale that takes place during the initial days of infection and the downfall of civilization. It begins in the city of Chicago and the moves out into the suburbs where the main character, a University Administrator and former military man, takes charge of the people in his neighborhood to defend against both the infected and the living. The zombies in this tale are actually not the living dead, but more accurately infected/still living, though the author essentially turns them into zombies by applying the same rule as you have with undead: you can shoot them repeatedly, but unless you get them in the head, they won't go down. There is an interesting slant in that they still sleep, which makes for some interesting situations when the characters come across a few snoozing undead.

The story moves at a fast clip, with very little build up before the introduction of panic and mayhem enters the main character's life after he has reported to work one morning. The infected are fast movers, so the infection, which seems to come out of nowhere, spreads like wildfire and makes the first few chapters an adrenaline soaked nightmare for Matt, our main character. It doesn't take long for the reality of this uprising to hit home with personal loss which carries over for him as he manages to make it back home to the suburbs. He discovers that several communities have banded together to protect one another from the "crazies", as Matt has dubbed them, and given his military background he is called upon to take the lead in his own gated community. Matt comes prepared, with a veritable arsenal and a brother who lives with him who also has military experience. Together they take charge and plan for the well being and safety of their people. Mad Swine: The Beginning takes place within the first few days after the apocalypse. It reads fast and easy and while much of the zombie action takes place prior to Matt's transition to suburban leader from urban refugee, the focus on human confrontations is a priority from then on. I enjoyed some of the confrontations that offer up hints as to what is to be expected in the next book of the saga, including the clashes between the different neighborhoods and how they are forced to deal with one another.

Overall, this was a fun, entertaining zombie read. It doesn't necessarily bring much new to the table with the zombies or the setting, but the main character is solidly developed and his story made for an interesting ride. While the book cuts off abruptly, the closing chapters set the stage for some potentially interesting developments in the second book of this saga.

I do my best to point out any concerns I have with each story I read and as is the case with every book, there were things I took exception to with *Mad Swine*. My main concern here has to do with what I would dub the chaos and the calm. By the chaos, I mean that the infection happens so quickly and spreads with such vigor that the world falls apart entirely around Matt in what seems like minutes. Things are such a blur at first that there is virtually no appearance by either the police or military in this story. The city falls to pieces almost immediately and the crazies rule the streets within hours. And by the calm, I mean how dramatically different it is within the suburban conclaves where Matt and most of the other characters in this book live. Everyone there seems to be on the same page, willing to fall in line with the new regime that Matt creates without questioning it or anything for that matter. Certainly, there is conflict between different neighborhoods, but it is limited and (at least in this book) fairly civil, all things considered. The transition from the chaos of the first part of the book to the calm of the latter portion is abrupt and would have made more sense had the chaos Matt sees in the city bled over into the 'burbs a bit more. While Matt, would seem like a natural choice as a leader for his neighborhood with his military experience and rather excessive arsenal, the fact that everyone within his gated community goes along with that decision without question or any who appears to be reluctant about such an idea seemed a stretch to me.

Despite this concern that I had with the story, it remains a solid, action filled apocalyptic saga with interesting characters and a storyline that has me intrigued and curious about what happens next. I look forward to checking out the next book in the series when it becomes available.

Shirley says

Another Zombie (sort of) apocalyptic book. One of the better ones by an independent author. The sequel should be out this summer and I'm looking forward to that.

Tony says

Great story. I read this one chapter at a time when he was posting it online while writing it. You could really feel the stress Matt was going through trying to get home to his family. Definitely some heart wrenching parts in there too.

J.R. says

Mad Swine takes a different look at the zombie genre by using established science ala the H1N1 Swine Flu issue and using that as the main plot device. As the story opens, we're following along with Matt as he takes his two young children to school then on to work. It's the average, normal day until the fire alarm goes off forcing an evacuation that soon changes the lives of everyone.

Whether this fire alarm was intentional or not, that's not the point. What is the point is that in the midst of

the organized chaos as each office section is attempting to reach their rally point, the Mad Swine infected people are mingling amongst them in a feeding frenzy.

