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Watch Your Mouth: A Novel

By Daniel Handler



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Tolstoy wrote that happy families are alike and that each unhappy family is unhappy in a different way. In *Watch Your Mouth*, Daniel Handler takes "different" to a whole new level....



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Watch Your Mouth: A Novel By Daniel Handler Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

So twisted that even its protagonist can't keep up with the perverse turns of plot, this melodramatic satire of family life trembles between virtuosity and utter collapse. Handler (*The Basic Eight*) sets up the first half of his comically warped novel as a mock opera, complete with stage and orchestra directions. Joseph, self-cast as the young hero, is a college student just finishing his junior year. Urged by his insatiable girlfriend, Cynthia Glass, to spend the summer sleeping by her side, Joseph moves in with her family in Pittsburgh, where the two plan to work as counselors at a Jewish day camp. Dinner at the Glass house the first night clues Joseph in to the family's bizarre fascinations: incest, science, Kabbalah. But he still has no idea what he's getting into. After closer acquaintance with the creepily rational Dr. Glass (baritone), his high-strung, opera-loving wife, Mimi (soprano) and their precocious young son Stephen (tenor), he continues to be bemused, though unspeakable acts are clearly taking place offstage. Handler's baroque prose curls in elegant arabesques, but his elaborate plotting too often overwhelms his characters. Weakest of all is his portrait of the doomed Cynthia (with the obvious pun of her diminutive "Cyn"), who never quite emerges from Joseph's horny descriptions of their romance. After the opera-melodrama's weird but tantalizing climax, involving death and the golem myth, the novel actually recovers its narrative balance as the psychologically scarred Joseph turns to New Age recovery paperbacks, which replace opera as Handler's satiric model. Layered with coincidences and surprises, Joseph's on-the-lam nine-step self-help program achieves some of the novel's potential as a "Turn of the Screwball" black comedy. (July)

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From Library Journal

Billed rather tastelessly by the publisher as an "incest comedy," Handler's second novel (following *The Basic Eight*) is ambitious but flawed. Joseph tells the story of a lust-filled college summer he spent with his Jewish girlfriend, Cyn ("Sin") Glass (think J.D. Salinger), and her "close-knit" family in Pittsburgh. The events in Part 1 of this Bildungsroman are treated as a four-act opera, complete with set and musical directions. The aftermath, Part 2, is packaged as a parody of the AA 12-step program. Sex between Joseph and his lovers (Cyn and those who follow) and Handler's clever writing provide entertainment, but the novel, like the golem in it (Joseph is convinced that Cyn's mother has made one), lacks the requisite soul for longevity. Purchase for comprehensive fiction collections or where there's demand for quirky, offbeat work like this. DR

Rebecca Sturm Kelm, Northern Kentucky Univ. Lib., Highland Heights

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From Kirkus Reviews

Handler follows up his waggish debut (*The Basic Eight*, 1999) with an even more pungent fricassee: a summer's romance turned incestuous and murderous, cast in the form of an opera followed, naturally, by a 12-step recovery program. Not that Joseph Last Name Changed to Protect the Innocent, as he refers to himself, has anything that outré in mind. What he expects when he signs on as assistant arts and crafts counselor to his girlfriend Cynthia Glass is a placid summer finishing up his junior-year incompletes in the time off from commuting between suburban Pittsburgh's Camp Shalom by day and Cynthia's enthusiastic bed by night. Oh, he's willing to vary the routine via the woods around Camp Shalom, the back of Cyn's car, and the occasional vertical bonk. What he's not willing to countenance is an incestuous streak that guarantees you'll never confuse this Glass family with J.D. Salinger's. Dad and Mom ("call me Mimi") lust respectively after their daughter and son, and young Ben pines for his big sis. The Glasses don't just pine either, as Joseph acknowledges every night when Cyn leaves his damp bed for her father's. Fortunately for Cyn's grandmother, the old lady dies before confessing any desire she might have to repossess her own flesh. The

rest of the Glasses follow more violently, falling victim one by one to somebody the cops in Pittsburgh, California (don't ask), think is Joseph and Joseph thinks is the golem Mimi was building in her basement. No jest is too broad (Mimi's physician is named Dr. Zhivago), no simile too indecorous for Joseph's desperately coy unfolding of his summer of discontent and its sequel, as self-satisfied allusions from Kafka to Nabokov to Bill W. jostle for recognition. Beneath all the busy trimmings, though, it's just another reworking of your basic self-reflexive parody incest opera mystery. About average for the genre. -- *Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joshua Rodrigue:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book allowed Watch Your Mouth: A Novel? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have other opinion?

Cassie Merritt:

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Dustin Alvarez:

The reason why? Because this Watch Your Mouth: A Novel is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap this but latter it will distress you with the secret that inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book get such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking way. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Steven Craig:

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