



# **Touched**

*Cyn Balog*

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Nick Cross always listens to the voice in his head. Because if he doesn't? Things can go really, really wrong. Like the day he decided to go off script and saved a girl from being run over . . . and let another one drown. Trying to change the future doesn't work.

But this summer at the Jersey Shore, something's about to happen that Nick never could have predicted. He meets a girl named Taryn and finds out about the Book of Touch. Now the path that he thought he was on begins to shift . . . and there's no way to stop things from happening. Or is there?

In a life where there are no surprises, nothing has prepared Nick for what he's about to discover--or the choice he will be forced to make. . . .

## **Touched Details**

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Author : Cyn Balog

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## **From Reader Review Touched for online ebook**

### **Amy Lignor says**

Nick Cross is a truly amazing character. He, not unlike many, has a voice in his head, but his voice actually tells him the future - every step that will occur that takes someone else's life. However, if Nick plays hero, listens to the voice, yet decides to veer off course to save someone different, then he dooms another.

Example: Nick Cross is working as a lifeguard at the Jersey Shore. On his way to work one day, the voice tells him all about a young woman who will be killed. As he heads to work, he sees a truck about to back into a girl and kill her. Veering off the 'path' the voice laid out for him, by the time Nick gets to his lifeguard's chair, a little girl by the name of Emma, who he was supposed to save, has drowned.

In essence, when Nick hears the voice he can either save or ignore the voice completely. However, once he lives the future and makes his decision, his brain basically shuffles the cards and a new future is dealt for Nick Cross. He's not the only one who has this gift that's basically a nightmare for him. His mother is also cursed with it and has made her into a recluse, never going outside, barely coming downstairs, and issuing moans constantly. Nick doesn't want to end up like that and because of his 'save,' perhaps he won't have to.

Even though he is devastated by the young child drowning, the girl Nick does save is named Taryn and most definitely has a 'place' in his future. You see, Taryn's grandmother has a book of some truly crazy spells. A bibliomancer by trade, it was in the past when Taryn's grandmother brought this curse down upon Nick's head and only he and Taryn together - going through a seriously odd and exciting adventure - can perhaps change the past and hopefully stop Nick from heading down his new path which the voice in his head claims is his absolute death.

This author has written such a spectacular tale that you will be wishing Nick Cross is a name that appears in the world of fiction yet again.

Until Next Time, Everybody,  
Amy

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### **Mandy says**

For Nick, memories work both ways-- he can see his own future. Well, a hundred versions of it, because every time he goes "off script", his memories cycle and change, showing him new futures a dozen times a day, resulting in piercing headaches and his nickname of CRAZY CROSS.

The opening chapter of TOUCHED grabs a hold of you, and the book keeps you going through twist after twist, not letting go until the final page. This book marks a departure for Cyn Balog, who has to date written paranormal romances with female main characters, and it's a book to eagerly anticipate-- I know I did!

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## Tez says

Last handful of chapters annoyed me, though they made me appreciate the Nan character more.

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## Savannah (Books With Bite) says

As much as I love this author, I could not get into the book. I did managed to finished it, with the ending getting much better.

I had a hard time getting into the book cause of the confusing beginning. There was too much going on with out much explanation. I had to continuously flipped back pages and re-read passages. After about a hundred pages in, I was finally able to understand. I could see what the bigger picture was so I continued reading.

There is a love interest that kept me reading. I adored their time together as well as the bond that it is between them. They each carried a key to their past and who they are. I'm glad that despite the confusing beginning, this love came together nicely.

The ending had a great end. Now, had the book been the way the ending was, I could have gotten into it much faster. The ending redeemed the book from the confusing beginning leaving me intrigued.

Overall, this book is okay. Touched has magical elements in it that I enjoyed. Completely different, Touched is good.

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## Rose says

**Initial reaction:** This is one of those times when the method with which a writer tells the story completely ruins the way the story comes across, along with harboring so many cliches in the genre, it's hard to read past them. Balog's "Touched" never managed to have a resonating character to connect with me. While the ability that Nick Cross comes from a compulsion that exists inside his mind - telling of his future, he's often too much inside his mind, and the narrative jumps back and forth without much flow.

