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Hoping to escape from her abusive ex-husband, a woman and her lover successfully carry out their plot to murder him, only to find themselves at the mercy of an obsessive, twisted stranger who witnessed the crime.

Joyride Details

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Author : Jack Ketchum

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From Reader Review Joyride for online ebook

Daniel Russell says

I'm going to be honest in the reasoning in my reasons for buying Jack Ketchum's Joyride. My cheapness in pages per dollar came into my decision not to buy the very short novella, Weed Species. Looking at the cover and seeing these epically evil plants (and I love my plant based horror, apart from the horrendously frustrating Garden of Evil by Edmund Le Plante – which I hope is a pseudonym!) it was hard to resist. But along comes Leisure who have released an impressive catalogue of Ketchum's work, and give us Weed Species as a bonus story with the novel Joyride. At the usual low low prices, I certainly couldn't resist this time! Let's look at the main novel first.

Carole is a nice enough, slightly posh woman who has been driven to hell and back by her abusive ex-husband. He really did a number on her with beatings, rape, etc. Now she's with Lee, and the two are moderately happy together...apart that the ex-husband still pops around now and then for threats, harassment and the odd rape. The police haven't done a thing, so the couple decide to indulge in some vigilante action, involving a seldom used hiking trail and a baseball bat.

Enter Wayne. Wayne is your town nutjob. In his twenties and working bar, he has a deep seeded resentment for basically everyone and a secret obsession with murder. After a failed romantic walk with his girlfriend, he takes a minute to rest, overlooking the trail.

This is where Wayne sees something he wasn't supposed to see.

Now Wayne wants to be their best friend and share in the thrill of murder. Carole and Lee aren't so keen, but how can you argue with a mad man?

Ketchum, as usual, hits the road running and never lets up. The novel slips by and you don't even feel it going in. Ketchum just has this pace and sharp edge to his words that few can compare with. He keeps the plot rooted in reality, with absolutely no supernatural element whatsoever. The subject of a man who finally gives into his bloodlust in such an explosive way, while some may see this as Ketchum simply ticking his own extreme violence box, is gritty and actually, close to real life events.

It was an interesting read, as at the time of finishing, I thought it was quite a shallow read. Ketchum in third gear, Ketchum providing the cheap thrills, but with a paler moral stance than say The Girl Next Door. Only a few days after it did I start to think about it. Yes, murdering random strangers is bad, but it raises questions such as is the murder of a bad person make it acceptable? Does an ignorant society breed psychopaths?

Ketchum also has the stereotypical cop hot on the trail, but with a few atypical character flaws. A decent subplot.

Onto Weed Species. Now, the mistake I'd made (as I believe others had in the past) was that this was a story about plants. How very wrong.

A very different couple from Joyride, Sherry and Owen are serial rapists, and murderers when the situation demands it. Weed Species follows them over many years, revealing their exploits, the repercussions and how their presence affects the community (like a weed species. No plants).

This is the most rape-tastic story I have ever read. It reminded me of that famous scene from Dusk til Dawn. We got rape! We got date rape! We got anal rape! You like oral rape? We got oral rape! How about some anal rape followed by oral rape? We got lesbian rape! We got incest rape! We kinky rape! We got torturous rape!

Lots of raping. Be interesting to see what percentage of the page count doesn't have any raping.

Ketchum really lets his hair down here on the pure gross out and explicit details. Funnily enough, just before reading this, I discussed in interviews how the first draft of Samhane was more extreme. However, Weed Species certainly would have aced it in the full-on rape stakes. Seriously, I cannot warn you enough, if you have a nervous disposition regarding rape, do not read this story. I've seen readers say they're ashamed to own this book.

Is it any good? It was okay, I guess.

I prefer other Ketchum titles, but this was still a good, fast read, but definitely not for everyone.

Scott Emerson says

JOYRIDE (aka ROADKILL) is not Ketchum's best work, but it's still a solid, entertaining read that rockets along at a fast clip. It's definitely worth a look, but the highlight of this volume is the inclusion of "Weed Species," a bonus novella that's as disturbing, cold, and ultimately insightful as THE GIRL NEXT DOOR or "Right to Life." It's worth the cover price alone.

