



Phantoms

Dean Koontz

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CLOSER...

They found the town silent, apparently abandoned. Then they found the first body strangely swollen and still warm. One hundred fifty were dead, 350 missing. But the terror had only begun in the tiny mountain town of Snowfield, California. AND CLOSER...

At first they thought it was the work of a maniac. Or terrorists. Or toxic contamination. Or a bizarre new disease.

AND CLOSER...

But then they found the truth. And they saw it in the flesh. And it was worse than anything any of them had ever imagined...

Phantoms Details

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From Reader Review Phantoms for online ebook

Reese Copeland says

Loved this book. Imaginative, original, artfully written. An incredible vision of possibility. The movie does not compare, but Liv Schriber was excellent in it.

Matt Garcia says

This was a reread for me and it was, once again, fantastic. One of Koontz's best. Fans of Lovecraft and early King will love it.

Scarlet Cameo says

"En este pueblo esta pasando algo condenadamente extraño, algo con lo que nadie se ha encontrado antes"

Conocí este libro gracias a que pedí que alguien me recomendara un libro que fuera aterrador, y vaya que para esa recomendación este libro funcionó, pero vamos ¿Qué tan fácil es lograr que un libro me de miedo? Muy sencillo, dame suficientes argumentos para que crea que puede pasar. No importa si me estas diciendo que cerdos zombies voladores están atacando Suiza, hazme creer que puede pasar con una ambientación atrapante, con personajes que conecte o (con lo que este libro lo logró) argumentos reales que encajen con lo que esta sucediendo.

Podría hablar de los policias, investigadores y las hermanas, pero son personajes antagonistas (sí, se que todos aparecen y son relevantes a la historia, pero eso no los hace protagonistas) el verdadero punto central de la historia es el "villano" (es difícil llamarlo así, aunque no suena adecuado) ese ser hecho maldad pura, reflejo de la naturaleza humana, complejo, atrayente y parece que un tanto bromista. Él crea y lleva la historia, hace que todos los personajes vean su suerte y OMG es aterrador (históricamente aterrador), omnipotente y omnipresente (view spoiler), las muertes muy buenas y muy adecuadas, las apariciones mostraban la naturaleza de cada persona....en fin, tiene varias cosas bien, pero son alrededor del mal y no de los héroes.

Por momentos es fácil de leer, pero en otros se hace un tanto repetitivo y aburrido, un poco desesperante la reiteración de una misma idea o sinonimos de la misma palabra en un renglos, pero no se si eso se deba al autor o al traductor, el romance se me hizo fuera de lugar y las últimas páginas se me hicieron meh (view spoiler).

"Estamos tratando con lo desconocido, y lo desconocido abarca todas nuestras pesadillas"

Kathy says

I loved this book! Things start immediately, and don't let up! First you are dealing with the horror of what has occurred....what happened in the town of Snowfield, California? Hundreds of people are missing. A handful of bodies are found, but what happened to them? Even Dr. Jenny Paige can't identify a cause of death. Is it the work of a psychopath? Terrorism? A Disease? Just wait till you find out what it is!!!

Mike (the Paladin) says

Currently rereading for the Dean Koontz group... wonder if I'll change the review? :)

Didn't care for it much...and the movie didn't help much (though Peter O'Toole had some good lines). This is a straight scare fest a horror story with a good dose of splatter factor. Not my favorite of his books.

Above is my first review and my 2 star rating...will I change it? No.

Let me say I like Koontz, he has written some books that would rate among my favorites....this isn't one. For me this is one of those, "isn't this book over yet" books.

MINOR SPOILER BELOW

If I'd been in Jenny's and Lisa's place at the first of the book, by the time I'd found my second body, I'd have been headed for the sheriff's station. If I'd gotten there and found everyone dead...I'd have been in my car and headed out of town at high speed. Did these 2? NOOOO.

Well, Lisa tried to. But her older sister, the doctor, the care giver, the one responsible for her younger (14 year old) sister keeps standing over inexplicably dead bodies saying "wait a minute" as her sister KEEPS saying "let's go!". And the book slips from there.

