



## Deadlands

*Lily Herne*

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## **Deadlands** Lily Herne

Ten years after Cape Town was destroyed in the War with the living dead, zombies ramble free in Cape Town's suburbs (known as the Deadlands), and the remaining living are either in fenced in on farms or in urban shantytowns.

The living are watched over by the mysteriously robed Guardians, a race of humanoid figures who appeared at the end of the War and who keep the living dead at bay, albeit for a steep price. Every year the Guardians stage a human Lottery and select five aspiring teenagers to be whisked out of the enclave for a secret purpose. To be one of the chosen five is a highly sought after and prestigious accolade.

No one (yet) knows why it is that the Guardians prize teenage bodies so highly, how they control the zombies or what they look like under the robes that cover their bodies...

## **Deadlands Details**

Date : Published February 2011 by Penguin

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Author : Lily Herne

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# From Reader Review Deadlands for online ebook

## Gina - Behind the Pages says

See the original review on my blog, Behind the Pages

### Thanks to Murdoch Books (Much in Little) for providing a copy for review

*This book is completely kick-ass! Jam packed with action and suspense, Deadlands will keep you coming back for more.*

Honestly, this is the perfect way to describe this book (and hoping, the series):

I imagine this happening as soon as some zombie fighting action starts! Haha and now that you've seen it (and imagined it being said the same as in White Chicks), you will think of this when reading this book.

OK, back to the actual book now. Honestly, this book was completely hypnotising. I couldn't stop reading this book, and was mind-numbingly turning the pages, getting my fix of YA-action addiction. The whole book was jam packed, and there was always something going on in the story. The end of the book is literally, just shock after shock after shock. There are so many secrets that are revealed in the final leg of the book that you honestly don't know what could be left! Of course, from the very end, you can tell what the rest of the series is going to be about, but not in a bad way.

I loved LeLe. She was an amazing heroine, one that is definitely kick-ass (yes, I'm using kick-ass too many times in this review, but only because it's the only way to describe everything/everyone accurately), and you find yourself loving every minute of her story. She is strong, both physically and mentally, and she won't let anyone put her down, no matter who they are. She stands up for herself, and does everything wholeheartedly, and if she believes something is right, she will go out of her way to do it! I also loved all the other characters that were thrown into the mix. The Mall Rats (I was cheering for LeLe & Ash <3), and Thabo. They were all so unique were all very strong characters. Even though there was a hint at a (dreaded) love-triangle, it wasn't much to take your focus off the important bits of the novel, there isn't really any kind of romance going on, but I still love Ash more than Thabo. I don't really like Thabo like the other characters, he seems like in the end, he just wants to keep in contact with LeLe because he knows she can get things that he needs and help him out for the ANZ (Anti-Zombie League), not really because he wanted to be friends with her. But that could be just me.

One thing I found a bit annoying was that LeLe kept on trying to blame her stepmother (the Mantis) for everything. Ok, I understand that her mother has passed, and it feels like the Mantis is trying to take over her mother. But sometimes she acts like a real child, not thinking any of the accusations through. I can see the Mantis kind-of trying to get along with LeLe, but when one thing comes up, it's two steps back. I still don't know why she is even called the Mantis.....

Even though the book is set in South Africa, you don't have to worry about knowing about the place to be able to understand. I honestly don't know much about South Africa, and Herne does such a good job at making you feel like you are familiar with the place. There is so much room for your imagination to kick in with the surroundings, because it is set 10 years after the 2010 World Cup (making the year 2020).

The ending left me craving for the next book, Death of a Saint, and shocked me to the core. The truth that

reveals itself at the end will leave you speechless. If you're after an addicting book, full of zombie kick-ass action, a heroine that fits right along with the big YA heroines, surprises, and just plain old awesome make sure you read this book!!

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### **Stephanie (Stepping out of the Page) says**

Deadlands is not a book I had heard about and I hadn't heard of the author, Lily Herne, before I picked this book up, but I'm always willing to read books that are new to me, and it's even better when they're unexpectedly fantastic like this one! I am so glad that the publishers put Deadlands on my radar and I'm glad to be able to share it with you, too.

