



Berserk

Ally Kennen

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From the bestselling author of Beast, also available in audio from Bolinda.

What happens when there's no-one around to tell you when to stop?

When fifteen year old Chas finds a website asking people to write to prisoners on Death Row, he thinks it would be funny to get letters from a murderer. He writes to an inmate, pretending to be his mum. When his new pen-pal is unexpectedly released, Chas' already problematic life spirals horribly out of control...

Chas is the younger brother of Stephen, the hero of Ally's debut novel Beast.

"Written with a verve and confidence that never lets up, this excellent novel well deserves the large audience it should get." - The Independent

Berserk Details

Date : Published May 7th 2007 by Marion Lloyd Books (first published 2007)

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Author : Ally Kennen

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From Reader Review Berserk for online ebook

Maryam says

12 days later, I finally finished Berserk because I had nothing better to do. I felt like it was a bit intended for younger reader maybe 14-16. I'm a sucker for a good crime/mystery/thriller, this book didn't have what I wanted. It did surprise me at some points and I did like others. As a whole, Berserk wasn't all that bad. For my first Ally Kennen book, I give it 3.5 stars because I understand that she has better work. 3.5 rating stands for-recommended (sure why not give it a try)

Julia says

Nach 23 Seiten aufgehört. Was'n Scheiß.

Hier funktioniert die So-tun-als-wär-ich-in-der-Zielgruppe-Methode auch nicht. Es ist einfach fürchterlich. Wie Numbers von Rachel Ward: 15-jährige kleine Scheißer aus der Unterschicht, die auf Rebell machen. In den ersten 23 Seiten wurde einem der Blagen eine Fingerspitze abgehackt (weil "die Harten" dieses Spiel mit "flache Hand auf Tisch, andere Person sticht zwischen Finger und wird immer schneller" gespielt haben) und will nicht ins Krankenhaus, weil "der Feind" (aka die Polizei) auf sie aufmerksam werden würde.

Gunne says

This whole thing revolves around the fantasy (turned fact) that the narrator wants a murderer (or someone on death row) as a pen pal. He (the narrator, not the murderer) has a scary friend who calls himself Devil, and while I find that super cheesy, the book isn't really bad. It's all about delinquency, friendship, danger and survival, and that whole part about Devil keeping the narrator's severed finger? Gross, very gross.

Won't recommend it, won't slam it too. You'll probably like it if you're into rebellious teenagers.

Elisa Sahara says

SPOILERS AHEAD!:

In my opinion, Berserk was a very interesting novel telling a story of a 15 year old juvenile going through trouble after writing to a murderer on Death Row, pretending to be his mum. The characters in the book had very different personalities and all made a very fascinating group when added altogether. The main character we have is the troublemaker Chas Parsons who on the inside, actually has heart even though he decided to drive a truck full of food with his friend Devlin (Devil he calls him), almost to hit into a man and his dog. He's your typical bad boy in secondary who hates school and has a massive crush on Devil's sister.

What I really like about him is that he has the kind of sarcastic wit which makes you want to actually kill him for being such an idiot and that he tried to fit in with Devil's bad attitude. Ally Kennen did well on this. The story had a very good plot but it was all just too much for me. I mean, we were suppose to focus on the fact that he was writing to a killer, not how he tried living through juvenile prison having massive fights and almost setting fire to everything!

But on the other hand, things also had twists. The way Chas' cut off finger played a massive role actually surprised me. The character developments and heart breaking story of his mentally ill mum was touching and it actually made a huge impact.

This was my first ever Ally Kennen book and I hope to read more again. I give this story a three because the language and the way she carefully sculpted a teenager's mind was amazing.

I would recommend this book to all the action lovers out there who enjoy a little bit of deep emotions in the book.

teleri llinos says

"It was Devil who had my finger..."

