



Brood X: A Firsthand Account of the Great Cicada Invasion

Michael Phillip Cash

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Just in time for the emergence of billions of cicadas from their seventeen-year gestation, Long Island native Michael Phillip Cash has prepared a Twilight Zone-like horror story of biblical proportions. Although more than half of the book is a rather quiet setup for the impending attack, when the insectoid assault does come, it arrives with a disquieting and stomach-churning vengeance.

With everything happening on a small scale, to a small cast, in a small neighborhood in Oyster Bay, Long Island, *Brood X* is horror at its best—up close and very personal, and inflicted in ways that address humanity's inherent fear of and disgust for bugs.

Cash's book is a quick read, even at almost three hundred pages. There are no big words or grand concepts here—this is a simple, straightforward, flashlight-on-the-face campfire tale meant to induce nightmares. Most readers' reactions to the attack of the four-inch insects will range from "argh!" to "yuck!" although the braver or more jaded horror fan may just get a good giggle out of Cash's story.

There are only six actual characters: Seth; his gorgeous wife, Laura (who is described as "Snow White in the flesh"); their friends Dominic and Marni (who is similarly beautiful, being likened to a supermodel); and a pair of neighbors ("Crazy" Jimmy the "prepper" and his grossly overweight mother). These six must fight off the hordes of oversize bugs that, unlike their real-world counterparts, attack and plant their eggs in people. A police officer, two hospital security guards, and a paramedic have a few lines. In this era of globe-threatening zombie and alien invasions, it is refreshing to read a horror story where the world coming to its end is presented at the individual level.

Although there are a few malapropisms (animals who are spayed are "spade") and typos, they are not overly distracting. There are a number of delicious lines, notably when one character finds himself "eyeball to eyeball with the insect" or when another boasts that, should the bugs come, he won't be worried because "it's gonna be a turkey shoot." As any horror fan knows, this character is going to be proven wrong.

The attack by prehistoric-looking bugs "the size of a clothes pin" is gross, but it has to be, or else this would be merely sci-fi and not horror. The appearance of billions of bugs is also no mere invasion but "a new plague" of such immensity that when the characters sprint for safety, their legs are "knee deep in insects." Readers, too, will find themselves knee-deep in *Brood X*, and while the book can be read in less than two or three hours, the horror is likely to remain far longer—especially as the real cicada invasion hits its peak in the summer of 2013.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (June 17, 2013)

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