



The Flu

Jacqueline Druga

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Throughout history there have been several thousand different strains of influenza. Each year hundreds are active. Chances are, this year, you will catch one of those strains. You will cough, sneeze, and your body will ache. Without a second thought, you'll take a double dose of green liquid, go to bed, and swear you'll feel better in the morning.

Not this time.

In 1918 forty million people succumbed to a particular strain of swine flu. It appeared out of nowhere, and just as quickly as it surfaced, the Spanish Flu vanished. Gone for good. Or so we thought. Though mankind has anticipated its resurfacing for some time, mankind is ill prepared. Mutated and with a vengeance, the Spanish Flu returns.

In a world blackened with plague, a glimmer of light exists in the small town of Lodi, Ohio. They shine as a sanctuary because they are 'flu-free' In the wake of the reality that they are spared, the spirit and strength of Lodi is tested. It becomes a fight against what is morally right or wrong in an increasingly difficult battle to stay healthy and alive until the flu has run its course.

The Flu Details

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Author : Jacqueline Druga

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From Reader Review The Flu for online ebook

Jacqueline says

The author focuses on the one town that is "flu free" and their fight against what is morally right or wrong in the difficult battle to stay alive until the flu has run its course.

Justin says

When a devastating strain of the flu is inadvertently unleashed from a research station in Alaska, it only takes days for the virus to spread across the world, decimating the population. As cities fall and civilization collapses, a team of specialists decide to make a last stand in the small town of Lodi, Ohio. With a radical plan, they hope this one town will escape the rest of the world's fate.

Jacqueline Druga's captivating novel *The Flu* reads a lot like *Outbreak* meets *The Stand* (minus the supernatural elements). The story features the usual suspects - doctors, federal agents, researchers - but is largely focused on the residents of Lodi and their relationships and everyday lives. Druga takes her time setting up the story and focuses a great deal on developing her characters. The result is that while you may get only the briefest outline of events in the larger world, you come to really know and love these characters. It's an interesting mix of a leisurely setup and a backdrop of a fast-moving virus, but it works really well.

One of Stephen King's greatest talents is his ability to make you care about the day-to-day lives of his characters, sometimes even more than you care about the larger story. Druga has this gift as well. 95% of the world's population is dying and you still get wrapped up in whether the small town sheriff will find love, a mother's relationship with her sons, and countless other little details. You will laugh with the townspeople, and you'll definitely cry with them. Of course, the way this pandemic unfolds is fascinating in its own right, and Druga spares no gory detail in describing the way it claims its victims.

It's not perfect. I'm sure you could go through and "kick the tires" long enough to find some things that don't quite work, but by and large *The Flu* is so captivating and moving that looking past a few flaws is not hard at all. *The Flu* is an interesting and emotional departure from Permuted Press. They're no strangers to apocalyptic plague stories, but *The Flu* doesn't have zombies or any other kind of supernatural elements. It's an entirely plausible story, and one with real heart. It reads a lot like one of those blockbuster thrillers you'd pick up at an airport bookstore, or even a book club selection.

Shana Festa says

The Flu opens up with a grim description of the effects that a flu-like plague has on its unsuspecting victims. One day, you're feeling fit and well, the next down for the count. Without rhyme or reason, the plague strikes and strikes hard. I was very intrigued by the premise of this book from the get go. Beginning in Alaska, you read with white knuckles as the plague spreads from the cold confines of the Pacific Northwest to Los Angeles. You writhe as the sickness infects and creeps east, finally bringing an entire Nation to its knees.

In the small town of Lodi, Ohio, Chief of Police Mick Owens is everybody's favorite guy, and our story's small town hero. Mick is clearly the story's protagonist as we are introduced to him very early on, although he is surrounded by many interesting supporting characters. Dylan Hughes, a fiery woman and loving mother to her three sons, Dustin, Chris and Tigger. Dylan's estranged husband, Sam, is in and out of the picture. A mysterious new teacher arrives in Lodi and the famous Dr. Lars Rayburn returns for his month long holiday just before the plague spreads nationally. Mick acts quickly, like no other man of his caliber, and will stop at nothing to keep the people of his town and the people he loves the most, safe from all harm.

