



In the Middle of the Night

By Robert Cormier

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Eight years before Denny Colbert was born, his father was involved in a tragic accident that killed 22 children. Now Denny is 16, and all he wants is to be like other kids his age. But he isn't allowed to answer the telephone or have a driver's license, and his family is constantly moving from town to town--all because people can't forget what happened long ago.

When Denny defies his parents one afternoon and answers the telephone, he finds himself drawn into a plot for revenge which may prove deadly.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sixteen-year-old Denny wonders if his family will ever recover from the tragedy that predates his own birth: 22 children were killed in an accident at the movie theater where his then-teenage father worked. Publicly blamed although legally exonerated, Denny's father still receives hate mail and threatening calls; now that the 25th anniversary of the accident is nearing, Denny's parents step up their efforts to avoid reporters and curious strangers. But the seductive voice of an anonymous phone caller lures Denny out of isolation. Eager to meet the caller face to face, the teen enters into a dangerous game of cat and mouse, eventually landing in a situation as horrific as the one his father experienced years ago. One of the eeriest of Cormier's thrillers, this account of vengeance and obsession provides the brand of suspense that has earned him so many fans. Although the bizarre qualities of the psychotic mystery caller are, perhaps, overdrawn, most characters are convincingly and enticingly complex. Ultimately, the masterful crafting of the book's intricate plot and surprise ending more than make up for a few hard-to-swallow gimmicks. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up?When a balcony collapsed during a special magic show in a rundown, neighborhood movie theater, 22 disadvantaged children died. Although he was never charged with any wrongdoing, John Paul Colbert, who was 16 at the time, was working as an usher and accidentally caused a fire that contributed to the tragedy. He resolutely refused to comment on what happened even after the theater's owner committed suicide and the public clamored for someone to be held responsible. Many of the victims' relatives blamed John Paul for the incident and tormented him into adulthood. Years later, his son Denny, now 16, begins to receive the same harassing phone calls. Resentful of his father's long passivity, Denny resolves not to follow in the man's footsteps. Intersecting plot lines rush together in an exciting climax that reveals the relationships between some key characters. Parallel in plot elements and themes to Cormier's previous YA titles, especially *We All Fall Down* (Dell, 1993) and *Tunes for Bears to Dance to* (Delacorte, 1992), this book seems more accessible, especially to horror/mystery fans. While grim and terrifying in some respects, this is not, *in toto*, a bleak novel. Its style is reminiscent of Jay Bennett's, with fairly long passages of dialogue that are heavy with foreshadowing. Unresolved details detract only slightly from the power of the prose to address the painful process of maturing and of beginning to understand and accept adult roles. Readers experience several time shifts and must discern the identity of several narrative voices while grappling with complex themes concerning tragedy, guilt, responsibility, and expiation. YAs willing to invest some intellectual effort will be amply rewarded by this sophisticated psychological thriller.?Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Jr. High School, Iowa City, IA

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 10^12. Almost 25 years ago, on Halloween, Denny's father was an usher at a theater that collapsed, killing 22 children and injuring others. Although he was absolved of any guilt, his family has continued to be harassed by those needing someone to blame. Sixteen-year-old Denny has been forced to lead a sheltered life, moving often, making no friends, even forbidden to answer the phone. In the tragedy's twenty-fifth anniversary year, Denny marshals the strength to rebel when he finds himself engaged in a suspenseful, sensual telephone game with a "victim" bent on revenge. Once again, Cormier explores the underside of human emotions: hatred, guilt, thirst for revenge. From the first page, readers will be caught up in the story as Denny is dragged closer and closer to apparent doom at the hands of someone too sick for Denny to defend himself against. The ending lacks resolution, leaving Denny with an obsession he might never escape

and his father struggling with what is clearly unjustified guilt--exactly the kind of ending Cormier fans have come to expect. *Jeanne Triner*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Danielle Smith:

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Lisa Madruga:

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