



Damned

Chuck Palahniuk

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Damned

Chuck Palahniuk

Damned Chuck Palahniuk

The newest Palahniuk novel concerns Madison, a thirteen year old girl who finds herself in Hell, unsure of why she will be there for all eternity, but tries to make the best of it.

The author described the novel as "if The Shawshank Redemption had a baby by The Lovely Bones and it was raised by Judy Blume." And "it's kind of like The Breakfast Club set in Hell."

Damned Details

Date : Published October 18th 2011 by Doubleday Canada

ISBN : 9780385671101

Author : Chuck Palahniuk

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Humor

 [Download Damned ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Damned ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Damned Chuck Palahniuk

From Reader Review Damned for online ebook

Megs ♥ says

Damned is another book I loved from Chuck Palahniuk. Each chapter starts: "Are you there, Satan? It's me, Madison," by a girl so emotionally needy she craves attention from the devil himself.

Madison is thirteen, and very smart. She's the daughter of a narcissistic actress, and a billionaire father. They adopt orphans to look good to the public, and ship Madison to her Swiss boarding school during the holidays to do other things. Madison dies, and is sent to Hell. She thinks the reason for landing in Hell, is because she smoked marijuana, but throughout the story she learns more and more about the night she died. Madison is unlike any other Chuck P. character, and I thought he did an okay job writing the perspective of a teenage girl without sounding much like a creepy 40+ year old dude.

Madison shares her cell with a group of young sinners that is almost too good to be true: a cheerleader, jock, nerd, and a punk rocker, united by fate to form the six-foot-under version of everyone's favorite detention movie! The book has shocks coming at you from every direction, and there are even some twists to keep the story interesting.

The parts I liked the most in this book revolve around Maddy's job in hell. She's like a telemarketer, but what she's selling is hell. She spends hours trying to convince terminally ill people to come to hell. Chuck also spends a fair amount of time throwing in all of the ways you can land in Hell in this story. Turns out that even simple things such as honking your car horn too many times in a lifetime can land you in Hell.

This is the afterlife as only Chuck P. could imagine it: The English Patient is playing on endless repeat, and roaming demons devour sinners limb by limb. Palahniuk's Hell is made up of dirty cages, dandruff and toenail clippings. [ew]

This was definitely not my favorite book by Chuck P., but I still enjoyed it. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to kind of "try out" Chuck's writing style. Although it seems a lot of his fans don't like this book, because they think it's not up to par with his older books I think this is a perfect book for a potential fan to try.

Loaded with Chuck's usual dark humor and satire I think this book was definitely worth reading. I am giving this book 4/5 stars, because I simply thought that Chuck's vision of hell would have been a little more insane. His world building was lacking a bit in my opinion, but the story was able to hold my attention the whole way through.

This book ends with "to be continued...", and people are speculating if this story really will be continued or if that was a joke. I probably would read another book if he writes it, but the story had a good enough ending I think.

Jeannette Nikolova says

Read on the WondrousBooks blog.

Are you there, Chuck? It's me, Jeannette. I honestly used to like your books once. Invisible Monsters was a revelation - if I ever grow the balls to become a director, that would be the movie that I'd do. If you have become addicted to heroin, find some help, I believe there is still something you can offer to the world. But your books have started to suck. I'm sorry, Chuck. I really don't want to hurt your feelings, I think you are a rock star in contemporary literature. If anything, you've always been able to put me into a humorous shock. But I'm turning into a non-believer. Forgive me, Chuck. No pressure, but pick your game up a bit.

Disastrous. I know the word disastrous, even though I'm a foreigner and English is not my first language.

Give me a spark of life. Give me something. Give me a good Chuck.

Because right now I'm Jack's utter disappointment.

Hydrogen. Helium. Lithium. Beryllium. Boron.

There was once a girl called Molly. Molly went into the forest. She met Mike. Mike was a junkie. Molly jerked him off. She prayed and screamed "YE, GODS!" and the gods of old gave her a revelation. Molly ran to the nearest town and had a sex changing operation. Then she went home and killed her family because they were boring. With her dying breath her mother told her that she is actually her father. Molly realized that she is going to hell for picking flowers in the forest. She blew her own brain to pieces.

SEE, CHUCK? If I can do it, so can you. And a thousand times better at that.

I've long since accepted that Chuck Palahniuk is a genius. No matter what anyone tells me, I'm convinced that he is a highly educated man. If you really read beyond the stupid and disgusting things in his books, you'd see it too. But, for some reason, Chuck has chosen to hide his intelligence in a pool of sperm, tears and blood. Add to that some hot boiling spit and some "kiddie-porn" and you've got a Palahniuk book.

I think there is so much more to him, but since I'm not his psychiatrist, I'm not going to go into long musings about just how fucked up his psyche is.

Damned sucks. Big time. It's damn depressing. And since I've grown immune to the random electric shocks that he likes to give his readers by describing sexual atrocities, I was also bored while reading **Damned**.

