



# Disciple of the Dog

*R. Scott Bakker*

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## **Disciple of the Dog** R. Scott Bakker

Imagine being able to remember everything you've ever experienced. This is the lonely world inhabited by Disciple Manning. He is able to recall every conversation, meeting and feeling he has ever had, making him an extremely dangerous private investigator.

## **Disciple of the Dog Details**

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Author : R. Scott Bakker

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## From Reader Review Disciple of the Dog for online ebook

### Chris Galford says

An amusing mystery piece, through and through. A good mix of thrills, humor, and personality. Not my favorite entry into the genre - certain aspects of the main character's personality got more than a touch grating at times (they were supposed to, by the by) - but it was a well-written, engaging read, with enough twists in the case to keep you going into the night. Plus, in true Bakker form, it trickled in here and there little touches of his philosophical notations. Much less so than in his Prince of Nothing series, of course, and in different form, but it makes for an interesting - if dark - addition to the piece.

All around? Short, engaging, and entertaining.

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### Josh says

Memorable quote: 'Makes me feel like a cannibal, sometimes, the eater of momentary souls'

Disciple Manning is a PI with a unique ability – he remembers EVERYTHING, which, in his profession seems like a gift, but for Disciple it makes the world boring and uneventful, that is, until commissioned to locate missing attractive 21yro cult member Jennifer. I couldn't help but draw comparison to Spillane's mucho P.I Mike Hammer in Disciple's mannerisms and chauvinistic attitude coupled with the tendency for violence and general self love. Disciple was a hard character to like and I often found myself wanting to read more of the suspects than the protagonist – Xen (cult leader) especially. There was a distinct Carter Brown Al Wheeler pulp mystery feel to this (refer to 'The Lover'), and the premise was interesting but it felt like Bakker was trying too hard to hide literature in a dumb downed hardboiled wonderland of profanity and meaningless action. 'Disciple of The Dog' looks great from the synopsis but didn't quite delivery in actuality. I'm interested to see where Bakker takes Disciple, as I think there is something good here, albeit with a slight tweak here and there. 3 stars.

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### Adam Peterka says

Worst book I've ever read!

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### Melissa says

Before starting this book I read a user review here on goodreads. I don't remember who wrote it or the exact wording, but the gist of it was that the main character, Disciple Manning (Diss for short), is a real douchebag. That you hate him right off, but by the end of the book you think he's great.

Point being that I started the book with an open mind. Yes, Diss is a douchebag. If I hadn't read that review I would have written him off as nothing but an emotionally retarded, post-adolescent, self-aggrandizing, sleaze bag. But I held my disgust in check and I kept waiting for it to get better.

It never got better. Dis IS an emotionally retarded, post-adolescent, self-aggrandizing, douche bag. As I read through the book I didn't come to like him anymore, I didn't think he was great, but my disgust gradually turned to humour. I found myself indulgently shaking my head and laughing at parts that otherwise would have made me throw up my arms and rant incessantly on the stupidity of men whose first thought regarding any situation revolves around sex (and how good they THINK they are at it) and who feel unreasonably proud of their farts. Because I realized something: Dis is a man and, as my husband often reminds me, men really do think of nothing but sex, sex, sex and farting really is the funniest thing.

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### **Thomas Padley says**

Overall, this was a very nice book, it was a first time read of Scott Bakker for me, and i can say that I will definitely be picking up his other novel from reading this. The only criticism I would have for it would be that there wasn't enough back story into the main protagonist (it hints on things such as attempted suicide, being in jail etc) but never really adds anything to it, so for me, I was left wondering why? Also the whole 'crime aspect' was quite weak based on other crime novels that I have read, there was no great depth, but that maybe due to the book only being 248 pages (or somewhere around that mark) so I felt like I didn't get THAT much of a mystery. But the characters were believable and the main protagonist certainly had a cynic view on life and had me smiling with some of his humor, and overall the book was excellently written and did have a couple of twist and turns along the way, so overall a very enjoyable read, but not exactly a page turner for me, not exactly high in the 'blood, gore and action' which I tend to enjoy.

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### **Lamar Henderson says**

Disciple of the Dog is a mystery by R. Scott Bakker, perhaps better known for his Prince of Nothing fantasy series. It features a New Jersey-based PI named Disciple Manning who has a genuine eidetic memory — he literally cannot forget anything he sees or hears (although this apparently doesn't apply to reading for some reason).

While you'd think that having total recall would be a great benefit, especially for a PI, for Disciple, it's a curse. Being able to forget things is what makes life tolerable for normal people. For Disciple, life is just a continuous, all-but-unbearable slog through patterns repeating themselves over and over as people make the same decisions again and again because they have forgotten what happened before. He has the scars on his wrists to prove it.