Deadlands is the beginning of a new young adult series set in Cape Town, South Africa. I have only read one other book set in South Africa, so this was still a relatively new setting for me. I loved the setting. I'm not all that familiar with South Africa or some of their dialect, so I was a little bit unsure at first, but after a few pages I soon adjusted to the setting - there wasn't much use of Afrikaans or references but that didn't devalue the authenticity of the setting - it just made it easier to understand. The fact that this is set in South Africa is of course very refreshing, but the setting of the enclave and the Deadlands themselves are incredibly atmospheric and gritty. The two sides of the city - the dangerous Deadlands where zombies roam and the (assumed) safer enclave, lawed by Guardians. The differences between the two are clear and very well written.

The storyline sounded potentially confusing, but that wasn't the case at all - the story was very easy to understand and follow whilst certainly having a good level of complexity. There is so much room for the story to expand and develop - there have already been some opportunities for twists and turns in this first book and I can only see more being added as the story progresses over the series. As I said, the story still is simple to follow - I was never confused by anything. There are lots of aspects to this story and to the city that Lele, the main character inhabits. This was certainly a page turner as I was reading quickly, trying to absorb every detail.

The characters were great to 'meet' and learn about the mix of characters in Deadlands. Our main character, Lele obviously has a lot of history and the plot allows us to see many facets of her personality. Due to the situation that the city is in, It was so difficult to trust anybody that we read about - I never knew quite who was on the right side of the city's Guardian 'laws'. The opposing groups were fascinating and it was interesting to see the politics of the enclave. The underground group, the Mall Rats who regularly venture into the Deadlands were particularly fascinating - they each had their own story and all had their own distinct personalities, which I loved.

Overall, Deadlands was a fantastic book which had me gripped from start to finish. It felt like an amalgamation of positive themes and ideas from several ideas whilst having its own unique story. I really, really enjoyed this and I will definitely be following the rest of the series. If you're a fan of young adult dystopian or paranormal (particularly zombies!), I'm sure that this book would appeal to you - it would be ideal for fans of The Hunger Games. If you're looking for a great new voice in YA, you'll find it in Deadlands.

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## Shelagh (The Word Fiend) says

Review from my blog: The Word Fiend

Lily Herne is the pen name of mother and daughter team Sarah and Savannah Lotz. This is their first book together and makes for an entertaining debut.

The cover of *Deadlands* is what first caught my attention with its mysterious hooded figure and fog shrouded landscape. It sets the scene for this apocalyptic zombie story and the feelings of dread and uneasiness it inspires followed me into the book. I was also very excited to see a book of this kind from a South African author.

The year is 2020, ten years after the dead first started walking, and we meet the protagonist, Leletia (Lele to her friends), as she has been relocated from the farmlands (the Agriculturals) to the enclave (all that's left of Cape Town and its suburbs). The enclave is run by the Resurrectionists, a cult that worships the mysterious Guardians who keep the walking dead under control. Herne has created a world where humans are confined to enclosed areas, the only safe zones where the zombies, called Rotters, are kept out. The press of humanity and the rising power of the Resurrectionists make for an environment where fear and suspicion are rife. It makes an interesting backdrop to Lele's story and adds an extra dimension to the personal difficulties she encounters.

*Deadlands* is well-plotted, with an interesting and well-developed backstory. The writing is clean and concise and Herne does an excellent job invoking the mood of the setting. What I really liked was that although the story is filled with drama, it is well interspersed with lighter moments which reflect the character's personalities and strength. *Deadlands* is peppered with pop-culture references, and while this may serve to date most books, in this case they are a poignant reminder that in many ways life stopped in 2010 when the zombies first appeared. There have been no new movies or books to influence the characters, so these references add to the story in a very effective way.

The political undertones in *Deadlands* are well-handled and are a reminder of some of humanity's darker days. From the oppression of apartheid to the tragedy of the holocaust, elements of these can be identified in this book. It makes for an interesting commentary on human nature and the actions of people in positions of power.

The story is told from Lele's perspective which allows us to experience the world in a very real way. She is a strong character and well-rounded. In fact there were times when her stubbornness made me want to kick her into action, but this makes her more real. I don't like reading about characters who are perfect. Lele's flaws make her more relatable and let me get involved in her story.