I've always described myself as a realist, but reading **Damned**, I started having some doubts about actually being a damn optimist. Because I can't believe that people like Antonio and Camille exist. That families like Madison's exist. That the Western world is as fucked up as Chuck shows it. If that is really the world we live in, I'd rather stay oblivious. I'm already too familiar with the ruin of the Middle East. Knowing that there is no place in the world where people are normal... I'd really rather be oblivious.

I don't think there is a point to analysing this book. I'm not even sure it's meant to make sense. Even in a world as upside down as the one in **Damned**, there still should be some logic, but there doesn't seem to be

one and I'm not going to tire my hands writing too much about it.

At one point I got all of Palahniuk's books and I've been going through them for years. At one point I always ask myself "Why don't you just get it over with, read them all and be done." And then I read one and I realize that if I read another one immediately after, I'm going to need therapy. So my quest continues, in a couple of years I might be done with Chuck Palahniuk. Or not...

Are you there, Chuck?

Coos Burton says

3,5

¿Estás ahí, Satanás? Soy yo, Madison. Por favor, no te lleses la impresión de que no me gusta el Infierno. No, en serio, si está muy bien. Mucho mejor de lo que yo me esperaba. En serio, está claro que te has pasado mucho tiempo trabajando muy duro en los océanos agitados y embravecidos de vómito hirviente, y en el hedor a azufre, y en las nubes de moscas negras zumbantes.

Omitamos primeramente que debía ésta reseña hace ya un mes cuando lo terminé, más o menos, pero que jamás noté que no la había hecho. Chuck Palahniuk es de esos autores con los que uno siente cierta afinidad, a pesar de jamás haberlos leído. No sé si les pasará, es una especie de conexión extraña, quizá las temáticas que toca, no lo sé, pero algo me hizo ansiar leer algo suyo con todo mi ser. "Condenada" es el primer libro suyo que leo, y francamente estoy bastante satisfecha. Se trata de una niña llamada Madison, la cual fallece en consecuencia de una sobredosis, y de ahí termina en el mismísimo infierno. La gracia de éste libro está en la manera en la que una chica de trece años ve el infierno, las dudas que le surgen, la gente extraña con la que se topa, aquellas expectativas de lo que nos encontraríamos en caso de desviarnos en nuestro camino al cielo. ¿Es malo? ¿es bueno? ¿es tan terrible como dicen que es? Ahora ella lo va a descubrir.

En términos generales, una novela que envuelve con su humor negro, por lo picante en la pluma de Palahniuk. La protagonista se torna un poco molesta, y a mi parecer, podría unirse al grupo de "Niñas que razonan y accionan como adultos a pesar de que aún estén en pañales", en el que también se uniría Trisha McFarland y muchas otras más. Ese tipo de personalidades hacen que se corte por completo la realidad que se había formado, y que algo en la historia se desconecte de manera abrupta.

La novela puede resultar un poco fuerte porque es básicamente una burla a todo, desde la religión, los ideales, la hipocresía, las apariencias, la sexualidad, la vida y la muerte. Es una novela que definitivamente puede ser catalogada de horror, pero que tiene un terror de aquellos que perturban, que incomodan, no de los que asustan y te espantan por un mes. Aún así, me pareció un libro ameno, llevadero e hilarante.

Jacob says

October 2011

Look out, Chuck Palahniuk fans! It's a Chuck Palahniuk book! Chuck Palahniuk's *Damned*, the newest Chuck Palahniuk book (by Chuck Palahniuk!) is classic Chuck Palahniuk, a wonderful addition to Chuck Palahniuk's collection of Chuck Palahniuk books, and a must-read for Chuck Palahniuk fans who love Chuck

Palahniuk and his Chuck Palahniuk books!

Meet Madison, Chuck Palahniuk's newest creation, a dead thirteen-year-old girl trapped in Hell after overdosing on marijuana (or did she? Chuck Palahniuk will keep you guessing!). And it's a Hell only Chuck Palahniuk could imagine! And you get to explore Chuck Palahniuk's Hell, with Madison and her friends--a jock, a nerd, a pretty girl, and a rebel, just like *The Breakfast Club*! Except it's set in Hell and it's by Chuck Palahniuk! Oh, isn't Chuck Palahniuk *clever*! Isn't he *witty*? Follow Madison & friends through the Dandruff Desert, past the Great Ocean of Wasted Sperm (isn't Chuck Palahniuk just so *shocking*?), to the Sea of Insects--see her masturbate a giant demon-woman with the help of a severed head (isn't Chuck Palahniuk just a *scream*?)--see her use her job in telemarketing (isn't Chuck Palahniuk a *comic mastermind*?) to convince terminally-ill Earth folk to join her in Hell (like the opposite of those support groups in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*--isn't Chuck Palahniuk a *genius*?)--see her punch Hitler in the face and take control of Hell (isn't Chuck Palahniuk *devilish*?)--join her as she meets Satan Himself (you'll never guess who Chuck Palahniuk's Satan turns out to be! He's a Satan only Chuck Palahniuk could write!)--watch as she learns a SHOCKING REVELATION (you'll never guess what Chuck Palahniuk's come up with this time!) and vows to destroy Chuck Palahniuk's Satan once and for all--IN THE NEXT BOOK!

