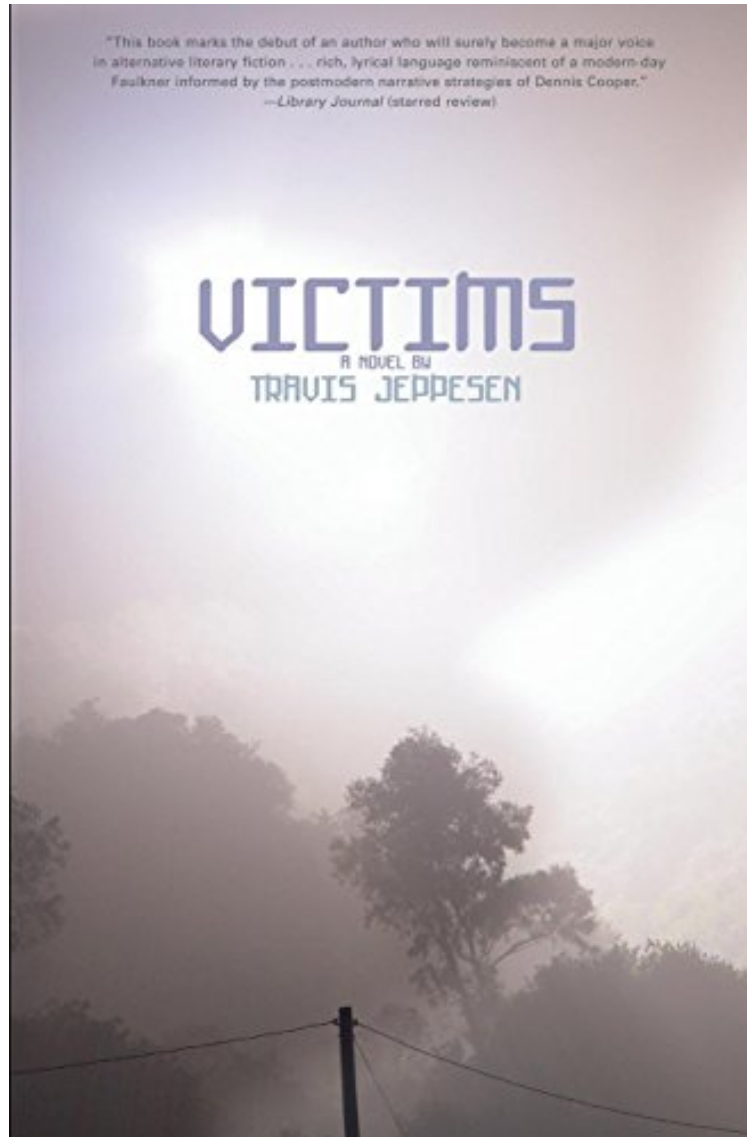


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## Victims (Little House on the Bowery)

*Travis Jeppesen*

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**Travis Jeppesen : Victims (Little House on the Bowery)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Victims (Little House on the Bowery):

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Like watching your ten year old niece butcher Fur Elise By A Customer Unlike most of the customer reviewers, I don't have strong feelings for or against Dennis Cooper -- I read Try, and I liked it, but haven't read anything else by him. With that preface, I have to say I agree with most of the other reviewers -- this painfully bad book is a waste of pretentious hot air, which Jeppesen seems to have no shortage

of. He's tried to inflate a shoddy narrative structure and horrendous prose with "philosophy" and "ideas", but it just comes across as another one of those painfully cute (in a condescending way), kiddie attempts at being grownup, like when your niece butchers Fur Elise at her third grade recital. Sadly, most of us outgrow this phase before the end of our teens; Jeppesen apparently has been able to live out this extended adolescence thanks to an indulgent publisher. His interview on the publisher's website is a gem ... Here's a teaser: "Without intending to, I ended up writing this book against the reader, to a large extent, at least to the reader who comes to this book with any preconceived notions of what a novel is supposed to be. This is why it is immensely gratifying for me, on a purely egotistical level, when readers have a negative reaction to this book; it merely confirms everything I suspected! I'd much rather people hate this book than like it. If people like it, that means it fails. Then again, failure is a lot more interesting than success . . . "Then, ummm ... I guess it's a smashing success, Jeppesen! Congrats! 10 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Potential, derailed By A Customer From Dennis Cooper's "Little House on the Bowery" series comes this first novel from Travis Jeppesen. Loosely chronicling the last days of a religious cult called the Overcomers, the novel is composed of fragments of the stories of Tanya, who joins the cult as a pregnant teenager, and of Herbert, her son who leaves the cult before its end. Various other characters appear, including two of Herbert's friends and the man who fathered Herbert, as well as the cult leader Martin Jones. Jeppesen's stark style is quirky and noteworthy, but the story threads unravel as the novel progresses, and by the end, the surreal quality of the fragmentary episodes overtakes the book and dilutes whatever meaning readers are supposed to take from it. Despite my problems with this book, Travis Jeppesen is definitely an author with a future. 5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Tedious Drive By A musician I always try to finish a book once I've started it, but "Victims" was certainly a chore. It's a vapid exercise in pretension, overwritten in a style that verges on the purple and that sheds absolutely no light on its subject, cults, or on literature in general. Yet no sooner had I forced myself to finish it than I read a very positive review comparing it to Henry Darger and Adolf Wolfi. Puh-leese! These guys had some substance to them. And they'd never have the gall to say in their author bio, as Jeppesen does, that they live in an "undisclosed" Eastern European country. I can't see the point in keeping this information undisclosed apart from Jeppesen trying to give himself a mysterious aura that his text fails to do. So the positive review baffled me, until I came to the end of it and saw that the reviewer also reviewed (also positively) Dennis Cooper's twaddle, and Cooper is the editor of the series that "Victims" is a part of. Hmmm. Very interesting. Is there some sort of connection here?

