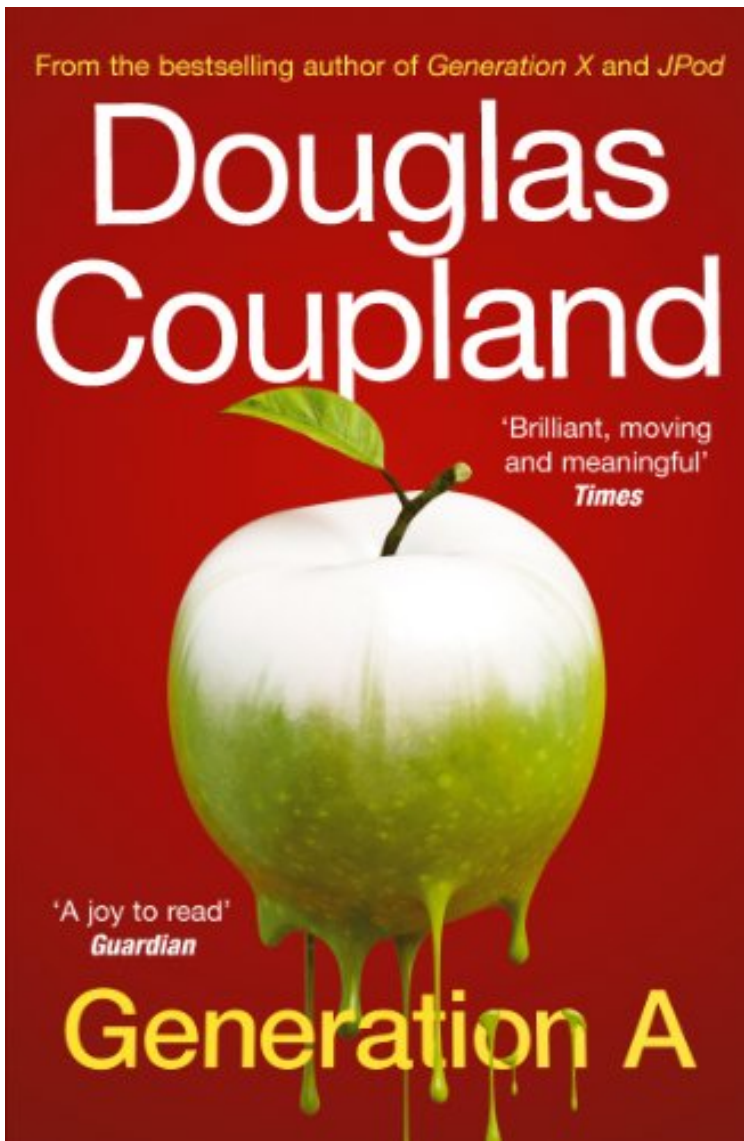


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Generation A



Par Douglas Coupland
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn the near future bees are extinct - until five unconnected individuals, in different parts of the world, are stung. Immediately snatched up by ominous figures in hazmat suits, interrogated searately in neutral Ikea-like chambers, and then released as 15-minute-celebrities into a world driven almost entirely by the internet, these five unforgettable people endure a barrage of unusual and highly 21st-century circumstances. A charismatic scientist with dubious motives eventually brings the quintet together, and their shared experience unites them in a way they could never have imagined.Generation A mirrors the structure of 1991's Generation X as it champions the act of reading and storytelling as one of the few defences we still have against the constant bombardment of the senses in a digital world. Like much of Coupland's writing, it occupies the perplexing hinterland between optimism about the future and everyday, apocalyptic paranoia,

and is his most ambitious and entertaining novel to date. Extrait HARJ Trincomalee, Sri Lanka How can we be alive and not wonder about the stories we use to knit together this place we call the world? Without stories, our universe is merely rocks and clouds and lava and blackness. Its a village scraped raw by warm waters leaving not a trace of what existed before. Imagine a tropical sky, ten miles high and a thousand years off on the horizon. Imagine air that feels like honey on your forehead; imagine air that comes out of your lungs cooler than when it entered. Imagine hearing a dry hiss outside your office buildings window. Imagine walking to the windows louvered shutters and looking out and seeing the entire contents of the world you know flow past you in a surprisingly soothing, quiet sluice of grey mud: palm fronds, donkeys, the local Fanta bottlers Jeep, unlocked bicycles, dead dogs, beer crates, shrimpers skiffs, barbed wire fences, garbage, ginger flowers, oil sheds, Mercedes tour buses, chicken delivery vans. . . corpses. . . plywood sheets. . . dolphins. . . a moped. . . a tennis net. . . laundry baskets. . . a baby. . . baseball caps. . . more dead dogs. . . corrugated zinc

