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As her husband descends into insanity, Lydia Danse becomes determined to protect her beloved young son from his father, but a possessive Arthur Danse refuses to give up on the boy he considers his property.

Stranglehold Details

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From Reader Review Stranglehold for online ebook

Sotiris Karagiannis says

Ε?ναι το εντ?κατο βιβλ?ο του Κ?τσαμ που διαβ?ζω και μπορ? να πω ?τι πλ?ον θεωρε?ται ?νας απ? τους πιο αγαπημ?νος μου συγγραφε?ς. Ε?ναι αρκετ? περ?εργος σαν συγγραφ?ας και ως θεματολογ?α και ως πρ?ζα. Μικρ?ς κοφτ?ς προτ?σεις, οικονομ?α στις λ?ξεις και αποτ?πωση της κ?θε κατ?στασης ?σο πιο ωμ? γ?νεται, χωρ?ς περικοπ?ς και "χα?δ?ματα". Ειδικ? ?ταν καταπι?νεται με θ?ματα ?πως η κακοπο?ηση γυναικ?v, παιδι?v, ζ?ων. Οι περιγραφ?ς του ΔΕΝ ε?ναι πορνογραφικ?ς (ε?ν εξαιρ?σουμε τη Νεκρ? Σεζ?v που ο στ?χος ?ταν το exploitation) αλλ? ?κρως ρεαλιστικ?ς. Ε?ν κ?ποιος προσβληθε? απ? τις εικ?νες ε?ναι γιατ? ?λα αυτ? συμβα?νουν ακριβ?ς με τον τρ?πο που τα γρ?φει. Και θα ρωτ?σετε τ?ρα: και γιατ? πρ?πει εμε?ς να τα διαβ?σουμε; Και θα απαντ?σω: Γιατ? ?χι; Ο κ?σμος ?χει δ?ο πρ?σωπα: ?να καλ? και ?να κακ?. Δε γ?νεται να κοιτ?ζεις μ?νο το καλ? - στη χαρ? και στην ηρεμ?α - και να γυρν?ς την πλ?τη σου στο κακ? - στη β?α και στη δυστυχ?α. Οπ?τε, ε?ν ποτ? αποφασ?σετε να διαβ?σετε Κ?τσαμ να ?χετε αυτ? στο νου σας. Αντ? που θα διαβ?σετε θα σας στενοχωρ?σει, θα σας γεμ?σει με μ?α οργ? και συναισθ?ματα ?σως αρκετ? μακριν?, συναισθ?ματα που δε θα θ?λατε να νι?σετε. Υπ?ρχει λοιπ?v ΚΑΙ αυτ? η πλευρ? της λογοτεχν?ας.

?να απ? τα αττο? του Κ?τσαμ ε?ναι οι ρεαλιστικ? χαρακτ?ρες, η εξ?λιξ? τους μ?σα στο ?ργο, με αποτ?λεσμα οι εκρ?ξεις τους να ε?ναι "δικαιολογημ?νες" στο μυαλ? των πρωταγωνιστ?v. Δρ?ση και αντ?δραση. Α?τιο και αιτιατ?. Τ?ποτα δεν μ?νει αναπ?ντητο και κανε?ς δε γλιτ?νει δ?χως τρα?ματα. ?σο σκληρ? και αν ακο?γεται, αυτ? ε?ναι η αλ?θεια στις ιστορ?ες που καταπι?νεται ο Κ?τσαμ. Δε μπορε?ς να μιλ?σεις για β?αιες απαγωγ?ς και να υπ?ρχει happy end δ?χως ψυχολογικ?, ?πως δε μπορε?ς να μιλ?σεις για κακοπο?ηση παιδi?v απ? παιδi?, δ?χως σκληρ?ς εικ?νες. Ε?ν σας προσβ?λλει κ?τι που ?γραψε ο Κ?τσαμ, απλ? ανο?χτε μ?α εφημερ?δα ? την τηλε?ραση. Η πραγματικ?τητα δεν απ?χει απ? τη μυθοπλασ?α, ?σχετα που ο Κ?τσαμ διαλ?γει τις περισσ?τερες φορ?ς να γρ?ψει μ?α ιστορ?α βασισμ?vη σε αληθιν? γεγον?τα απ? τη δικ? του πλευρ?.

