



Angels of Detroit

Christopher Hebert

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Once an example of American industrial might, Detroit has gone bankrupt, its streets dark, its storefronts vacant. Miles of city blocks lie empty, saplings growing through the cracked foundations of abandoned buildings.

In razor-sharp, beguiling prose, *Angels of Detroit* draws us into the lives of multiple characters struggling to define their futures in this desolate landscape: a scrappy group of activists trying to save the city with placards and protests; a curious child who knows the blighted city as her own personal playground; an elderly great-grandmother eking out a community garden in an oil-soaked patch of dirt; a carpenter with an explosive idea of how to give the city a new start; a confused idealist who has stumbled into debt to a human trafficker; a weary corporate executive who believes she is doing right by the city she remembers at its prime--each of their desires is distinct, and their visions for a better city are on a collision course.

In this propulsive, masterfully plotted epic, an urban wasteland whose history is plagued with riots and unrest is reimagined as an ambiguous new frontier--a site of tenacity and possible hope. Driven by struggle and suspense, and shot through with a startling empathy, Christopher Hebert's magnificent second novel unspools an American story for our time.

Angels of Detroit Details

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Author : Christopher Hebert

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From Reader Review Angels of Detroit for online ebook

Diane Wachter says

I was born in Detroit, and lived almost the whole of my life in the suburbs. I was hoping to like this book. Actually read it through to fulfill my 2017 Goodwill Reading Challenge: A book set in your hometown/region. So very sorry I chose this book! Even at it's worst, Detroit deserves much better than this. The book was written by someone who obviously doesn't love Detroit. The only part of the book I enjoyed was finding landmarks that I know and love. I didn't like the characters much, except for maybe Clementine and Constance. The rest were pathetic excuses for human beings. I never understood the title...where are the Angels? Nothing came together for me, not the why, not the who, not even in the end with the so there. In my opinion, a complete waste of time. Ugh - I really have to give it a star??? Maybe a half star...one of the worst I've ever read, nope, sorry, no way, not for me!!!

Rusty says

While there were interesting characters in this novel the glaring insufficiency was tying all the subplots together. As for the city of Detroit, the lack of references and knowledge of the political landscape further detracted from the book. It was as if Detroit was nothing but a flat character in a book that could've been written with any major city as a backdrop. Furthermore, the lack of motivation for all the characters remains a mystery.

Kathy Heare Watts says

I won a copy of this book during a Goodreads giveaway. I am under no obligation to leave a review or rating and do so voluntarily. So that others may also enjoy this book, I am paying it forward by donating it to my local library.

Michael Bell says

I really don't get the title of this book. The plot was boring.

Sherrie says

This book gets one star for being about Detroit, which makes it a one star review on the book itself. Had it been a series of short stories, I think it could have been much better. As written, though, there are too many extraneous characters, too many plots, and too little connection between any of them. There was really nothing in this book that interested me at all, except the descriptions of Detroit, which as a resident of Michigan I'm all too familiar with already. Waste of time.

Nancy says

Detroit is America's poster child of a collapsed rust belt city. Empty houses and factories stare with empty windows, pillaged of anything salable. Crumbling roads lead to grasslands.

Detroit has a vibrant Midtown with a first class orchestra, amazing art museum, historical and science museums, trendy brew-houses and restaurants, and swanky stores that draw suburbanites.

Detroit is rising, reinventing itself. Detroit should be plowed under and forgotten.

The visions of the city and its future clash in *Angels of Detroit*, Christopher Hebert's sprawling novel characterized by old timers and a child, disillusioned activists from the 'burbs, and people who just stumble into alliances they come to rue.

The novel is not a paen to the past, although some characters remind us of Detroit's glory days. It is not an imagining of a rosy future. Instead Detroit is a battleground of idealism and profiteering.

A group of Millennial drop-out activists plot to bring down a huge Detroit based company whose drone is implicated in the destruction of a school. A man in debt is sent to set up housing for a human trafficking ring. A carpenter moves into his deceased grandmother's house and helps a 70 year old woman create a garden in the urban prairie while imagining the deconstruction of the past.

There are a lot of characters, a lot of back stories slowly revealed, but they are all brought together in the end. As flawed as each character is, we come to understand their journey.

Polly Krize says

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

In the urban wasteland that is Detroit (parts of it, anyway), the engaging characters in Christopher Hebert's second novel search for meaningful lives. I enjoyed this book on many levels, amazed at the tenacious will of the human spirit. Recommended.

Rosemary Jones says

Well written, but confusing, never quite knew what was going on, up until the end (even then I didn't know!) Liked the atmosphere of sort of post apocalyptic Detroit.

