



Creative Spirit

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A modern Gothic thriller

After parapsychologist Anna Galloway is diagnosed with terminal cancer, she has a recurring dream in which she sees her own ghost. The setting of her dream is the historic Korban Manor, and she's compelled to face the secrets of her soul.

Sculptor Mason Jackson has come to the manor to make a final, all-or-nothing attempt at success before giving up his dreams. When he becomes obsessed with carving Ephram Korban's form out of wood, even Anna can't divert his bizarre passion.

The manor itself has secrets, with fires that blaze constantly in the hearths, portraits of Korban in every room, and deceptive mirrors on the walls. With an October blue moon looming, both the living and the dead learn the true power of their dreams.

Creative Spirit Details

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From Reader Review Creative Spirit for online ebook

Christina Francine says

The Creative Spirit
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Reviewed by Christina Francine
<http://ChristinaFrancine.wordpress.com>

Life leads us down paths we don't always understand the reasons and as we step tentatively, continuing though we don't know why, life reveals answers. When the path doesn't make sense and is out of our character, not only do others question our right mind, we do too. Yet, we're drawn. We can't change the direction of our feet. Our subconscious, or someone else seems in control.

The Creative Spirit is a paranormal suspense read about a young woman with cancer who follows and unknown pull to Korban Estate, a secluded mansion nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains. After six years of research at the Rhine Research Center in Durham, Anna guesses the reason is to do another research article. Ghosts and dreams called to her, watched her, but when a ghost of herself reached out and wouldn't go away, Anna's real purpose began. Along the way, Anna prepared for her passing from this life into the next and dealt with the daily pain.

Other artists were also drawn to Korban Manor, each believing because of their art. Young honors graduate Mason Jackson, and winner of the 2002 Grassroots Consortium Award came to the manor on a grant, one from North Carolina Arts Council and from Korban Manor. He didn't realize he'd been chosen to sculpt a worthy form for the deceased Ephran Korban where his entity would slide into.

Each artist brought to the manor came for a reason other than what they thought and one by one met the real reason in a surprising and grisly way.

Scott Nicholson skillfully balances paranormal intrigue with a message about artists' and their dreams, about their suffering and about sacrifice, and their fear of failure. A profound message for artists and one of my favorite parts is:

Maybe this was what suffering was all about. The art of sacrifice. It wasn't about enduring starvation, struggling for recognition, fighting the fear of failure. Maybe it was about finishing, letting go. And realizing that the dreams you bring to life sometimes have no place in the world, and are best left as dreams.

The toughest critics weren't in New York or Paris. They weren't in the art schools. They didn't wear berets and sprout tiny mustaches and drink espresso. Sometimes they lived in your mirror.

Dreams aren't the only thing we got in this world. Pain. Dreams and Pain. Well, that's a lovely mix. Maybe you can add 'faith' to that list. The mix that maybe love was made of.

--Nicholson 2003

Nicholson has written 10 novels, electronic works, story collections, and writes for a newspaper. His friendly and helpful website, The Haunted Computer is a testimony to his helpful and playful personality.

Eerie and magical. The Creative Spirit gathers momentum, builds suspense, visits the dead, provides abundant characters easy to follow, and offers vision. Entertaining and thought provoking. Recommended.

Matt says

I don't usually read the Gothic thriller genre, but I downloaded this as a Kindle freebie so I gave it a chance. It was well written and definitely had me hooked early on. The story was creative enough that it pulled me along, even though it felt like horror movies I have watched in the past.

I only gave it 3 stars because I wasn't compelled to finish it quickly. I was able to put it down after only 1 or 2 chapters, which is not typical for me. I tend to read books in 3-4 sittings, this one was more like 30 small ones.

Glad I read it, and I will give Scott Nicholson another chance in the near future. I like his style, but I'm not crazy about his genre.

Susan Anderson says

I loved this book.

Scott Nicholson dips into the tradition of Appalachian folk lore, mining its lode of celtic and Scottish fables, and fashions a world of his own making in CREATIVE SPIRIT, molding myth into horror, creating a haunting tale where ghosts and evil spirits interact with humans and fight for power. The story had me hooked from the opening sentence.

On one level CREATIVE SPIRIT is a riveting horror story peopled with ghosts and flesh and blood characters—artists, photographers and writers who get more than what they've bargained for as the guests of Korban Manor, the nineteenth-century Appalachian estate of Ethan Korban where his spirit reins. As the lives of the guests unfold, the author creates a rich world of layered dimension where ghostly beings, good and evil, grapple with humans and with one another for control.

