ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

Night Chill
Jeff Gunhus
Seven Guns Press
978-0-615-82838-1
Five Stars (out of Five)

Gory, bloody, medical manipulation will chill you to the bone in this unforgettable, exceptional debut.

A primitive ritual and an ancient secret threaten a family's safety in this heart-pounding tale of horrific madness. Guaranteed to trigger night sweats along with a childlike, irrational fear of the creaky attic, Jeff Gunhus's *Night Chill* will not disappoint horror fans.

Traumatized by a car accident, a father comes to terms with his own hidden past as the prospect of a destroyed future lurks on an uncertain horizon. Terrifying events that defy explanation lead those closest to Jack to believe that he may be suffering from paranoid delusions or guilt-induced hallucinations. Nothing can prepare him for the reality of what is happening to him, and especially not for the supernatural attack on his youngest daughter, Sarah.

Gunhus portrays his protagonists, as well as his primary villain, Nate Huckley, with vivid description. This startling apparition of Huckley, designed to nauseate, definitely succeeds: "The digestive tract appeared first, shimmering organs disconnected from the malformed head that hovered above it. Then lungs. Arteries. Veins. A twitching heart that pumped yellow light. The mouth opened wider and pulled in the last traces of light. A skeleton materialized around the floating body parts."

Providing an unforgettable tale, this exceptional author drives his plot with focused clarity, never failing to keep up his incredible pace. Critics and cynics alike will appreciate the imaginative delivery while shuddering over a bloody look at the animal side of deranged human beings.

By the end of this innovative novel, a person may wonder to what lengths an insane individual is capable of going to attain a sick goal of supremacy. Though the story veers into a somewhat immature rendering of morgues, madmen, and monsters, the underlying theme, which is decidedly more sophisticated, counteracts the chop-it-up, blood-slinging activities evident

throughout this well-crafted nightmare.

Allusions to Hitler's obsession with an all-powerful, genetically superior race are embedded in the narrative. In this scene, Jack's wife Lauren detects insanity in one of Huckley's many cohorts, a doctor she once trusted: "The look in the man's eyes as he spoke had shaken her. It was the glazed, distant look of the fanatic, as if he had already created the world he described, and he was looking at it through a window visible to only his eyes. Gone was the reasoned, rational man she thought she knew, replaced by a lunatic with a religion to sell."

Meticulous editing and slick packaging will help this title reach its targeted audience—presumably horror connoisseurs looking for a twist on expected plot devices. The cover depicts an innocent girl in a white gown facing a foreboding line of trees while clutching a worn teddy bear behind her back.

Gunhus is a prolific writer of fiction and nonfiction. He may be best known for his young adult series *The Templar Chronicles*.

Beyond a bump-in-the-dark fright, the ominous mood of *Night Chill* will stay with anyone daring enough to pursue the contents of this lurid book. Graphic situations and extreme violence make this novel suitable for adults with a stomach for revolting medical manipulation that takes its victims to an underground place where unspeakable atrocities have occurred. There, they will lie among the bones and the souls of the departed.

Julia Ann Charpentier