That's right, Chuck Palahniuk fans! Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Damned* is only the first Chuck Palahniuk book in a Chuck Palahniuk trilogy! By Chuck Palahniuk! Hold on to your hats and genitalia, because Chuck Palahniuk is just getting started!

Chuck Palahniuk? Chuck Palahniuk!

Chuck Palahniuk.

(Original review)

If there was a Hell, my mom said you'd go there for wearing fur coats or buying a cream rinse tested on baby rabbits by escaped Nazi scientists in France. My dad said that if there was a devil it was Ann Coulter.
(*Damned*, p. 18)

Taking a little jab at Ann Coulter, I see. Ooh, how daring.

Are you there, Chuck? No, really, *are you there*? Maybe I'm just out of touch, but I was under the impression that it's 2011 and *nobody gives a shit about Ann Coulter anymore*. Maybe it was when she called John Edwards a fag, maybe it was a few years later when Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann came along--but let's face it, Ann Coulter is a nobody. She was replaced by younger and perkier right-wingers, and these days the best she can do is insult the stupid old queens at GOProud for money. Does she still write a regular column? Maybe. Does she have a book out? Yeah, so what. It doesn't matter. Whatever shock value she once had is completely dried up. Gone. Coulter is old, tired, and dull. A complete hack. Stale.

So, I guess the two of you make a perfect couple, don't you?

F says

Loved this book.

The breakfast club but set in Hell. And with the English Patient playing over and over (which i have seen and don't wish that upon anyone)

The first half was amazing, the last half dragged a bit for me but I still loved it.

Sick & twisted.

Unique Characters.

Short Chapters.

Unusual storyline.

ew norris says

Ugh...

My god, Chuck, what is going on? Are you OK? Do you have a brain tumor? Are you trying to get out of a contract with Doubleday? Has The Cult really done this to your ego? What happened?

It's like you're not even trying anymore to write with any kind of style and it's getting tougher and tougher to get excited about your work. "Damned" is like a 250-page fart joke. It's like you're trying so hard, pandering to those you once rejected, working so hard to hit the lowest common denominator. And we know you can do it much better than this.

It's sad really. It seems that over the course of several books you've given completely in to trivial cliché and one-shot pop fad. We know that you're the grossest and the hippest and the "most" and all, we get it, but you are going at it anymore like a cretin bully. It is getting to be a sad show. You are doing to "subversive" literature (whatever that means anymore) what the Goo Goo Dolls did to "alternative" rock.

You are better than this. Where is the insightful chaos? Where is the wink and the whisper? Where is the intensity, the fire, the flare? Where is your humor? Where did it go? "I am Jack's complete lack of surprise."

I got my hands on a bound galley of "Damned" and on that is what I am basing this review, the uncorrected proof. So, I'm hoping that a completely different book arrives on Oct. 18, much like how I kept hoping that whenever I turned a page I would happily discover that what I was trudging through was not really the book but some kind of post-modern metafictional prank. "Oh, Chuck," I would have chuckled relieved.

What I am most concerned about is this "To be continued..." business at the end. Seriously? Seriously, please, don't do that. This ain't your first rodeo. You should know better. Please come back, Chuck. We miss you.

Robyn says

I once again find myself Lamenting Good Reads' lack of half stars. This should be a 3 1/2.

I must admit, I walked into this book with a fair bit of trepidation, having felt rather lukewarm to everything that came after Haunted and been fully enraged by Pygmy. Reading this book was going to be, I thought, the

book fan's equivalent of identifying the corpse. "Yep, that's good old Chuck P. I used to love him... Pity what happened, though." And I would assert that my beloved author was dead to me, and I would be able to move on with my life. No more would I have to try to defend his bizarre missteps to the rest of my circle of literary friends; after this book, I was going to be done.

You might be expecting me to tell you at this point that the author's corpse leaped off the autopsy table, and did a little jig, and as such, I have regained all my faith in his abilities and he's my most favoritist author ever once again. Well, not quite...

The beginning of this novel was very slow and meandering, with lots of ruminating and very little action. The Palahniukisms came hard and fast: the cynical narrative character with two or three repeatable catch phrases, the funny sentence structure; if you've read even two of the author's books, you know the little stylistic flourishes I'm talking about, here. I'm not actually certain if I was deluged with them, or if I've read so much of the author's work that these devices are starting to feel repetitive for me, but it was just... too much.

Also too much was the expected jabs at upper-class white society. Yes, we get it, you hate this pseudo spiritual, pill-popping, insincere group of people. I don't like them either, but if I were a published author I would find some more interesting stuff to say about it, rather than creating these same caricature-ish straw men over and over.

The grossness in this book was once again an issue. I don't even know how to describe this, and I'm going to sound funny trying but... Grossness *can* be done artfully. Shock can be more than schlock, and in his earlier works, Palahniuk positively *nailed* this concept. It's an interesting ability to get a generation of kids raised with Ren and Stimpy cartoons to read words on a page, and then throw up in their mouths a little. It's even better when he does it and it actually adds something of worth to the overall narrative. He's consistently proven that he can pull out the making people throw up in their mouth part, but the making it worthwhile... he's been a bit shaky on that concept. This book, it falls right in the middle. Some of the grossness actually seemed to have a real point, and some of it could have been grosser, but the author showed remarkable restraint. Hell, the gigantic pile of nail clippings sounded kinda fun in a horrible way.