So, Disciple is without question one of the most gleefully cynical characters I've ever encountered in fiction. He uses sex, drugs and gambling to just try to make it through the day.

Disciple of the Dog starts off when Disciple is hired by a couple, the Bonjourns, to find their daughter, Jennifer, who has gone missing. Their relationship with Jennifer, they admit, has been troubled. Recently, she joined a cult called the Framers who believe that the world is 5 billion years older than we all believe it to be, meaning that its on the verge of being swallowed up by the sun.

Disciple heads to the small town in Pennsylvania, Ruddick, where the Framers have their central compound. He meets the leader of the group, Xenophon Baars, formerly a philosophy professor at Berkley who taught a course on cults. He also meets the local chief of police, a nice enough fellow who recognizes that he's in over his head with Jennifer's case and welcomes the presence of an experienced professional like Disciple.

Making matters even more interesting is when Disciple meets Molly, a stringer for a Pittsburgh newspaper who hopes her coverage of Jennifer's case will jump start her career.

Of all the people Disciple deals with, he's the only one who is pretty certain that they won't find Jennifer alive, so much so that, in his head, he only refers to her as "Dead Jennifer."

The case is a pretty standard mystery novel plot. What makes this book compelling is Disciple, who is writing down the story as part of his therapy. Because of his memory, you see, Disciple is going insane.

Disciple's insights into the human animal are stark and fascinating.

"Your brain is a cherry-picking machine. You remember only what confirms your assumptions."

"Principles are as likely to get you a Hitler as a Gandhi."

The character's voice is sharp and clear throughout, whether he is going on about people keep repeating themselves endlessly or drawling his favorite expletive, "Fawk!"

The major flaw in the book comes toward the end. After setting up a pretty delightful situation, Bakker seems to zig in a different direction, ultimately resolving the case in a disappointingly mundane manner.

Even so, Disciple of the Dog is well worth reading if only for the main character.

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### **Suhrob says**

My first detective story in more than a decade! It is a quick, easy and fun read although not quite your typical crime story either. Bakker is a philosophy almost-PhD and this somewhat show across the novel.

The story is strongly character driven with the main character, private detective Disciple Manning, possessing a perfect memory which is both his main tool in solving crimes but also a curse allowing him to see all human failings, hypocrisy and shallow motives. He does not spare himself from his accurate introspective vision either. Not being granted merciful oblivion, Manning became extremely cynical and gritty. I can understand that his relentless cynicism might be overbearing for some people, but it didn't get on my nerves and I was thoroughly entertained (amusement is all I can offer for the ultimate cynic, meaning it in all friendly earnestness I can (self-deceptively) muster. It is easy when it is not quite personal, too. The cynic is right if one takes offense or not).

This is generally a recommended, light read!

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### **Mal Warwick says**

Cults, neo-Nazis, gorgeous young women, and a detective who can never forget

If Philip Marlowe were to roam the back streets of today's cities, he might bear at least a slight resemblance to Disciple Manning, the protagonist of R. Scott Bakker's mystery novel, Disciple of the Dog. They're both

tough-talking tough guys with a special affinity for the dark recesses of society. Manning is a troubled ex-soldier -- he fought in Iraq in the first Gulf War -- with a ceaseless hunger for pot and sex. He is, of course, fiendishly handsome, but he still manages to alienate women with his crude and usually unwelcome honesty.

However, Manning's most notable distinguishing feature is his memory, which sets him apart from Philip Marlowe and, apparently, the rest of the human race as well. It's been the subject of university lab tests for many years: he cannot forget ANYTHING. Now, this is not your run-of-the-mill eidetic memory, which is fundamentally visual. In fact, his memory of the written word doesn't seem to be the equal of his memory of the conversations and confrontations he's had in the course of three decades of a topsy-turvy life. He remembers everything ever said to him by anybody. Everything. Everybody. And not just the words, but the expressions, the body language, the intonation, and the context, including everyone else in the picture.

Disciple Manning is not a happy man. In fact, from time to time he despairs of humanity, having what he believes to be a far more accurate picture of human behavior than just about anyone else, and as a result has slit his wrists on several occasions. Somehow, though, he manages to pull through.

In Disciple of the Dog, Manning is hired by the wealthy parents of a 21-year-old woman who has disappeared from the cult headquarters where she's been living for two years. The scene is a small town in rural Pennsylvania, a former industrial center now shrunk to a fraction of its previous size. In the course of investigating the cult, a small operation led by a former UC Berkeley professor of . . . guess what? cults . . . Manning encounters another unusual organization that has set down roots in the same town. It's a neo-Nazi "church" led by a clique of ex-cons from the Aryan Brotherhood, and it appears to own the town. Manning rockets between believing that first one, then the other of these evil-seeming organizations is responsible for the young woman's disappearance and, he firmly believes, her death.