Imagine a space alien is standing with you there in the room as you read these words. What do you say to him? Her? It? What was once alive is now dead. Would aliens even know the difference between life and death? Perhaps aliens experience something else just as unexpected as life. And what would that be? What would they say to themselves to plaster over the unexplainable cracks of everyday existence, let alone a tsunami? What myths or lies do they hold true? How do they tell stories? Now look back out your window look at what the gods have barfed out of your subconscious and into the world the warm, muddy river of dead cats, old women cauled in moist saris, aluminum propane canisters, a dead goat, flies that buzz unharmed just above the fray. . . picnic coolers. . . clumps of grass. . . a sunburnt Scandinavian pederast. . . white plastic stacking chairs. . . drowned soldiers tangled in gun straps And then what do you do do you pray? What is prayer but a wish for the events in your life to string together to form a story something that makes some sense of events you know have meaning. And so I pray.

ZACK Mahaska County, Iowa Cornfields are the scariest things on the entire fucking face of the planet. I dont mean that in a Joe-Pesci-being-clubbed-to-death-with-an-aluminum-baseball-bat kind of way, and I dont mean it in an alien-crop-circles kind of way, and I dont mean it in a butchering-hitchhikers kind of way. I dont even mean it in an alien-autopsy-remains-used-as-fertilizer kind of way. I mean it in a Big-Corn-Archer Daniels Midland/Cargill/Monsantogenetically-modified-high-fructose-ethanol kind of way. Corn is a fucking nightmare. A thousand years ago it was a stem of grass with one scuzzy little kernel; now its a bloated, footlong, buttery carb dildo. And get this: cornstarch molecules are a mile long. Back in the seventies, Big Corn patented some new enzyme that chops those miles into a trillion discrete blips of fructose. A few years later these newly liberated fructose molecules assault the national food chain. Blammo! An entire nation becomes morbidly obese. Fact is, the human body isnt built to withstand high-dose assaults of fructose. It enters your body and your body says, Hmmm . . . do I turn this into shit or do I turn it into blubber? Blubber it is! Corn turns off the shit switch. The corn industrys response to this? Whous? Contributing to the obesity epidemic? No way, man. People simply started to snack more in the eighties. Now be quiet and keep drinking all that New Formula Coke. Man, humans are a nightmare fucking species. We deserve everything we do to ourselves. But who the fuck gets stung by a bee in a combine tractor in the middle of a cornfield in Mahaska County, Iowa? Me, fucking me. By the way, welcome to Oskaloosa and all the many features that make Oskaloosa a terrific place to visit. Theres something for everyone here, from the historic city square with its bandstand to the George Daily Auditorium, the award-winning Oskaloosa Public Library, William Penn University and three golf courses. I stole most of that last paragraph from the Internet. What the towns home page forgot to mention was my fathers meth distillery (lab makes it sound so Cletus--Brandeen), which got busted by the DEA a few years back. Dad and the DEA never got along too well. Six years ago Dad got wasted and in a moment of paranoia stole the Oskaloosa Librarys bookmobile, abandoning its carcass in the 14th hole sand trap of the legendary Edmundson Park and Golf Course. Then, in the delusion that he was destroying DEA monitoring equipment, he torched it, in the process losing his eyebrows, his drivers licence, his freedom and his visitation rights to my two half-sisters, who live in Winnebago County. Once out of the clink, he went right back to business and when his meth distillery was raided, the back of his head was toasted by a canister of boiling toluene. He spent six weeks in the correctional facilitys hospital unit until he got into reason able enough shape to walk around. My uncle Jay, a lawyer and Freon broker from Palo Alto, was able to post bail and had Dad flown out to California for OCD counselling. Dad picked up drug-resistant staph from a set of improperly cleaned in-flight headsets that infected his burn scar; by the time they touched down at SFO, maybe a quarter of his head was eaten up. So then we buried Dad, and Uncle Jay sold half the farm and bought me the worlds most kickass corn harvest ing combine, Maizie. Since then, Uncle Jay has sent me a