On another level, CREATIVE SPIRIT is a book about being an artist and longing for acceptance and success in a harsh world. It deals with writer's block and self-doubt, with rekindling imagination and the joy of artistic creation.

The characters, alive and dead, are many, believable, three-dimensional. Chapters are devoted to their stories. My favorites are George Lawson, Ransom Streater (I want one of his charms), Mason Jackson, the dying Anna Galloway searching for her own ghost, and of course, Appalachia, a character in its own right; and I loved to hate Jefferson Spence and Ethan Korban.

It takes great skill and understanding of the human spirit to write a horror story and Scott Nicholson's

writing flows. At times it is brilliant, especially his descriptions of pain and of spiritual beings. I will never forget the scene of George Lawson in his agony, Anna Galloway's search, or how the novel ends.

I recommend the book to all readers who love action-packed horror, especially those who delight in a unique story told with compassion and prolific imagination.

Sara says

A horror novel about an old mansion harboring the soul of its creator artist, Creative Spirit tells the story of a group of artists there on retreat whose souls are desired by the long departed owner. A little bizarre, not terribly scary, I think I was looking for a bit more that never appeared. There were some good scenes, though. I ended with some questions that went unanswered.

Kimberly says

I read this one a couple of years ago, but some of the scenes are still fresh in my mind! Absolutely captivating imagery. This was an excellent character-driven novel that had enough twists and turns to make quite an impression on me. Definitely a story I can see myself re-reading!

Edit from re-read: I found myself really drawn into this novel with this second read. On top of being character-driven, the intense atmosphere was incredibly prevalent! The storyline was eerie right from the beginning, and thoroughly engrossing. There was only one aspect of the story that I didn't particularly care for; but I won't mention specifics so-as to avoid any spoilers.

Second reading: 4.5 stars

Recommended!

Cats of Ulthar says

Delightful! Lyrical prose-horror viewed through the kaleidoscope of realism and shifting reality-finely tuned characterization-and a pace that allows no stopping nor turning back-another Scott Nicholson gem! Every one of Author Nicholson's books I've read has been a winner, but some are even beyond exceptional, and "Creative Spirit" is one of these. I absolutely could not turn away from this book-I felt as if I was devouring it rather than reading it.

This is not a novel in which the horror begins up front: rather, like the little cat feet of a fog, the horror creeps along almost silently, waiting in the backdrop. On the forefront of the stage is a hundred-year-old mansion, with a powerful, wealthy founder who willed his estate to be a perpetual artist's retreat. Why? Most of the artists don't ponder, but are happy to enjoy the sightseeing and the opportunity to get away-and to exhibit their egos and vanity. But the mansion-and the entire estate-are a crucible where emotions fire up and spirits roam. No one but a very exclusive few understand this mansion's secrets.

Darcia Helle says

This book made me want to cover my eyes and hide in the closet - but I couldn't put it down long enough. You won't find a typical ghost or haunted house story here. The plot is original and kept me on edge from start to finish. Scott Nicholson has a gift for breathing life into his words, inviting us to step into his characters' world and share their experiences. If you're looking for horror with substance, this is the one for you.

Pamela says

I read this in print form year ago when it was under another name. Still a good horror novel to read, bu then Scott Nicholson writes them well. He pulls you into the story and you walk with the characters, feel with them, and know the terror they encounter.

Indie Books List says

[Click here](#) to read the full review as it originally appeared on our blog.

We've all seen the set up before: A small group of strangers are invited to an opulent mansion beyond the reaches of civilization. They get to know each other, somebody dies, strange events ensue, then the waiter comes around with dessert.

“Creative Spirit” is anything but bad dinner theatre.

The book opens with an introduction to the frantic Sylva. She’s going to the home of Ephram Korban: land baron and occult figure. We get a brief glimpse of the enigmatic Korban as his strange powers emerge and fade into flame.

We are then thrown into the modern day mountains of NC, where artists both legitimate and delusional meet for a retreat. Some are present because of charity, others because of the enormous wealth they possess. At the end of the day it will not matter. The mansion has a life all its own. It possesses others with its spirit, which tends to make the artists far better than they are, and deceive them into thinking that they are the source of their genius.

At its heart, “Creative Spirit” is a morality play that rails against the twin sins of Vanity and Pride. One can only imagine the author returning from yet another party full of stuffed shirts and pretension to a beckoning keyboard. It is there he displays the horror of these vices for all to see: A pompous writer on the verge of obsolescence returns to the mansion to regain his standing as a literary genius. A humble sculptor is transformed from a charity case into a dreamer driven to obsessive madness by the promise of fame. The spirit of the mysterious Korban occupies this atmosphere, seemingly guiding these artists to heights previously unknown. To what end?

