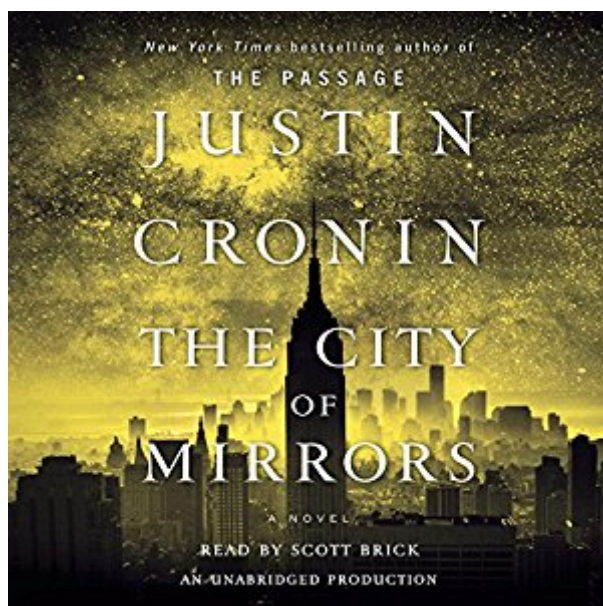


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The City Of Mirrors: The Passage Trilogy, Book Three



Synopsis

In *The Passage* and *The Twelve*, Justin Cronin brilliantly imagined the fall of civilization and humanity's desperate fight to survive. Now all is quiet on the horizon - but does silence promise the nightmare's end or the second coming of unspeakable darkness? At last this best-selling epic races to its breathtaking finale. The world we knew is gone. What world will rise in its place? *The Twelve* have been destroyed, and the 100-year reign of darkness that descended upon the world has ended. The survivors are stepping outside their walls, determined to build society anew - and daring to dream of a hopeful future. But far from them, in a dead metropolis, he waits: Zero. The First. Father of the Twelve. The anguish that shattered his human life haunts him, and the hatred spawned by his transformation burns bright. His fury will be quenched only when he destroys Amy - humanity's only hope, the Girl from Nowhere who grew up to rise against him. One last time light and dark will clash, and at last Amy and her friends will know their fate.

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Customer Reviews

Justin Cronin's *The City of Mirrors* sets out to do the seemingly impossible and wrap up scores of characters and an immense landscape of action in a way that will satisfy readers who have waited four years for the publication of this book. Well, I guess Cronin can do the impossible! Because *CITY* is a brilliant novel, powerful in its message and extraordinarily satisfying in its concluding pages. Spanning almost a thousand years, the story manages to keep the reader intimately connected to a group of characters we've known since the

first installment (THE PASSAGE) while also letting us glimpse the vast scope of a story that touches the entire human race. This is a novel about hope, love, and human endurance set against a truly terrifying landscape that threatens the survival of humanity itself. Some have called this a classic “good vs. evil” story, but I don’t agree. It’s really a story about our own inner conflicts, the very human battles between our better natures and the urges that seek to undo us. What saves us, says Cronin, is love. If only we can recognize it.

CITY begins just after the end of the second installment (THE TWELVE), but it quickly jumps ahead three years, and then another nineteen. The characters Cronin focuses on are ones we know very well – Peter, Alicia, Sara, Hollis, Michael, Lucius, Caleb, Kate. Some were children when we first met them; some may be grandparents when we meet them again. Cronin provides a brief summary of sorts at the start of this novel, which does help to refresh our recollections (this was a big help to me, since I didn’t have an opportunity to re-read THE TWELVE before diving into CITY). But it took little time to become invested again in these people and the world they are trying to build. At the conclusion of THE TWELVE, only two questions remained – 1) what happened to Amy, and 2) where is Zero, aka Timothy Fanning, the first to be infected with the virus back in the early 21st century. The so-called “Twelve” (Fanning’s followers, convicts who had been infected with the virus as part of a government program) have been destroyed, meaning their “viral” hoards (vampire-like creatures that decimated the planet in the hundred years following the release of the virus) have died with them. So CITY begins in a place of relative calm. Kerrville in Texas is booming, people are living their lives again, and a new generation is born, a generation that knows nothing of virals and the horrors their parents lived through. But is it really over? Or is there a new threat, an even greater threat, waiting for the right time to reveal itself?

