Patrick Ness

The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness (first in “Chaos Walking” trilogy)

This fantasy for teenagers is Book One of a series with the overall title ‘Chaos Walking’. As much science fiction as fantasy, it is the story of Todd, an adolescent just short of his thirteenth birthday and ritual admission into manhood. Part of a settler community on a new planet, he and all males (but not females) are infected by a planetary germ called the Noise which means that they (and animals too) communicate all their thoughts to others and live in constant telepathic pandemonium. Todd’s village, Prentisstown, has been ostracised by every other settlement for its horrific response to the Noise, and he must flee it before he reaches 13. In the nearby marshland he finds Viola, another teenager, and sole survivor of a crashed spacecraft heralding a new wave of settlers. Two desperate refugees, they are relentlessly pursued across the planet by the men of Prentisstown, though Todd has no idea why his recapture matters to them. The book is a compelling high-speed adventure story, a violent and unsparing tale of flight and pursuit as Todd and Viola surmount danger after danger in the hope that the larger town of Haven will give them sanctuary. It all ends on a cliff-hanger, nicely set up for the rigours of Book Two.

Though mainly an engrossing thriller, the novel has serious themes. Todd’s journey is a rite of passage, his physical test and suffering highlighting the psychological stress of growing up, of loss, bereavement and new love. His inability to kill, even for survival, contrasts with the customary rule of violence on his planet (and ours). His pacifism is explored here with notable insight. And not for nothing is this planet called New World. At one level the whole novel is an allegory of the colonisation of America, right down to the demonisation and killing-off of native people, the warping of early hopes and ideals, and the madness of religious bigotry. A thoughtful and intelligent morality shapes this breathless, thrill-a-minute, irresistible story.

Review from Books for Keeps
We have all 3 books in the “Chaos Walking” trilogy. Come and take a look!

The Knife of Never Letting Go won both the Booktrust Teenage Prize & the Guardian Children’s Fiction Award in the UK.
He has won the prestigious Carnegie Award in the UK twice; in 2011 for the 3rd book in the trilogy, “Monsters of Men”, and then in 2012 for “A Monster Calls”

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