



A Stranger North

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Nine years ago, the Desolation laid waste to Earth's human population, leaving only tiny, scattered pockets of civilization in its wake. Now, John Osborne drifts through the ravaged land, his only companion the six-shooter at his side.

When a young girl finds John unconscious in the northern Minnesota wilderness, she urges her village to help him. But while John is regaining his health, the girl mysteriously vanishes. Recognizing that the disappearance is no mere coincidence, John takes it upon himself to find and bring her back safely.

Outmanned and outgunned, the deck appears to be stacked against John. Little do his adversaries know that he has a turbo-charged bionic surprise lurking under his left sleeve...

A Stranger North Details

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From Reader Review A Stranger North for online ebook

Tris says

I received the book from the author (thank you again) and I began reading it straight away. It is fairly short, just a hundred pages, so I finished in just a day. I am impressed by the writing skills: the plot is intriguing, just a little too straightforward in his development and the main character has the right amount of mystery, I was looking forward to know more of him, but at the end almost all my questions remained unanswered, so I am a little disappointed. A very good first work.

Alex says

It was a short read. I started and finished this in one night. Granted that night was from 5 to 1 AM but still. Anyways, it was VERY intense towards the end, and that's why I read until 1 AM as I wanted to know what happens. I do feel like certain sections could have more stuff in it, like what the heck the people look like. All I got was 2 Japanese kids, and that was at the end, and a bearded guy, so naturally I thought of someone who looks like they're from Duck Dynasty.

I did get a bit worried in the beginning because it started off being WAYYY too masculine for me, but it mellowed out as soon as Emiko was introduced. I feel like it wasn't very developed and maybe something I could pull off myself for like NaNoWriMo or something like that. However, as I'm trying to reach my 50 books in a year goal, this was very easy to read.

Definitely for someone looking for a good, short, easy read and a not so terrible cliffhanger for a series.

Mark Fuller says

I liked the book. It started slow and ended with a cliffhanger, but it was a good read. I'm looking forward to seeing how the story continues. The book left a lot of unanswered questions and added new characters right up to the end.

My only complaint is the lack of a logical pause. I would have like a bit more before ending the book. The way he wrote the book is definitely to create a cliff hanger. Anyone can stop a story, but it takes a genius to know the perfect place.

I fully intend to continue the series.

Darren Mitton says

I received a copy of this via goodreads.com - Interesting work! Part dystopian post-apocalyptic nightmare & part almost western. Recommended for a good, adventurous read!

Dionne says

Great story!

I couldn't put it down. John is a great story where he triumphs over evil. Something no one the story would do, until a girl gets kidnapped. Looking forward to reading more about John and his adventures. I also hope he survives.

Daniela says

I received a free copy of The Northland Chronicles: A Stranger North from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Likes: Beards, frankenmoose, frankenmeese, rambling professors, sass, more sass, "Who *is* that guy?", mama bears, arms *wink wink*

A common problem I've noticed with new authors is that they don't really do very well handling dialogue. Let me explain. Many of the characters end up sounding the same, don't each have their own unique touch. Mr J.Olsen however, had no such issue. In fact, he handled the characters dialogue very well and left me impressed with how easily he could get into of each of their mindsets. For example, the ramblings of the professor (which I loved), Nathan's confusion at how to handle his younger sister, Emiko, constantly wondering what his father would have done in his position. I found this specially evident when (view spoiler) I found this particularly effective because this is likely how a young girl would react- with such naivety. And for the author to have portrayed this while being not only a different age but also gender, is very well done.

I noticed a few people speaking negatively of the fact that A Stranger North is so short and leaves questions unanswered, there is one reason for both: as the author mentioned, this is only **episode** one of The Northland Chronicles! There are answers that the protagonist himself does not yet have. If all these questions were to be answered immediately, what would there be left to write about? I for one enjoy discovering things at the same pace as the main character, it adds excitement and helps you empathize with them. Which is necessary for a succesful series. You need to want to come back, to see how the protagonist is doing as well as all the other characters you love, in search of the answers not yet in your possession. Which is exactly how I feel after having finished this brilliant piece.

I'm going to be completely honest and say that I was not expecting to enjoy The Northland Chronicles as much as I did! Oh John.. Osbourne..Ozzie. I really can't resist those heroes that nobody can see coming. The composed, quiet ones. So quiet that when they finally do show their complete badassery, they make the other characters exclaim "Who *is* this guy?!". I almost expected Ozzie to crack one of Horatio Caine's one liners, stroking his beard as opposed to putting on sunglasses.

Great job, Mr Olsen. I was definitely left wanting more. Not because there was too little, but because what there was, was very well done. There honestly was not a point that I did not feel thoroughly entertained or unwanting to read on and I anxiously await the next installment. I will definitely be joining Ozzie on as

many adventures as he will allow me too!