"Victims may be the most exciting first novel I've read in a decade or more. This is a brilliant, haunting, and, strangest of all, very funny novel." Dennis Cooper, -author of Frisk Victims is a novel about the final days of a religious cult called The Overcomers. Like the infamous Heavens Gate cult, whose mass suicide gained world media attention in the 1990s, they are a small group of lost souls guided by the teachings of a charismatic leader, Martin Jones. The Overcomers go about their lives preparing for the cosmic event that will signal the end of their time on earth. Their struggles to reconcile their faith in Jones's teachings with the emotional ups and downs of their relationships, jobs and interactions with the natural world form the subject of this exquisitely written and highly original novel. Based on extensive research into the rhetoric of religious cults, Victims is a novel of ideas. Twenty-three-year-old author Travis Jeppesen uses an episodic narrative, an elegantly direct style and a quirky, sympathetic group of characters to ponder a question raised by Jones's teachings: If friendship and love are just systems to instill comfort in our lives, are all human interactions acts of manipulation? Victims is set in a rural America of the imagination informed by classic American values and cleansed of the mundane distractions that characterize American culture. Travis Jeppesen has written a novel with a philosophical bravura rarely seen in the work of contemporary American writers. Travis Jeppesen was born in Ft. Lauderdale in 1979. His fiction and cultural criticism have appeared in Book Forum, 3am Magazine, The Stranger and other publications, and he is a contributing editor to Pavement Magazine. Victims is his first novel. Jeppesen currently resides in an undisclosed Eastern European country.

From Publishers Weekly Delving desultorily into the psyches of the members of a small cult, Jeppesen strives for apocalyptic resonance in this wobbly first novel. In brief, fragmentary chapters, the writer introduces his motley cast of disaffected characters, most seduced in some way by the teachings of Martin Jones, Earth's Representative from the Next Level of Existence. Jones's cult, a Heaven's Gate-like outfit, is housed in a former elementary school in the imaginary rural community of Buick. Herbert, the most frequently recurring figure, tests the patience even of his fellow cult members, indulging all sorts of unpleasant urges (near the start of the book, he slaughters a goat and eats its raw entrails) and eventually striking off on his own and meeting up with two loner freaks, Howard ("a dumbfuck and a failure") and Ruphis ("a grade A low-life"). In a series of faux-Beckettian scenes, the three eke out their idle existences ("What if Herbert is not only looking at Ruphis and Howard, but down at the table as well? It's not out of the question, no"). More sympathetic is Tanya, a troubled teen whose boyfriend commits suicide soon after she finds out she's pregnant, driving her into the clutches of Martin Jones. Jones's teachings are strictly generic—he believes that the earth is being "recycled" and that his followers need to leave (via a mass suicide). Still, Jeppesen might have revealed something about the twisted logic of cult faith if he hadn't succumbed to the temptation of garbled, pseudo-

experimentalist prose ("a life faring sexless as the hairs of a day"; "lifting his fork in advance of a forthcoming display of fantastic implication"). The pretentious sloppiness of the writing obscures a genuine narrative vigor, which shines through in isolated episodes. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Victims may be the most exciting first novel I've read in a decade or more. This is a brilliant, haunting, and, strangest of all, very funny novel."From the PublisherDebut title in Akashic Books new Little House on the Bowery series: Feature books acquired and edited by cult-novelist Dennis Cooper.