Lele's family is an interesting case. She is not close to her father or stepmother, so at first they come across as uncaring characters. But as the story progresses, Lele discovers more about them and the reasons behind their actions and we learn with her. It was interesting to see this growth. One of the most poignant relationships in the book is the one between Lele and her brother Jobe. He was taken by the Guardians at the beginning of the war and returned 'broken'. He has never grown and his mind is locked in early development. Yet Jobe is an important character and we learn a lot about Lele by seeing her interactions with him.

The children Lele meets at her new school and the Mall Rats are also nicely developed characters with their

own personalities and views. That, in my mind, says a lot about the storytelling ability of an author.

My only real problem with the book is that I would have liked to see some more of the Rotters and the Guardians earlier in the story. Specifically, what makes them so feared? There are a lot of references to past events, but even one scene would have made the danger they posed more real for me.

*Deadlands* is an apocalyptic story with brains and heart and I would love to see more from this talented author.

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### **Rachel (The Rest Is Still Unwritten) says**

Find this review and more on my blog [The Rest Is Still Unwritten!](#)

*Deadlands* by Lily Herne is a unique and unusual dystopian read with a fresh and different twist on the walking dead. While this book may not be for everyone, Herne has certainly won me over with her heroine's unique and riveting story!

In all honesty, I don't know quite what I expected this book to be about when I began it, but whatever that was, *Deadlands* turned out to be the furthest thing from. And yet, strangely, I really enjoyed this book. Lily Herne has penned a really unique apocalyptic tale.

Set in an alternate Cape Town, the setting of this story was something very different from what I've read before. I have to give Herne props for exploring a non-traditional dystopian setting in *Deadlands*. It gave her the ability to create something we hadn't seen a million times. Herne blends traditional South African elements together with a society destroyed and ravaged by a mysterious plague that reanimates the dead well. I liked her unique twist on zombies and found it very entertaining trying to piece certain things together.

I will say I struggled in the very beginning of this book. As someone not overly familiar with South African culture, the slang and idealisms threw me, as well as the pronunciation of some of the names throughout the story. However after the initial first chapters, I found myself easily getting lost in the story as I adjusted to the setting. This book is actually a quick read (it only took me two days) and I enjoyed seeing the almost primitive society Herne has woven together with modern apocalyptic elements.

Following main character Leletia de la Fontein, aka Lele, *Deadlands* introduces us to a society where zombies are everywhere and the world's population survive in enclaves, protected by Guardians, mysterious individuals whose motives are a secret, especially from those they "protect". This is quite an interesting concept to see. After a war against the zombies that saw multiple deaths, the Guardian's arrived to create enclaves for ordinary people to live in. These enclaves are primitive, without basics like electricity, but almost everyone, bar some rebel forces, accept this. There's no questioning the Guardians and an almost cult like reverence for these unknown people/beings is widely practiced.

There is a great bunch of characters in the story. Our heroine Lele is stubborn and opinionated and loves her brother fiercely. Considering her overall situation, I liked her and found her easy to follow within the story. All the other characters were very different, and each plays a role in Lele's tale but none are more important than the Mall Rats, a bunch of teenagers who manage to escape from and then back into the enclave all so to acquire certain everyday items that are now a luxury to the people in this story. Saint, Ash and Ginger are intriguing friends to Lele, but they too have secrets—something I enjoyed learning of.

Herne does a good job keeping the story driving forward while dropping little hints here and there about the overall plotline in Deadlands. The final few chapters of Deadlands are very shocking; the ending exciting. So many of Lily Herne's hints and mystery's suddenly make sense and you can't help but feel invigorated by this discovery.

Featuring a surprising but exciting ending, Deadlands leaves me ready to pick up the next book as soon as I can get my hands on it!

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### **Lainy says**

Time Taken To Read - 4 days

Blurb From Goodreads

Ten years after Cape Town was destroyed in the War with the living dead, zombies ramble free in Cape Town's suburbs (known as the Deadlands), and the remaining living are either in fenced in on farms or in urban shantytowns.