I hate to say this, but I actually think I like the movie better (and it's not an exceptional movie).

Sorry, but a forgettable novel (which may explain why I forgot it) that I was glad to see end.

Emma says

This is another long-time-later reread for me. It has some great scares and made me think twice about turning off my reading light, but it doesn't have the kick of Midnight or the cleverness of Watchers. Still worth a read for the few pants-crapping moments and well written gory detail.

Dean says

I love Dean Koontz and his books...

And I know that lots of reviews at goodreads doesn't seem to accompany adequately my sentiments....
Nevertheless boldly as I'm here comes my humble review!!!
First of all let me say that with "Phantoms" you have here vintage Koontz, I mean a classic piece for what
Dean Koontz books stands and are loved for....

Snowfield, a little town in California will be haunted by unspeakable evil, and a small group of survivors
fights against it!!!!

That's all.....

Let me say, if you love Carpenters movie "The Thing" or Stephen Kings "It", and if you are fond of "The
Exorzist" then welcome in Snowfield and enjoy the ride, you will not be disappointed at all...

Koontz mix and blend Science Fiction with horror, and that he does masterfully well.....

By the way, "Phantoms" is really a genuine page-turner, you will not be able to stop until The End!!!

Having said that, the characters are in my opinion not so well developed, that's the reason for retaining one
star in my rating.

But, a good and gripping read awaits you, it will entertain for sure and that's the main issue.

Have fun and enjoy, all of you!!!

Dean;)

Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

This reminded me so much of old school King that it's automatically in the keeper pile.

10/10 would read again. :D

Javi says

This is the book that put Dean Koontz on the map as a horror writer, for better or for worse, the horror story
against which most of his later books would be compared to. And no, he didn't disappoint- it's a downright
scary book and unequivocally horrific at times. This was my first Koontz book and I read it when I was very
young, and boy, it scared the living shit out of me. Maybe because of this I've come to grow really fond of

the book and I recently re-read it for old times sake...and it was still equally scary.

The premise is very simple: the whole population of the city of Snowfield, with the exception of the Sheriff, simply vanishes. They disappear, they're nowhere to be found, there's nothing left at all. Now, from this moment on it's impossible to say anything further without spoilers so I won't do it.

What I can describe is the atmosphere- Koontz depicts a town so void of life that it seems dead. Not just empty: it's lacking life. Where is everyone? What are those mysterious screams that pierce the night at certain points only not be heard again? If there is one thing I remember vividly from the book is that the silence seemed thick and viscous, as if it were something you could slice with a knife, making it almost impossible to breath. That's how overwhelmingly oppresing the atmosphere is. The silence seems to be alive and willing to attack at any moment, around any corner. And *something* does attack indeed...Enter the two heroines of the book, who get to Snowfield and are by themselves until they manage to meet with the Sheriff.

And then all hell breaks loose...

The last part of the book sees the introduction of many new characters and that seems to take some of the spooky factor away from the story, but Koontz wanted to give it a complete resolution and an explanation so I guess this is the only way he could do it.

I don't think, at least in my humble opinion, that DK wrote anything as horrific after this. Once he established himself as a "horror" writer and with a huge following on his side, it was only a matter of time before mega intelligent dogs started showing up in his stories and he made an almost complete 180 when tackling new stories. This produced all sorts of books varying from the corny to the mysterious but he was never consistent when it came to the basis of his books, unlike Stephen King, for example. That doesn't mean that his stories weren't good, most of them *are* good, if only because he has tremendous skills as a writer as well as penchant for the unknown. But horror stories? "Phantoms" is probably his only one, and overall, one of his best books.

If you fancy reading a horror story, grab this book one night when you are alone at home and I can guarantee you that you will, at least, be spooked.

Alejandro says

It's amusing how I ended reading this novel. And maybe this will be the most humorous review of a truly scary horror novel. If you read it, you'll understand what I mean.

First, I didn't know that it was a novel, a long horror story book, when I bought it. Honestly!