I’m not giving anything away to say that Amy plays a central part in this novel. There was never any doubt that she would be back for the finale. But the role Cronin has imagined for her is perfect in its ability to pull this immense story together in a brilliant and satisfying way. Amy has always been the focus of this trilogy, even if it wasn’t always clear why she was so important. In CITY, we understand her better than we have before. In many ways, this is her story, one she was created to tell. As for Zero, I had my doubts about how he would fit into this novel. What Cronin does is introduce us to Timothy Fanning, the man who became Zero. And in so doing, he helps us see that behind any monster is the human he once was. Even the virals themselves are human beings, transformed into creatures driven by blood lust – but they also have names and memories and pieces of a past they cling to, even

in their rage. I found Fanning's story fascinating. He tells it in first-person, beginning with these words: "Behind every great hatred is a love story. Therein is the heart of CITY, and of the trilogy as a whole. This, too, is a love story. It's about people clinging together against horrible adversity, risking everything for those they love. At one point, Fanning says, "It's love that enslaves us, but Amy knows that only love has the power to set us free. And that's what happens in CITY – there's a lot of sadness, a lot of death, but in the end it's love that sets the survivors free. The final section of CITY reminded me a lot of the end of Margaret Atwood's HANDMAID'S TALE. It's set a thousand years in the future, when a symposium has been convened to investigate the discovery of a mysterious journal that may hold the secrets to humanity's history. It's an odd final section (just as it was in Atwood's book) because it takes us away from the story we've been following. But Cronin manages to not only bring us back to that central story, but to make a much bigger connection between the people we've come to love and the future of the human race. In the end, he is telling us what Amy tries to tell Fanning: "Everything you have loved will come back to you. It's a beautiful and inspiring message that transcends the horrors we've read in this trilogy. It's hard to imagine what it would be like to look back at the world we're living in today from a thousand years in the future. Would our future selves understand the things we did, the things that happened to us, the decisions we made? Cronin is suggesting that "All things [fall] into the past but one; and what that [is, is] love. If we can understand that, we can understand ourselves. I loved CITY OF MIRRORS. It's a better book than either of the first two, and it's a wonderful conclusion to a gripping trilogy. The four-year wait was definitely worth it!

It seems like the author had a three-book deal but only two books' worth of story. None of the previous characters were further developed, and the new characters were just outlines. Stories, like the 20-year rebuilding of the ship, which would have been great books in themselves, were just sketched in. And the less said about the main character, who tells his backstory for much of the book, the better. His reasons for ruining the world make no sense at all and we have to listen to him basically whine for ... like ... ever. And why was Amy even in this book? She was locked up for most

of it. The new characters and storyline introduced at the end of the book were unnecessary, except to tee up a Book 4? Yikes let's hope not. Cronin is a great writer--please move on to a new story!

So much time has passed since book 2 of the Trilogy, that there are mixed feelings- excitement remembering how caught up and invested you were in these very interesting and complex characters- and confusion remembering plot points. This book is somewhat of a mess. Greatly detailed in some chapters, and oftentimes annoyingly so, and yet we struggle with time. And distance. And dream vs reality. I would have used better differentiated chapters going back and forth between time and characters and places. Time is badly handled; perhaps Miles's story could have been interjected throughout and the garden and voices would've worked better. Cronin doesn't know horses like he knows ammunition, or the impossibility of time and space even given this is a work of fantasy. This is a big NO for me; 2 stars.

A satisfying conclusion to *The Passage* trilogy. Full of action, suspense, danger, heroism, love, loss, adventure, and soul. I was very pleased that Cronin revisited one of my favorite characters, the long-suffering Anthony Carter. (Too bad my favorite character, Wolgast, is no more) However, I found part II *The Lover* to be a real slog, and almost put the book down. The only interesting aspect of the life story of Tim Fanning, aka *Patient Zero*, was the window into the lives of the rich and shameless Ivy League students.

Oh the disappointment. I have waited for this book for so long only to be let down. If you're looking for the interpersonal relationships that made the first two books in this series so addictive you won't find them here. Our 12 heroes from the previous novels have scattered far and wide and don't really seem to care much about each other's lives. If you're looking for page upon page of Tim Fanning (Zero) telling his side of the story then this is it. Living underground in the subways of NYC for a hundred or so years drinking rats' blood really does tend to mess with your head but it seems all he needs now is the bow of a ship from which to scream 'I'm king of the world!'. Yes he hates Jonas Lear, the man who kept Fanning's infected self as a type of science experiment, but there was more. We learn just why Fanning suddenly showed up for Lear's expedition and why Zero's 'many' lived a dark dream. In the meantime Peter has become President of the Republic of Texas, a stretch on a good day. His nephew Caleb is grown with a family of his own. Humanity is making it's first efforts into a world unprotected by walls and lights. Bad idea. It's also a bad idea to be unprotected

when (Spoiler alert) you can't tell the difference between a place where a viral has buried itself underground and a fire ant dome. So yes, I was disappointed. I wanted the continuation of the story with characters I had grown to love. If that's what you're looking for be forewarned.

The book drags due to excessive subplots with different inter related groups of characters and unnecessary exposition and arm chair psychological analysis of the villain. It staggers back and forth between these groups eventually winding up at a tacked on meaningless ending. It was much ado about nothing and very disappointing after the first two books.

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