Matt, realizing that the defecation has not only hit the rotary oscillator but is beginning to smother it, gets in his car and hauls ass to this children's school. In those few short minutes, all hell is breaking loose and the traffic soon degenerates into creep and beep. Matt, however, unlike other characters in other books which shall remain unnamed, has a Go-Bag in the trunk of his car and wonder of all wonders, an actual firearm which he has no problem loading and carrying. Using the aforementioned weapon, he services a few hostiles on his way to the school but arrives to an empty building. The only person left is the parish priest. Matt discovers that all is not what it seems at the school and has to deal with the loss of family members. This is one of the turning points for his character within the story, one of many.

Adapting to the changed environment, he makes his way towards his suburban housing development using any means and methods at this disposal, encountering survivors, hostiles and other problems along the way.

Arriving at the gates to a development that he has to pass through to get to his home, he encounters a non-infected problem. Before the problem can increase to something more than a few shouts and shots, the voice of reason steps up in the form of Phil, a man who recognizes Matt as being from the local area and not a looter. There are a few tense moments but the issue is resolved and Matt makes his way to his home where his wife Alyssa and brother Brian are waiting.

All is not good on the home front as Alyssa has been scratched by one of the infected. What makes this an interesting plot point is in most cases, infection is only transferred by contact with bodily fluids or a bite. By using a scratch as a method of infection that makes this entire outbreak all the more dangerous and opens up all kinds of other related problems.

Matt and Brian, after facing the issue of Alyssa being infected, take inventory of their arms room. This was a small issue for me at this point as in most novels in this genre; there are always problems with getting what you need. In this case, the only thing the boys are lacking is enough ammunition for all their toys.

Moving the plot along, neighbor Bob, a former police officer approaches the brothers with the idea to form a neighborhood watch but one that is way more effective than a couple of people looking out the window when a car passes by. It's at this point that the reader finds out that Matt is a former military officer and his brother Brian a sergeant. There's never any real detail into what branch they might have been in, Army, Air Force, or Marines, whether it was the same branch or different, that's not an important part of the plot. Events transpire and Matt, Bob and Brian form a militia with other members of the neighborhood, Brian taking on the training aspect, Bob forming up the rest of the patrols and members and Matt working on the admin and logistics. This all starts to work out until the time they exit their area for a supply run and events turn south. Forced to pass through the other development to get to the main road, this same development that almost lit up Matt with massive weapons fire when he tried to enter, now wants half of all the supplies they may gather before allowing them entry.

By this time, you're probably wondering where the infected come into play with all this. Mad Swine, at least the first book, has limited contact with the infected and focuses more on the human dynamic and interaction when some people realize that the rules and laws don't apply to them anymore. Mad Swine: The Beginning is more of an introduction to the characters and events that I have to presume would continue in the rest of the series.

Steven Pajak paints a bleak picture of what life could be like in the first few weeks and months of an

outbreak. With the infected outside the walls of their gated community, the real monsters are the people right next door. The duality of this novel is refreshing to read as it's not all that often that an author will delve into the nature of the beast, the fall of man and the 'Us' versus 'Them' issues. In this case it's the haves and the have nots.

Mad Swine: The Beginning is well worth the read. It hits human nature at its lowest point. Think this couldn't happen? Just look at the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake where armed gangs were killing people for food, stacking dead bodies to form roadblocks and hijacking relief convoys.

Now take that information and apply it to this novel adding in the threat of infected wandering around wanting to take a bite out of your ass and you have a real winner in this genre that will make you want to sleep with the lights on, doors locked and weapons ready.

Robert says

Not a lot of reviews for this book. It started well as he captured the chaos of an office when the outbreak hits and the faster moving infected (not really zombies) always creeped me out more. One of the problems is with voice. The book starts out as a main character reflection as he looks back on the beginning but then it felt like it was moved up to real time with spoilers sprinkled in, such as, "little did I know the next time I saw so and so they would be infected." Then half the book later it would give you the prediction completely removing the suspense from the scene. Although the novel was slow, it had what makes every good zombie novel good: the best and worst of human nature. The end not a real end but a pause for the next book in the series. Given where it left off, the sequel promises to be even better.