Bakker's writing style is lively, to say the least. The tale is told in Manning's interior voice, which is rich with imagery, profane, and endlessly engaging. The story is intricately plotted, though that's difficult for the reader to see until Manning reveals key points in retrospect as he sorts through his memories. The book is full of surprises. It's a lot of fun.

(From [www.malwarwickonbooks.com](http://www.malwarwickonbooks.com))

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## **Jason Michelsen says**

"And you wonder why I'm cynical. I've literally 'seen it all before.' The truth is we all have, every single one of us past the age of, say, twenty-five. The only difference is that I remember."

Disciple Manning has a gift--or is it a curse? He is incapable of forgetting anything he has ever seen, heard or felt. He remembers it all with instant-replay-clarity, pulling conversations from the recesses of his mind at whim, dissecting them, uncovering nuances he may have missed when he experienced them live. As a private investigator, this might seem like a useful tool, and indeed it helps him traverse the twisted landscape that is his latest case. But the dark side of this particular neurological condition is that Manning has become more than cynical, he's become an unfeeling prick, mere degrees short of a bona fide sociopath. And while this seems to be a popular characteristic of some protagonists nowadays, few are as sarcastically funny or interesting as Disciple Manning.

A beautiful, twenty-something daughter of well-to-do parents has gone missing in a rural town. Once home to twenty thousand industrious citizens, Ruddick is now a shadow of its former self, inhabited by various religious crazies--scary crazy ... read and find out--not the least of which is a bizarre cult that believes the

world is about to end. Manning runs the gambit of possible suspects, through twists and turns at times hilarious or harrowing, but which never seem heavy-handed.

Despite Disciple Manning's despicable character traits, he is very definitely endearing in an I-wish-I-could-be-that-crass-and-get-away-with-it way and has several shining hero moments sprinkled throughout the novel. His internal monologue--in the tradition of the hardboiled crime fiction of Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain and Jim Thompson, Disciple of the Dog is written in first person--is full of insightful, witty commentary on everything from the human condition to sex to fart jokes. You know, real life.

Anyone who's ever read other Bakker novels will certainly recognize his writing style. Bakker has a way of turning a phrase in a very literary sense while remaining faithful to the genre in which he is writing. (Something this reader finds incredibly refreshing.) Disciple of the Dog is probably his most accessible novel, at least to the average reader. It's not nearly as steeped in philosophy as his fantasy series--The Prince of Nothing and The Aspect-Emperor--or in psychology and science like his first thriller, Neuropath, but it's still provocative and reflective, worthy of a spot on the bookshelf of anyone who enjoys original fiction. (And just to be clear, The Prince of Nothing and The Aspect-Emperor series are excellent. Pure. Genius.)

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## Linde says

So, I don't usually read mystery books. I don't even usually read "regular" fiction. I found this book while working my way through the Sale section of the American Book Center in Amsterdam and the name Scott Bakker kept popping up, so I grabbed this book and gave it a try.

*Disciple of the Dog* is written from the perspective of Disciple ("Diss") Manning, a man who does not forget anything. He's a cynic, and he will remind you over and over and over. He's a bit of an ass. He's not very likable. But at some point I warmed up to him. He's a bit like that one rude friend you put up with because they're actually pretty amusing.

As for the rest of the story.. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but some revelations really made me go 'Wait.. *what?!* How the.. huh?' It was weird. It was amusing. It was interesting. The book is well-written, especially considering how difficult it must be to write from the perspective of someone who never forgets.

*Disciple of the Dog* may not make it in to my favourites, but I will definitely be looking in to Scott Bakker's other writings.

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## Matt says

PI Disciple Manning doesn't forget, anything, ever; his "gift" allows him to see through many deceptions (self and external) and understand the essentially deeply repetitive nature of the human animal.

He is deeply cynical, coldly manipulative and a novelty junky (but not, he assures us, a sociopath).

The plot is an abduction/murder case involving some hockey religious cult – as a straight forward detective story it would be functional but not anything special.

In reality the book is really about using Disciple as a darkly amusing vehicle for shedding some light into the

murkier corners of human personality and consciousness (mostly stuff supported by modern psychology and neuroscience research).

This is pretty much what I have come to expect from Baker – I find it bleakly fascinating.

Minor problems: Some of his musings are, ironically, a bit repetitive.  
I'd buy another Disciple Manning book if there ever is one.

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## **T says**

Disciple of the Dog is the story of Disciple Manning, a private eye who remembers everything. The book is told through his point of view as if he is talking to the reader. Disciple's point of view is strong, in your face, and no-holds barred.