This pretty much reflects my feelings for the first... oh... two thirds of the book or so.

But then... Something happened. I can't quite pinpoint the exact spot, or tell you what it was precisely that caused it, but I found myself caring about Madison. I found myself *identifying* with her. Something in the book began to actually move me. I finished the last third or so, completely engrossed, despite some of the really over the top cartoonish stuff that was going on. There was a part of my brain telling me "No, this is far too silly, don't like this." but there was a bigger part telling the first part "f*** off, I'm having fun!"

So, with a "to be continued" at the end of this book, I'm hooked. You haven't charmed my pants completely off, Chuck, but you have my interest again, and I'm keeping an eye out for the next installment.

Bradley says

I enjoyed this book, but it would have been much better if it had a plot arc going on. Sometimes it's nice when authors work off an outline or just know what's going to happen next in the story rather than seeming like they're making up every little thing as they go along. Sure, there's an inciting incident and a journey with no particular destination for no particular reason than to just wander around Hell and check out the sites. And then the journey comes to an abrupt halt for no reason that I could figure out. And at first, I thought the

descriptions of hell could have been a lot more imaginative, until I realized what Palahniuk was doing with it: it was composed of human waste and sweat and discarded fingernail clippings. And once I figured out there was a reason for these choices, I admired its meaning more than I would have if the choices that he made for the details of the setting were random and extremely imaginative (which is what I would have done if I ever wrote a novel where Hell was the setting).

And sure, the protagonist experiences inner change through the book. And it has this "episodic" thing going on with the character from one thing to the next without any sort of satisfactory explanation. But unlike episodic-type of books, it just seemed like Palahniuk got tired of writing about one thing and just leaped to another.

And I really liked the meta aspect of it near the end (which I won't get into specifics about to avoid revealing spoilers), where the story actually provides an explanation as far as why the book's protagonist is pretty much like every other protagonist in each of Palahniuk's novels (while none of his novels have had an explanation like this before). And although the female protagonist may be a typical Palahniuk character, the book is written in first person and she does not "talk" like a typical Palahniuk character (or in pidgin-English), which was rather nice. Although I did not buy that the story was being told by someone who was as young as thirteen-years-old. And I don't think she had been in Hell for too long before the book started, so she wasn't exactly an immortal, wise-beyond-her-years, thirteen-year-old.

But overall, it was an extremely entertaining read that was highly flawed.

I think I hold Palahniuk to higher standards than virtually all the other authors that I read because he's the only author who I enjoy that writes books that get on the bestseller lists (at least I assume that they do) and makes big money and has legions of fans, so I'm going to be more critical of him than anyone else. Nevertheless, I don't think it would have been that difficult for him to have incorporated plot structure into the novel in order to improve it significantly.

David says

Well, I can now sit back and wait for the 2011 Palahniuk wars to commence. I've already heard the distant rumblings of such and now, based on what I've read, I know that the full slaughter will soon break. Mind you, I don't think that Palahniuk's newest work is bad. I actually enjoyed it quite a bit. It won't rank up there with some of his books that I regard as imperative in order to not have lived a wasted life, but it was a fun read. There are some good characters, good description, and an interesting re-imagining of hell and the after life. However, I think that a certain segment of Palahniuk's fan base is going to be enraged. Having gone fanatical for some of his other books, they will be unwilling to let him ever write anything that isn't almost exactly the same. They will be disappointed. Although, what right will they have to bitch? Palahniuk has already written some amazing books. Perhaps this book is more "good" than "amazing," but that is Chuck's prerogative and not his fans. Regardless, I can already hear the bitching coming from over the horizon...

Kemper says

If a thirteen year old dead girl in Hell stops a rampaging Godzilla-sized demon by sexually pleasuring it, would you consider that necrophilia, bestiality or kiddie porn?

I'm not sure either, but these are the kind of questions that can come up when you read a Chuck Palahniuk

novel.

Madison is the very smart but overweight daughter of a rich and famous Hollywood power couple that finds herself dead and in Hell after experimenting with marijuana. Turns out that all the whacko Christian fundamentalists were right after all, and it's very easy to wind up downstairs after you kick the bucket. (Apparently we should all lay off our car horns and using the F-word in conversation.)

While Hell is very dirty and pretty gross, Madison finds herself some friends that form a Breakfast Club-type group, and she uses her Hell-job as a telemarketer to spread the word that being dead isn't all that bad.

This one follows the standard Palahniuk set-up. We've got a main character who finds themselves in bizarre circumstances telling us a story that eventually explains how they ended up there. Along the way, he takes his usual shots at materialism and celebrity culture while throwing in some tremendously gross and shocking tidbits. There's some of his usual twisted humor and clever observations about the hypocrisy of people in general as well as the ways we try to deny that we're all eventually going to be taking a dirt nap.

