

= Player One =

For the band , see Space Invaders (Player One song) .

Player One : What Is to Become of Us is a novel written by Douglas Coupland for the 2010 Massey Lectures . Each of the book 's five chapters was delivered as a one @-@ hour lecture in a different Canadian city : Vancouver on October 12 , Regina on October 14 , Charlottetown on October 19 , Ottawa on October 25 and ending in Toronto on October 29 . The lectures were broadcast on CBC Radio One 's Ideas , November 8 ? 12 . The book was published by House of Anansi Press .

The plot follows four characters , Karen , Rick , Luke , and Rachel , as they arrive in the lounge of an airport bar , as they interact with one another , and as they cope with chaos that erupts as cataclysmic events occur . The story addresses their motivations and perceptions , as well as their thoughts on certain themes . There are several minor characters and a fifth main character , Player One , who retells the events that the four main characters experience but from the perspective of an outside observer , like someone exploring a video game environment .

= = Background = =

In 2009 a panel of representatives , including Sarah MacLachlan of House of Anansi Press , John Fraser of Massey College and Ideas executive producer Bernie Lucht , selected Douglas Coupland to deliver the 2010 Massey Lectures . Coupland , a West Vancouver resident who would be 48 years old during the lectures , was best known for his previous novels Generation X (1991) , iPod (2006) , and Generation A (2009) , but also had written non @-@ fiction works and screenplays . Coupland did not immediately agree but after some thought , accepted the panel 's offer . He was given the creative freedom to select how the lecture would be delivered , and chose to write a novel . While previous novelists , such as Margaret Atwood and Thomas King , had delivered traditional academic lectures , Coupland felt that " a narrative seemed like the most efficient and accessible way of putting forth a large number of propositions about life in the year 2010 . "

= = Synopsis = =

The book is divided into five chapters . Each chapter is divided into five parts , each describing events from the perspective of one of the five main characters : Karen , Rick , Luke , Rachel , and Player One . The first chapter , " Hour One : Cue the Flaming Zeppelin " , has Karen arriving at the Toronto airport on a flight from Winnipeg to meet a man she met online . She sits on a stool at the airport hotel bar in which Rick is the bartender , Rachel is at a computer terminal , and Luke is sitting at a table drinking scotch . Rachel is there with the expectation to meet a man who can father her child and approaches Luke . Karen 's date goes badly as she finds the man too assertive physically and too distant intellectually . A self @-@ help guru , Leslie Freemont , enters with his assistant Tara to welcome Rick into his empowerment program ; Leslie gives a speech to the group , takes Rick 's money , and leaves . Meanwhile , oil prices rapidly increase and explosions start to occur outside . With the power unreliable , Karen , Rick , Luke , and Rachel run to Rick 's vehicle to listen to the radio . Karen 's date , Warren , is killed by a sniper as he runs to the group , who quickly return to the bar lounge where they barricade themselves in .

In " Hour Three : God 's little Dumpsters " Karen 's daughter tells them , over the phone , of rioting and general chaos that is occurring . Rick and Luke crawl through the ventilation shafts to the roof to overpower the sniper but fail and retreat to the lounge . As chemical fall @-@ out starts to land on the airport , the sniper seeks shelter in the lounge and is taken prisoner by the other characters . In " Hour Four : Hello , My Name Is : Monster " Rick and Rachel have sex , the sniper explains his motivations , and a teenager suffering from chemical burns seeks their help . In the final chapter " Hour Five : The View From Inside Daffy Duck 's Hole " Karen and Luke tend to the teenager 's wounds . Rachel discovers that the sniper is actually Leslie Freemont 's son , and upon stating this , the sniper panics , manages to get his gun back and shoots Rachel . The final part of the final chapter is told from the combined point @-@ of @-@ view of Rachel and Player One , who exist in

what is labeled as Eternity , and provide an epilogue revealing the fates of the characters .

= = = Characters = = =

Karen ? A divorced mother of one daughter , and a receptionist at a psychiatrist office , who travels from Winnipeg to Toronto to meet Warren , whom she met in an online forum .

Rick ? A divorced father of one son , and a recovering alcoholic , who works as a bartender at the Toronto Airport Camelot Hotel . He has been saving money to enroll in an empowerment program operated by Leslie Freemont .

Luke ? A pastor of a church in Nipissing , Ontario who lost his faith in religion , stole \$ 20 @, @ 000 from the church and fled to Toronto .

Rachel ? A young woman who operates a business that breeds lab mice and lives with psychological conditions on the Autism spectrum . Among her psychological conditions is prosopagnosia , as well as an inability to understand humour , metaphors , irony , or social cues . She wants to become pregnant to prove to her parents that she can lead what they consider a normal life .

Player One ? A disembodied voice who watches the events and comments on the character 's past , present , and future actions and circumstances .

Warren ? The man who Karen is scheduled to meet at the hotel bar .

Leslie Freemont ? A self @-@ help guru who operates the Power Dynamics Seminar System . He arrives with his assistant Tara to accept Rick into the program .

Bertis ? A religious fanatic , the son of Leslie Freemont , and the sniper on the bar 's roof .

Max ? A teenager who tries to covertly take photos of Karen during their flight . He stumbles upon the group as he flees the chemical fall @-@ out .

= = Style and themes = =

Player One is the first Massey Lecture to be delivered as a work of fiction : a 50 @, @ 000 @-@ word novel . The story is told as a first @-@ person narrative with the perspective rotated between the five main characters : Karen , Luke , Rick , Rachel , and Player One . The narrative voice was described as being the typical " Coupland @-@ esque coolness " with the " same apocalyptic feel " as his previous novel , Generation A. Rachel , though , speaks with a unique tone , devoid of emotion and unable to detect emotion in the voice of others , similar to how people communicate online without seeing one another , like via email .

The story 's themes reflect many of the themes Coupland has addressed in his other works , including themes on time , religion , an afterlife , and communication . One reviewer mentioned that the book has " quintessential Coupland themes , chiefly , how the speed of change , both technologically and socially driven , is altering the world , our own sense of self and our souls " . In relation to the Future Legend glossary at the end of the book Coupland said " The future is happening so fast and furious right now , there 's no language to describe all these new sensations , so we have to begin inventing one " .

= = Publication and reception = =

The book was published by House of Anansi Press and released in October 2010 as Coupland began the Massey lecture series in Vancouver on October 12 . Each lecture consisted of Coupland reading aloud one chapter , followed by questions from the audience and a book signing . The second lecture took place in Regina on October 14 , followed by Charlottetown on October 19 , Ottawa on October 25 , and ending on October 29 in Toronto . The series was recorded then aired on CBC Radio One 's Ideas between November 8 and 12 . The book was long @-@ listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize .

The review in the Library Journal wrote that the book is " eminently readable , humorous , and philosophical if at times slightly lightweight " and that it " is a worthwhile novel that may also appeal

to younger readers " . By selecting Coupland , the Massey Lecture selection committee did intend to appeal to " a slightly younger demographic than previous Massey Lectures " . In the Booklist review , Jonathan Fullmer writes , " A taut and scintillating exploration of time , Coupland 's tale is both smart and suspenseful while simultaneously questioning the meaning of narration . "