Back then (1992), I was in a local bookstore. I read the title "Phantoms" (well in reality it was "Fantasmas" since I bought in Spanish first the book) and I thought that it was an anthology of ghost stories and that Dean Koontz (I didn't know the author at that moment) was the editor or something of the book.

I started to read the book and honestly I didn't realized that it was a novel until I got to the third chapter! :P In my defense (hehe) each chapter has titles, so I still was thinking that they were horror short stories, but quite odd since they didn't have some climax or good ending (hahaha!) when I started to read the third chapter and I met again the same characters of the first "short story" (hahaha) it was when I realize...

Oh!!! This is a horror novel!!! Hahaha, honestly, this is a true story. I hadn't read any horror novel until that moment. I had read a lot of anthologies of horror short stories with several specific topics and it was like my current reading type of books at that moment. However, I supposed that this book wanted me, and I took the call.

The humorous stops right here... **bring on the terror!!!**

It was the start of a great reading story of me with Dean Koontz's novels. I love his style of making books, those cool details that they repeat on each book in some way or other.

And maybe because it was the first that I read, but this novel keeps to be my favorite book of Koontz and my favorite horror novel. If you ever had the bad experience of watching the dreadful film based on this book, please, don't let that keep you away from the wonderful experience of reading this masterpiece of literature on the horror genre.

Snowfield, a typical American town where in one night, everybody just disappeared, every single person and animal are nowhere to be found, a real "ghost" town that was full of life just one day before. The young Dr. Jenny Paige along with her younger sister, Lisa, will have to explore this deserted town and try to find a clue of what happened.

Welcome to Snowfield. You wouldn't be able to leave!

Jonathan Janz says

I'm fiercely competitive. Like, ridiculously competitive. To the point where I choose a favorite, and from that point on I'm squarely behind that favorite until the bitter end.

The Chicago Cubs.

Star Wars.

Stephen King.

You get the picture.

Problem is, this causes me to miss out on things that threaten the supremacy of my favorites. For several months I avoided The Lord of the Rings movies because I was afraid they'd be better than the original Star Wars trilogy. Then, when they were better, I decided to avoid watching the Harry Potter movies because they represented a new threat to my new cinematic darling. Eventually, I broke down and watched the Harry Potter films (after reading the books with my firstborn), and now I'm a diehard Harry Potter fan, as well as a diehard Lord of the Rings fan, as well as a diehard Star Wars fan. It really shouldn't have been this complicated, but what can I say? I have problems.

Speaking of problems...

I'm as a big a fan of Stephen King as you can imagine, and it's no secret that on any bookstore shelf, King and Koontz are situated right there together, each with his own section of literary real estate. For many years

I've been told I should read Koontz, but that silly, childish, competitive side of me dug its heels in and refused. *King* was my favorite, so I didn't need to read Koontz. So there!

shakes head at self

Pitiful.

Well, I'm happy to report that I've finally matured enough to give Koontz a try. My opinion of him?

He's really, really good.

While Stephen King will always be my favorite writer, I will unquestionably be reading more Koontz novels. His prose is deceptive. At first glance I thought, "What's the big deal? This is good, but it's not *that* good. It's not I-get-my-own-bookshelf good."

Then Koontz sucked me in. By the time the lawmen from the neighboring town came to investigate the problems in Snowfield, I was hooked good and proper. I enjoyed where Koontz took the story, and I found his writing more and more engrossing the further and further I delved into the narrative. I also found the tale quite creative, which is saying a great deal. The whole affair reminded me a little of the marvelous Preston and Child novel THE RELIC, which I absolutely loved.

So...I give this epic novel the rating it deserves--five stars. And I recant my embarrassing stubbornness and promise to keep maturing so I don't miss out on great writers and movies.

But I still won't root for anyone but the Cubs.

Thomas Strömquist says

My first Dean (R.) Koontz, I was 17 and the world would never be the same again. Unfortunately, it was also the outstandingly best effort from the author, who did manage some more really great books before something utterly inexplicable happened to his works.