Damned seems wildly unfocused though. A lot of time is spent on the Breakfast Club set-up and then it's almost immediately dropped. Also, this Hell seems kind of weak. Sure people get eaten by demons and have jobs as telemarketers and providing content for web porn, but I was expecting Palahniuk to really deliver on the whole eternal torment thing. Meh. Even his attempts at the gross out like hills of discarded fingernail clippings or a sea of sperm seem kind of listless and half-hearted.

It also felt like Palahniuk couldn't really decide on an ending and in the last quarter of the book, Madison cycles through several personas and shifting attitudes about her life and death. There's a couple of revelations late in the game that just confuse everything even more.

The book ends on a To Be Continued note. I'm not sure whether Palahniuk was being serious about that or not, but I don't have a urge to read any more of this story if he does carry on with it.

Eddie Dobiecki says

Are you there, Chuck Palahniuk? It's me, Eddie.

I know no one dares editing your stuff any more, since you're a genius and all, but do you think, maybe, you could not use the same rhetorical device as many times as there are pages? I'm dead, not illiterate.

The M. Night Shyamalan of literature, Palahniuk has found a way to transcend the accusations of cop-out twist ending that he, like Shyamalan, must suffer: the not-at-all-contrived-or-hackneyed "To Be Continued"!

Now, some people might say that, to justify a "To Be Continued" ending, the work must be especially long, or have a singular narrative thrust that completes itself with an overarching aspect to it. Or perhaps an episodic structure, where the entire plot is resolved, but a with a quick, jump-cut scene, the book ends with Something About To Happen.

Palahniuk shows us just how simple-minded that view is: *Damned* is short, nonsensical, and pointless. Palahniuk, king of the ridiculous premises, ensures a few gags are worked to death (to DEATH, get it?), and makes sure to end in a scene that makes particularly little sense.

But I get ahead of myself.

Damned is, and it should go without saying there will be spoilers below, the story of little 13-year-old Madison Spencer, who dies and is sent to hell, which is apparently where the vast majority of people must go if the criteria listed are true. And of course, everyone lies about why they're there. (An unreliable narrator? Way to stretch your boundaries!)

The child of movie stars, Madison has dozens of adopted siblings she mostly doesn't bother to name, and parents that she doesn't connect with. She makes witty observations like "The magazine took her picture arriving at the Oscars red carpet with my dad driving them both in a dinky electric car, but really, when nobody's looking they go everywhere in a leased Gulfstream jet, even if it's just to pick up their dry cleaning, which they send to have cleaned in France."

Celebrities are hypocritical examples of conspicuous consumption? Mr. Palahniuk, do go on! What a muckraker!

After escaping from her cell with her Breakfast Club group (Madison fancies herself the Ally Sheedy type), she travels the fantastical landscape of hell with the speed and sudden quick-travel that only someone who hates writing description can give his characters.

A 13-year-old girl pleasuring a demon by sticking a severed head in the vicinity of its giant clitoris, and having that demon be just so grateful that it gives them all, even the one it just ate whose severed head was all that was left, a ride? Why, how witty and insightful and not-at-all desperately edgy that was. I swoon.

Madison reaches the central hub of Hell and gets a job as a telemarketer, where she spends her time annoying the living and convincing them that Hell isn't all that bad, really. And you get paid in Reese's.

Eventually, she takes over hell in a move that can only be described as "quick"; the 13-year-old even wins a fistfight with a demon.

But despite her chapter-beginning love letters to him, Satan is nowhere to be found until the very end, where the shocking what-a-twist moment happens, before there's a skosh of what I guess is supposed to be denouement and then the cliffhanger. The book has less than 250 pages, and yet somehow requires a To Be Continued.

Palahniuk supposedly spent some time reading Judy Blume books before writing this. If I were Ms. Blume, I'd ask him to claim he was reading Beverly Cleary.

In closing, I got this free from the library as an e-book, so while I can't ask for a refund of money, I can wish that I had the time I spent reading it back almost as much as when I made the mistake of watching Cloverfield.

Megan Anderson says

If you, like me, have been suspecting Chuck Palahniuk is heading in an irreversible downward spiral, this book will not change your mind.

Chuck Palahniuk used to be my favorite author. My high school copy of Fight Club is highlighted and dog eared; I included a quote from the book next to my signature in people's yearbooks. The book he signed for

me during his “Roses and Shit” tour for Haunted is framed in a shadow box. (I know: I’m lame. Let’s move on.) But I won’t even say he’s my favorite author anymore for the same reason I stopped saying Squad Five-0 was my favorite band in 2002—after they’d cranked out several terrible albums and changed their style dramatically. I feel uncomfortable professing my love unless I can love the whole body of work. It’s sort of like a boyfriend that turned into a real jerk towards the end of the relationship: you might be nostalgic for the good times, but you’re not going to walk around professing your love for him. You’re going to break up with him (hopefully).