Lars Rayburn quickly became my favorite character, he was full of wit, charged with intelligence and the necessary means Mick needed in keeping the town of Lodi safe during the darkest time the world has seen since the Spanish Flu. The friendship that he builds with Lodi Elementary's new teacher and the mystery surrounding his adoration by the people of Lodi definitely forces you to keep reading. At the end of the book I was forced to compare the Lars Rayburn mystery to the "Plastic Parrots" joke. (I would definitely recommend looking that joke up.)

The book overall was a good read. Where I found it lacking was in the pace of the story. It isn't until the second part of the book that you are ever aware of why the town of Lodi, Ohio is even relevant. The plot line as a whole lacked any real climax or crescendo. The character development was great, but far too much time was spent on the faults of characters involved in a bizarre love triangle. The character development was so good in fact that some of the streamlined characters (there purely for filler) didn't need to be developed at all. I'm a mature reader, but the mild and random sex scenes scattered here and there honestly took away from the story as a whole and served as mere distractions.

Jacqueline Druga is obviously a talented writer. I love to encounter fellow female writers in the apocalyptic genre. She is definitely someone who's work I will continue to read. I've rated the book a 3 out 5, but only because of what I've previously mentioned. The book ends on a bitter sweet note, bringing an emotional ending to the plague ravaged town, which leaves room for a sequel. And there is a follow up read to The Flu, which I will definitely be checking out!

Review submitted by Stevie Kopas, member of The Bookie Monster team. bookie-monster.com

Erin Hatfield says

I started this book two days ago and was hooked from the beginning. The end threw me for a loop and I was definitely in tears for the last couple chapters. Such a great read, you get incredibly close to the characters in this book!

Michael Flanagan says

This book works its way into your system and does not let go. The Flu tells the tale of a killer flu accidentally let loose upon the world; it highlights how fragile as a species we truly are. This is what scares you about this book, it has happened before and it is bound to happen again. A great cast of characters take us through this tale that has it all, action, romance, suspense and humour. Like the Flu this book leaves exhausted once it is done with you. But this is a good thing because it shows that you have just read a great book.

Elizabeth says

It's been a while since a book made me cry. Not that this is a bleak story - but I had a real connection with the characters. This is well worth a look.

Nancy L Smith says

Read about 12% of the book and couldn't continue. Really boring. Nothing was happening and none of the characters were likeable. Normally I really enjoy end of life as we know it books.

Kat says

I purchased The Flu thinking it would be an OK read. A filler if you like, something easy to read on my daily commute. But I was wrong - very wrong!

The Flu immediately plunges you into the story with characters that are incredibly likable and not the usual infallible types that predominate in the post-apocalyptic genre. They are normal people with normal lives, and have the same feelings and fears that you can imagine yourself having in such situations.

The story is free-flowing and addictive, easily understandable and not bogged down by the scientific explanations that can make such novels a bit of a chore in places. I read these type of novels for fun, not an education, and The Flu has a big tick in that box.

Now, I do have to mention the errors, spelling and grammatical in this book. But in the end, I didn't care - the story is good, the characters great and these small issues did not distract me from that.

I will definitely be purchasing more of Ms. Druga's stories in future.

Pam Shelton-Anderson says

More than half the book treats the looming disease as a side story and mostly is centered on a small town Ohio triangle of a woman and two men. The female main character, Dylan, is so very annoying that I was hoping she would end up being the first person in the world to die of the flu. There are some interesting moments once the flu gets started but it was hard for me to envision that this little town in Ohio would attract a world renowned infectious disease physician and two research scientists as well as being the country's hope for being able to beat the disease. The FBI guys seemed to only be there for a bizarre sex scene that was pointless to the story and to bring a villainous agent of disease to Ohio. I bought both books together since I have read other books by this author that I liked so I guess I will continue with the series.