Aletha Pagett says

This book was received through Goodreads.

To me, it was like an art film and I don't understand or enjoy those either. There were wonderful words and finely crafted sentences wrapped around emptiness.

Donna M. Olson says

Did not like this book

Sarah Oravetz says

It was interesting, but became convoluted and hard to follow at times. I think I may be to read it again to pick up all the pieces I missed the first time around.

Foster Winter says

It probably isn't fair to review a book I have not actually completed, but I just couldn't get into this. As a native Detroiter the premise fascinated me, but I gave it till 10% (Kindle) to interest me. I couldn't tell who the characters were, whether they were good, bad or indifferent, whether I was going to like or dislike them and more importantly why.

Rachel Jackson says

Ever read a book so bad that it inspired you to write a better one because you know you can? Thanks, Christopher Hebert!

I tried really hard to like *Angels of Detroit*; I really did. It was a book I picked up at a little free library on the side of the road, so it was a gamble then anyway, knowing the limited selection those boxes have. Still, growing up so near Detroit, the plot intrigued me: a group of people from all walks of life coming together in the Motor City to save it or at least make a statement about its apparent demise. Interesting enough. Except that as I began the story, I could only hope that it wouldn't turn into one of those fetishizations of Detroit that seems to be all people know about the city—you know, the filmmakers who set zombie apocalypses there, the urban explorers who have wet dreams about its abandoned buildings. And then it turned into exactly that, with absolutely zero plot and scattered characters.

Despite my initial optimism about the intrigue that the book genuinely contains, I grew more and more critical of *Angels of Detroit* as I read it. The first, oh, half or so of the book was interesting, and I was curious about what was going to happen next, how all these characters lives were entwined, how their fates would connect in the end. By the two-thirds point of this book, however, it was clear to me that this was never going to happen, and that all of Hebert's exposition, character development (yeah, right) and description of predictable post-apocalyptic Detroit landscapes were going nowhere and it was all a big letdown.

Indeed, after 422 pages, nothing happened. Oh, sure, some of the characters interacted, but most of them didn't; some of the plot events were entertaining, but most were nonexistent. Hebert seemed to struggle with

character development in this book, because he kept introducing character after character for no reason and then leaving them hanging, never to be heard from again. Darius? Myles? April? All disappeared, with no closure on where or why. Even McGee and Dobbs, arguably the main characters in this book, had little context for their lives, personalities and motivations, despite their actions powering most of the book. Ruth Freeman and Constance, two of the more interesting characters, didn't even have much closer on their lives; they, too, came and went from the story. I'm not even sure who the protagonist was, though, since Hebert jumped around with characters with so much inconsistency.

So, really, the book was pointless—literally. As I got closer to the end of the book, I found myself marveling that, one, I had made it through this much awful storytelling to begin with, and, two, that anyone could write positive plot blurbs to be plastered on the dust cover—or that it could find a publisher at all! I'm bewildered that Hebert even thought this could constitute a story, because there is no evidence of anything resembling a story arc with all the usual literary techniques that make a book a cohesive, pleasant, interesting read.

Joan says

This is one of those books that use Detroit to get more reads. Nothing in the book, makes it Detroit. The book talks about vacant areas in Detroit that are turning into gardens and parks. The characters are unknown beings as we are never told the reasons for what they do. McGee has a group that is working to, I think, force a company to admit a wrong. She tries many ways including pickets, breaking in and contacting the news. Her friends help her, but no one seems to have any real emotion about the company. (I thought it was funny that the company makes appliances and drones, not something Detroit is known for.) It took me forever to finish. I like to finish books I start because I think there might be something worthwhile in the book, but in this case there was not. I don't know why it was even published.

Julie says

No re-cap here; most other reviewers will tell you the story of this bunch of people who react to the slow death of a big city in ways that range from pathetic to inscrutable and back again to pathetic. I will say that by chapter three I was so confused by the boatload of character names that had been thrown at me that I actually went back to the beginning and drew a character map that eventually filled a full sheet of paper as I read. This made all the difference.

Unfortunately, the reason it was so hard to remember who was who was that the characters are all pretty shallow (with the exception of my favorite: Ruth Freeman) and their motives remain, until the last page, murky and emotionally inaccessible.

Yet I enjoyed the book after the first third or so. I have never been to Detroit, so I cannot speak to the characterization in the book of that city, but I have lived in a large American Midwestern Metropolis, so I did recognize the often desolate, wasted landscapes described.

I'm sticking to my 4 stars, but waffled between 3 and 4 long enough that it is probably a 3.5 star book for me.