Admittedly, this loses some pace at the end (when we learn "what it's all about") but the beginning and ramp up of the story! Wow!

Brad says

Should I give Dean Koontz another chance?

Maybe I am being too hard on the piece of derivative trash that is Koontz's *Phantoms*, but it was so bad – and so memorably bad – that I've never read another Koontz book. But I am probably being unfair.

After all, I often find myself reading the garbage put out by Harlan Coben, and is there really any difference?

I don't think so. Koontz is just older. In fact, I like to imagine Koontz as the seed spraying father of Harlan Coben, standing over the world of pulp fiction, dick in hand, saturating the fields of crapness like an inspirational sprinkler, and wherever his seed falls a bad writer pops up. Oops, there's some Koontz seed on the "Coben field," and there rises a new author, another pop hackosaurus with the storytelling skills of an illiterate mute with severe brain damage from falling out of bed. Harlan Coben, the author who, these days, most makes me want to poke out my book reading eyes (despite the fact that I keep going back for more).

But if I am willing to keep reading the bastard son, why not the father?

I dunno, but once upon a time I DID read Koontz, and it was awful. A friend of mine, a close friend, recommended Koontz because, he said, "He is awesome!" So I read him because I trusted and loved my friend, and our trust was broken forever. I fell out of love. Koontz destroyed our relationship. We're not friends anymore.

Phantoms contains girls in peril, an Ancient Power -- the same one that killed off the dinosaurs -- that's back for more world changing ass-whooping, dumb cops and Bones McCoy style scientists (they of the "Hail Mary" science discoveries) to protect the girls in peril and make everything okay with a bacterial solution; it's full of bad writing, bad characters, bad dialogue, and it gave birth to a badder than bad screen version starring Ben Affleck (has any actor ever made so many truly terrible movies? Does any other Academy Award Winner even come close?) Phantoms is, by any measure, pretty awful.

But I am probably being too hard on Koontz and Phantoms.

Still, I think of those other hackosaurs who've risen from Koontz's seed, and I am pretty sure that my assessment is as fair and balanced as can be. I am a reasonable man, however; I am willing to admit I could be wrong. So I ask you Dean Koontz fans: "Am I wrong? Should I give him another chance? And, if so, which book should I read?"

I promise I will try it once. If I can do it for the son it's the least I can do for the father. Maybe I've been wrong all these years. But I doubt it.

Rick says

I'm only four chapters in, but I'm already hooked. I have had mixed experiences with this author, so I was wary, but if he can keep up the breathless mystery and suspense, this looks like it will come down on the side of one of Koontz's good books. We shall see...

And done...a solid effort from Koontz and I will add it to the books that I like from him: The Odd Thomas series and the book about the mutant dog.

Maciek says

In 1979, Dean Koontz wrote a novel called *Whispers* which catapulted him to the bestseller list. Koontz's status in the publishing world shifted drastically; from a rather unknown suspense producer he became the hot stuff, and in 1981 *Whispers* rose to the top five of the New York Times paperback bestseller list.

But this article is not about *Whispers*. While I'm not a fan of the mentioned novel, and consider it to be largely tedious and overwrought with banal drama and sentimentality, it shows potential in one field: the creep field. There are sections in *Whispers* that are genuinely disturbing to this day, and it's been three decades since the original publication - that's saying something.

However, as big a success the book was, it didn't make Koontz a millionaire, nor a cult writer. His publisher told him that if he wanted to build his career he'd have to write a horror novel - *Whispers* was marketed as horror, despite having little to do with the genre - horror was popular at that time. Koontz wrote four novels under various pseudonyms (all largely forgotten, more or less deservedly) and after two years he finally gave in to the urgings and in 1983 came up with *Phantoms*.

Now, in 1983 Koontz wasn't interested in angelic dogs and some weird new age philosophies, and most importantly he was still fresh with ideas and hasn't succumbed to the formula of rewriting the same book over and over. *Phantoms* was the novel which gave Koontz the label of a horror writer - a blessing or a curse? Seems like a bit of both. The book was an enormous success, earning praise of both audience and critics, who then returned to read his later work and were disappointed that it didn't have much in common with *Phantoms*.