The living are watched over by the mysteriously robed Guardians, a race of humanoid figures who appeared at the end of the War and who keep the living dead at bay, albeit for a steep price. Every year the Guardians stage a human Lottery and select five aspiring teenagers to be whisked out of the enclave for a secret purpose. To be one of the chosen five is a highly sought after and prestigious accolade.

No one (yet) knows why it is that the Guardians prize teenage bodies so highly, how they control the zombies or what they look like under the robes that cover their bodies..

### **My Review**

Ten years have passed since the war against the zombies happened and the Guardians appeared. They keep the undead away whilst the living are fenced in and safe or living on farms or Urban shantytowns (the book takes place in Cape Town (South Africa). But protection doesn't come free and every year the Guardians have a human Lottery and take 5 teenagers for reasons unknown to the people left behind. Where do they go and what happens to the teenagers and how do the Guardians control the zombies?

The main character of the story is a seventeen year old girl, Lele. She is a lively teenager who is unhappy with many aspects of her life, let alone the zombies and Guardians. Her step mother is a believer that the coming of the zombies made everything better (as is the teaching at Lele's new school). Lele sounds finds out she is not alone in her thinking and after hearing about the Mall Rats she wants to know more.

There is a lot to this book and the zombies don't really come into play until after 100 odd pages. The book is definitely Young Adult and covers the teenage angst issues,despite there being zombies and people dying, they play a huge part in the story. Lele's struggles to fit in, her budding interest in boys, heartache at losing her gran, relationship issues with her step mother etc.

It picked up for me when the Mall Rats came into play and you start to get a bit more background on how things came to pass. Lele finds out as slowly as the reader, the background, and I found myself getting really

frustrated as she would ask the questions you the reader would but more often than not gets brushed off or a half answer. There is a twist with the zombies that you don't see coming and it is interesting to see them in a different light.

From the zombie aspect I was disappointed as I wanted a lot more zombie but as this is the first book in the series I think a lot of ground work has been covered to build the story. There are a lot of unanswered questions too however the second book is out October 2013 and I will certainly be getting it as I need to find out the answers to the questions.

The chapters are very short (we know by now how I love this) so you can dip in and out and the book as and when. The author also has a great way of ending each chapter in a way you can't put it down and you want to know what she means and what happens next. A good introduction to a new series, well written and flows well, 3/5 for me. This book is out to buy on April the 18th 2013, both paperback and ebook for £6.99. Thank you so much to Newbooks for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Christa Seeley says**

I am a sucker for zombie novels. I can't quite put my finger on why but I absolutely love them. So when I was offered a chance to review Lily Herne's Deadlands (a novel with the tagline - Everything's better with Zombies - Not) I jumped at the chance.

Deadlands starts out on a strong note. As the reader we're immediately introduced to Lele, a zombie apocalypse survivor living in South Africa. I think I can count the amount of books I've read that were set in South Africa on one hand. It's not a setting you see that often and it was a refreshing change. I liked that we were given references to life before the zombie outbreak and wish there was even more of it. If it's going to be set in South Africa why not make the most of it?

To read the rest of this review check out [More Than Just Magic](#)

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### **Monique says**

Deadlands is the first of its kind- a South African zombie novel. While the SA slang and expressions are pretty abundant, it is nothing a decent glossary can't fix and this book can easily be enjoyed by readers worldwide.

The plot and characters are well-thought out with twists that left me thinking "ahhh, that totally makes sense". Lele is spunky and brave. She outshines plenty of YA heroines.

My only peeve is that the last sentence of each chapter could have been done away with. It was usually along the lines of "How wrong I was." or any other means of foreshadowing, basically giving away that big things were to be expected and things were not as they seemed.

Also Lele's narration was sticky at times. It is an attempt at talking to us, the readers, where the reader gets referred to as "you".

Small things, but it is enough for me to hold back one star!

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### **Craig Smith says**

Lele is your typical teenager, she hates school and she has a crush on the cool guy, but there's one very large twist to her story. Everything isn't normal. When people die they don't stay dead. Yes, you've got it. She's living in the time of Zombies. Zombies that have destroyed the world and pushed humans down a notch in the food chain.

And if that wasn't bad enough a group of people known as the Resurrectionists have taken control of the enclave. The only safe spot in Cape Town. A safe spot created by the Guardians. A mysterious group who saved the vastly dwindled population from the Rotters as they are known. A group that seem to have control over the Resurrectionists.