Lance Dale says

I didn't think it was his strongest effort, but I'd take one of Ketchum's lesser books over most authors' best books. The guy knew how to tell a story.

DJMikeG says

Jack Ketchum delivers an incredible, emotionally devastating novel yet again. Ketchum is a horror writer by title, but his writing is so artful, and rings so true emotionally that I would just call him an amazing novelist period. He goes so deep into the reasons people do what they do, that is the reason so much of his writing is so disturbing. The characters could so easily be real people. The kind of horror Ketchum delivers is based more on the terrible undercurrents in our society, not on the supernatural. He looks into the truly dark underbelly of humanity and shows how the wrongdoings of others affect all of us, or any of us. This was one of the heaviest, darkest books I have ever read. Its not a 'fun horror romp' by any means. Its a serious look into the darkness that surrounds us all. Ketchum is to be commended for writing books that make the reader really think. The ending was surprisingly uplifting and positive, as well. I was floored by this book. Highest recommendation possible.

J.C. Brennan says

Let the Pandemonium begin!

This book takes its readers on a ride with a psychopath who, up until now, has buried his urges deep. He's been too much of a coward to act on them. That, however, is all about to change.

It all begins when Wayne, a simple bartender, try's to chokes his girlfriend to death while on a hike. She, of course, is none too happy about his actions and runs off leaving him sitting alone. It's at this time he sees a couple committing a brutal murder, and it's this act that awakens Wayne's inner-psycho. He begins a murder spree but not on his own—oh no. He wants witnesses to his senseless reign of terror and who better to observe than the couple that he just watched murder a man

This manuscript brings its reader sex, horror, and mayhem the three things that Ketchum has always been so talented at bringing to life. Joyride is a compelling, but tragic, drama with some nasty little twist making it

markedly enticing.

Chris says

Like most of his fiction, Jack Ketchum blends everyday life with inexplicable horror, usually more realistic psychological than supernatural, and does this just about better than anyone. Joyride involves an abused ex-wife and her lover, and their plans to murder her abuser ex-husband, who continues to harass her. But you know that saying about best laid plans? Needless to say, things go sideways in a very bloody and brutal way. The bonus story, Weed Species, was disturbing and horrifying in its depiction of the seemingly perfect young couple, who have perversely evil desires.

Highly recommended.

Querus Abuttu says

"You're not going to believe this," he said to Rule. "We got a shooting out on I-89. Lady in a station wagon. Is this piece-of-shit day never gonna end?"

~Joyride - by Jack Ketchum (2010)

There are not many books I give a 5 star too. This is an exception. I put off reviewing this novel for a couple of reasons. One: I'm often one of the first to submit a review before reading other writers' critiques in my SHU program. I decided to do things differently this time. Second: I'm afraid I'm a real freak. I love Jack Ketchum's writing. Not just his writing, but his stories. What does that say about me? I've read how others feel that his novels, and what a bummer. Some think his work is a trip down the filthy alleyways of twisted humanity that only exists in the worst of nightmarish dreams. And maybe it's true, but it doesn't bother me. If anything, I'm appreciative. His prose is real, and he dives into storytelling in a way that is different from others.

The first part of the story, Wayne witnesses a murder and it thrills him. His sentiment about it is not so different from those who enjoy reading about serial killers, or those who look on the internet for fatality crashes and are amazed at the blood and aftermath. Is he so different from the person who drives a car and just for a moment wonders what it would be like to plunge her/his bumper into a crowd of people taking their time crossing the road when the light is green...the person who is waiting to turn right but can't because that person dosen't dare?

"It was not the product of the kill, which was nothing but meat and emptiness when you got down to it, though the person you killed wasn't there anymore and that was something. But the act itself, the moment of the taking and the losing. That was classy. That was important."
Ketchum (Kindle Locations 425-427).

And that is what is important in this story when you read it. Something you need to stick in the back of your brain as your fingers turn the pages.

Another thing I really liked about the way Ketchum put this book together is that he plays with your thoughts as you read. An example is when Lieutenant Rule reflects on what he knows about Carole. Where you might think at one point she's one hell of a bitch, later you discover she had real reasons for wanting her ex-husband dead. But then you have to consider, is there ever a real reason for wanting someone dead? And does the wanting ever justify the actual act?