Koontz opens the novel in the Hitchcockian way. With a bang - the opening establishes the tension and introduces the reader to the nightmare which will most certainly follow.

The scream was distant and brief. A woman's scream. - Deputy Henderson is sitting alone in the town jail of Snowfield in California, a small lazy town, when he hears the scream. The duty is dull; not much happens in Snowfield in September, and the deputy is bored. He listens intently but cannot hear anything; a quick glance at the peaceful main street makes him think that he might have imagined the scream. He almost wishes that someone *had* screamed; being young and brave he's ready for some action.

He sighed, looked down at the magazine that lay on his desk—and heard another scream. As before, it was distant and brief, but this time it sounded like a man's voice. It wasn't merely a shriek of excitement or even a cry of alarm; it was the sound of terror. The deputy gets up from the chair, ready to investigate, and when he's almost halfway to the door he hears a sound in the office he has just left.

That was impossible. He had been alone in the office all day, and there hadn't been any prisoners in the three holding cells since early last week. The rear door was locked, and that was the only other way into the jail.

When he turned, however, he discovered that he wasn't alone any more. And suddenly he wasn't the least bit bored.

Phantoms opens as a locked room mystery - what happened in the Deputy's office? How could someone enter the place that was empty seconds before he left it? Koontz restricts the action in the opening to a single place and a single protagonist, who is faced with danger that is shown but not explained, therefore making it intriguing and pushing the reader to the edge of his seat - this drastically increases the tension, a feat that requires considerable skill to perform on such small space.

The second chapter is titled *Coming Home* and introduces two characters - Jennifer and Elisabeth Paige. The two weren't close; Jennifer's work as a doctor didn't allow her to spend much time on bonding. However, on the death of their mother, Jennifer decides to take care of Lisa. The sisters drive to Jennifer's home in Snowfield, and quickly notice an unusual quietness in the town. Koontz does a great job with describing the surroundings in vivid detail, and thrusting two average people into a strange situation (another Hitchcockian trope he uses).

The town is not merely quiet - it looks *dead*.

The sidewalks, balconies, and porches were deserted. Even in those shops and houses where there were lights burning, there was no sign of life. Jenny's Trans Am was the only moving car on the long street.

Snowfields appear to be uninhabited. The sisters are scared, but decide to find out what has happened. Koontz employs the best type of terror in this section of the book - something sinister has apparently occurred in Snowfield, but neither the reader nor the two sisters have a clue what is going on. And it's not because of the lack of evidence; soon the sisters find plenty of evidence, but it produces more questions than explanations. The terror in Snowfield has occurred for no apparent reason, and there is no explanation for it. Or is there?

The silently crushing presence of a dead town is one of Koontz's best suspense in his whole career. It's difficult to discuss the book without going into spoiler territory, so I'll refrain from it. Have you ever wondered what might have happened on *Marie Celeste*, or who wrote *Croatoan*? The same mystery of mass disappearance is employed masterfully by Koontz in the first section of *Phantoms*. The horror employed by Koontz is the best one; no boogeyman shouting "BOO!", but a silently malevolent presence, or an imagination of this presence serves for the unrelenting sense of slowly unfolding terror. I started reading *Phantoms* when I was alone at night, and I was so into this section that I jumped when stray wind hit my window. It is the best setting to read this novel; silence equaling that in Snowfield, where little happens but the terror just mounts and mounts. This is Koontz at his best, a writer enjoying fresh success and experimenting with joy in the genre that offers unlimited possibilities. "You want horror?" - he asks. "All right - I'll give you horror! I'll give you the mother of all horror stories!"