Suffice to say, this was a disappointing story on more than one level.

### Full review:

"Touched" is the first Cyn Balog book I've had the opportunity to read. I was initially intrigued by the cover and the concept of a boy who hears voices in his mind that will tell him of his future, and controls his life in such a way that it makes it difficult for him to live and cope if he deviates from it. Yet despite having a premise of due merit in the YA paranormal spectrum, "Touched" makes many pedestrian writing errors that prevented me from enjoying the novel in its entirety. This is going to be a tough review because I'm not one to say that any author should abide by a certain spectrum or set of standards to write his or her story - that's usually up to the technique and stylistic of the writer. There have been people who break a lot of writing tried and true rules and manage to tell a compelling story with doing so.

However, "Touched" is neither compelling nor original in its progressive story - it's an insta-love story that drops the ball on its premise quite hard, and leans away from what one would consider an interesting mystery/ability story with due conviction. Much of the tension established in this book was broken by too much telling of the narrative, and plot threads that seemed strewn every which way without much flow. Very jarring chapter transitions that felt choppy at best. Granted, there were moments of insight that I liked seeing about Nick Cross's life that were worth merit, but it felt so expository that I never gained a sense of intimacy with his character - I never knew who he was as a person nor did I get a sense of who the people were around him. I often felt annoyed that Nick was not only too much into his head and angst-ridden, but the other characters didn't really speak for themselves as much as Nick spoke for them, and he really doesn't sound like a strong, male protagonist of his due age. It annoyed me even that he kept referring to his former friend whom he had a falling out with as "Sphincter" when he could've just said Eric and allowed his frustration to show in other measures.

The way the story's told is an alternation between the first person narrative account of Nick as he deals with the voices in his mind, and second person with a bunch of "You Will" statements that showcase future things he would do, see, or feel. Nick would often try to fight against these voices, but when it results in the death of a girl, he's tormented over it. That would've had greater weight if it were presented in a way that was more sympathetic and not repeated over and over again to the point of overstatement. And while I wish I could've gotten to know Nick and Taryn more, the narrative kept me at arms length from their accounts for much of, if not all, the book. Nick was too much in his own head. While I can understand that being somewhat necessary for an introverted character tormented by problems within to focus internally - the way this story was told doesn't give a compelling enough narrative to keep me engaged with those particular problems and to understand where the character's coming from. I think a better balance of the internal and external dimensions could've made it stronger than what it was.

I honestly tried and wanted to like this story, I really wanted to, but there were so many issues with it that it was a miss - I didn't care for the characters, the love connection, the humor - quite much of it fell flat for me.

I don't know yet if I'll read more of Balog's work, but I firmly believe this could've been a stronger story with better technique and structuring of the actual story, with greater intimacy to the characters and their plights, particularly with Nick and his respective ability. Unfortunately, it fell apart at the seams and never recovered in its duration.

Overall score: 1/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Random House/Delacorte BYFR.

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### **Kristin (Beneath Shining Stars, I Read) says**

(More like 4.5 stars.)

Nick was born Touched, able to see his own future and he's been trying to stick to the "script" as much as possible; at least he was until he met Naryn, a girl who knows about the Book of Touch, what Nick's Touch is, and maybe, just maybe there's a way to undo everything.

I know you've heard me say it before, but for the record, I'm usually not someone who reads books told in first person, male perspective. Why? Because I can't always get into them and let's face it, that can be

annoying. However, Touched flows along nicely and as such, it was no hardship to keep reading--that, and I loved the idea of the Touched. I can't actually tell you too much about being Touched as it gets explained in the book and by now you should know my stance on serious spoilers. Let's just say that you should learn everything that you want to know about what it means to be Touched and the consequences as well.

As for Nick and his Touch, it makes for a very interesting first person read--he starts off trying to stick to his "script" as much as possible. But honestly? Asides from Naryn, I loved Nan--who is Nick's grandmother. Why? Because she's the one keeping the household together. His mother has cut herself off from the world due to the Touch and well, things definitely are not easy for Nick. The kids at school call him Crazy Cross and Naryn is probably the only girl nice enough--and new enough--to give him a chance. However, I don't think he expected that she'd have such an effect on his life--that's about all I can hint at.