Coming from the agriculturals Lele is new to all this and takes some time to adapt. Getting into trouble for not believing what she was hearing and saying things she shouldn't. In addition she's stuck with a step mother she doesn't like. A veteran from the zombie struggle who seems to have it in for her brother and herself.

Understandably Lele is not fond of the enclave and wants nothing more than to go back to the Agriculturals. A place her and her brother had to leave when her Gran died. Meeting an underground group known as the Mall Rats she soon discovers that everything isn't as it seems. Will she be able to return home? Read it and find out. You wont be disappointed.

Although I'm not much of a YA reader I found this book very enjoyable. The characters sounded real and it's not your normal zombie book/movie. Here the people have learned how to adapt to living with them. Some even thriving. It's a human story that is well handled and I can't wait for the sequel.

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### **Devi Thomas says**

I love novels about zombies and this is one of the best. Such an interesting, grim take. The zombies pretty much fall to the background of this novel, overshadowed by the awesome political dramas playing out and by the incredibly fantastic characters. I love the twists and turns are far from what I've come to expect from these type of novels.

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### **Tammy says**

***Side note:*** A shortened version of this review orginally appears on the women24 website, which you can find [here](#).

*Young Adult satirical zombie fiction has a new home. And it's right here in South Africa. And yes, you should get a copy.*

17-year old Lele and her brother are stuck and living with her parents in the city enclave.

It's one of the few safe places following both the war and the appearance of the Zombie menace that has been ravaging the Deadlands (the area designated as unsafe and outside of the enclave) ever since.

Beneath the so-called veneer of safety, Lele can't help but notice that there's something sinister about the Guardians who keep a strict lockdown on the people who live within the enclave.

Stuck in a school run by the Ressurrectionists, a fanatical cult who worship the Guardians, Lele doesn't seem to have a way of escaping...

... At least not until, by some fluke (or is it luck?), she ends up being one of five aspiring teens that end up being selected by the Guardians in a staged human Lottery (which takes place every year). No one knows why the Guardians want these teenagers so badly or what they do with them, but Lele is certainly about to find out.

My thoughts:

As a huge fan of the Young Adult fiction genre, I've always wondered why our fabulous South African authors don't plug into a genre that is so hugely popular around the world right now.

Thankfully, my book prayers were answered and mother-daughter duo, writing under the author name of Lily Herne, have both written a phenomenal new offering for lovers of Zombie fiction; adding a uniquely South African twist that is sure to make this book a hit with everyone.

Set in post-apocalyptic Cape Town (as I'm from Cape Town), this book is remarkably easy to relate to.

One of the most surprising things about the novel, is that in spite of it having a zombie focus, it was a rather light-hearted read with plenty of amusing moments in between. And as someone who isn't a big fan of gore, this ended up being quite a plus for me.

What makes this novel really unique though, is the clever and no-holds barred, satirical barbs about South Africa's past and current political infrastructure scattered throughout the book.

To international readers, you don't necessarily have to have an understanding about South Africa's history, but if you do, then you, like me, will find the satire very, very clever.

With references to the very controversial Julius Malema (Lele's forced to go to a school called Malema high -) and political party, ANC (Lele joins the ANZ (Anti-Zombians) movement - an ode to the ANC before it became what it is today), it becomes obvious that there are two opposing sectors that will no doubt be heading for battle.

On the one hand, you have the Guardians and the Ressurrectionists who believe that they are doing the best for the people and giving the people what they "need" - just as long as people don't rebel and question them (Sounds like the ANC today doesn't it?) .

On the other hand, you have the ANZ movement - a resistance movement that are fighting for the people's rights and are forced to use violence as a method of trying to get their message across.

In a way, there is an underlying sense that almost feels as if you have the same faction fighting against itself and all it used to stand for. Again, this relates back to just why I think adults will probably also enjoy reading this.

The writing of the novel, for the most part, flowed quite seamlessly.

One thing I have to address, is the criticism that chapters are structured in such a way that it employs that age-old tactic of ending off with a line that forces you to continue on to the next page.

