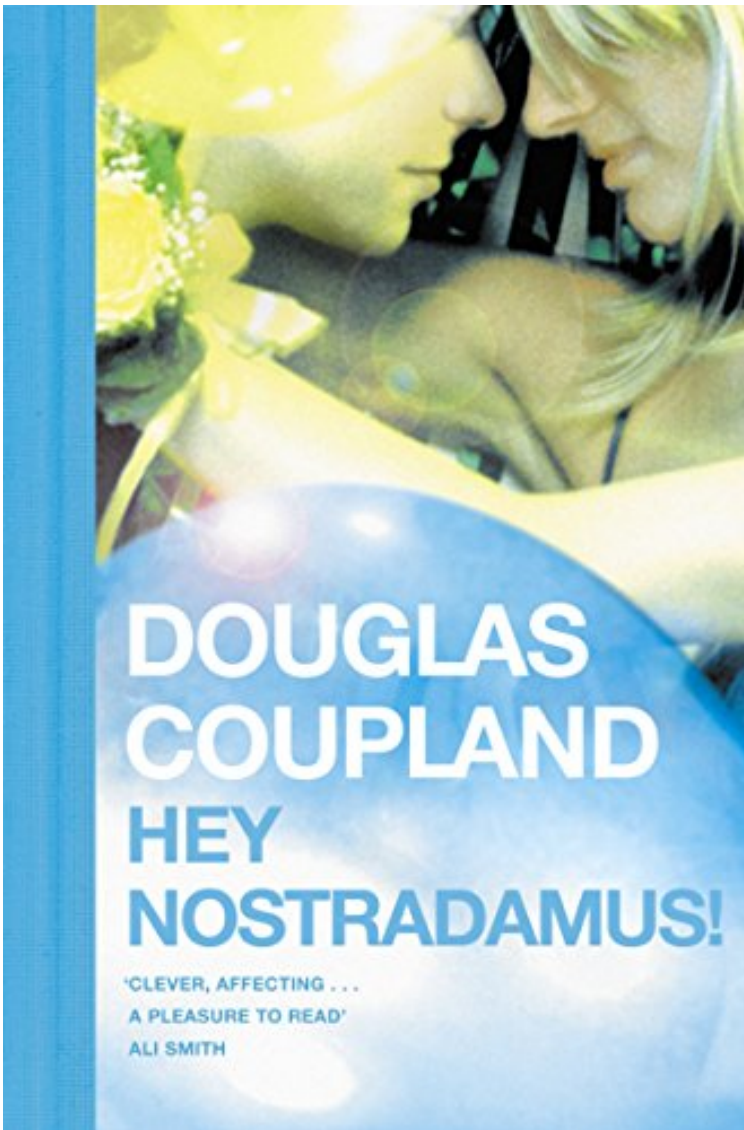


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Hey Nostradamus!



Par Douglas Coupland
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Description : Description du produitPregnant and secretly married, Cheryl Anway scribbles what becomes her last will and testament on a school binder shortly before a rampaging trio of misfit classmates gun her down in a high school cafeteria. Overrun with paranoia, teenage angst, and religious zeal in the massacre's wake, this sleepy suburban neighborhood declares its saints, brands its demons, and moves on. But for a handful of people still reeling from that horrific day, life remains permanently derailed. Four dramatically different characters tell their stories: Cheryl, who calmly narrates her own death; Jason, the boy no one knew was her husband, still marooned ten years later by his loss; Heather, the woman trying to love the shattered Jason; and Jason's father, Reg, whose rigid religiosity has separated him from nearly everyone he loves. Hey Nostradamus! is an unforgettable portrait of people wrestling with spirituality and with sorrow and its acceptance.