As a writer and student of writing popular fiction, there were some POV errors I noticed now and then. None of them seriously bothered me, but I noticed them just the same. The way the story flowed I caught myself wondering if we're too hard on POV changes in manuscripts. Perhaps. I also had a problem with some of the sentence structure. There were places on the pages that a comma would have been beneficial and kept me from reading the same sentence over a few times to catch the meaning.

I've heard others call this book "in your face" writing, but I'd rather describe it as "stare in the mirror" prose. If you enjoy traveling a road where the scenery isn't pretty, but you can acknowledge the loveliness and complexity of a sewer or waste-treatment plant, this story is for you. If you're afraid to stare into the pupils of your own reflection, or you gag at the stench of decaying muscle or mounds of stinking raw feces . . . then don't inhale the words written inside this masterpiece. This is a book best devoured by those who have a palate for the nuances of evil mixed with the subtleties of a timebomb. Overall, this was an excellent read and anyone who disagrees is going in my notebook.

RETAL.

~Q

Note: To read more reviews by Q, go to: <http://wieldingpenandword.blogspot.com/>

Kasia says

Ketchum is quite satisfying when I reach for his stories; the horror and gore are based on things that with some stretch of really bad luck could really happen to someone which he balances on that too close to comfort crossing line perfectly. Joyride has a few murderers in it and some you hate and despise and the others you root for, crazy yes, you do want some of the characters to be okay, the story is twisted and even though it's a good read it's not his most visceral. This goes easy on the usual Ketchum gore and focuses on speedy shock and a thriller to keep the reader alert thought the tale, as usual there is more than one story line going on and sooner or later they join for an interesting ending. This was originally published under the title of "Road Kill" in the nineteen nineties in the UK and the flavor of the story reflects the place and time of its publishing, you get the darkness and the battle between good and evil or in this case evil and lesser evil based on the characters and who's on top versus on who's more of a mad man chopping and killing like in his previous works, here the mental games take over the pain of the flesh that he can make real very easily.

Howard is a sick young man on the killing spree of his life, traveling with him is Carol and Lee, you know why he takes them when you start the story and absorb their sticky and stressful backgrounds. He takes them on a ride but in this case the journey is more important than the destination, it's either them or random innocents who will get their share of bad luck for the day, Ketchum makes this an addictive read that's hard to put down and one that stays in the memory for a while. You pick who you root for, both sides have their black acts and it doesn't take too long for some very bad things to start happening to some random good people and a few damaged souls in need of a new start. This was a fast and easy read, not the most potent

from Ketchum but then again this is the same man who wrote Off Spring which was the most insanely gross and intense book ever in a good way if you love horror, so perhaps it's not such a bad thing.

- Kasia S.

Josh says

Definitely shines--since it is a Ketchum book--and contains a great deal of violence that is never cast in a leering, sexualized or remotely exploitative light. Interesting characters and interesting situations, plus lots of Ketchum's signature Rising To The Occasion--characters thrust into horrible situations and then attempting, however they can, to try to hurdle the obstacles set in their path.

However, it's not one of his strongest works. Passages are a bit clunky, lacking the smoothly polished, sparsely poetic quality of some of his more notable books. While the antagonist is interesting, I found him to be painted in somewhat broad strokes, especially the parts concerning his relationship with his mother (who turned out to be a much more intriguing character than Wayne...although she was only in the book for three or so pages, I wanted to know more about her...)

If you're a Jack Ketchum fan, this book is a must. If you're in for a disturbing, twisty ride, I'd highly recommend it as well.