Amidst all this, Anna stumbles through the twilight of her dreams and treads on ground that is both unstable

and eerily familiar. Why does she feel so connected to the mansion? Is there a reason it feels like home? Unlike the others, she seeks neither fame nor fortune. Rather, she searches for the answers to her questions, so that she can enjoy the short time she has remaining and die in peace.

The remaining cast of characters is fantastic, which is one of the factors that separates a book that is simply “ok” from a book I recommend. Even the most minor characters are well used, and make their appearance at the right time to push the story forward. Boy, does this story move, through reality, imagination, and things that stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the border between the two.

If could use one word to describe this book, it would be “balanced”. Mystery gives equal time to humor. Horror gives way to humanity. The dialogue blends effortlessly with description. This book is pure fun. The plot twists are unexpected. Nicholson will make you the victim of your own reason. I mentally flogged myself for falling victim to this misdirection many times.

Overall, “Creative Spirit” deserves the 5 stars I am giving it. It is creepy in the best way possible: It avoids cheap thrills through the use of character development, and builds a feeling of true suspense and dread.

This was my first Scott Nicholson book, and I can give you good odds that it won’t be my last.

Ms. Nikki says

After the initial roll call of the characters, my attention span waned a bit. The goings of some of the artists weren't driving the story forward fast enough. I don't know if the ending was as thrilling as it should have been. The writing was solid. I think it was the pacing that made this a good, put-downable, gothic tale.

Books says

This is probably the shortest review I've written on any book so far, but “Creative Spirit” is easy to sum up in a few sentences, so here goes.

“Unputdownable” doesn't roll off the tongue so well for me, but that's just what it is. Wonderfully creepy are also great words to capture the essence of this book. For quite some time now I've been searching around for a book that would scare the living daylights out of me, as I am a big horror / paranormal fan, and don't scare easily. How lucky for me to have won a copy of “Creative Spirit” by Scott Nicholson for review!

Remember how haunted house stories used to be written? This book is just like that – although it's not just any haunted house, but something far more sinister. Voodoo, witchcraft, shockingly slow deaths, possession, and loads more hair-raising goodies are to be found right here. It contains all the elements a good old fashioned, spine chilling supernatural story should have.

I suppose I should mention what really adds to this book is good, solid characters with strong personalities, each with their own in depth background story; as well as medium to fast pacing of the storyline that builds up the suspense really well until you can take no more. The author hardly gives you enough time to catch your breath before launching into the next bloodcurdling twist!

I won't recommend you read this before turning off the lights though – you'll keep looking over your shoulder and hearing strange noises in the dark...
But don't say I didn't warn you!

WARNING: Not for the fainthearted.

S. Wideman says

Somehow, I had three Scott Nicholson books on my kindle. "Drummer Boy" was the first, a book I felt was so horrible that I would never read another book by said author. Joke was on me. Because, as I said, three were on my kindle. This was the second book, and it was only marginally better. At least I finished it.

So, we have Korban Manor, an awesome artistic retreat where folks of artistic abilities can come and recharge their juices for a very hefty price. I got the feeling that they only allowed one of each time, as I can't remember there being really two of any kind of artist at the retreat in the story, unless they were a couple. We had a sculptor, a painter, a photographer, a videographer/documentary person, a writer, a psychic (yeah, whatever), a couple who played instruments, and a few others. They applied to come to this retreat, and it's like the Who's Who of their artistic world. What they don't know is that it's haunted by the evil Master Korban who is sucking the creative energy from them to feed himself, and plans on becoming solid once more because this trip so happens to coincide with the Blue Moon in October. Not a bad storyline.

In fact, it was the storyline that drew me in and made me break my "Never this author" vow. Beyond the first chapter, I was ready to go back to my "Never this author" once more. For a good idea, the execution was horrible. I finally figured out why, but I'm saving that for my third review since it will tie everything together.

"Creative Spirits" promised to be a scary book, but never delivered on the scares. Scott Nicholson kept pulling me out of the action and horror to focus on a new character. This book suffered from both "Too Many Characters" and "Vanishing Characters". Every chapter focused on a new character, in a new location, with a new problem, and it was dizzying. I never felt scared because I got whiplash from being whisked from where Mason was to where Anne was to where Roth was and so on. Because of the focus, you'd think the characters would be better developed, but I felt like they weren't developed enough. Oh, they were better than the ones I encountered in "Drummer Boy" but not developed enough that I cared about them. The only character I cared about was Adam, and I think he only showed in maybe five chapters total.