Prsentation de l'diteurThe story of one family piecing itself back together after a tragic highschool shooting, Hey Nostradamus! is Douglas Couplands most soulful, piercing and searching novel yet.Pregnant and secretly married, Cheryl Anway scribbles her last will and testament and erie premonition on a school binder shortly before a rampaging trio of misfit classmates gun her down in a high school cafeteria. Overrun with paranoia, teenage angst and religious zeal in the ensuing massacre's wake, this sleepy Vancouver neighbourhood declares its saints, brands its demons and finally moves on.But for a handful of people still reeling from that horrific day, life remains perpetually derailed. Four dramatically different characters tell their stories in their own words: Cheryl, who calmly narrates her own death; Jason, the boy no one knew was her husband, still marooned ten years later by his loss; Heather, the woman trying to love the shattered Jason; and Jason's father Reg, a cruelly religious man no one suspects is still worth loving. Each wrestles with God, self-defeat and a crippling inability to hold on to those they love.Coupland's most surprising and soulful novel yet, rich with his trademark cultural acuity and dark humour, Hey Nostradamus! ties themes of alienation, violence and misguided faith into a fateful and unforgettable knot from which four people must untangle their lives..comConsidering some of his past subjects--slackers, dot-commers, Hollywood producers--a Columbine-like high school massacre seems like unusual territory for the usually glib Douglas Coupland. Anyone who has read Generation X or Miss Wyoming knows that dryly hip humor, not tragedy, is the Vancouver author's strong suit. But give Coupland credit for twisting his material in strange, unexpected shapes. Coupland begins his seventh novel by transposing the Columbine incident to North Vancouver circa 1988. Narrated by one of the murdered victims, the first part of Hey Nostradamus! is affecting and emotional enough to almost make you forget you're reading a book by the same writer who so accurately characterized a generation in his first book, yet was unable to delineate a convincing character. As Cheryl Anway tells her story, the facts of the Delbrook Senior Secondary student's life--particularly her secret marriage to classmate Jason--provide a very human dimension to the bloody denouement that will change hundreds of lives forever. Rather than moving on to explore the conditions that led to the killings, though, Coupland shifts focus to nearly a dozen years after the event: first to Jason, still shattered by the death of his teenage bride, then to Jason's new girlfriend Heather, and finally to Reg, Jason's narrow-minded, religious father. Hey Nostradamus! is a very odd book. It's among Coupland's most serious efforts, yet his intent is not entirely clear. Certainly there is no attempt at psychological insight into the killers' motives, and the most developed relationships--those between Jason and Cheryl, and Jason and Reg--seem to have little to do with each other. Nevertheless, it is a Douglas Coupland book, which means imaginatively strange plot developments--as when a psychic, claiming messages from the beyond, tries to extort money from Heather--that compel the reader to see the story to its end. And clever turns of phrase, as usual, are never in short supply, but in Cheryl's section the fate we (and she) know awaits her gives them an added weight: "Math class was x's and y's and I felt trapped inside a repeating dream, staring at these two evil little letters who tormented me with their constant need to balance and be equal with each other," says the deceased narrator. "They should just get married and form a new letter together and put an end to all the nonsense. And then they should have kids." --Shawn Conner, .caExtraitPart One1998: CherylI believe that what separates humanity from everything else in this world -- spaghetti, binder paper, deep-sea creatures, edelweiss and Mount McKinley -- is that humanity alone has the capacity at any given moment to commit all possible sins. Even those of us who try to live a good and true life remain as far away from grace as the Hillside Strangler or any demon who ever tried to poison the village well. What happened that morning only confirms this.It was a glorious fall morning. The sun burned a girly pink over the mountain ranges to the west, and the city had yet to generate its daily smog blanket. Before driving to school in my little white Chevette, I went into the living room and used my father's telescope to look down at the harbor, as smooth as mercury, and on its surface I could see the moon dimming over East Vancouver. And then I looked up into the real sky and saw the moon on the cusp of being over-powered by the sun.My parents had already gone to work, and my brother, Chris, had left for swim team hours before. The house was quiet -- not even a clock ticking -- and as I opened the front door, I looked back and saw some gloves and unopened letters on the front hallway desk. Beyond them, on the living room's gold carpet, were some discount warehouse sofas and a lamp on a side table that we never used because the light bulb always popped when we switched it on. It was lovely, all that silence and all that calm order, and I thought how lucky I was to have had a good home. And then I turned and walked outside. I was already a bit late, but I was in no hurry.Normally I used the garage door, but today I wanted a touch of formality. I had thought that this morning would be my last truly innocent glance at my childhood home -- not because of what really ended up happening, but because of another, smaller drama