People seem to have a problem with this, and while I, agree with them in terms of some of these lines being relatively cheesy, I think it's an effective strategy to keep the reader reading. It certainly kept me reading and wanting to find out what would happen next.

What did bother me though was the use of repeated vocabulary. I understand that words often do get repeated, but for me, it does become bothersome when I actually start noticing it.

Still, I thought the characters were incredibly strong, and Lele in particular, has a can-do, and don't-need-a-boy-to-take-care-of-my-problems kind of attitude that is incredibly refreshing to behold in the Young Adult genre spectrum.

The secondary characters and the introduction of the Mall Rats (I can't reveal more without spoiling for you), gave this novel an added kick in what really transformed itself into not just a zombie novel, but an action-packed zombie novel filled with a lot of adventurous moments.

There's also a potential love-triangle, which, although wasn't a major focus, gives us an idea that we might just get to read more about it in a possible sequel.

For all of the action though, there were and are still a lot of questions that I would have liked to have seen answered. For example, we know that there was a war, and that there was a zombie plague, but there's no explanation as to why the war took place, where the zombies came from and how they were formed from the start.

But, in spite of these minor plot holes, I think that this is a great start in a genre that more South African authors should look into. And as a reader who certainly doesn't enjoy zombie fiction, I myself was quite taken aback by just how much I enjoyed it.

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### **Nerine Dorman says**

Finally! A South African publisher brings out genre fiction for YA with a South African setting. This is a fun, easy read that not only offers some zombie arse-kicking action, but also takes a look at a post zombiepocalyptic setting in a way that takes not so subtle stabs at current South African society.

This book is very much geared toward being a quick read and offers plenty of pop culture references with a nod toward Max Brooks' World War Z and The Zombie Survival Guide, as well as George A Romero's 2004 remake of Dawn of the Dead.

South Africans will enjoy the subversion of a familiar setting and, it can be hoped, foreign readers get to see South Africa in a totally different light that doesn't bludgeon readers over the head with long-winded discourses on the evils of apartheid.

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## Celine says

Forget all the comparisons that cover *Deadlands* - it is more than capable enough to stand on its own.

One day during the World Soccer Cup in 2010 the Rotters came. Humanity would be lost, if it wasn't for the mysterious robed Guardians. They're the only thing that stands between humans and Rotters, but their protection comes with a price. More and more teenagers are handed over to the Guardians for unknown purposes. The public doesn't seem to mind, they even worship them. Lele isn't a Ressurectionist though, and when she comes into contact with like minded people, there is no way back.

*Deadlands* gets compared to *The Hunger Games* three times on the cover, but I barely see any resemblances. Yes, there are teenagers shipped off to unkown whereabouts that probably mean death, and yes, there is some kind of rebel group, but that's about where the comparison ends. There is a small undercurrent of rebellion throughout *Deadlands*, but the main focus of the book is Lele and her friends and family.

I really liked Lele. She has a quick temper and is easily enraged. She is the outcast at school with her shorn hair and Agricultural ways. This part of the book didn't turn into a pity party with endless examples of why high school is awful though - something I was really glad for. Part of her outcast status is her behaviour, as she inherently hates people that worship the Guardians. Especially as the book progresses Lele has a good understanding of her actions and emotions, without losing the teenage tendancy to feel things out of proportion. There is a small love triangle in this book, and it wasn't one that I hated. Whew, I never thought this day would come! Lele is so genuinely confused of her feelings, that I didn't mind at all. It also helps that she didn't declare her undying love to any of the two.

One of the strongest points in *Deadlands* is the interesting world it is set in. First of all I liked the South-African setting and the occasional use of South-African words and slang. It was especially fun for me because I'm Dutch - a lot of South-African words are influences by Dutch, so I understood most of them. I usually connotate South-African fiction with the Apartheid, and but Ms Herne handled the subject very well by mention it in passing, but not letting it take over the entire book. Secondly, of course, is the zombieification of the city. I loved the way we ate thrown in instead of getting a huge info-dump at the start. There are tons of details to bring the story alive throughout the book, with some big revelations at the end that fit perfectly.