While I can’t bring myself to break up with Palahniuk (I’m much too curious for that), my loyalty has definitely wavered. I used to buy an advance copy or rush out to purchase his new books as soon as they were published, but now I wait until I can find them at a used book store. I don’t know if I’ve outgrown him (gasp!) or if his writing really is getting worse. I still love the early books (and Rant), so I suspect it’s the latter. Maybe it’s something to do with being pressured by the publisher to crank out a book a year.

After reading Dainty Squid’s Review of Damned, I was cautiously hopeful. And then quickly disappointed.

Damned has most of Palahniuk’s signature elements. The material is imaginative, shocking, and transgressive as always; his vision of hell as a disgusting landscape with landmarks such as “the Dandruff Desert” and “Vally of Disposable Diapers” is inventive and stomach churning. That’s good. As is his idea that every deity to fall from favor in human history becomes a demon (I love it when a little anthropology is thrown into fiction). What’s missing is the classic Palahniuk plot twist (it’s planted to early and is much too callable) and the heart. The thing I’ve always loved most about Palahniuk is his creation of seemingly despicable characters that are so human you can’t help but love them. Those characters have been nowhere to be found in the last few books. Try as I might, I couldn’t bring myself to care about Madison, the protagonist. It’s hard to keep reading a book when you don’t care what happens.

The other books I read this month may have made Damned seem worse than it was, to be fair. Vonnegut’s view of the afterlife in *God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian* was so much more meaningful. And Dave Eggers’s short story in *Speaking with the Angel* was narrated convincingly from the perspective of a dog (a dog!), which only shed light on Palahniuk’s inability to write in any voice other than his own (Madison is not convincing as a thirteen-year-old girl for a second). When I go out with a group of super hot girls, I look awful. I think that this might be what was happening here.

I’ll at least give it one more chance in the form of a re-read before I trade it in at a used bookstore.

Darwin8u says

“What makes earth feel like hell is our expectation that it should feel like heaven.”
? Chuck Palahniuk, *Damned*

Reading this wasn't Heaven (brilliant) and it certainly wasn't Hell (horrible). It was just kinda purgatory, luke warm. Read almost as an obligation. Perhaps, I've grown too old. Perhaps, CP has grown too old. The shock is gone. All shock is gone?

There is also a bunch of Hell fiction out there. I still prefer Steven Peck's *A Short Stay in Hell* and of course Dante's (not Dan Brown's) *Inferno*. This one is a mixture of the *Breakfast Club* meets *Blume's Are You There God? It's Me*, *Margaret* with a dash of *Jane Eyre* for spice. It certainly is transgressive in parts (her first battle with a demon in hell was, um, *interesting*), but it also is a bit uneven, and actually boring in parts.

So, not my favorite Palahniuk novel but also not my least favorite. Not bad enough to keep me from reading the rest of Palahniuk's pile, just not good enough that I'll read them tomorrow. Hell part 2 (Doomed) can wait.

Scott says

Fifty pages into *Damned* I was pitching it to my friends, selling them on reading about eternal torments, daemons, and hellfire - all hilariously done in the style Palahniuk has made his own.

Those first fifty pages are pretty entertaining. Madison, a sad, overweight rich kid, drops dead (from a weed overdose) and finds herself in hell. This is isn't the standard lake-o-fire Hell either - this is Hell like you've never imagined it - an underworld that is as amusing as it is gross (and it's really gross). The landscape of Palahniuk's Hell is spectacularly icky- mountains comprised entirely of nail clippings, an ever-growing sea of ejaculate (fed by every act of masturbation on earth), vast dandruff deserts, that kind of thing. Madison finds herself a breakfast club style group of friends and sets out on a journey across damnation and up the hellish hierarchy. It's all rather amusing and spiced with the usual cutting pop culture references and jabs at both hypocritical liberals and right-wing nut jobs like Ann Coulter. So far, so Palahniuk.

Fifty pages later I was calling friends to retract my recommendation. Very quickly the humour in *Damned* wears thin and the plot - which often seems little more a series of unimportant signposts on Madison's journey to become a big-time hell-boss - starts to feel perfunctory. The whole book begins to feel as though some good ideas for a short-story had been thrown onto the rack and tortuously stretched into a full novel. I eventually goaded myself to the final page and was confronted with a 'to be continued' - a frustrating finish for a story this thin.

It surprises me that the guy with the chops to write *Fight Club* could take a scenario as rich as the Inferno and write a book that never ignites. There's a great deal of unrealised potential in *Damned*. The whole book feels like it's racing to get to its underwhelming ending, powering past interesting lookouts, intriguing roadside attractions and picturesque seaside towns on the way to the reading equivalent of a weekend getaway in a malarial swamp.

Reading a promising book that lets you down is its own special kind of hell, and I have a suggestion for a new underworld location in *Damned's* sequel - The Dire Library Of Disappointment, a sadistic institution stocked entirely with novels that begin well then descend into aimlessness and unearned cliffhanger endings.

Steve Lowe says

It was... you know... eh. Don't get me wrong, well written, with some solid Palahniukian things to say about... things and stuff. But overall? Shit, I don't know.