Books says

With so many zombie-themed post-apocalyptic novels out there, it's steadily becoming more difficult to pick the one book in this saturated genre that will offer something a little different. "Mad Swine" proffers readers the usual zombies, in the usual virus outbreak post-apocalyptic setting, but instead of its main focus being solely on the gore and violence you usually find in your typically average zombie novel, this one actually tells a story of loss and the fight for survival that will touch the reader's heart. To be honest, though, I think men will enjoy this a great deal more than women, because almost half – if not more – of the book is spent on tactical surveillance and planning in setting up security measures around the neighborhood where the main character lives, in defense against zombie attacks. Even though I found each detailed step very interesting, and the reader gets to know each character inside out, I also found it a bit on the tedious side as I'm not a patient reader when it comes to elaborations.

All in all, this is an extremely intense and enjoyable read. I definitely want to read more of this author's books, but hopefully the rest will be better edited than this book.

Josh Hilden says

I have read this book twice and I have come to the conclusion that it is an extremely entertaining read. Yes there are a few flaws but if you let those ruin your experience it's your own fault. As a "Zombie" book it more than lives up to, and in many cases exceeds, my expectations of the genre.

I enjoy that the primary conflict in the novel is NOT the dead/infected but instead the humans of the neighboring communities. I enjoyed the development of the communities and experiencing their fragmentation and the attempt of one to assume dominion over the other.

I will be reading the second one soon!

Justin says

Previously self-published and now reissued by Permuted Press, *Mad Swine: The Beginning* is the first book in a planned series by author Steven Pajak. After a brief introduction to the series main character - an army vet turned office worker/family man - and a description of the causes and symptoms of the infection, this story jumps right into full-on outbreak mode. Our hero has to make his way across an increasingly violent and chaotic city in order to find his family, and then is pushed into a leadership role by the survivors left in his community.

Zombie 411: As Pajak points out in the prologue, these aren't really zombies. They're infected humans the main character dubs "crazies." They may be *28 Days Later*-style mindless cannibals, but they're still alive. That doesn't stop him from referring to them as zombies or undead from time to time.

The good - Pajak does a good job setting the pace here. He finds a good balance between action and exposition, and keeps readers engaged throughout the story. The human vs. infected fight scenes are the highlight though, and are good and bloody. He also does a good job conveying the kind of emotions the characters are experiencing. The scene in the church graveyard is particularly well executed.

The not so good - With the possible exception of the main character's brother, just about every character in this book is a thin construct without much depth. Instead of developing his characters, the author wastes valuable pages detailing types and quantities of guns, hygiene habits and what the characters are eating or wearing at any given moment. I mean, if you're going to spend time telling me that someone ate a banana and threw away the peel (seriously), I'm going to have to start thinking about things like how soon bananas go bad, and the likelihood of having an edible banana in the house so many days after the outbreak. I don't care if a character drinks a Coke or dries his face with a paper towel. I care about how believable the story is. The idea that an entire community can instantly fall into survivalist training mode and surrender all authority to a single person is hard to swallow. In the city it's all panic in the streets, but in the suburbs reason and organization reign? I also care that this book ends abruptly without any real or meaningful conclusion. A series means multiple fully-realized novels, not segments of a novel cut off once a certain page count is reached.

The best I can do here is three stars. *Mad Swine: The Beginning* shows promise, and it does have some really good moments. It just doesn't seem quite ready for prime time, nor does it have much to set it apart from the very crowded zombie/post-apocalyptic pack.

Noreen says

I am not done reading this book yet but I'd like to give it some credit because although the reviews seem 50/50 most positive reviews aren't written down.

This is the first "zombie" book I have ever read. I followed it briefly online when he would post chapters up for followers to read and once the book came out I eventually got a copy. Signed! (helps to know the author's brother-in-law :))

Not everyone can relate to this but the location of the book I enjoy. Since it's set in the area I was born and raised in I can really follow where the character is going in my head. For me it brings a little more life to the book.