The huge cast of characters is weeded out quickly. Of the artists that arrive, Scott only focuses on a handful, but the rest are basically dropped. At the end, we have the musician couple playing a song, and I forgot who they were because they are not talked about at all since they arrived. Some characters get a brief dialog at their introduction, and then they, too, are dropped. They served no purpose in the book and I felt they could have been cut. Of the characters we do focus on, we keep going back to Anne and Mason. Mason was okay, but I couldn't wait for Anne to die of cancer (as evil as that sounds). She annoyed the crap out of me with her "I'm a Psychic and people make fun of them, so anyone who talks to me must be making fun of me so I'm going to be a bitch to them first" attitude. I wanted to deck her. Hell, I still want to deck her.

Mason was more sympathetic, but he was a wet towel. Adam, as I mentioned, was the only one I really cared about, and I don't normally go for gay storylines. Here he is, a man who inherited a lot of money, enough to go to this three month retreat, so his boyfriend can reap the benefits. And almost at once, the boyfriend turns

into a jackass. Now, I don't know if he was supposed to be a jackass before hand and Adam thought this would bring them together, but I really felt for him. And after Adam's fate is revealed and his boyfriend is callous, I wished they had switched places. To hell with it, SPOILERS: Adam dies. And no one cares. Literally, no one cares. Not his boyfriend, Paul. Not Anne. Not Mason. No one. The one good character, and he is treated so horribly. That sucked.

The story doesn't flow right. Since every chapter is another character's POV and story, it never flows properly from one section to the next. It was very jarring. Some chapters ended with what would be cliffhangers, but then I had to reorient myself with the story of the next chapter, and it dampened any scare. That being said, I also found the way the story was told to be confusing. I had to reread several sections because I felt like I missed something. We would go from like Mason doing something, to him thinking about his past, to something else...all on the same page. While Scott has some very beautiful writings, it got jumbled in trying to put too much in the story. I really didn't care about hearing about Mason's mom or Anne's anger toward her ex every time they were on screen. It got in the way of the story. The scenery he did fantastically and jumping into back story or following some train of thought in an ADD-like track pulled me out of it.

All in all, this was a better book, and I have one more to review. It took three books to fully understand Scott Nicholson. I suppose, if you like haunted house stories (which, honestly I do), this book isn't bad. It could have been better if half the characters were never there and we spent more than one chapter at a time with a character. Other than that, it okay.

Jon Recluse says

You can add Korban Manor to the listing of sinister "unreal estate", right up there with Belasco House and Hill House. A chillingly atmospheric haunted house tale that will have you leaving the lights on long after you finally put it down.

Scott Collins says

Artists from all over the country come to awaken their muse as a historic countryside mansion that some say is haunted by the long dead owner. Little do they know just how haunted the mansion and surrounding lands really are. Who can and cannot be trusted? Who's dead and who's alive? Is it the artists doing the creating or something far more evil and powerful?

Another great story by Scott Nicholson. It's full of detail, imagination and creepy goodness. Well done.

Quentin Stewart says

I was drawn to this book by its setting. I am from the Appalachian Mountain region and find myself interested in stories based within the ridges and deep hollows throughout the area. This is my introduction to Mr. Nicholson and found him to be an excellent storyteller and writer.

Imagine a group of artists on a retreat, each trying to recapture the "creative spirit" that for many has slipped

away, only to find themselves trapped and being used by the spirit of the man who built the mansion that they have been invited to to rekindle that "creative spirit". One of the invited guests is the granddaughter of the house creator and through her he wants to reclaim his life along with the help of the creations of some of the artists as he and his minions lead them in their creative workings. Will the spirits of the house overcome the living and recreate their lives or will those that are living overcome the temptations of knowing that the works they are making will increase their fame and possible fortune? Are all of the good people really that good or are they trying to manipulate the guests for their own ends? It all comes to a very dramatic climax in the end.

Mr. Nicholson's native characters living on the mountain, brought to mind real people that I am acquainted with from the Appalachians. Their beliefs in omens, charms, and the lore that they kept alive were very familiar to me. He has evidently spent some time on the ridges of the mountains.

A very good read and a job well done. I look forward to reading more of Scott Nicholson's works. Hopefully he does not have to go to the mountaintop to get fresh material. One never knows what type of "spirit" one may run into on the mountains.