Aeshna Juncea says

Left me wanting more BUT I'd like it grittier! I know you're not going to get that in YA books though but I'll read any dystopian/apocalyptic I can!

Thomas Sabo says

I must admit I'm vastly enjoying the independent author revolution Amazon has brought to the world through digital publishing. I've discovered some amazing authors, beginning with Hugh Howey's "Wool" series and now finishing my most recent find "The Northland Chronicles: A Stranger North".

This story doesn't disappoint, and I've read a few I couldn't get through from other indie authors. The author here crafts an interesting tale that puts us firmly in a world that has already de-evolved, but doesn't slap us in the face trying to tell us the "why" and "how" too fast.

There is action right out of the gates that does a good job at setting the hook and firmly establishing the protagonist as someone you want to know more about. Character development is solid and the human element is faithfully portrayed in a non-sappy way. There are a couple of cringe-worthy lines...the radio communication with "The General" made me a little crazy (ending each transmission with "This is the General, over and out"), but I'll allow it, as it was the only thing that really stood out.

This is an easy read, and a trip I'm glad I chose to embark on. I'll definitely be buying the next in the series when it comes out. Keep up the good work, Mr. Olsen!

Clouds says

[
I was gifted a free copy of A Stranger North in return for an honest review.
(hide spoiler)]

Justarius says

This book had its good parts, and I really wanted to give it 3 stars. But in the end, it was too short. And too long. Let me explain.

The opening grabs your attention, introducing you to a mysterious man with a mysterious power and past. He reminds me of Wolverine from X-Men, actually. You want to know more about him and how he got there. Why the world is the way it is. Who is after him and why.

But the middle of the story doesn't really provide many detailed answers. There are answers, but they are all

sort of vague. Instead, it fleshes out supporting characters and their town. Now if these characters were X-Men, things might get even more interesting, but they are ordinary folks doing ordinary things until the protagonist showed up. A few things happen, but before you know it, the story is over. It feels a bit short..and long. After reading 100 pages, I was still left wondering most of the same questions I started with. It felt like a long introduction to something greater.

But the story has its strengths too. For a first work, I was reasonably impressed with the description, action, and general flow. This book just need a little more body to it, more substantial answers to reward the reader for his dedication.

Aimee Clark says

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. I think that this author has potential. The story was fun and imaginative. I'd like to see more character development. I am curious as to what we will find out about our protagonist. He seems very Chuck Norris meets Wolverine in The Road. I normally shy away from those type of characters, but I am curious as to what will happen to him. I will likely follow the rest of the series.

Janie Johnson says

I got this book from the author in exchange for an honest review. I did not know what to expect but saw that is was kind of a post apocalyptic, futuristic type of story. I have to say that I really did quite enjoy this book. I feel like it flowed very well and was easy to understand and follow.

This story is about John Osborne, 9 years after the desolation of the earth. He is traveling across the country that has a minimal amount of people who have survived. Ekimo, a teenage girl who has only her brother, discovers John unconscious and alerts her small community that she found a man alive and asks for their assistance. While John slowly recovers, Ekimo disappears and John then helps her brother Nathan pull off a rescue.

I liked the imagery to this story, the world was pretty well constructed. I could not imagine living in a world so desolate and lost. The author painted the scene well, but I would like to see just a bit more depth. The world created here makes me think of an old western. I also found the many things that are different in this future quite intriguing I also liked that they were not over the top and the characters often made references to the old world.

I also enjoyed the characters, but I wish that there would be a bit more back story, especially on John and his life before all of this. I am hoping there will be more information on that soon and on life before desolation. This is obviously not a complete story so I look forward to more of this story. I am rating this a 3.5 stars and recommend this to anyone who likes post apocalyptic/futuristic stories.

Jalyn says

I picked this up mostly because I haven't read a good post-apocalyptic lately, and this one sounded pretty

good. That, and the author said that even though this is an adult book, lots of YA-aged people liked it. So I decided, what the heck.

John Osborne, the stranger, was an interesting character. He was ex-military, and sometimes it seemed he didn't know his own strength, but when he was throwing his weight around he knew exactly what he was doing. He was stubbornly independent and carried a lot of anger, which he was really good at hiding. I didn't like him, per se, but I was fascinated by him.

I'd mention other characters, but besides Osborne, none of them really had enough page time to mention. There was Aristotle, the bookworm girl who shows up in the beginning and end, and Nathan and Emiko, siblings who are in and out of the story through the middle and end. Nathan and Emiko were both important to the story, and I think Aristotle will be more important in future books, but in *A STRANGER NORTH*, they weren't around enough to get a feel for them.