reasonable paycheque in return for me not making meth (and following Daddys path), as well as for me doing a slightly more than half-ass job tending the corn (our family legacy), and for me to piss into an Erlenmeyer flask in front of Iowas creepiest Romanian lab technician (just in case I forgot the former two conditions). The urine was tested on the spot to see if Id shaken hands with someone who ate a poppyseed bagel since the previous Tuesday; its not fun being treated like a disgraced Olympian athlete, but Uncle Jay made cleanliness a condition of keeping Maizie. I mean, everyone I knowhell, the whole countrys baked on drugs, clueless as dirt and morbidly obese. Normally Id have been the perfect candidate for all three, except, 1) I cant do drugs if I want my cheque, 2) Im not entirely stupid and am at least curious about the world and 3) I believe corn is the devil. Try finding rice and soy grocery products in Mahaska County. Good luck. They might as well add that fact to Oskaloosas online civic profile: Oskaloosas grocers sell a wide array of products into which manufacturers have invisibly inserted a vast family of corn-derived molecules. Should your child decide to go vegetarian or adapt any other questionable dietary lifestyle choice, our grocers and mini-marts will thwart their teen desires at every corner. Okay, heres the thing I didnt mention about the raid: the DEA also found a fake-vintage saltine cracker tin containing two dead mens index fingers. Dad had been using them to loan authenticity to a long-running cheque fraud scheme, but there was a third finger the DEA didnt find, which I traded soon after to a DEA server maintenance girl named Carly who was running some scam of her own. In return for the finger, she gave me a killer blowjob and access to the DEAs real-time geosynchronous surveillance satellite cameras. I could have made something long-term with Carly, except she demanded that I cut off my ponytail and donate it to Locks of Love. Farewell, Carly. Why did I want access to a real-time satellite camera? For my art, of course. Details to come shortly. So the day I got stung by that goddam bee I was out in Maizie, a harvester so luxurious it could shame a gay cruise liner. I was naked, and why not! The ergonomically sensible operators cab was fully pressurized and air-conditioned; unibody cab frame, rubber mounts and sound-absorbing material reduced noise levels to near zero. All-round visibility allowed me ample time to throw on some shorts if I saw a visitor arriving on the farm. I was also listening to some trendy band from Luxembourg or the Vatican or Lichtenstein or the Falkland Islands, one of those places so small that a distinct pie slice of its GDP derives from the sale of postage stamps to collectors and music sales by nanotrendy indie rock bands. I had my four plasmas on 1) the NFL, 2) some whacked-out Korean game show where people dress in animal costumes to win prizes that look like inflatable vinyl alphabet letters, 3) the DEA real-time satellite view of my farm and 4) a two-way satellite link to an insomniac freak named Charles, who works in the satellite TV media-buying wing of BBDO in Singapore. Charles pays a hundred bucks an hour to watch me work nude in my cab. Did I forget to mention that? Welcome to the new economy. If I can make an extra buck by getting off some Twinkie in another hemisphere, you know what? Im in. Charles, you unzip your trousers. Zegna trousers, and I know that about you because I read your secret online profile: lions-and-tigers-and-bears@labelwhore.org. In any event, the sexy portion of Charless day seemed to have been completed, and the two of us were talking. Specifically, Charles was trashing the state of Iowa, branding it The Rectangle State. I quickly disabused him of this notion, pointing out that Colorado is technically the rectangle state. Charles said, "...Revue de presse"[A] visionary author . . . rock'n'roll yet deadly serious, a caustic social commentator and delineator of the near future . . . He's caught midway between technophilia and technophobia . . . there's no better place to be for a contemporary prophet" (The Sunday Times)"A shrewd observer of modernity . . . His latest novel is a quirky glance into the near future . . . an earnest plea for authentic communication in an evermore isolated world . . . Coupland touches on an ambitious array of topics . . . enlivened by observations about the banalities of popular culture" (The Observer)"A paean to good old-fashioned storytelling, of which the novel itself is an inventive and unexpectedly moving example" (Daily Mail)"[An] intoxicating cocktail of literary influences . . . Coupland [is] a joy to read . . . A globally ambitious novel, and all the better for it" (The Guardian)"Fans of Coupland will rejoice . . . Coupland's audacious flights of fancy, his laugh-out-loud dialogue and his magnificent ability to bring it all back to storytelling and orange-flavour tang, they're all here . . . Such a treat" (Independent on Sunday)