Στο Stranglehold λοιπ?v, ο Κ?τσαμ καταπι?νεται με ?να ζευγ?ρι στα πρ?θυρα χωρισμο?, τον Arthur και τη Lydia. Στα πρ?τα κεφ?λαια παρακολουθο?με τη μητ?ρα και τον πατ?ρα στη νεαρ? τους ηλικ?α, την οικογ?νεια που μεγ?λωσαν και κ?ποια περιστατικ? που τους διαμ?ρφωσαν ως ?τομα. Αργ?τερα υπ?ρχει η συν?ντησ? τους, ο γ?μος του και τα πρ?τα προβλ?ματα μετ? τη γ?ννηση του Robert. Τα π?ντα αλλ?ζουν ?ταν ο Arthur, ιδιοκτ?της του εστιατορ?ου Caves, αρχ?ζει να κακοποιε? σεξουαλικ? τον μικρ? Robert και να συμπεριφ?ρεται β?αια στη Lydia. Ο παλι?ς εαυτ?ς του βγα?νει στην επιφ?νεια και η Lydia πλ?ον πρ?πει να πολεμ?σει για δ?ο: για τη ζω? της και για τη ζω? του μικρο? Robert.

?να απ? τα καλ?τερα και πιο ολοκληρωμ?να βιβλ?α του Κ?τσαμ που ?χω διαβ?σει, γραμμ?νο με ευαισθησ?α προς τον αγ?να της μ?νας. Υπ?ρχουν πολλ? δι?σπαρτα περιστατικ? που κ?νουν το βιβλ?ο να "κινε?ται" συνεχ?ς, μεταφ?ροντας το Robert απ? τη μ?α κατ?σταση στην ?λλη δ?χως να ?χει επιλογ?ς, δ?χως να μπορε? να διαλ?ξει τι πραγματικ? θ?λει και να βρ?σκεται συν?χεια ?ρματο των καταστ?σεων. Υπ?ρχει μ?α πολ? ενδιαφ?ρουσα δ?κη που πραγματικ? ε?ν τη διαβ?σετε θα σας γεμ?σει οργ? ?χι μ?νο για το δικαστικ? σ?στημα αλλ? και για το πως οι δικηγ?ροι καταφ?ρνουν να αλλ?ζουν τα λεγ?μενα της Lydia σε μ?α στιγμ? αδυναμ?ας. Σκεφτε?τε ?τι μοι?ζει με το Κρ?μερ εναντ?ον Κρ?μερ αλλ? ο Ντ?στιν Χ?φμαν να κακοποιε? σεξουαλικ? το γιο του. Σκην?ς β?ας υπ?ρχουν στην αρχ?, αλλ? δεν ε?ναι ?σο περιγραφικ?ς θα περ?μενε κ?ποιος ε?ν ?χει διαβ?σει τη Νεκρ? Σεζ?v. Ο Κ?τσαμ δε μ?νει στη β?α, αλλ? αναπτ?σσει εξαιρετικ? τον εσωτερικ? αγ?να μ?ας

μ?νας εναντ?ον εν?ς ψυχοπαθο?ς πατ?ρα, εν?ς ?δικου δικαστικο? συστ?ματος και γενικ?τερα, μ?ας κοινων?ας που πλαισι?νεται απ? φιλ?ες και συμφ?ροντα.

Το τ?λος ε?ναι δραματικ?. Το δι?βαζα στον ηλεκτρικ? και κοκ?λωσα απ? τον τρ?μο. Απ? την συνειδητοπο?ηση κ?ποιων πραγμ?των. Ε?ναι διαφορετικ? το να ακο?σεις την κατ?ληξη μ?ας τ?τοιας ιστορ?ας περιληπτικ? και τελε?ως διαφορετικ? το να ακολουθ?σεις τη μητ?ρα σε κ?θε β?μα της και να "ανταμειφθε?ς" με αυτ? το τ?λος. Θα σου σκ?σει τ?σο σκληρ? και θα νι?σεις ?σο σκατ? ?νιωσες στο κορ?τσι της διπλαν?ς π?ρτας ? στο Red.

Ε?γε Κ?τσαμ. Για ?λλη μ?α φορ? με ?κανες να λ?ω ?τι ?σουν, ε?σαι και θα ε?σαι ?νας απ? τους καλ?τερους στο ε?δος σου.

Tom says

Loved this book. A very tense final 50 pages. This is Ketchum at his finest.

11811 (Eleven) says

More disturbing reality horror from Ketchum that could have come straight from yesterday's newspaper (and probably did.)

Trudi says

Oy vey! This was a tough one ... boy, Jack Ketchum is definitely not for the faint of heart. He pulls no punches *ever* and this one is no exception. Just like his other infamous, traumatizing novel -- *The Girl Next Door* -- *Only Child* (previously published as *Stranglehold*) is inspired by true events -- and what a horrible and depressing story! Give me supernatural horror any day because at least then I don't have to brood about the real consequences for the real people involved. This one does not have a happy ending and left me feeling really shitty (hence, three stars). But it was compelling and well-written.

