

At The End of Everything

By Marieke Nijkamp

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Blurb:

From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *This Is Where It Ends* comes an emotional and timely story of incarcerated teens fighting to stay alive amidst a deadly pandemic. The Hope Juvenile Treatment Center is ironically named. No one has hope for the teenagers who have been exiled there; the world barely acknowledges that they exist. Then the guards at Hope start acting strange. And one day...they don't show up. At first, the teens are thrilled. But when they band together to make a break from the facility, they encounter soldiers outside the gates. There's a rapidly spreading infectious disease outside, and no one can leave their houses or travel without a permit. Which means that they're stuck at Hope for good. And this time, no one is watching out for them at all. As supplies quickly dwindle and the plague passes through their ranks, the group has to decide whom among them they can trust and figure out how they can survive in a world that has never seemed to want them.



Lamont Review:

Set in The Hope Juvenile Detention facility, a place where strict controls mean those inside certainly don't have any hope. Things change overnight when all of the staff disappear.

The teens inside soon discover the guards disappearance is because of a pandemic that starts as a cough and quickly leads to death.

As they start succumbing to the disease, they quickly learn a few things. Firstly, no one is coming for them. Secondly, they can't escape, as there are soldier controlled roadblocks that they cannot pass, and the soldiers will shoot to kill.

So their survival instincts kick in. About half of them choose to try their luck, together out in the woods. The remainder allocate jobs, like doctor, cook, hunter and undertaker. They establish a kind of system of leadership.

The story is really that of those left behind and their strength in these extreme conditions. You feel for each of them, and hope for their ultimate survival.

There are huge ethical and moral issues and discrimination, but ultimately there is a message of hope, kindness and friendship, told while facing a terrible pandemic, and it makes this is a gripping and timely novel, suitable for all readers 14 and older.

Reviewed by Rob