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Painless



Synopsis

Seventeen-year-old Quinn can't feel physical pain. Born with a rare neurological condition, he's faced accidents and emergency room visits. It's a surprise he's still alive; a fact that has caused him to be left to his own devices for most of his life. No school, no friends, no rules. At the mercy of his older sister Caitlin, who has spent the past few years caring for their dying father, he spends his days drinking at a nearby bar, testing his limits, and working on a graphic novel about a mysterious vigilante called Shadow Man. Lately, though, even his art has taken a turn for the worse. Quinn has created a new character called Demon Boy who destroys everything he touches, and now Quinn can't decide how his book should end. Furthermore, an ominous black dog has started to follow him everywhere. On the same day his father dies, Quinn accidentally gets hit by a car and Caitlin decides that this is the last straw. Left with the choice to either find a job and grow up or be committed to a rehabilitation center, Quinn takes a gig at a local butcher shop owned by the father of a sensitive but troubled girl who often changes her appearance with the flick of a wrist. But the closer he gets to finding stability, the further he spins out of control, as the lines between art and reality continue to dissipate. In this debut novel, Jamie Mayer offers an unflinching and poignant look at loss, empathy, and how to grow up without feeling pain.

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Customer Reviews

"Painless is a dark and harrowing read about a broken family and its broken son struggling to find some sort of relief. A serious and sometimes ominous tale, it offers glimpses of hope to its tortured,

twisted characters, who have to find their own sort of solace in the midst of their tragedies."—Foreword Reviews

"Jamie Mayer makes her debut with *Painless* and knocked me off my feet—a vivid, heartbreaking and provocative exploration of the power of love and human connection."—Holly Goldberg Sloan, New York Times Bestselling author of *Counting By 7's*, *I'll Be There*, and *Short*

Even though this book is more for young adults, it was highly recommended to me. I am so glad I read this book. It reminded me of *Catcher in the Rye*. True, I read *Catcher* many many years ago. The comparison would obviously be a troubled youth. I do not even remember why *Catcher's* youth was troubled. Without giving too much of the story line away, you know from reading the book cover that Quinn has a rare neurological condition. The way Jamie Mayer handles the trials and tribulation of Quinn and his family is heartbreaking & covers so much real emotion. For a first time novelist, I think Jamie Mayer has written an excellent book, and look forward to reading her next novel.

The protagonist has an extremely rare disorder that prevents him from feeling physical pain, but his central dilemma, namely what good is the purpose of feeling any pain at all--particularly emotional--when the toll can be so devastating is one that will resonate with any reader. I think this would be a particularly good read for the teen artist in the family as young artists do in my opinion feel more or at least differently than their peers and often need encouragement to keep tapping into their powerful inner reserves, just as Quinn in this book eventually learns to do. I also love that he is brought to his new level of understanding by two well-written and -delineated female characters--his sister and his love interest. Lastly I so enjoyed Mayer's language, her turns of phrases; they're not showy but they reveal so much about each character.

I picked up *Painless* to page through before gifting it to my teen son, and ended up rushing to finish it before I needed to have it wrapped! Since then it has become a frequent topic of conversation over dinners, and has been a nice way for us to segue into conversations about what is happening in our own interior landscapes. The Oliver Sachs medical reader in me is fascinated by the very premise, and the psychology of the characters ring empathetically true. Recommended!

Compelling characters and a moving story. Great book!

In competing narrative voices (mostly first with a dash of third), author Mayer ably explores the turbulent headspace of Quinn, a teenager with a condition known as congenital analgesia — he can't feel pain. A high percentage of folks with Quinn's condition don't make it to adulthood, and Quinn seems set on joining that grim statistic. As he processes — or tries to process — his father's death, Quinn self-medicates through his art; and he's good. The guy at his local comic shop begs him to complete his masterwork, a parallel tale about a dark superhero who fights crime alongside a canine familiar. The story later ushers in more residents of Quinn's little island of misfit toys: two women who seem to speak to different sides of his personality. (Such triangles always make me flash on Dorothy Vallens and Sandy Williams, but that's probably my cognitive bias talking — though this book does have some Lynchian qualities.) In any event, this touching book reads like a cross between *Good Will Hunting* and *Geek Love* set on the boundary between our universe and whatever universe houses A-Ha's video for "Take on Me." It's also beautifully written, belly-laugh funny, and downright harrowing at times. Highly recommended.

Quinn is a seventeen year old who suffers from Congenital Analgesia. Congenital Analgesia is a disease where the sufferer feels no pain. This disease is extremely fascinating. I have heard in the past about children who could not feel pain. It is explained in 'Painless' that it is a rare but deadly disease. Children who inherit this disease rarely make it to adulthood. Pain is an evolutionary trait that helps prevent injury. The inability to feel pain cause the victims to unknowing cause life threatening damage to themselves. Quinn takes this to another level by intentionally hurting himself. Adding to Quinn's problems is the fact that his mother left when he was a child. This leaves Quinn at the mercy of his older sister Caitlin. It is revealed early on the Caitlin is also having a hard time juggling responsibilities in her life. She is a nurse, mother, wife, and caretaker to both Quinn and their terminally ill father. 'Quinn's' character really brings home what struggling with this disease must be like. The character of Caitlin is also wonderfully complete. Like many women she is stretched thin. The character of Caitlin is indicative of what it is like to be a mother and caretaker. I really sympathized with Caitlin even when it was revealed that she had her own demons. One of the main storylines in the book is that Quinn is a fantastic artist. He creates a comic book character called 'Demon Boy'. Quinn uses 'Demon Boy' to really personify his struggle with his disease. There was a bit of magical realism that kind of threw me off. It is explained later in the novel but it really confused me and didn't really add much to the storyline. I really loved this novel. The prose was well written and the story had a good pace to it. I really love novels that really put you in someone's skin who is

suffering from some type of ailment. I highly recommend 'Painless' for a realistic look at Congenital Analgesia.

In Mayer's debut YA novel, PAINLESS, narrator Quinn repeatedly explores the existential question "What would it be like if you couldn't feel pain?" Born with congenital analgesia, Quinn literally can't feel pain and so is always, dangerously and careless, testing his limits (and the limits of those around him, most notably his older sister and guardian Cait), but his bigger question is metaphorical: Is it possible to go through life without feeling the pain of loss and disappointment? For a boy who lost his mother to suicide and his father first to rage and then cancer, the answer must be No. But Quinn does his best to fend off that realization as long as possible, on the way discovering that there's another person he might care deeply enough about to risk the pain of loss. Often scintillating, always quick and bright, Mayer's novel will send an arrow straight to the heart of many young adult readers.

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