Bark says

Ketchum throws you down into the muck that is the worst of humanity, pins you there and rubs your face in it. If you haven't read him before you should know this before jumping in. *Stranglehold* takes an unflinching look at the kind of real life horror that occurs every day. The kind of horror that trickles down, creating a legacy of pain and torment.

Lydia meets Arthur and falls in love. He's decent and kind and a respectable business owner. But Arthur is a good actor. He's a sociopath who believes he's been put on earth to make people realize the world is an ugly pain-filled place. He has done some terrible things in his past and though he fools Lydia for a while, he can't hide his true self forever. After they have a baby they name Robert, the cracks begin to show and Arthur's behavior becomes increasingly abusive towards Lydia. Lydia sticks it out until he crosses a line and she

realizes she's been living with a madman and files for divorce. She allows him visitation for Robert's sake. He loves Robert after all and even after her own abuse at his hands, she believes he is a good father who would never hurt their son . . .

What happens next is just grueling but it wouldn't be a Ketchum book if it was all unicorns and rainbows. The book follows Lydia through the injustices of the legal system. Lydia assumes she is doing the right thing by following all the rules but playing by the rules isn't enough. A nasty, ugly and unfair trial begins. It's infuriating and sad and the innocents, unfortunately, are the ones who suffer the most. It really makes you understand why some people take their kids and run.

I really felt for Lydia and Robert. Lydia's own past was one filled with abuse and that was the last thing she wanted for her child. She feels guilty and bravely stands up to Arthur once she realizes what a deranged beast he truly was beneath the respectable façade. But sadly she was helpless once she entered the courtroom and had to depend on other people to do right by her.

This book was suspenseful but it will more than likely make you angry. It was horribly grim and unpleasant but it's one of those books that you have to see through to the end regardless of the fact that you know you'll probably be sorry.

Narration Notes: Chet Williamson reads with an intense, serious tone well suited to the bleak material. I think he would do an amazing job with a gumshoe noir type of hero because he has that type of voice. He brings Arthur to life; his voice is menacing, mean and calculated and just what this piece demands. Much of this story is told from Lydia's point of view, however, and I always think it strange when a male is chosen to read a female character Williamson does a decent enough job with Lydia, forgoing the silly cringe-worthy falsetto that some male narrators use, but I would've preferred a woman to voice her thoughts, if I'm being completely honest. He's not bad by any means, but a woman (at least for Lydia's parts), would've been a better choice. When it comes to Robert I have no complaints. He sounded like the confused, scared kid that he was supposed to be and the other male character were easily discernible from one another.

Audiobook received for review for Audiobook Jukebox

Jonathan Woodrow says

Stranglehold is a serious piece of fiction. If you've not read anything by Jack Ketchum before, it's important to understand that this is pretty extreme stuff, and not for the faint of heart. But of equal importance, it's clear that the subject matter is just as horrifying to the writer as it is to the reader. Some horror writers seem to take a perverse pleasure in publishing the most extreme thing they can comprehend, giggling and grinning as they imagine their readers squirm. Jack Ketchum is NOT one of those writers. And as horrifying as this story is, Ketchum's approach is sensitive and nuanced.

I found myself in almost constant anxiety throughout this book, pretty much from beginning to end. There were moments where I had to actually pause to remind myself that these characters were fictional, though deep down I knew better. While characters Lydia and Robert and Arthur were made up, the roles they represent are no doubt very real, and I'm sure the system this story so vehemently criticizes is just as cold and flawed as it is portrayed to be.

This story is stressful, frustrating, harrowing, and is one of the most powerful I've read in my entire life.

Everything about it rang true to me (the characters, their actions/inactions, and in particular, the legal procedures and courtroom scenes), and I have absolute faith that Ketchum conducted his research with meticulous care and precision. Remember the Hemingway quote about nine tenths of an iceberg being underwater? It's those nine tenths that are still eating away at me now, and Ketchum knows it. He did that on purpose!

As hard as this was to read (and believe me, this is an eye-opening, if not life-changing experience), I would heartily recommend it to anyone and everyone. It is a shocking indictment of the family court system and how it can catastrophically fail the needs of a child, and his mother.

Glen Krisch says

More brutal than The Girl Next Door, but with less heart. The writing is excellent as always, but there's a coldness to the characterization that dulls the overall impact of the tale. Still worthwhile for fans of Ketchum's work.

Plum-crazy says

Ketchum is a new author to me & while this is not horror as such it's certainly an horrific tale - that of an evil man who inflicts the worse kind of pain & torture on his family.

This harrowing tale - despite making me shudder at times & at others making me feel sick to my stomach - had me gripped, as disgusted & horrified as I felt at times it was really hard to put down. A really good read - although "enjoyed" seems an inappropriate word to use about it!