Unfortunately, the first part is the only flawless one. In his previous novels, Koontz switched the narrative between protagonists, and does it again in *Phantoms* - in chapter 9, Jenny uses the telephone to call a sheriff from the neighboring town. From now on, the narrative will switch between a cast of characters, and this very technique largely destroys the brilliant creepiness of part one. The horror that ratcheted up with each revelation is largely diminished by the entrance of new characters and the insight into their perspective; now there's a sense of companionship and the two sisters are not alone, and when you're not alone in the dark the fear of the unknown largely disappears. Each chapter offers a new perspective; and the time spent with each character is too small to grow attached to them and to share their uneasiness and fright.

It's not the biggest disappointment, though. Koontz approached writing *Phantoms* with *Whispers* fresh in his mind; he wanted to provide a logically consistent explanation of the happenings in the town. From the afterword:

I thought I would cleverly evade their horror-or-starve ultimatum by making Phantoms something of a tour-de-force, rolling virtually all the monsters of the genre into one beast, and also by providing a credible scientific explanation for the creature's existence. Instead of fearless vampire hunters armed with wooden stakes, instead of werewolf trackers packing revolvers loaded with silver bullets, my protagonists would save themselves by using logic and reason to determine the nature of their mysterious enemy and to find a way to defeat it.

Employing essentially the same tactic (and sharing the same sentiment) as Stoker in *Dracula* - Ancient Darkness against Modern Wizardry of Technology - destroys the book potential. *Phantoms* would become a timeless horror classic if it did not try to be too much - *Phantoms would be a horror story, yes, but it would also be science fiction, an adventure tale, a wild mystery story, and an exploration of the nature and source of myth.* Koontz tries to handle too many genres, too many subplots at once for the thing to work. The incredible, slowly unfolding horror of Part One disappears once the reader is shown what the protagonists are up against and how they mean to deal with the situation. I'm pretty sure that this section of the novel was

spoofed in a certain movie that came out just a year later. The end of the novel retreats to the mediocrity and disappointment of most of Koontz's work.

Nevertheless, this is the novel that made Koontz known as a horror writer, and probably his sole title that has been influential in the genre and other media. I'm a big fan of the *Silent Hill* videogame franchise, and the influence of this work in the first installment is obvious and clear (not to mention that the titular town has a "Koontz street"). If only *Phantoms* held the mood of the first part, promised on the cover of my paperback edition - a mountain-country house constructed from wood, surrounded by ominous white fog, under a brooding red sky - but I'm sad to say it does not. It's a real shame, because conceptually this is one of Koontz's very best books; and it could be so much, much more. A wasted opportunity that will not be repeated.

Brian says

* The quotation from Stephen King on the back cover of my paperback edition: "Gruesome. Unrelenting." No indication of quality, just a couple of observations about the presentation. Like saying, "Action-packed," to describe *Sucker Punch*.

* Dialogue isn't one of Koontz's strong points. Neither is characterization. Here we have a 14-year-old girl who never behaves like a child, so she might as well be 28. Here we have a cop who, with his heavy-lidded eyes and his ingratiating manner, fools people into thinking he isn't too bright, but who, of course, is a brilliant detective. (Koontz, however, doesn't dedicate the book to or even thank Peter Falk.) And over here we have a pretty, young woman doctor who states that even if a guy beat and raped her, she'd still give him the best medical care she could if she found him bleeding out on the street. She's not religious, either, which is strange, since she treats the Hippocratic Oath like one of the Ten Commandments. (Funnily enough, the character she's referring to turns out to be a prolific serial killer.)

* The book doesn't end well. Oh, it smarmily ties up every loose end, but even before that, Koontz generates his climax from a ridiculously unbelievable bit of scientific investigation. In *Jurassic Park*, Crichton created dinosaurs from a simple mosquito. Here, Koontz does basically the reverse. And, yes, it's just about that deflating.

* These criticisms aren't the sort that occur to you only after an enthralled reading of the book. Regrettably, they occur with regularity throughout.

* Though it's not relevant to the book, the movie, also written by Koontz, is worse in every way.

Aaron Nash says

I don't yet understand the hate for Koontz. Currently I have read three of his novels ; *midnight*, *watchers* and now this one, and I have thoroughly enjoyed each of them. Maybe I peaked too soon with his best works. Hopefully not.

