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Review

"Joe McKinney has been my favorite horror writer since he first broke on the scene. Each story in The Red Empire is a dangerous gem of a tale. Here is the most original voice of modern horror." -Jonathan Maberry, New York Times Bestselling Author of Assassin's Code and Dead of Night

Joe McKinney is no longer a rising star on the horror scene; he has arrived. With each novel he writes he gets better and more mature.

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Joe McKinney's writing is crisp, fast, and he seldom lets the characters (or readers) come up for air...an action-packed must read. -R.B. Payne of Shroud Magazine

From the Back Cover

EIGHT TALES OF TERROR AND SUSPENSE FROM MASTER STORYTELLER JOE McKINNEY. The Red Empire is the Army's secret weapon against insurgents the world over. A gigantic colony of inch long, super-intelligent fire ants, The Red Empire is capable of fighting any enemy, no matter where they're hiding. But when the military transport tasked with delivering this weapon washes out in a flash flood along the Texas-Mexico border, and the ants are loosed upon the countryside, no one is safe... Included in this collection are seven additional tales of murder and injustice, things criminal and darkly supernatural. McKinney takes us from the ghostly sorrow of a grieving parent to the depths of a Lovecraftian nightmare, from a sanity-destroying discovery by one of America's greatest writers to a love lost that won't let go until a man is driven over the edge. Tales of horror and human depravity you won't dare miss!

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Joe McKinney's debut collection, The Red Empire & Other Stories, brings together eight tales of haunted policemen and cosmic horrors...

A chance encounter with a homeless man one hot summer night opens the doors of perception for a Houston beat cop...

Genetically engineered fire ants threaten to devour a small Texas border town, and the only thing in their way is a grief-stricken county man...

An ex-detective can no longer run from the ghost of his greatest failure...

A rare piece of non-fiction chronicles the author's fifteen year investigation into a century old cold case...

Police work can be hell. But there's no hell like the catacombs of the mind.

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

An Exciting, Fast Paced, Horror Thriller.

By David B

I love Mr. McKinney's zombie books and I was excited to read The Red Empire, a non-zombie tale. And like his other books, The Red Empire is just as great. The writing is superb, the characters fantastic and the story is something different. A throwback to the great horror tales of the 70's and 80's, but with a current feel, if you will. Yes, there are military ants--nasty buggers--that cause quite a havoc, but its still the people that make the difference in this story. This is a great read and if you like Mr. McKinney's other books then grab a copy of this. I couldn't put it down. I can't wait to check out the other stories in this book.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

McKinney dips his quill in an inkwell that contains a part of his soul

By Book Sandworm

I agree with the reviewer that stated that author's shouldn't pigeonhole themselves to a certain genre. We as readers shouldn't be guilty of making a similar mistake and only reading one genre by our favorite authors.

Joe McKinney is best known for bringing the undead back to life. Whereas he never fails to deliver giving us thrilling zombie tales, he has so much more to offer as a writer. The Red Empire is a collection of stories that proves that.

I am convinced that Mr. McKinney dips his quill in an inkwell that contains a part of his soul. He manages to bring characters to life in such a way that had me questioning if I was reading a work of nonfiction at times.

The Red Empire is the lead and longest story. This is a fast paced tale with loads of excitement and many harrowing scenes keeping it a constant page turner. Blemish had me wondering how autobiographical the story was and McKinney's comments at the end gave insight to it. Cold Case was a true mystery that's still waiting to be solved. The Old Man under the Sea really took me by surprise as the protagonist is none other than Ernest Hemingway! The Millstone weaves a story of crimes of passion, cigarettes, alcohol, and trailer-trash neighbors. Don't relax while reading The Empty Room. The Burning Finger Man is a colorful story of life in a crime-ridden apartment complex with 'unique' characters trying to live good lives while a molester

stalks innocent women. The last story leaves you with a shudder with Eyes Open, a Lovecraftian-influenced tale of horror.

What didn't I like about the collection? I have the Kindle version. The active table of contents appears at the end of the book. A formatting error I guess, unless I received the Israeli version. :)

Thanks, Joe, for a good time. I have Dodging Bullets on my next Amazon order.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A solid collection from top to bottom

By Elizabeth A. White

Though Joe McKinney has made quite a name for himself as a novelist, he was a 2009 Bram Stoker Award nominee, his collection The Red Empire and Other Stories was my first experience with his writing. I'm happy it happened this way, as the eight stories in the collection have given me a nice cross-section of what McKinney's capable of considering they run the gamut from horror to sci-fi to police procedural and even a non-fiction entry. A solid collection from top to bottom, three in particular jumped out at me.

"The Red Empire," the collection's namesake, is actually a novella, and a damn entertaining one at that. In the tradition of sci-fi films of the 1950's, "The Red Empire" finds a colony of fire ants the military has genetically engineered to be both over-sized and super intelligent accidentally set loose in a remote Texas border town during a torrential storm. Local Amy Bloom and her daughter find themselves cut off by a flash flood and at the mercy of nature, both natural and unnatural. Further complicating things, a convicted bank robber/cop killer who's being transported through the area uses the chaos of the storm to escape and makes his way to the Bloom residence. The events that unfold leave one wondering just which `creature' poses the biggest threat.

"Cold Case" is a fascinating non-fiction entry which explores the circumstances surrounding the death of San Antonio Patrolman William Madison Lacey, who was killed in 1900 after only one day on the job. McKinney, himself a Sergeant with the San Antonio Police Department, digs deep to uncover a story that shows fact is often more fantastic than fiction... complete with a missing grave.

"Burning Finger Man" was hands down my favorite of the collection. San Antonio Housing Authority Officer Ben Cortman spends his days patrolling the Nelson Courts Projects, a collection of apartment buildings with more than their share of dealers and addicts, pimps and prostitutes. There's also the occasional crazy like old Margie Kerns who's convinced, among other things, that little men who live in her wall sockets sneak into her refrigerator at night and drink her orange juice. The majority of the people in Nelson Courts are decent, hard-working people though, a fact which gets slammed home for Cortman when a serial molester begins targeting women in the projects. One of his victims is Ashely, the deaf and retarded adult daughter of Margie Kerns. As Cortman watches the toll the unsolved attacks begins to have on the community, he resolves to do anything necessary to put an end to it. Things take a turn for the drastic, however, when the Neighborhood Watch also decides to take matters into their own hands. "Burning Finger Man" is a very well-written and developed exploration of what makes a community, the true meaning of justice, and just how far people are willing to go to achieve both.

Joe McKinney is an extremely versatile and talented author, and I look forward to exploring his other work. And if you're new to the McKinney party like me, The Red Empire and Other Stories is certainly a great place to start.

See all 16 customer reviews...

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