Gatorman says

This is the tale of two books. The first book, which lasted up until the epilogue, was an excellent read, a gripping and horrifying tale of a woman suffering through a marriage to a psychopath who discovers after her divorce that he was, among other things, raping their young son. The story moved at a rapid pace, was well-written and had you caring about the fate of the mom and son. I was well prepared to give this book 5 stars.

However, the second book, the epilogue, completely shot that notion out of the water and, sadly, reduced it to a three-star read. I understand that Ketchum intended the book to be a scathing indictment of the family court justice system. However, the ending went needlessly way over the top in that mission. It was ridiculous, implausible and laughable, designed solely to outrage and disgust without any thought as to, say, credibility, even for a thriller. To someone with real knowledge of the court system, I was unable to buy it for a second, even as outrageous as that system can be at times. It's a shame Ketchum felt the need to end it the way he did. He could have, with just a bit more effort, used a plausible ending that still made you feel the effects of legal injustice. Instead, he chose the easier way, an ending designed to cause the most anger in the reader but that really makes no sense once you stop and think about it.

Jeanne25 says

Disturbing and tragic. Ketchum writes with such brutal honesty and sensitivity that leaves even those of us with the toughest hearts in tears. Child abuse is the most horrific act in my opinion. Worse than the child abuse here is how the system continued to fail the child.

Before Stranglehold, I had just finished The Girl Next Door by Ketchum. These two stories have left me emotionally depleted. I must pick something positive for my next read.

Bracken says

This may be the best Jack Ketchum book I've read yet. Although other reviews suggest that this book is over the top, he treats the subject of child sexual abuse with considerable sensitivity and honesty. Also, as a lawyer I can say the courtroom scenes are the most accurate representations of trial and the family court system that I've read. He deserves some real praise for the quality of his research. I wish more people could have the stomach to read this one to see how our system utterly fails to serve kids in court.

But back to the storytelling. This book has exactly what you want from Jack Ketchum: real villainous character(s), a strong moral center, and an intensely compelling storyline. There is one character story-line that very closely resembles one in The Lost, but I liked it better here (this book being *much* better than The Lost, IMO). After the first third of the book, it was a Herculean effort to put it down and parcel the story out to make it last.

I'm glad I bought the Gauntlet limited edition. That was \$35 well-spent!

Bill says

A truly disturbing piece from Ketchum. Does he do it any other way? Brutal realism.

Every parents worst nightmare. Makes me sick to my stomach. Every time I read a story like this it makes me want to go to medical school to learn how to keep someone alive long enough to peel all of their skin off and then start lopping off the digits. One by one. Somebody get me a saline drip stat!

Karl says

Hardcover Headline UK edition.

Violence in 'Only Child' is extreme and, at times quite graphic.

Tressa says

Nobody can make me so angry reading a book that I want to flip through the pages to see the end just to be done with it because of severe uneasiness the story is causing me.

Only Child is a realistic portrayal of the price women pay when they choose a violent sociopath as a partner, knowingly or otherwise, and then bring a child into the mess. It's also about how parents cover and make excuses for their little sociopaths.

I thought the ending was a bummer, though, because I came to care for Lydia and Robert, and was heartbroken at the abuse Robert was subjected to by his violent father. Although I was bummed about the ending, there have been true life cases where justice wasn't fairly dealt and the victim became the punished.

Bandit says

Nobody writes sociopaths like Ketchum. There is just such heart pounding immediacy to his writing, such an unflinchingly realistic approach. This book is no exception, Arthur Danse is as frightening as they come, the man is genuinely evil, though not without a hand in his upbringing, nurture (or lack of) is definitely the winner here, no contest. Arthur Danse happens upon Lydia, the way a hurricane happens upon a place, because Lydia's whole life has been a long chain of terrible men happening upon her. Still...there are choices she makes, particularly earlier in the story, that make one question her judgement and intelligence. To me it seems like an educated woman with a large city living experience should have maybe been somewhat more cautious and aware, but then again as a person waist deep in it, she certainly lacked the perspective that readers are offered. But the time Lydia wises up, the legal system enters and...the story just tumbles out of control, toward its inevitable violent resolution and all you can do is just turn the pages. The only time I had this sort of visceral reaction to a book was while reading the author's more famous/notorious story of a child abuse case. Ketchum does draw from real life crime cases for inspiration and in the afterword to this book we find out about the inspiration behind this one. Which really makes it all the more horrifying. The most scary thing in this book is shockingly enough neither violence nor rape, it's the absolutely astonishingly appalling way in which the legal system here failed to help, to intervene and to save lives. Very very scary. Is it fiction? In the afterward Ketchum assures us the legal aspects of the book were very accurate. Scary indeed. This book is very intense, very graphic, emotionally exhausting, alarming and very frightening. Reader beware. It's also very very good, well written and very much worth the read. Recommended.