Scott says

This book is a box of psychological hell. Savage brutality, nihilistic sadists, and very potent writing await you in this one. Jack Ketchum is a sick man, but he's so damned good at it. You are really thrust deep into terror with no chance to catch your breath. The prose is so deftly constructed, not one word is wasted. The book is about a man teetering on the edge of lunacy that witnesses a wife and her lover kill the evil husband, then decides that it looks like fun. He kidnaps the two for a bloody ride down the Interstate... What makes this a GOOD novel is that Ketchum gives humanity to all of the characters, including the multitude of victims. Death is not just dealt out quickly, it all has a function. It ain't for everybody, but it's unforgettable. Oh, the version I read of this has a novella - "Weed Species." This story is one of the most depraved and disgusting things I've ever read - and that's saying something, trust me ("American Psycho still holds the honor for most depraved). It has depth in its main idea, violence begetting violence, but it goes WAY over the line... It's great, actually, but be STRONGLY warned. Think De Sade.

Joshua Buhs says

After The Girl Next Door I went back to my local used bookstore. This was the only other Ketchum on the shelf. It was not as good, and substantiated some of the criticisms that I had of Girl. Still, it was good, an engaging, easy read.

In the afterword, Ketchum says he got the idea for the book from Zola's *La Bete Humaine*, which includes a scene in which a man watches two people murder someone and then vows to meet them. I suppose there could be a lot of Zola in this book--I haven't read much of him, and certainly not *La Bete Humaine*. But

what it reminded more of was John D. MacDonald, particularly *_The End of the Night_*, which is similarly a tale about a multi-state killing spree told from varying perspectives.

The whole vibe of the book harkens back to drugstore paperback thrillers, with ads in the back and a frontispiece that highlights some scene from deep in the book. (But this is contemporary--the pull out has no problem reprinting the f-word.)

There are differences, of course, the main one being that the plotting in *_Joyride_* is much less intricate. The points of view are all those of the people directly involved, and seem used so that there are no gaps in the readers knowledge.

The story itself is fairly straight forward, and its outcome predictable from very early on, although Ketchum does stop just short of the Hollywood ending the narrative seems to drive toward. The sentences are simple, again, with a lot of fragments, and recursive thoughts that build character without being overwhelming. As in *_Girl_*, Ketchum often eschews commas that would make sentences clearer, and opts for pronouns when it is not obvious about whom he is writing. These tics seem deliberate, I'm just not sure to what end.

There is a lot of violence. Again, he might plead, since the story was also built around real life tales (which, like *_Girl_* he borrowed from *_Bloodletters and Badmen_*. But that doesn't really explain why he dwells so much on the violence. In this story, it is not as shocking as in *_Girl_*, but seems pro forma. There's also, again, a reliance on the Women in Refrigerator trope that makes his use of it in *_Girl_* seem less like a critique of a culture--his use is just another reflection of the tendency to turn women (and women) characters, into objects.

Carole (SPOILER) escapes Meg's fate, and even has something approaching a happy ending, or, at least, a chance to begin anew. But the story is never hers, really. It was always Lt. Rule's--and so, her pain and suffering was for his redemption.

Konnie Jones says

Joyride and Weed Species are great together! I already had Joyride, but bought the paperback from Mr. Ketchum himself! I had to read Weed Species, as I am familiar with the Karla Homolka case. This is a very short story, but very disturbing. And yes, I loved it!

Sotiris Karagiannis says

That was a Joyride indeed!

πως αναφ?ρει και στον επ?λογο, ο Κ?τσάμ ?γραψε το Joyride ?χοντας στο μυάλ? του την αρχ? του Ανθρ?πινου Κτ?νους του Εμ?λ Ζολ?. Το βιβλ?ο ξεκιν?ει με τον Lee και την Carole να δολοφονο?ν τον Howard στο δ?σος. Ο Howard ε?ναι ο πρ?ην σ?ζυγος της Carole που εξαιτ?ας της δ?ναμ?ς και της θ?σης του, κατ?φερνε να ξεφ?γει απ? το ν?μο κ?θε φορ? που την κακοποιο?σε. Οι αμ?τηρητες καταγγελ?ες της Carole στην αστυνομ?α παρ? τα απειλητικ? τηλεφων?ματα, τους βιασμο?ς, τις