There seems to be speculation on the way the book was written and any errors readers seem to come across. Firstly almost every book I've ever read I can seem to find a handful of grammar errors. Caught a few in Under the Dome even. So of course there could be some regardless of the editor or writing style. However, certain ways sentences are phrased or when certain words are used (and I don't mean finding an "an" when it should be an "and") is just simply the way of the writer. You write what you know and you write in the way you speak. It is just simply his writing style.

Another review I'm not in agreement with at all is that it's slow moving. I started this book and was immediately engrossed in it. In the first half of the book alone he goes through so much turmoil some of which I was shocked in how early he actually put them in the story but it grips you. Again I haven't fully completed the book so maybe the story does taper off and slowly moves along because after the first half what else does he have to lose? but I cannot comment on this without finishing the book.

In a whole which as far as I've gotten in the book I can't say many negative thoughts on it because I don't really have many. I like that he writes in a way you can feel his pain in the tragic occurrences he has to deal with. So far I would definitely recommend this book and I have a feeling even when I'm finished it will still be a great read.

Rosann says

Mad Swine. Actually a ok book to read, I did enjoy the authors "infected" version and how the people in the story became a "crazy"

If a person were bitten and died (before) the infection set in .. then they remained dead. But, if they remained alive long enough for the virus to take ahold then you became a walking infected or "crazies" as

the author liked to say.

Since the person(s) never died to reanimate, then they could not be called zombies in this story.

Since reading these 2 parts in the book, I understood why the author called them anything EXCEPT zombies.

Will probably read book 2, but not quite ready for it yet.

~~R

Marissa Pedroza says

Steven Pajak is a great storyteller. If you are squeamish, then this isn't the book for you. If you like a good storyline with interesting characters, read this book, you won't be sorry.

I didn't expect much from a book that centered on another zombie apocalypse storyline. I am so glad that I read it, because it's more than just blood & gore and the end of all things. The characters make you care what happen to them & Mr. Pajak seems to really have thought through how society would break down and how we would react to it, both good and bad.

Brian Manville says

I guess Mad Swine isn't exactly a "zombie" novel since the infected aren't dead, but in reality it's a distinction without a difference. They act the same as zombies except for sleeping at night and having no control over their bodily functions.

Matt Danzig a former Army officer who works as a college administrator and who seems to have one of those lives where things are going well - wife, two young kids, career on the rise - when the poop hits the fan in the form of people ("crazies" as Matt calls them) infected with a bad batch of the shot for the H1N1 virus. The story goes on to detail his life after the world goes to pieces.

It seemed like a rather write by numbers book:

Gun nerd descriptions? Check

Profound angst by the protagonist? Check

Living in a gated community? Check (and done better in *Zombie Fallout*)

Former military members by the boatload? Check

Dazzling diversity of occupations of neighbors? Check

Obligatory gay couple? Check

While the story moved quickly, there was not enough here to suspend your disbelief and immerse yourself in the story. There were too many OH COME ON! moments for me. For someone who works in Chicago (a city with limited gun rights), Matt seems to have no problem driving around with an SKS in the back of his SUV. And he breaks it out and lights up crazies on an interstate highway? He's angry about (something I'm leaving out so as not to spoil) so he digs a grave for his priest?

Not only does Matt have a rifle and go bag stashed in his SUV, he convinced his wife to become Doomsday Preppers so they have a small arsenal of weapons and ammunition to fight off the Illinois National Guard. Of course, they live in a community with walls around it! And in a libertarian's worst nightmare, everyone immediately suborns their rights and submits to Matt's authority, well, because zombies. If anything reeks of Plot Contrivance Theater, this would be it.

The rest of the characters are rather thinly fleshed out and you are left wondering why Matt would call someone "friend" when it seems he just got to know them. A character dies after one mission and you'd think Matt and this guy did a couple of tours in 'Nam the way Matt reminisces about him.

On the positive side, the pacing of the book is great and the battle scenes are well written and were a treat to read. However, the fact that the book just kind of ends and the multiple OH COME ON! items leads me to rate it as I do.

BOTTOM LINE: An OK book - you'd probably want to read something else before this.
