

#MurderTrending

Gretchen McNeil

Freeform, August 7, 2018

Reviews

[Kirkus 6/18/2018](#)

After a wrongful conviction, a terrified teen must fight for survival on a lethal reality show in McNeil's (*I'm Not Your Manic Pixie Dream Girl*, 2016, etc.) latest thriller. In a distressingly familiar world where a reality star has been elected president and the penal system has been outsourced to a twisted producer called The Postman, "justice" is now meted out via a Survivor-esque app. Criminals are sent to Alcatraz 2.0, an island near San Francisco, where they are executed in the most entertaining ways possible by professional killers. When Latina teen Dee Guerrero is convicted of her stepsister's murder after a bogus trial, she refuses to be executed for a crime she didn't commit just to boost ratings. She soon discovers that she is not the only innocent person on the island, but as the teens begin to build alliances, The Postman's rules seem to change—and not in their favor. This laudable and campy attempt at YA's answer to *Black Mirror* throws a few too many things into the mix. Critiques of capital punishment, privatized prisons, and a populace voluntarily subjugated by social media—it's so much, so fast that the narrative relies on breakneck pacing and scenes of gruesome and innovative violence to move the plot forward. With inconsistent and incohesive character development, this is one for action and annihilation fans. Cringes on every page—many of them good. (Thriller. 14-18)

Horn Book Guide, 04/01/2019

In the near future, executioners pride themselves on killing their subjects in increasingly creative ways and live-streaming the deaths on social media. Dee Guerrero is surprised to wake up imprisoned at Alcatraz 2.0 and tapped as the next to die. Framed for her stepsister's murder, Dee has to take down the system and prove her own innocence in this gory story surprisingly infused with witty satire.

[Publishers Weekly, 09/17/2018](#)

In this biting satire of reality shows and today's U.S. political atmosphere, 17-year-old Dee Guerrero, framed for the murder of her stepsister, is dropped onto a nightmarish island in San Francisco Bay where she must fight for her life against state-sponsored killers. Dee is sentenced to Alcatraz 2.0, a show and attendant app created by an anonymous television mogul that offer "televised capital punishment." After accidentally killing her would-be executioner in self-defense, she becomes an instant sensation. Now branded the #CinderellaSurvivor and forced to portray a Disney princess for audience appeal, she forms a tenuous alliance with fellow inmates in a desperate attempt to unravel the island's secrets and expose the injustice of their situation, all while suspecting she was brought there for a specific reason. McNeil (*I'm*

Not Your Manic Pixie Dream Girl) offers a tense, fast-paced tale that balances gore (numerous people die in creative, occasionally graphic ways), pop culture, and dark comedy. Ages 14–up. Agent: Ginger Clark, Curtis Brown Ltd. (Aug.)

Voice of Youth Advocates, 08/01/2018

In the near future, Dee Guerrero is wrongfully convicted of her stepsister's murder and sent to Alcatraz 2.0, an island prison where inmates are executed in elaborate, thematic displays. Executioners, such as Cecil B. DeViolent, whose victims die in re-created movie scenes, and Prince Slycer, who dresses his victims as Disney princesses, stage the kills, streamed live on an app for the entire nation to watch. All of it is controlled by an entertainment mogul known only as The Postman. On her first day, Dee manages to survive Prince Slycer and takes up with a few other Alcatraz 2.0 inmates. Dubbed the Death Row Breakfast Club by The Postman's legions of fans, it is not long before they realize that a conspiracy is afoot and set out to get to the bottom of it. McNeil uses familiar tropes to create a unique (sometimes sinisterly humorous) story set in a chillingly realistic near-future world. No justice is served on Alcatraz 2.0, and human lives are a commodity to be used for entertainment. Dee and her fellow inmates are an eclectic bunch, and the many twists and turns of the plot keep the reader engaged. Readers who love dystopias and murder mysteries will be drawn to this book. The story contains several graphic kill scenes.—Elizabeth Norton.

[School Library Journal, 08/01/2018](#)

Gr 9 Up—This dystopian horror novel imagines a world where the height of entertainment is watching a livestream of convicted felons getting hunted down and murdered by professional executioners in the most macabre prison imaginable. The facility, set on a remote island, is managed by a man known only as The Postman, and he makes money by streaming the prison feed over an app and selling related merchandise. His innumerable young fans are rabid for watching violent justice being served to death row criminals. In fact, they "ship" them, lust after them, and follow their moves—just like any other reality television stars. The latest addition to the island is Dee Guerrero, a 16-year-old who has been framed for the murder of her stepsister. Now Dee and the other innocent inmates must band together and fight for their lives if they are to find a way out. The fast-paced action will appeal to fans of *The Hunger Games*, though character development is often sacrificed to keep up the frantic pace. There are many graphic descriptions of blood, guts, and gore relating to the murders and lots of colorful language. Embedded in the novel are chat transcripts from the app, which have the potential to spark discussion and raise moral and ethical questions that relate to contemporary social psychology and use of social media. VERDICT A gory thriller that moves at breakneck speed, this book will be hard to put down for older teens with a penchant for horror.—Shannon O'Connor, Unami Middle School, Chalfont, PA Copyright 2018 Reed Business Information.

[Booklist, 08/01/2018](#)

Grades 9-12 - The U.S. criminal justice system has been outsourced to an entity known only as the Postman and his Alcatraz 2.0 app. It is within this world Dee finds herself when accused of murdering her stepsister. On Alcatraz 2.0, government-sanctioned killers hunt down and murder criminals for the public's viewing pleasure. Dee miraculously survives her first night and is given the moniker #CinderellaSurvivor. When the killers begin to target her new friends and make cryptic comments that allude to Dee's past as a kidnapping survivor, it becomes apparent that the Postman's interest in her is very personal. McNeil has written a compelling story that cleverly mixes dystopian, survivalist, horror, and mystery genres together. Readers will relish the mischievous traps set by the killers—such as Gucci Hangman, a drag queen who always kills with Gucci scarves—as well as the pure logic Dee uses to begin taking them down one at a time. Give to fans of action, mysteries, and Saw-esque tricks and traps.

Crowdsourced Reviews

[Goodreads](#)

Awards/Lists

- 2019 YALSA Teens' Top Ten Title #1 Pick (#MURDERTRENDING)
- 2019 YALSA Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers (#MURDERTRENDING)
- International Literacy Association's 2019 Young Adults' Choices Reading List (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Official Junior Library Guild Selection for Fall 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Barnes & Noble: Best Books of 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Brightly Teen: 18 of the Most Exciting YA Books to Read in 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Goodreads: Most Popular Books Published in August 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Seventeen Magazine: The 20 Best YA Books of 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)

- Refinery 29: The Ultimate YA Beach Reads Of 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- EpicReads: The 18 Most Anticipated YA Books to Read in August 2018 (#MURDERTRENDING)
- Hypable: The August 2018 YA book releases that need to be on your to-read list (#MURDERTRENDING)

Response to challenges

None found

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