This is what I'd call a very plot-driven novel. The story's focus was more on whatever weird thing is going on with Osborne, and on a kidnapping plot that seems to be setting up a bad guy for future books. Characters, and even the post-apocalyptic world, are secondary to the plot, which is unfortunate, because I'd like to learn more about what happened.

A STRANGER NORTH wasn't fantastic, but I did enjoy it. As for book two – it's not at the top of my to-read list, but I'd be interested. This book left enough unanswered questions and threads I'm pretty sure will pop up again later.

I received a fee review copy of *A STRANGER NORTH* from the author. His generosity in no way influenced, or sought to influence, this review.

djcb says

The Northland Chronicles by Henry J. Olsen The Northland Chronicles *A Stranger North* is a story set in some post-apocalyptic time in the not too distant future; for the scenery, think [The Postman] (ie., in the US, and a bit of a 'western' atmosphere, a traveling loner etc.) and certainly without any The Road-bleakness.

The story is about a man who, for unknown reasons, is sought by some 'government', and on his journey ends up in a village, where various adventures ensue.

It's a quick read and certainly well-written; but perhaps something for 'young adults'; I would have liked a bit more surprises in the story, as well as, perhaps, and bit more background on the sociology of a post-apocalyptic environment.

Disclaimer: the author kindly provided me with a copy.

Alexander Crommich says

The Northland Chronicles: A Stranger North is a post-apocalyptic action piece focusing on the adventures of John Osborne, a bearded, six-shooter toting ex-soldier with a bionic arm. The novella has several problems,

however, that prevent it from drawing the reader in. The pacing is off, John has an inconsistent and puzzling personality, Mr. Olsen tells the reader what the characters are thinking, and the ending doesn't quite gel with a work of this length.

The problem with any novella is that it has to strike the delicate balance between being a short story and a novel. Short stories generally have one point that every single word in the story builds towards. There's not much room to flesh things out, and even a handful of excess paragraphs can foil an otherwise good tale. A novel, on the other hand, has to do more work to build a sense of place, give the reader periodic breathers, and incorporate a more nuanced plot structure.

Unfortunately, in this story the author never quite finds the balance he's shooting for and ends up caught in a mix of a short story and a novel rather than a novella. Too much happens in the story, which clutters things up. There are more characters, places, and the like than there really need to be, and one in particular gets several chapters to herself that don't serve to advance the narrative. They flesh out the setting a bit, but not enough to justify their inclusion.

On the other hand, although the author thoroughly describes everything, the world never develops to the point that it feels real. He injects a lot of technical detail about survival in the woods that, although interesting, doesn't contribute much. Additionally, there are routine information dumps about the Desolation (a mix of nuclear war and plague) and how it changed the world. These tend to break up the action or drag out scenes longer than necessary, and given the sort of story this was the details really didn't matter. It's enough for the reader to know that something wiped out the civilized world. In a novel, it would have been worthwhile to explore the subject and there would have been room to do it, but here there simply wasn't enough space.

The main character, John, has an irregular personality that prevents the reader from ever getting a sense of who he really is. The prelude to the adventure pitches him as a sociopathic killer, essentially murdering someone because the man is a drunken jerk. Later in the story, however, he easily adapts to small town life and expresses a clear willingness to go out and help someone he's hardly met. There's never really an arc that takes him from one point to the other; he starts as a vicious loner and ends up a small town hero without the reader ever feeling like the necessary ground has been covered. His personality also tends to change scene to scene. It feels less like different aspects of the same character and more like different characters altogether.

This isn't helped by the author's tendency to tell the reader what's going through John and everyone else's heads. The author regularly has the characters deliver quick, italicized thoughts in the middle of the action that gives away what they're thinking, or he uses descriptive language that does the same thing. It's too direct, and it takes the life out of the characters. For me, I have most of my fun figuring out the characters and being surprised by them, so being outright told what kind of people they are and what they're thinking takes that away. Also, it never really helps clarify John's back and forth personality.

The end of the novella leaves too many questions open and immediately sets John on the path to his next task. There's no sense that something has been accomplished or that feeling where, as a reader, you can close the book, take a deep breath, and feel like things have settled up for the time being. Instead, the status quo is much as it was before the story took place, and the reader is left without that critical sense of resolution.

It's similar to an ongoing TV show that keeps dropping a handful of new twists at the end of each episode so the viewer never has a chance to catch up. That's not to say that the structure is necessarily a bad one, but in this case the novella was too long to really make it work. Had it been short, perhaps around 10,000 words, or

part of a book being released as a serial one fairly brief chapter at a time, it would have worked better.

Mr. Olsen's work ends up caught between being a short story and a novel and never finds the happy middle ground. The author gives too much of the wrong sort of information about the characters and the world, which clutters up the story and breaks up the narrative, and John seems like a different character scene to scene. The story has an interesting premise, but it never becomes what the author wants it to.