The only thing I disliked was the strong foreshadowing. Foreshadowing is a tool that should be handled sparsely, and sometimes Ms Herne takes it a bit too far. Sentences like "I thought I'd be safe. How wrong I was" fill the endings of several chapters, and I started rolling my eyes at them after a while. I'd have liked the story better without them. I read the ARC though - it might be different in the finalised version.

It seems that zombie fiction of the new generation is less about killing the shambling dead, and more about political and ethical consequences. *Deadlands* is a surprisingly light zombie novel with more than enough love and laughter to keep it from being depressing. It doesn't compromise on world-building though, and it features a creative view on zombies that I haven't seen before.

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## **Kimberley doruyter says**

the country goes to hell in a zombiebasket and people go absolutely mad.

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## **Jude says**

I read all three of the books in this trilogy over four or five days. I liked them very much. I have read other reviews that point out obvious flaws - for example too many sections end with a predictive "we couldn't have been more wrong" expression alerting to the reader to the next disastrous event. Other issues for me included the attempt to give one of the characters a London accent, which mainly consisted in adding "innit" to the end of most of his sentences... The ending of the third book is also left fairly open and a number of questions raised in the plot remain unanswered, which is unsatisfactory in some ways. But, it was well-written - far better than the writing in the Hunger Games (and Twilight, but that is not difficult). The story is fast-moving and gripping with well-delineated characters. Changing the focaliser and point of view every chapter is a little disconcerting at times, but it does allow the reader to empathise with different characters - there are four focalisers - two male and two female. I was impressed, overall, and think the trilogy will appeal to those who enjoy dystopian fiction, including zombies. It is also set in South Africa, with plenty of landmarks and local references, not to mention herds of giraffe...

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## **C Hellisen says**

Deadlands is Cape Town after the zombocalypse. Or at least, that's the premise, but there's more to it than a rehash of The Forest and Hands of Teeth for the South African market. And while it has the same feel as its YA contemporaries like Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games and Carrie Ryan's The Forest of Hands and Teeth, it has a pervasive political wit that shimmies along underneath, poking fun at giants and wanna-be giants alike.

It is gritty and ugly – the Cape Town it paints is not the Cape Town we like to sell to the tourists, and Herne has done an admirable job of world-building a Capetownian dystopia I can believe, drawn from shacks and shanty towns and the bureaucratic Divine.

Deadlands is also the story of a girl, Lele de la Fontein. She's just this kid, yanno, as all the best books seem to be about. She's out-of-place, bitter about the death (and subsequent zombiefication) of her grandmother, bitter about her father's marriage to the Mantis (Lele has a way of reducing people to faceless entities, although this changes a little as she realises that there are also people behind those adult masks). She's bitter about her new school.

Mostly though, she's bitter about zombies, and the cattle-like state that humanity has been reduced to.

Enter a bizarre zombie cult, a shadowy menace, a blackmarket in Nikes and Levis, a lottery of sacrifices, a rebel group, and you have the seeds of a fun South African take on the zombie dystopia. And when things seem like they're finally starting to get together for Lele, that she's being grudgingly accepted at her new school, that she's even met someone, that her family seems to be chugging along almost harmoniously, that's when things go horribly and utterly wrong, and Lele ends up on a side she never even knew existed.

It's a fast read, and I loved following Lele around on her discovery of who the key players were, and what they are doing. Things develop quickly, and the tension racks up throughout. If Lele comes across a wee bit mary-sueish in the beginning, trust that the novel resolves this nicely with a decent, and somewhat disturbing reveal.

There were two parts where the novel stumbled for me: I found the fight scenes a tad cartoonish, although I feel this may be have been intentional on Herne's part, as a sly nod to anime (pop culture references abound). The other, somewhat bigger problem, is that although I could fully identify with Lele (hey, been there done that! Not the zombie-killer part, the being a wangsty teenager part) and relate to her as a character, indeed fall a little in love with her, I just did not buy the romantic subplots.

They were there, they were square (well triangular) but they felt shoe-horned in, as if Herne herself didn't really buy them and felt that they needed to be there to make the book more appealing to teens.

The novel is definitely set up for a sequel, and we'll see how those issues work out in the second installment. And I really hope there is one, because I'm fully invested in the world Herne's has created, and I need to know what happens next.

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