Would I recommend Touched to you? Definitely! (Granted that you like the idea of a boy being able to see his own future.) I loved the idea behind Touched and although the ending definitely threw me--you'll see what I mean--I'd recommend this to you.

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### **??Hannah?? says**

Going into this I wasn't sure how it would be. Thankfully it ended up being an enjoyable read. In the beginning and at the end I was confused thankfully it was all cleared up. I did feel bad for Nick. I can't imagine living with that and then having the town treat you poorly. If the ending hadn't worked out good for him in the end this would have had a lower rating.

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### **Heather Dearly says**

Touched pulled me in from the start and didn't let go until the very end. With a fast and flawless pace, this story offers one amazing twist after another. I was left breathless. I love Cyn's voice and her unique contributions to the young adult paranormal/fantasy genre. Touched is my favorite Balog book to date.

In full disclosure, I am one of Cyn Balog's crit partners/beta readers. It has been several months since I read this story, but I haven't been able to stop thinking about Crazy Cross. I can't wait to read it again!

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### **ExLibris\_Kate says**

This story hits the ground running as the reader is put into Nick's head realizes he can see his future. He can see the big things, like marriage and children, as well as the little things, like tripping over the cat or spilling water. All of these things crowd his head every second of every day. If he deviates from the "script" as he calls it, his future furiously realigns itself as it works through the millions of possibilities that one small act can change. The way this world is built for you as a reader is very detailed and discombobulating. I felt as if I really understood the constant need to listen to the voice telling him what to do and how awful it must be when you are seeing these possibilities while trying to interact with others. Nick's life is exhausting and even in his own family, he sometimes feels alone. When he meets Taryn, he begins to discover where this ability comes from and he also discovers how his curse is tied to hers. He wants so badly to have normal things like a girlfriend, but his ability to see into the future makes any kind of relationship very difficult, especially with

Taryn.

This was such a wonderful and unique idea. I thought that this view of being able to see the future really gave you a unapologetic look into the downside of knowing everything that will happen to you. This story has romance, spell-casting, mystery and a good dose of bittersweet that makes the happiness all the more satisfying. I think that anyone who reads this will really feel for Nick and everything he has had to do to cope with his abilities and just reading about it was exhausting. I loved the idea that something that seems like a gift can really be a curse; that for every good thing, there is a consequence. The story seemed to ask the question: if you had a choice, would you really want to know? If anything, this book will make you appreciate the surprises that life can bring and perhaps not knowing what's next is a gift, after all.

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### **PopcornReads says**

When I saw the book cover for *Touched* by Cyn Balog, I was intrigued. I had to find out what those dark sinister looking streamers were coming off of the person. Once I read the description, I was hooked and had to read this YA novel. Obviously every choice we make does determine our future. So, what if you knew your future and could see how every choice you make alters that future? What would you do? Read the rest of my review at <http://popcornreads.com/?p=4398>.

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### **Megan Olguin says**

One of my least favorite books like.... ever.

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### **Dark Faerie Tales says**

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: *Touched* started out promising, but the focus is all on Nick's romance, and his voice sounds more like a whiny girl than a hero.

Opening Sentence: It had taken years, but finally, I had everything down.

The Review:

Nick's mind is filled with memories — of things that haven't happened yet. He calls them memories, but they're really visions of his future. Every deviation from his script changes everything. He sees hundreds of different futures every time and has to pick the one he likes before he can even function. Because he always knows what's about to happen, it's pretty much impossible for him to be normal — he's always this close to slipping up and talking about something that either never happened, or hasn't happened yet. Which is why his classmates call him Crazy Cross.

Through his memories, Nick's lived a lot of great, normal lives — a wife he adored (adores? Tenses are hard when discussing this book!), children, grandchildren. If he could just stay on the right script, he could have it all. Then enters Taryn. Beautiful and distracting, she takes him off course so far that every single future

ahead of him leads to disaster. Taryn needs to find a way to break her family's "curse" and, finding a kindred soul in Nick, wants his help to do it.