He tells the story of how he was hired to find his client's daughter in a small town. Although the mystery he uncovers isn't the most intricate plot, Disciple's "Voice" is unmistakably strong and carries the book.

His Big personality-- crass, rude, overwhelming, and even charming (in his honesty)-- is the book's greatest feature. For the most part, however, his "views" are humorous, poignant, and gives him the character-flair that makes him so memorable. The only downside is that the book has a little too much pontification about society, people, etc. However, his "views" seemed a little much by the end and even a little repetitive (wink).

Regardless, I loved the book because of Disciple, his attitude, and his views, which made him an engaging character from page one. If your looking for a gritty private detective story with a strong PI, check out Disciple of the Dog.

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## **Liz says**

Despite the protagonist being the biggest asshole I've ever read (and almost making me give up on this book), he grew on me. This mostly unremarkable, whorephobic, homophobic misogynist manages to be a compelling character, not because of his perfect memory, but because of the unusual form his cynicism takes. He doesn't hate people, he just thinks they need help. Not from him, though.

The narrative itself is also interesting, the kind of missing person mystery which has a conclusion you'd never expect, but that doesn't feel forced or Shyamalan-eque

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## **Stefan says**

Disciple of the Dog is R. Scott Bakker's second non-fantasy novel (after 2008's Neuropath). While most fantasy readers are probably still most familiar with the author for his Second Apocalypse series, venturing out of the fantasy genre for this noir-ish detective novel is an excellent idea because it's an entertaining and unique read that will keep you fascinated to the very end.

The novel's two main attractions are its protagonist, Disciple ("Diss") Manning, and its prose. As for the first, Disciple is a foul-mouthed, highly cynical, down-on-his-luck private detective with a unique ability: he

is unable to forget anything he's heard. Regardless (or thanks to) this gift (or curse), he is a grim, misanthropic serial womanizer who'd rather be brutally honest and say "oh well" later than compromise now. While cynical, jaded private eyes aren't anything new, R. Scott Bakker takes things to an entirely new level here. Let's just say that if you don't enjoy books with unlikable main characters, *Disciple of the Dog* isn't for you.

However, *Disciple's* attitude leads directly to the second big strength of this novel: the prose. *Disciple of the Dog* sounds as if it's narrated by the late, great George Carlin at his sharpest and darkest. *Disciple's* observations are often incisive, very funny and painfully true. While the novel has a solid missing person/whodunnit plot, the true pleasure of reading it is the fact that there's a quotable line on every page. *Diss's* unique ability also leads to an interesting narrative device: he can "play back" conversations in his mind. As the plot develops, some of those earlier conversations take on new meanings or reveal additional details.

As for the plot: two distraught parents hire *Disciple* to look for their missing daughter, Jennifer Bonjour. Complicating the case is the fact that "Dead Jennifer" (as *Diss* affectionately calls her) was a member of a bizarre charismatic cult called the Framers, who believe that what we perceive as reality is actually an illusion, and that we live five billion years in our own future. *Diss* teams up with a journalist (after he tries to seduce her, of course) to investigate the cult and the circumstances of Jennifer's disappearance.

In the end, *Disciple of the Dog* is more interesting as a look into the life and mind of *Diss Manning* than as an actual murder mystery, but the novel's plot does have a few surprising twists that'll keep you guessing until the very end. Thanks to *Diss Manning's* dark but often funny tone, this book is simply a blast from start to finish. If you're in the mood for a noir-ish detective novel with a fascinating, highly cynical main character, grab a copy of *Disciple of the Dog*.

(This review was also published on 11/17/2010 at [www.fantasyliterature.com](http://www.fantasyliterature.com))

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## **Zora says**

2.5 stars.

What I like most about Bakker so far in my exploration of his oeuvre is that he's very smart--possibly smart enough that his personal life may be painful in some ways (in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man often gets kicked and spat on), and definitely smart enough that I want to keep reading to feel challenged or amused by his insights.

In this case, I wanted to keep reading despite feeling he missed more than he hit with this cynical, obnoxious PI narrator. He's willing to insult everyone and everything through the mouth of the narrator, but he's not willing to say the "F" word? His choice of substitution, "Fawk," is irritating and comes every three pages until it grates on your (whatever you call the "ear" that hears subvocalizations when you're reading). Grates badly. And yet he gives quite a bit of detail regarding the narrator's interaction with whores--we see the narrator's penis more than once, but the "F" word is verboten? Bizarre.

The book feels badly balanced, too, with too much philosophizing of the narrator and not enough mystery plot.

Still, I want to try several others of his books, as the first I tried, *Neuropath*, was better than okay.