I didn't really go into this book with any kind of expectation. It seems two camps have emerged in the Chuck Palahniuk fandom world - the group that's tired of that "Chuck" voice that every main character seems to have and wishes he'd branch out, and the group that's tired of Chuck trying to branch out and do something that doesn't read like a Chuck book. I fall in between I suppose. I liked PYGMY until the end, but my problem with that book didn't have to do with the voice or the "Chuckitude" of it, more with the copout of an ending.

I guess this is Chuck's curse, to have all of his work forever compared to his first, great breakthrough. Either it's not enough like it, or it's too much like it. I think my problem with DAMNED is, Chuck's heart just doesn't seem to be into it. To put it another way, this felt like book writing instead of story telling. Felt like fiction manufacturing instead of yarn spinning. By the time I got to the TO BE CONTINUED... at the end, I really didn't even have the energy to be annoyed. I laughed a few times, kind of got to like the Madison character, wondered why all the candy in Hell didn't melt, but mostly just felt really noncommittal by the end.

All I really want is to read a good, entertaining story. That's all I'm looking for at this point. If I get something more out of it, then that's just the unexpected gravy atop the mashed potato. (The yellow kind they served with school lunch, that seems so delicious and magical now that I haven't had it for 20 years.) It's not you, Chuck, it's me. Will I read the sequel(s)? Yeah, most likely. But, again, I won't go into it with any kind of expectations. I grew up rooting for the Chicago Cubs. I've learned not to have expectations. I am broken.

Gina says

Tedious, try-hard and frustratingly inconsistent. Chuck Palahniuk is completely incapable of writing as a 13-year-old girl, particularly a girl of the same generation as Madison would ostensibly be. He just sounds like a 40-something white guy who's really impressed with himself and his ability to write. I can't say that I've read anything else by Palahniuk, but this book was all I needed to ensure that I'll avoid him for the rest of my life. Madison doesn't know what French kissing is, but describes in graphic detail one of the most disturbing sex scenes I've ever come across in any book. Her education level is *wildly* out of order with her age. Her character bounces around all over the place. And then the cop-out twist comes along, and it seems like nothing more than Palahniuk's own realization that he wrote an amazingly inconsistent book and readjustment to cover up the problems without having to go back and fix anything. It could just be that this was a personal experiment of his in writing while on a variety of drugs. That would be a fitting reason for how much of this book is just utterly idiotic and lost in superfluous, aren't-I-so-daring gory details. An obnoxious, annoying book.

Mary (BookHounds) says

quite possibly my favorite book of the year!

MY THOUGHTS

ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT

So, if Christopher Moore (think Abby Normal from Bite Me) and Judy Blume got together and wrote a book dedicated to a life lived in hell as a sort of CandyLand game with all of the twists and turns that move a player forward; where candy is currency. Each chapter starts with a note from Madison, the eleven year old protagonist address to Satan. As she accepts her death and now after life, she finds that even small infractions are enough to send you to the underworld. Honk your car horn? You get 700, once you surpass that magic number, kiss heaven good bye. Same thing for being rude, an idiot and not picking up your trash. As far as Madison can figure out, she ended up in hell because she smoke pot. There is more to the story than that, but you have to read this one to the bitter end to find out exactly how she died.

The writing is so superb that I can't even describe the pleasure of each word and the placement. Most writers have one or two quotable lines, but this whole book is entirely quotable. I have read most of the author's

work and this totally redeemed him in my eyes for Pygmy. I had a hard time reading that one. In no way is this book suitable for younger teens but more adventurous ones should really enjoy this. It takes young adult paranormal drama to the next level. Hell is also the location of telemarketers. Madison rules hell as she convinces people to give up their eternity for hell and become the top recruiter on her way to world domination. She does get her chance for salvation, but instead decides she is more suited to a life as a ruler.

David says

Palahniuk shows more sympathy for the Devil than for liberals in this book. Which is not to say that this reads like an axe-grinding conservative polemic (I have no idea what Palahniuk's politics are), but the targets of his satire in *Damned* are Hell and Hollywood, and he makes Hell seem like the less awful place.

A word to all the Goodreads reviewers who classified this book as "Young Adult" -- are you nuts? Did you actually read this book? Or do you just assume that any book with a teenage protagonist must be YA?

(Yup - I just checked and apparently 30 people think Stephen King's *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* is a children's book because the main character is a nine-year-old. *Context*, people!)

The protagonist of *Damned* is Madison, the 13-year-old daughter of two super-rich ultra-liberals, a billionaire and a movie star. Palahniuk is pitch-perfect if vicious in his skewering of poor, fat Madison's vaguely-loving but utterly narcissistic parents, right down to that perfect Hollywood brat name, "Madison." Initially I thought they were all just going to be caricatures, but while Palahniuk does throw every cruel, satirical stereotype there is at Madison and her parents, from their brood of fashionable adopted foreign babies to their much-abused Somalian maids to their brainless orthodox leftism, Madison, at least, develops into a real person. She is pretty much the sort of person you'd expect a girl who might have been fundamentally decent but raised in an over-privileged moral vacuum to be: she's a horrible, annoying brat with occasional flashes of humanity.

