

“THE HUNGRY” and “THE HUNGRY 2: THE WRATH OF GOD” (Book Reviews)

Written by Trevor Parker

Tuesday, 25 September 2012 14:36



Another day, another derivative novel of the zombie apocalypse from an indie publisher. Still, overexposure aside, this reviewer doesn't see the crowded subgenre as something to automatically revile; the odds of cool-to-crap are at least as favorable with the written word as with films. There are plenty of examples of successful literary zombie tales, from the indefatigable WALKING DEAD comics to the pioneering BOOK OF THE DEAD anthologies. Two more rotting romps to rear their decomposing heads recently are Genius Publishing's THE HUNGRY and THE HUNGRY 2: THE WRATH OF GOD, both by Steven W. Booth and Harry Shannon.

THE HUNGRY focuses on Penny Miller, the sheriff of the one-stoplight Nevada burg Flat Rock, an unlucky town that happens to be situated alongside a secret underground military laboratory. As is apparently the norm with secret underground bases, a reanimating pathogen easily slips through the cordon in the body of a rogue soldier, and Flat Rock is soon besieged by clawing, gnashing undead. Attempting to high-tail it to a safer location, Sheriff Miller accumulates a collection of desperate misfits, including her gormless ex-husband, a biker who earlier managed to evade her custody and one of the scientists responsible for the outbreak. With hopes of a smooth escape quickly foiled, Miller and co. are now pitted against a crazy colonel's scheme to weaponize the plague, as well as an endless flood of prowling zombies.



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In THE HUNGRY 2, Miller and her friends are coerced by a team of mercenaries into joining forces and returning to the subterranean base where the plague originated, in a sequel that traces over the ALIENS storyline (this “homage” goes so far as to lift some lines of dialogue directly from that movie). The expedition goes awry, and Miller has to deal with several double-crosses, a Winnebago-driving holy man of suspect credentials and the impending detonation of a nuclear bomb—along with that never-ending flow of pesky, hungry corpses.

As the above synopses make clear, the HUNGRY books work along the popular DAWN/DAY OF THE DEAD logarithm for undead antics (zombies vs. cops vs. bikers vs. soldiers vs. scientists). The story never explores any territory that hasn’t already been thoroughly mined in previous outings, and the prose is plain and matter-of-fact. These are minor qualms, and are to be expected when dealing with novels in this subgenre; what’s not forgivable in THE HUNGRY is having the characters communicate with each other almost exclusively through a series of threats and tiresome tough-guy banter. It’s a slow drip that eventually gets to feel like Chinese water torture, although it does mercifully taper off in the second volume.

What these books do have on their side is an irrepressible energy, and an obvious sense of fun with which they were written. The authors are clearly having a ball with their plucky heroine and shooting-gallery fantasies, and it’s hard not to get swept along. Both books are loaded with action delivered at a peppy pace, and their skinny page count ensures THE HUNGRY(s) never get a chance to slow down and bore. They even skew more Marvel comic than pulp novel, with the zombies shunted aside and events veering into chemically generated superpowers and mad, pontificating villains.

If the reader can slog past the sour dialogue and worn story elements, this pair of HUNGRY books make for a speedy and entertaining go. And really, violent and destructive zombie stories are like potato chips—don’t you always have room for one more?

BOTH BOOKS: 🍅🍅🍅🍅