



Tenderness

By Robert Cormier

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EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD ERIC HAS just been released from juvenile detention for murdering his mother and stepfather. Now he's looking for some tenderness—tenderness he finds in caressing and killing beautiful girls. Fifteen-year-old Lori has run away from home again. Emotionally naive but sexually precocious, she is also looking for tenderness—tenderness she finds in Eric. Will Lori and Eric be each other's salvation or destruction?

“Cormier is in top form in this chilling portrait of a serial murderer. . . . Gripping.”—*School Library Journal*, Starred

An ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The path of a serial killer intertwines with that of a teenage runaway who cannot resist his charm. "Readers will stay on the edge of their seats," said PW. Ages 14-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6 Up. Cormier is in top form in this chilling portrait of a serial murderer. Eric Poole has progressed from killing kittens, cats, and a canary to parents and unsuspecting young women. Now 18, he has paid for his mother and stepfather's murders with three years of juvenile detention and is ready to continue his "plan." Unfortunately, his looks and shallow charm are as pleasing on the outside as his character is ugly on the inside. The story unfolds through the eyes of two characters: Eric, and the luckless 15-year-old Lori, a runaway who met Eric once when she was 12 and is drawn to him like a moth to the flame. Even when she realizes his guilt, after he attempts to kill her, she can not desert him. The ugliness of the story contrasts with the beauty of the language. Perfectly titled with characteristic irony, a sense of "tenderness" pervades this gripping tale. Where other, lesser writers would have screamed the story in full-blown tabloid prose, Cormier is the model of decorum. No overt blood and gore are needed for this author to terrify his readers. Eric is not an antihero. Sympathy is not so much for the undeserving villain, but for the society that spawned and neutered him. A meaty horror study that's a fine substitute for the anemic, but popular "Fear Street"

books. ?Marilyn Payne Phillips, University City Public Library, MO

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 11⁺-12. Focus: That Tender Touch. Cormier's latest is a mesmerizing plunge into the mind of a psychopathic teen killer that is both deeply disturbing and utterly compelling. Eighteen-year-old Eric Poole, handsome, clean cut, and with a vulnerability that plays well before the cameras, is about to be released from the juvenile facility where he has spent three years for killing his mother and stepfather, who were believed to have abused him. That he murdered his parents without provocation and is a serial killer (who sexually assaults his girl victims) is known only to Eric himself, though it is a virtual certainty as far as veteran cop Jake Proctor is concerned. When Proctor's covert endeavors to obstruct Eric's release fail, the teen walks out of the facility, glorying in his cleverness and in great anticipation of renewing his obsessive search for "tenderness." Then the chase begins, with Eric carefully avoiding controversy until he can escape to another town and Proctor anxiously watching and waiting for the young man to make a mistake. Neither villain nor cop suspects that Eric's undoing will come in the form of 15-year-old runaway Lori, who sees her own desire for affection mirrored in Eric's haunted eyes.

This edgy thriller isn't textured enough to satisfy YAs who are already reading substantial adult true-life accounts of sociopaths by authors such as Ann Rule or psychological thrillers by the likes of Ruth Rendell. There are, however, a number of intriguing psychological underpinnings to attract teens who haven't made the leap. Foremost are the murky psychosexual nuances related to Eric's fixation: his young victims have long, dark hair, just like his mother's. The suggestion of incest is strong. In fact, although Cormier deserves a lot of credit for eschewing grisly sexual specifics (even an early scene in which Lori hitches a ride with a strange man and lets him kiss and fondle her is cleverly managed, with things set up so that the reader's imagination easily fills in most of the blanks), the sexual component here is far stronger than in Cormier's earlier books. And it factors as prominently in Lori's behavior as it does in Eric's. A victim of sexual harassment and abuse, Lori blatantly and aggressively uses her sexuality to get what she wants. Like Eric,

she is obsessed with a search for genuine affection, and she's every bit as committed to pursuing it.

Good characterizations make up for the slender background, with both main characters revealed with equal finesse. Cormier introduces them first in alternating chapters, later smoothly entwining their perspectives after they meet and the circle of violence begins to tighten. Lori is a complicated blend--at once a selfish, vulnerable child; a sexy tease; and an intuitive young woman. Surprisingly, Eric turns out to be nearly as complex. Certainly he's a monster, but he's also cast as a victim and, finally, as a hero of sorts. He can't simply be dismissed as the stereotypical villain who gets what he deserves. His relationship with Lori (whom he tries unsuccessfully to kill and later tries to rescue from drowning) results in the final irony: he becomes human despite himself. It is the idea of Eric's humanity that is the most disquieting aspect of the novel. It is also what ultimately makes the book so seductive. That's the operative word in Cormier's dark world: *seductive*. *Stephanie Zvirin*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leonard Dail:

The book *Tenderness* give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem with the subject. If you can make examining a book *Tenderness* to get your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. It is possible to know everything if you like wide open and read a book *Tenderness*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this book?

Farah McCune:

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Ina French:

Is it you actually who having spare time and then spend it whole day by watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This *Tenderness* can be the reply, oh how comes? A book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your free time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a geek activity. So what these publications have than the others?

Taylor Becker:

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