μελανι?ς και τις μαχαιρι?ς δεν ?φεραν καν?να αποτ?λεσμα, οπ?τε ο Lee, ο εραστ?ς της και παλι?ς υπ?λληλος του Howard, της προτε?νει να τον δολοφον?σουν. Με μεγ?λη σιγουρι? αφ?νουν το πτ?μα του Howard στο δ?σος με τ?τοιο τρ?πο ?στε να φα?νεται ως ατ?χημα. Ε?ναι σ?γουροι ?τι κανε?ς δεν τους παρακολουθο?σε. ?καναν ?μωσ λ?θος. Κρυμμ?νος στις φυλλωσι?ς , ο Wayne ε?δε τα π?ντα. Π?ς ο Lee χτ?πησε με το ρ?παλο τον Howard και π?ς η Carole θρυμμ?τισε το κρ?ν?ο του. Τ?τε αποφ?σισε ?τι ?ταν καιρ?ς να β?λει το σχ?διο του σε δρ?ση. Αυτ?ς ?ταν αρκετ? δειλ?ς για να σκοτ?σει αλλ? τ?ρα μπορο?σε να ζητ?σει βο?θεια απ? αυτο?ς τους δ?ο αγν?στους. Θα του ?δειχναν αυτο? τον τρ?πο. Και σιγ? σιγ? η λ?στα με τα αντ?ποινα θα μειων?ταν....

Και κ?πως ?τσι ξεκιν?ει ?να φρικιαστικ? roadtrip με πρωταγωνιστ? τον Wayne που προσπαθε? να κ?νει το "?λμα" προς το ?νειρ? του. Και ?ταν μαθα?νει το π?ς, γ?νεται ασταμ?τητος.

Αυτ? που κ?νει ανατριχιαστικ? το Joyride δεν ε?ναι η β?α που ε?ναι αρκετ? περιγραφικ?, αλλ? ο χαρακτ?ρας του Wayne. ?νας φαινομενικ? απλ?ς ?νθρωπος της διπλαν?ς π?ρτας με την κοπ?λα του και τη δουλει? του, ο οπο?ος ?μωσ κρ?βει μ?α καταπιεσμ?νη κακ?α για τους γ?ρω του. Δεν αργε? να εξωτερικε?σει αυτ? τον θυμ? και τα π?ντα β?φονται κ?κκινα. Μιας και βρισκ?μαστε στην Αμερικ?, τα π?ντα ε?ναι ε?κολα... Τα ?πλα ε?ναι παντο?.

?πως λ?ει και αυτ?ς χαρακτηριστικ?:

It's a free country after all

? ?πως λ?ει ο Snake στο Escape from LA του Carpenter: *America... Land of the free...*

Στο ταξ?δι ?μωσ, υπ?ρχει και το ζευγ?ρι Lee-Carole ?πως αναφ?ρθηκε πιο π?νω. Σε ?λη τη δι?ρκει? του, το ζε?γος ?ρχεται αντιμ?τωπο με τις τ?ψεις και τις ενοχ?ς, μπα?νοντας στο χορ? "αν?ποδα" βλ?ποντας π?ς ε?ναι τελικ? να ε?σαι το θ?μα ως παρατηρητ?ς. Δυστυχ?ς ?μωσ για την Carole, αυτ? ?ταν το θ?μα απ? την αρχ?, οπ?τε το ταξιδ?κι θα της στοιχ?σει πολλ? περισσ?τερα...

Το Joyride ε?ναι ?να καλογραμμ?νο θρ?λερ που κρατ?ει μ?χρι το τ?λος την αγων?α. Η γραφ? ε?ναι εθιστικ? και διαβ?ζεται πολ? γρ?γορα. Ο Κ?τσαμ καταφ?ρνει π?ντα να κορυφ?νει τη δρ?ση και να σε κ?νει να πηδ?ς γραμμ?ς για να δεις τι θα συμβε? στη συν?χεια.