Madison's parents leave her alone in a hotel room with one of her many adopted siblings, whom they collect like Paris Hilton collects purse dogs, and she winds up dead. How exactly this happened is one of the twists which I won't spoil, but most of the book takes place in Hell, which Madison entertainingly guides the reader through accompanied by several other vapid, damned teenagers.

I have yet to understand what makes Chuck Palahniuk such a cult favorite. From what I can see, his books have a certain cleverness to them, usually cleverness piled atop cleverness, but it's a clever that substitutes for any depth or lasting impact, and sometimes he takes shortcuts on the way to clever, which is where you get drink-spraying images like a prepubescent girl masturbating a giant demoness with the severed (but still living) head of one of her fellow damned souls. I mean, really, Chuck? What was the *point* of that scene other than to prove that you could write it?

But I am being a little unfair here. There was a point, which is that *Damned* is a riff on *Inferno*. And *The Breakfast Club*. And *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. And also *Gulliver's Travels* and probably half a dozen other literary influences besides the ones I spotted. Palahniuk is clever and well-read. And I enjoyed *Damned*. Parts of it really are pretty damned funny. It's not a work of genius, but Palahniuk's version of Hell, where *The English Patient* plays in an endless loop, people get damned for breaking any one of hundreds of arbitrary rules (like peeing in a swimming pool more than twice in your life, so as Madison says, most people are already damned to Hell by age five), and damned souls make up the majority of telemarketers who call you during dinner (you knew this, didn't you?), has the sort of bizarre, macabre, and uneasily funny tone of a

genuine satire.

Madison's story is one of eventually coming to terms with the fact that she is, well, damned. In the process she practically takes over Hell and also turns out to be really good at telemarketing.

This book is a little bent, like the author, but if the sense of humor I describe does not put you off, you will probably enjoy it.

Emily says

I wanted to finish the book before I did a full review on it, but some things just cannot wait..and this is one of them.

I really try to like Palahniuk. His earlier stuff..brilliant. But lately, especially in the case of *Damned*, all I'm reading is shock value nonsense. You know, I get it. You are a very intelligent man, Mr. Palahniuk. You know a lot and you have very opinionated views on the world. How bout writing an essay on why you think the Hollywood celebrity crowd is wasting their time trying to stay young instead of prattling on disguised as a 13-year old who, if I may say, would not know all those fancy words? Of how bout just writing a decent story that doesn't consider it's sole mission to offend/shock as many people as you can? I'm halfway done with the book and like I said, I plan to finish it and if anything I've said needs amended, I will fix and apologize and all that goey stuff. But I have a strong feeling my review is going to stay just like it is.

Okay, I have finished the book. Yes, my current claims still stand but I'd like to add something. I think I get so upset with this man is because I think he's a superb writer. Imagery is his forte and I feel like he's wasting it with all this muck stuff. He has a gift and he submerges it in filth. I'm being dramatic, I know. It's much easier for to rant about something I dislike than to praise something. Gah, the potential! The potential!

Edward Lorn says

3.5 stars.

Dear God,

I want to go to Hell, 'kay? Thanks bunches!

Damned is the first book I've enjoyed from Palahniuk since... Diary, I think. His first four or five novels were fantastic, and then we received such disasters as Tell Tale, Snuff, and Pygmy (The latter was written entirely in phonetic English. Le sigh...). Because I was so shell shocked by Pygmy I completely skirted Rant, because it seemed to be written in the form of interviews, a style I've never enjoyed. The only reason I picked up Damned is that I found a hardcover edition for three bucks. Boy, am I ever glad I bought it.

I had big fun traversing Chuck Palahniuk's version of Hades. His descriptions are vivid and disgusting, just the way I like my hellish landscapes. A place where candy bars are used as a form of currency and Hitler gets what's coming to him is a place I want to vacation. A standout section of this book for me was the gang riding a giantess into the central hub of Hell. What preludes this ride is some of the funniest adult

entertainment I've ever read. Gives a whole new meaning to the term giving head.

I must note that I was rather taken aback by the way the author tackled a sensitive subject: having a boy brag about being a school shooter. Even though the kid's lying, it took me out of the story for a second so that I could consider whether or not I wanted to continue. If you think you'd be put off by such, you might want to skip this book. I don't know why I was surprised, given that Palahniuk's never been known for being politically correct, but my own personal opinion is that the scene was tactless and unnecessary.

One of the major selling points of a Chuck Palahniuk book is the guarantee of a twist. Damned is no different. Somehow, I didn't see the mid-point mindfuck coming, even though it was pissing in my face the entire time, so my hat's off to the author for that one. Yet, I was disappointed in the final curve ball. Seemed... oddly enough, very Stephen King-ish. You'll have to read this one to understand why I say that, but if you liked the final three Dark Tower novels, you should love Damned.

In summation: Not Palahniuk's best, but well worth the read. I will be reading the sequel, Doomed, in the near future, and I'm looking forward to more of the author's unique imagings. I've heard it said that readers of Palahniuk judge one another on which of his books are their favorite. Here's mine: Invisible Monsters. Nuff said.