For me, this was a cracking read. The first 100 pages or so were filled with dread, and so tension filled. I felt like I was there with the two sisters, as they explored the town and discovered the horrors within. It was damn creepy and really atmospheric. As more characters were introduced the tension just kept on building until finally the "ancient enemy" struck.

The less said about the enemy the better, but it is one of the most malevolent forces in fiction I have read about. A disturbing creature that has a terrific backstory and is well researched. It is such a frightening presence throughout.

Finally I believe this was written around five years before Stephen King's IT. I can't help but feel that King read this, and found a lot of ideas here that went into his own masterpiece. There are just too many coincidences. I mean the enemy in this novel is even referred to as IT many times!

Dede says

This is one of my all-time favourite books. I remember being twelve and my mother telling me under no circumstances was I to read any of her Dean Koontz books, because they 'were not suitable for a girl my age'. So of course, the minute I had the chance, I grabbed a bunch of his books and got to reading!

Phantoms is the only one that really resonated with me. Over the years, whenever I'm bored and at a loss as to what to read, I find myself drawn back to this book. My copy is positively ancient-looking - it's falling apart, the back cover is missing, and one or two pages are taped together. It's been with me everywhere: on school camp, on overseas trips... it's almost become a security blanket for me.

Personally, I think it's a great story. It's got everything - there's romance, there are awesome background characters (and pretty great main characters too). And there's a genuinely scary evil *thing* that still gives me the heebie jeebies when I think about it. The whole idea of (view spoiler) terrified me when I first read it, and still does if I'm being honest! I completely and totally blame this book for my current obsession with horror stories!

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

If there is a person out there that would not find this book eerie, I'd be surprised.

Koontz writes fiercely here, keeping the sentences devoid of overabundant words and pretty phrases. Instead he just delivers the goods, action from page one. His writing style is not overdrawn, but instead is kept minimal to complement the story alone.

The villain is frightening, complex, and powerful. There's enough imagination and depth to it that it stays with you after the last page has been closed. Supporting characters seem real and are easy to care about. They don't chase their tails attempting daring, stupid moves, but instead seem to be genuinely driven. There are slight cliches here and there in terms of characterization, but only obvious cliches where they deserve (and are expected) to be, nothing cheap.

This is one of those books where if you're reading through it, it's hard to imagine how on earth the strings can

be tied together to make sense at the end, but somehow Koontz accomplishes this. It's all wrapped up in a satisfying way, and the road on which I traveled to get there was exquisite. The plot is as complex as its villain, each character keeping it flowing instead of weighting it down, the heart and soul of the novel always kept alive by a steady supply of imagination and intrigue.

Filled to the top with suspense, horrid imagery, truly bizarre and horrifying deaths, gory details, a pure mystery, science and intelligence, well-drawn out fear and even small glimpses of hope, this is a horror book that EVERY horror reader owes it to themselves to read. Koontz really made a name for himself, and this is one of the works that accomplished that feat.

Daniel says

Where has this book been all of my life? And why did I write off Koontz as a hack that pushes brainless filler onto the shelves once per year? Thanks to my snobbery, I went years without picking up a book that would have satisfied my craving for a good monster story. Serves me right for thinking I knew better.

"Phantoms" is a marvelous, fun, and satisfying read. It has monsters; awesome, frightening, man-eating, intelligent, scary, what-in-the-world-is-going-on monsters. It is also an exciting read. From the beginning, Koontz immediately launches into violence and mayhem without letting up or losing track of the greater story, which itself is a neat mash-up of historical mystery and what-if. He brings in a number of characters in a short time and with economical strokes he fleshes them out just enough to provide emotional purchase. Put shortly, this is good, solid fiction.

I will not go into any more detail, because the story Koontz weaves together needs to be experienced without any spoilers. I will impart this advice: if you like monsters wreaking havoc in a creepy story, forget any stereotypes surrounding Koontz's work and read this book.
