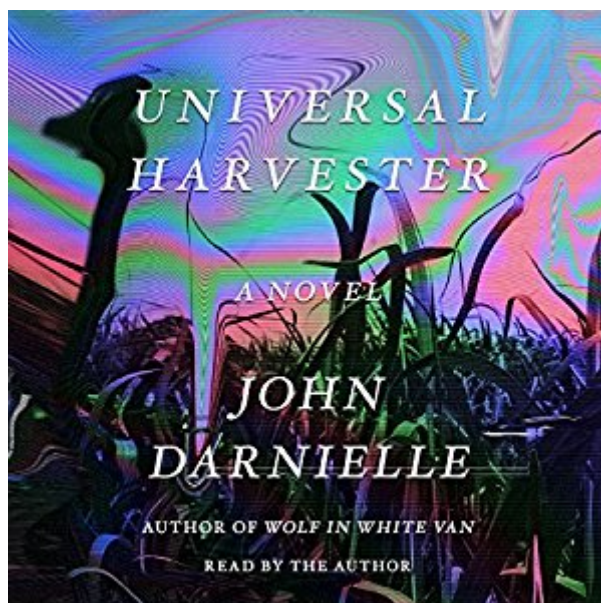


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# Universal Harvester: A Novel



## Synopsis

Jeremy works at the Video Hut in Nevada, Iowa. It's a small town in the center of the state - the first a in Nevada pronounced ay. This is the late 1990s, and even if the Hollywood Video in Ames poses an existential threat to Video Hut, there are still regular customers, a rush in the late afternoon. It's good enough for Jeremy: It's a job, quiet and predictable, and it gets him out of the house, where he lives with his dad and where they both try to avoid missing Mom, who died six years ago in a car wreck. But when a local schoolteacher comes in to return her copy of *Targets* - an old movie, starring Boris Karloff, one Jeremy himself had ordered for the store - she has an odd complaint: "There's something on it," she says, but doesn't elaborate. Two days later a different customer returns a different tape, a new release, and says it's not defective, exactly, but altered: "There's another movie on this tape." Jeremy doesn't want to be curious, but he brings the movies home to take a look. And indeed, in the middle of each movie, the screen blinks dark for a moment, and the movie is replaced by a few minutes of jagged, poorly lit home video. The scenes are odd and sometimes violent, dark, and deeply disquieting. There are no identifiable faces, no dialogue or explanation - the first video has just the faint sound of someone breathing - but there are some recognizable landmarks. These have been shot just outside of town. So begins John Darnielle's haunting and masterfully unsettling *Universal Harvester*: the once placid Iowa fields and farmhouses now sinister and imbued with loss and instability and profound foreboding. The audiobook will take Jeremy and those around him deeper into this landscape than they have ever expected to go. They will become part of a story that unfolds years into the past and years into the future, part of an impossible search for something someone once lost that they would do anything to regain. Engineered by Matt Douglas Music by Buttonwood Agreement John Darnielle - piano, guitar Joaquin Spengemann - drums and percussion Additional synth by John Vanderslice Music produced by John Vanderslice at Tiny Telephone, San Francisco Additional mixing and postproduction by Tim Franklin

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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[Fiction > Literary](#)

## Customer Reviews

I've been a fan of John Darnielle's work as a musician and an author for quite a while, so I may have a tinted view of his writing. While this book didn't quite live up to my expectations that were set by *Wolf in White Van*, it's still an engaging, thought-provoking novel that I read in one sitting. One of the best things I think John does is tell people's stories, and give the stories that don't often get told a long-overdue and in-depth narration. The story doesn't draw you in because there's a heart-breaking romance or even an edge-of-your-seat mystery, it's because you get to see these characters with normal, usually unspoken about struggles in the quiet moments that they work through it. Jeremy doesn't have the perfect job, home life, love life, and his hesitant dive into a weird mystery lets him, and us, appreciate the normalcy.

Started out promising, but got slower and slower. Barely finished it.

Eerie and wonderful. Short enough to read in a sitting, but left me thinking about it for days afterward. A book I will definitely reread in the future, as was his first novel, *Wolf in White Van*.

Good bones, but a little disjointed with flow and timelines for me.

A wonderfully well written story that makes it hard to put down once you begin the book.

A beautiful tale of loss, and the different ways in which people try to move on from it. Effective horror elements, but astonishing character work. A gorgeous novel.

Great second novel by John Darnielle! As much as I enjoy his music, I hope he can find even more time to hone his novel writing. I think he's only going to get better and better.

This book was written well. The author pieces together words beautifully and I must acknowledge this art. The story, however, suffered from poor pacing and a shift in protagonists. The flaws makes it hard to stay interested, to turn the pages with any real fury. I hope the author figures out his flaws because his ability as a writer is great, he just isn't writing for the masses.

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