that was supposed to have unfolded. I'm glad that the day was as quiet and as average as it was. The air was see-your-breath chilly, and the front lawn was crunchy with frost, as though each blade had been batter fried. The brilliant blue and black Steller's jays were raucous and clearly up to no good on the eaves trough, and because of the frost, the leaves on the Japanese maples had been converted into stained-glass shards. The world was unbearably pretty, and it continued being so all the way down the mountain to school. I felt slightly high because of the beauty, and the inside of my head tickled. I wondered if this is how artists go through life, with all of its sensations tickling their craniums like a peacock feather. * * * I was the last to park in the school's lot. That's always such an uneasy feeling no matter how together you think you are -- being the last person there, wherever there may be. I was carrying four large binders and some textbooks, and when I tried shutting the Chevette's door, it wouldn't close properly. I tried slamming it with my hip, but that didn't work; it only made the books spray all over the pavement. But I didn't get upset. Inside the school, classes were already in session and the hallways were as silent as the inside of my house, and I thought to myself, What a day for silence. I needed to go to my locker before class, and as I was working my combination lock, Jason came up from behind. "Boo." "Jason -- don't do that. Why aren't you in class?" "I saw you parking, so I left." "You just walked out?" "Forget about that, Miss Priss. Why were you being so weird on the phone last night?" "I was being weird?" "Jesus, Cheryl -- don't act like your airhead friends." "Anything else?" "Yes. You're my wife, so act like it." "How should I be acting, then?" "Cheryl, look: in God's eyes we're not two individuals, okay? We're one unit now. So if you dick around with me, then you're only dicking around with yourself." And Jason was right. We were married -- had been for about six weeks at that point -- but we were the only ones who knew it. * * * I was late for school because I'd wanted everyone out of the house before I used a home pregnancy test. I was quite calm about it -- I was a married woman, and shame wasn't a factor. My period was three weeks late, and facts were facts. Instead of the downstairs bathroom I shared with my brother, I used the guest bathroom upstairs. The guest bathroom felt one notch more medical, one notch less tinged by personal history -- less accusatory, to be honest. And the olive fixtures and foil wallpaper patterned with brown bamboo looked swampy and dank when compared to the test's scientific white-and-blue box. And there's not much more to say, except that fifteen minutes later I was officially pregnant and I was late for math class. * * * "Jesus, Cheryl . . ." "Jason, don't curse. You can swear, but don't curse." "Pregnant?" I was quiet. "You're sure?" "I'm late for math class. Aren't you even happy?" A student walked by, maybe en route to see the principal. Jason squinted like he had dust in his eyes. "Yeah -- well, of course -- sure I am." I said, "Let's talk about it at homeroom break." "I can't. I'm helping Coach do setup for the Junior A team. I promised him ages ago. Lunchtime then. In the cafeteria." I kissed him on his forehead. It was soft, like antlers I'd once touched on a petting zoo buck. "Okay. I'll see you there." He kissed me in return and I went to math class. * * * I was on the yearbook staff, so I can be precise here. Delbrook Senior Secondary is a school of 1,106 students located about a five-minute walk north of the Trans-Canada Highway, up the algae-green slope of Vancouver's North Shore. It opened in the fall of 1962, and by 1988, my senior year, its graduates numbered about thirty-four thousand. During high school, most of them were nice enough kids who'd mow lawns and baby-sit and get drunk on Friday nights and maybe wreck a car or smash a fist through a basement wall, not even knowing why they'd done it, only that it had to happen. Most of them grew up in rectangular postwar homes that by 1988 were called tear-downs by the local real estate agents. Nice lots. Nice trees and vines. Nice views. As far as I could tell, Jason and I were the only married students ever to have attended Delbrook. It wasn't a neighborhood that married young. It was neither religious nor irreligious, although back in eleventh-grade English class I did a tally of the twenty-six students therein: five abortions, three dope dealers, two total sluts, and one perpetual juvenile delinquent. I think that's what softened me up for conversion: I didn't want to inhabit that kind of moral world. Was I a snob? Was I a hypocrite? And who was I to even judge? Truth be told, I wanted everything those kids had, but I wanted it by playing the game correctly. This meant legally and religiously and -- this is the part that was maybe wrong -- I wanted to outsmart the world. I had, and continue to have, a nagging suspicion that I used the system simply to get what I wanted. Religion included. Does that cancel out whatever goodness I might have inside me? Jason was right: Miss Priss. From the Hardcover edition.