Και εδ? ξαν? ο Κ?τσαμ πατ?ει στα ?ρια της πορνογραφικ?ς β?ας και γ?νεται ωμ?ς, ?πως θα ?πρεπε να γ?νει εξ?λλου, μιας και δε?χνει το προφ?λ εν?ς μανιακο?. Και για τα fun facts ?πως μας λ?ει ο Κ?τσαμ, ο χαρακτ?ρας του Wayne ε?ναι ?να κρ?μα απ? τον Howard Unruh και τον Thomas Eugene Braun. Ο πρ?τος π?ρες μ?ρος μαζ? με τον κολλητ? του σε ?να killing spree το 1967 με καμ?α απολ?τως πρ?φαση και ο δε?τερος κρατο?σε μ?α λ?στα με ?λους τους γε?τονες που ?θελε να ξεπαστρ?ψει. Κ?ποια στιγμ?, ο Howard ?παθε αμ?κ και σκ?τωσε 13 ?τομα μ?σα σε 12 λεπτ?. ?πως βλ?πετε υπ?ρχουν πολλ?ς ομοι?τητες μεταξ? των τρι?ν χαρακτ?ρων.

Τα τ?σσερα αστ?ρια τα ?βαλα με βαρι? καρδι? γιατ? εν? χτ?ζεται καλ? ο χαρακτ?ρας του Wayne μετ? την γνωριμ?α με τον Lee και την Carole, δεν υπ?ρχει αυτ? η αν?πτυξη που θα ?θελα να δω για το παρελθ?ν του. Υπ?ρχουν β?βαια 2-3 πραγματ?κια αλλ? δεν ?ταν αρκετ? για να με κ?νουν να νι?σω την ?κρηξη ?πως θα ?πρεπε.

?πως κ?θε βιβλ?ο του Κ?τσαμ που ?χω διαβ?σει (εκτ?ς του Red προς το παρ?), δεν προτε?νεται σε ?λους. Η β?α ε?ναι μπροστ? στα μ?τια σου και οι εικ?νες ζωνταν?ς. Ε?ν αντ?χετε ?ναν ανεξ?λεγκτο ?νθρωπο να κ?νει τα π?ντα (και εννο? τα π?ντα εκτ?ς απ? κανιβαλισμ? - υπ?ρχουν ?λλα βιβλ?α του Κ?τσαμ για αυτ? αν ψ?νεστε ;) , διαβ?στε το οπωσδ?ποτε ως ?να δυνατ? θριλερ?κι. Οι ?λλοι θα το βρε?τε υπερβολικ? και κακ?.

Melissa Helwig says

Jack Ketchum frequently uses true crime stories as inspiration for his novels. Off Season is based on the legend of the Sawney Bean family, The Girl Next Door tells the horrors that befell Sylvia Likens and this novel, Joyride, is derived from Howard Unruh's killing spree. In Ketchum's afterward, he reveals that he found his story (and the story of Sylvia Likens) in Bloodletters and Badmen by Jay Robert Nash.

Usually Ketchum's combination of real-life terror and an interesting "what if" scenario hooks me, but Joyride never grabbed my interest and is a mediocre effort from a usually amazing writer.

Carole and Lee planned the perfect murder of Carole's abusive husband. But they didn't count on a man named Wayne watching them. He doesn't want to turn them in or blackmail the couple. He mistakes them for being as sadistic and depraved as himself. What Wayne wants is simple: friends who understand his dark side and can indulge in it together.

The plot is more like that of a crime thriller than a horror novel. The story is told from Lieutenant Rule's perspective on the chase of the spree killers, and then Carole, Lee and Wayne's viewpoint in alternating chapters. And there isn't much gore - at least for a Ketchum novel. It takes several chapters before anything exciting happens and even then the pace doesn't really pick up. There are a few more dull chapters, one action-packed chapter, and then back to the same tediousness. This formula is repeated throughout the novel.

The reason for my boredom is probably due to the lack of depth in the characters. Carole and Lee are fairly bland and hard to empathize with. While the reasons behind Wayne's madness are never touched upon, he is merely crazy, end of story. Lieutenant Rule is an interesting and well-drawn character, but isn't featured in the story as much as Wayne or Carole.

But I didn't hate Joyride, although it may sound like I did. It's still a Ketchum novel, so it's well-written and the climax is exciting, but it still doesn't make up for the rest of the lackluster novel.

Alex says

I'm a horror fan, which automatically makes me a Jack Ketchum fan. This book has Ketchum's thrilling, fast pace with short punchy chapters but the story was lacking a bit, even with the brutal scenes. I almost liked Jack Ketchum's back story on how he created the villain more than how he turned out in the book. Of course, it was still a fun read.