Really, really great premise, right? Except the moment Taryn steps on stage, the whole thing deviates and degenerates to revolve around her. If the book had been written from her POV, this wouldn't be so bad. Which leads me to Nick — I couldn't reconcile the narrator with a guy. Every time I reverted to thinking of him as a girl. A weak one, at that. It made it impossible for me to invest in his character.

I loved their family's secrets, the ways they've changed the characters and how wrong the characters were about 1) the secrets and 2) their family. It made for both great plot development, but also added to the characters. Not enough to make me care about them, but the effort was definitely there. When Taryn reveals to Nick exactly where his powers come from, we learn how his curse ties him to her. I expected more characters or world-building to happen here, something to complicate what's otherwise a straight-forward mystery.

Cyn Balog's writing style isn't anything special — which might have contributed to the less than dynamic narrative voice — though it does read easily. The conversation is stilted and the humor is super forced, but I bring all that back onto the characterization that lacks here. What I really liked about this novel was the premise, even if it didn't manage to follow through. If you had a choice, would you want to know? To choose between futures is a burden, not a gift. And if you had one wish — would you regret what you wished for?

Notable Scene:

I shook my head. "I can only see my own future. And I don't even see that very well. Like I said."

"Oh." She bit her lip, another one of the cutest little mannerisms I'd ever seen on a girl. "She's not a fortune-teller, anyway. She's a bibliomancer."

"A what?"

"She can tell a person's future by passages in certain books."

"Passages in books? Sounds shady."

"It's an ancient practice," Taryn said. "Dates back to medieval times, or so my grandmother says."

I raised my eyebrows. "So, like, what does she do? Open a book and just tell a person's future from it?"

FTC Advisory: Delacorte Press/Random House provided me with a copy of *Touched*. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

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## Danny says

Guys POV always rock! There are tons of Girls POV's out there, which makes the Boys even more stand out. This in combination with this gorgeous cover made me pick up this book with enthusiasms.



In addition, the premise was intriguing. A Guy with voices in his head?

Nick was an awesome hero - although we might not call him a hero yet. Nick and his mom are different, they hear voices and see the future and all the possibilities this a certain future holds in her heads. Constantly! Even the tiniest details like walking down a street.

It's hard to explain and truthfully I had some difficulties understanding this concept in the beginning. We jump right in Nick's characters and for him, these voices are normal. But we need some time to fully comprehend Nick's ability, or ... curse.

It is easy to understand why Nick is considered an outside, why he is the perfect loner. No friends and no girlfriend. I felt sorry for him and it was actually heartbreaking to see how this curse manages slowly to ruin his life. He's very closed up of course, not eager to let someone in. I highly enjoyed his voice, he was easy to like and he's one of those hero's you will cheer for - hoping he will get the girl, change his life and just come out stronger.

Taryn is the girl that changes everything and for some reasons also seems to know about his curse and even more, together with her he can finally have a little peace. Taryn was a girl that was just a little too nice, and a little too perfect - trying to get close to Nick even though he was a jerk more often than he was nice. It might be just her being able to see behind the facade but it sometimes didn't make sense for me.

The story was nice, but not ground breaking and although the pace quickened towards the end I was never completely emotionally invested. I realized exactly this, when something terrifying happened in the last pages. Normally, with me being me, I would have cried yet I didn't.

Bottom Line: Touch by Cyn Balog was a compelling read with a fantastic protagonist. Nick was awesome, he was such a genuine character is a character who struggled hard with his ability, yet never seemed to give up! I can recommend this book to all fans of Boy POV's with a nice paranormal twist in the story! The ending was phenomenal and one of the best features of this book!

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## **Katy says**

Man, this book was really hard to read. It wasn't difficult to understand. The beginning was so chaotic, and the whole book was really choppy. I just really struggled to go through it.