This story had a very weird starting, and it continued throughout the book and I thought that was really interesting. Chas gets the tip of his finger chopped off, and I've read a handful of books where an injury is forgotten about within a few pages or it's magically healed but the author didn't do that. I got a sense of time passing with how the finger healed, and it was refreshing to read a book where someone was injured and they actually suffered problems because of it. He had pus, and pain and embarrassment and it made me happy to read about. It was continually mentioned in the book in such a way that it reminded you that this was how the book started, teenagers messing about, and the results had led to this. It was really fascinating.

I did get heavily let down with the book though because although it was a good read, it was nothing like it said it was. The blurb screams: boy writes to killer and danger happens. And with a quote "*An absolute nail-biter...*" by the Sunday Times on the front, I expected this to be a hardcore book with threatening letters, and somehow the killer escaped, and he's hunting down this kid, and everything is spooky and set in Winter where it gets dark earlier so that it's more of a scarier setting, but it's not. Instead, you have a stuttering man, skinny and pale sending four letters during Summer. Not exactly a nail-biter. This book is 320 pages, and I could easily write it in less than that.

Lenny, the killer, gets acquitted not long after receiving the letters, (WHAT A SHOCKER!) and chases down his school bullies. Only finding one, he dates his school bullies ex and makes her cry a lot. Then traps her child, plus his other bullies children in a crane. Shoots a few bullets, which isn't very realistic in the UK, and then goes after one of the original bullies. The book is told in the perspective of Chas' point of view, and it's very focused on him and his life more than it is on the storyline of the killer coming from America and trying to get revenge or whatever it is he wants. You're practically halfway through when he's let out of youth prison, and it takes a while for things to start happening in relation the Lenny and the justice he wants. I mean, things really get good when they're at the construction site but even that got a bit eye-rolling, in all honesty. I expected more horror from this book.

Seriously, the best bit of this entire book was when Lexi told Lenny she was the daughter of Satan. Although it doesn't make sense as her brother goes by the name Devil and Satan is another name for Devil, right? I don't know, it felt weird reading it. Another bit I liked, was that the author wrote about a mentally ill character, you don't often see them, and if you do they're made to be horrible, but Ally did a great job in

making his mother human, and lovable. The way she wrote Chas to be protective of her warmed my heart because people are actually like that in real life and when you get characters that mimic human nature it's flattering.

louise says

I remembered seeing *Berserk* in Borders (when it was still open) about five years ago and being really interested by the pretty ambiguous back cover and also the front. Eyeballs with silhouettes reflected in them really interested me when I was eleven. I'm not sure why. Anyway, I recently came across it again in the City Library and luckily had my library card on me.

Berserk opens with Chas, our narrator, having part of his finger cut off by his best mate, Devil. Lovely. When I first started reading, I kept thinking 'what does this have to do with the story?' It is mentioned quite a few times throughout the book and when the significance of Chas' finger is revealed, I was incredibly impressed because I never would have guessed. I really enjoyed the plot of *Berserk*, the mysterious and dangerous feel made for an exciting read.

The way I see it, if you want to know what British boys really are like, then you should read this book. Although the action of the story takes place miles away from me, I could easily compare quite a few of the characters to people I actually know. To me, Chas and Devil are your typical British soap opera style trouble-makers. They nick off school, hang around the streets and are always in trouble with the police. I was pleased to know that Chas isn't all bad and actually owns a guilty conscience, unlike Devil who would probably never amount of anything.

I picked up this book without even knowing that it is set in the UK. So when words like 'trainers', 'reckons' and, of course, 'Mum' started appearing I was pleasantly surprised. I haven't read into British fiction in a long time so it was nice to read in a British voice.

Throughout *Berserk*, I was gripped by the suspense and the occasional macabre moment that made me squirm in delight. Ah, there's nothing like a good bit of violence that makes you grit your teeth. I enjoyed Chas' voice as a narrator, he sounds a lot like the boys that I know. I enjoyed his wit and thoughts that were embedded into the narrative.

Overall, *Berserk* was gripping, dangerous and full of suspense. It made me squirm at parts and had me up late at night.