Christy Brunner says

This book was so emotional for me. No one writes family drama the way this author does. She makes you care about the characters, and she writes them in such a way as to make you invested in them. Just to warn you, this book was an incredibly emotional read for me. I love to read apocalyptic end of the world stories, but this book is so much more. It is driven by the characters. I also highly recommend her books *Dust* and *Sleepers*!

Michael says

I've read a lot of apocalyptic fiction over the last two years, and I do have to say this is one of the better ones, as you are primarily concentrating on one small community in Ohio vs. jumping back and forth with multiple situations and events. The author does an excellent job of getting you into the heads and interactions of her characters, and you feel as if you are right there in the middle of the action and feel their emotions. This one was really hard to put down, and I would consider purchasing a sequel to the book to find out what happens with the characters and society once the flu has run its course.

I picked this up for free during a Kindle promotion about six months ago and just now got around to reading it; as I type this review, I see the pricing for the Kindle version has reverted back to \$3.99: you will receive a heck of a lot more than \$3.99 worth of entertainment value from this one. If you enjoy a good apocalyptic tale, I highly recommend this one!

David Ketelsen says

This book goes in a number of directions, only 2 of them finished. If you're here for the pandemic/influenza book, you're going to be sorely disappointed. It sucks. The author apparently doesn't know the difference between bacteria and viruses. The entire book is written as if Influenza is bacterial in origin.

The other aspect of this book that is complete is the love story between Mick and Dylan. That story is well told and as long as you're not too analytical the romance between these two characters is endearing. Of course if you look beyond the surface, these two, especially Dylan, can barely function in society. I don't know why the author chose to make them so codependent, but it does make for an interesting story.

This is a good read for anyone interested in the love story aspect and not very analytical.

(view spoiler)

Dee Streiner says

Okay, I was really surprised by how much I enjoyed this book. I went into it expecting chaos and conflict, horror, which I was perfectly okay with. I did not expect to end up a blubbery mess. I also didn't expect to laugh as often as I found myself laughing. I was surprised all the way through. The pacing was just brilliant to me. The way the story came together and how amazingly the pieces all fit, it blew my mind. As a writer, I'm still shaking my head. Now I need to go back to my own writing and figure out how Jacqueline Druga organizes like she does. Dammit.

Syndilou says

"The Flu" was an amazing story. From the first page to the end, it was hard to put down. How it spread from Alaska to the west coast all the way to the east coast. The lives it touch, the twists and turns as how some people got it and other didn't. How the small town of Lodi, Ohio handled the flu which was the main focus of the story. The ending was very surprising I would say more but don't want to spoil it for others. I will be reading more books by Jacqueline Druga.

Heather Clitheroe says

At times a bit overdone, I thought: stilted dialogue and a contrived plot finds a sensitive biker Mick (also the chief of police and something of a 24-esque hero) slowly falling in love and saving a small town...along with intrepid doctor Lars (also a romance novelist and aid worker). FBI partners holed up in an LA hotel have a 'the world is ending' sexual encounter - which is frankly so out of place that it's laughable. I suppose it plays along with the sense of civil disorder that the story tries to build, but is shockingly contrasted by references to 'the New Jerusalem' and a book section titled 'The Walls of Jericho.'

The story is slow, slow, slow to start. You'll get to know the hairstyle of each character. And as the plot builds, you'll find yourself rooting for the flu. Several typos spoil what's meant to be emotional moments, and everything is thunderous: coughing, trucks, whatever.

I do actually think, though, that this would be a stronger piece if it were adapted for the screen. It would make an excellent tv movie. The pacing felt right for a screenplay, and the melodrama, but it doesn't translate quite as well to the novel form.

A good book to take on an airplane, I think. You'll be done in a few hours with a satisfactory ending but feel no remorse in abandoning the book in the setback pocket.