And the summary really had me intrigued. I thought it sounded similar to Sherilynn Kenyon's Infinity - hey we even have a Nick, and touching the girl makes the voice go away - and thought it might be better attempt at a really cool concept. But the voice wasn't what I thought it was going to be, and I hadn't realized the "script" was actually a pre-written (well spoken) set of instructions for Nick to follow. Yeah, not so cool anymore. And even the "demonstrations" to Taryn were really cliché and dumb.

I didn't really care for Nick. For a boy, he sure did think a lot. I know that we're getting a glimpse of his mind and with the script, it gets pretty crowded in his head, but geez, he gave me a headache.

And the dialogue was pretty bad. If someone yelled out loud associating me with STD in anyway - even if it saves me from being unwillingly hit on - I would be really angry, not shrug and smile at the person. And this

part was especially bad. (view spoiler)

I guess the story was okay, but with it being the way it was written and with characters I did not care for, I was just ready for it to be over, which is sad because it wasn't very long to begin with.

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## **Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says**

I am used to reading bad books. I try very hard not to, I pick every one very carefully, but I often end up with something I'd been doing my best to avoid. And it's okay. It's the same for all of us. But when a book starts out great and I get my hopes up, only to become formulaic and focused on all the wrong things later on, I feel more than just disappointed. I feel cheated.

Touched had a very promising beginning. Ever since he was born, Nick Cross' head has been filled with what he calls memories, but what are really visions of his future. His best hope is to pick a future he likes and stick to the script, but any deviation, no matter how little, can change everything, and when it does, it's usually for the worse. If he ignores the script he's currently following or makes a mistake, his head is instantly filled with so many possible futures that he is unable to function until he chooses a new one and gets back on course. Because he's always trying to follow some script (or ignore it if he doesn't like the future it leads to), it's very hard for him to pretend that he's normal.

*I felt like I'd gone ten rounds of a heavyweight title match. I couldn't tell if it was because of the cycling or because the new memories would prove too horrifying to bear. I could change them. I could change the bad things, sometimes, by going off script. The problem was, changing the bad things usually took away the good things, too. And there always seemed to be more bad things to replace the ones I managed to escape.*

Nick has lived several versions of a normal life through 'memories' of his future. He has seen a wife he adored, children and grandchildren, jobs, houses and everything else he could have if he would just stay on the right script. Sometimes his 'memories' are so real that he is unable to separate them from reality, which causes him to mention his wife or an event that never actually happened to other people. But when a beautiful, angelic-looking girl Taryn enters his life and causes him to change course, every single future that lies ahead becomes downright disastrous.

*The future I'd given up was a one- in- a- thousand future. I went to college, married Sue, who understood me as well as anyone could, had children and grandchildren. It wasn't anything awesome, but it was normal, and that was all I wanted.*

Sounds pretty great, right? It was for a while, but as soon as a girl entered the picture, it all went downhill pretty fast. Touched was too focused on romance and not nearly enough on Nick's very interesting ability. Perhaps the book should have been written from his girlfriend Taryn's point of view considering that the second half revolved almost entirely around her... which leads me to my next problem, Nick's voice.

We've had many examples of female authors successfully writing male protagonists. Just think of Holly Black and Cassel, Lish McBride and Sam or even Kendare Blake and Cass, but I'm sorry to say that we cannot count Cyn Balog and Nick among them. For the most part, Nick had the voice of a thirteen-year-old girl, maybe even younger, one still not old enough to be completely ruled by hormones. A lot could be written off as lack of experience since he spent his entire life focusing too much on the future and not enough

on the present, but I doubt even inexperienced seventeen-year-old boys think and behave like whiny little girls. There was something missing in his character that I can't quite put my finger on, but he never came alive for me and I didn't care about what happens to him at all.

Cyn Balog's prose is not very immersive. I was never really invested in her story, I never felt like I was part of it. It was more like watching something happen from a great distance, something that is of little concern to you. I knew exactly when Balog was aiming for my emotions, but she never quite reached me, never even came close.

If you're in the mood for a YA paranormal story that has 'wasted potential' written all over it, I'd say go for it. If not, find something else to read.

Also posted at [The Nocturnal Library](#)

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