Rebecca says

Berserk had a really intriguing premise which is what drew me to the book in the first place. I have to say that the summary I read of it doesn't really give the best idea of what the book is about because I had an idea about what the book would be about but it was completely different.

I still enjoyed it though. The ex convict actually made me think of Hannibal Lector, i.e Anthony Hopkins, and so every time Lenny Darling was mentioned or in it all I could think of was Hannibal Lector. Even though Lenny wasn't a cannibal or anything like that.

Oftentimes there were events that didn't seem to be a part of the main story but then they prove to be useful

later on in the book which was really cool. I did think that some of the events happened to be a little too convenient but that was what made it interesting to be honest.

Berserk was really interesting. I thought it would be a thriller of sorts but it was more of a contemporary novel with a little bit of action at the end.

The character interactions were all really interesting and they weren't perfect which is what made their behaviour and interactions all the more believable.

I didn't think the ending was the best but I did enjoy Berserk enough to say that it is well worth a read if you're looking for something light that is set in England.

leynes says

This book was a little too nuts for me, because it's essentially about a teenager writing to a man on death row (for fun, like wtf) and that just does horribly wrong. It seemed really unrealistic to me.

Fatimah says

Well, I definitely didn't expect this kind of storyline. It has characters that are different from characters I'm used to read so that's interesting.

But the story's not as thrilling as I thought it would be, and there're unnecessary details that I think the story could definitely be without.

Jan says

Perhaps because I've just read Smart and Fifteen Bones, the prospect of yet another book set in a poor, crime-ridden estate with another dysfunctional family was a little disconcerting. Maybe this book was tainted for me before it even began. I can see that this book would have appeal, particularly for boys, as the main character, Chas, is quite the naughty boy. In fact, he's a bad boy with more than one brush with the law. He's a truant and he hangs with Devlin (aka Devil), the baddest boy in the neighbourhood. In the opening scene, Devil accidentally cuts off Chas's finger while playing knife games late at night under a bridge and that kind of sets the tone for the whole book. Yet, there is still something likeable about Chas and he seems to have it in him to be better than his surroundings, which is what keeps the book readable.

In a moment of true boy dumbness, he decides it would be fun to write to a death-row inmate. Since he is under 18, he has to pretend to be his mother in the letters. He chooses to write to Lenny Darling, since Lenny grew up in his own town. While Chas is detained in a youth facility after a hilarious (but morally dubious) incident where he and Devil steal a grocery lorry and take it for a joyride, Lenny Darling is released on new evidence and shows up in Chas's town. In fact, he has started dating Chas's mother. Then the plot becomes even more sinister and macabre as the true reasons for Lenny's return play out once Chas and Devil are released.

The world of this book is one that on some levels I am unfamiliar with or uncomfortable with. It is a world where adults are largely on a benefit or involved in crime. It is a place where no-one seems to have two parents and where a criminal record or family suicide is normal, where school is optional and the strong

survive and dominate the weak. Yet, there are still recognisable qualities to life: the desire to find love, the strength of family ties, friendship and the people who still want to live right if they can.

The plot pivots on high levels of co-incidence, which is a weakness. Ultimately, this is a book about consequences, Chas and Devil's car stealing and other juvenile delinquencies do have a price. The section set in the Youth Detention Centre (a prison in any terms) is harsh and does lead Chas to begin questioning his choices. Chas's thoughtless decision to write false letters to a man condemned to death comes back to bite him. His brother's death has consequences for his mother and the whole family (even though it happened before the story began). The long-term effects of bullying are also clearly shown in the final section. It also has a redemptive note: at the end, it does seem that Chas has tried to make something more of his life than petty crime.

For me, one of the quietly satisfying moments is when two of Chas's teachers refuse to give up on him and send him school work while he is in prison. To his own complete surprise, he does the work and finds that he is able to do it. This gives him some hope that things can be different. An action that is both a moment of hope and of consequences, but this time, good ones.
