



Eat the Dark

Joe Schreiber

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“A harrowing, up-all-night read with delicious scares at every turn. Joe Schreiber knows just what terrifies us, and his masterly skills are on full display.”

–Tess Gerritsen, author of *The Bone Garden*

“One part noir, one part horror, one part the uniquely talented Joe Schreiber. Dark, chilling, scary—I couldn’t put it down.”

–Peter Abrahams, author of *Nerve Damage*

Escorted from prison under heavy guard, murderous psychopath Frank Snow is scheduled for an emergency brain scan at Tanglewood Memorial Hospital, an institution that is closing its doors after one final night of operation. But Snow has something far more terrifying planned. And once the lights go out, a fiendish game of hide-and-seek begins.

Alone in the dark with a homicidal madman who knows their fears, their secrets, and their every move, MRI technician Mike Hughes, his wife and child, and the other unlucky souls trapped in the hospital have no choice but to duel with the devil incarnate. If they play by their stalker’s twisted rules, some of them might just survive. But there’s more to Frank Snow than the naked eye can see . . . or the sane mind can bear.

“Eat the Dark is a tight novel of terror. Well written, fast paced, with a grip like a claw. I loved it.”

–Joe R. Lansdale, author of *The Bottoms*

“Reminiscent of Stephen King’s early work, *Eat the Dark* is a terrifying, claustrophobic, bone-chilling, unputdownable masterpiece of suspense fiction. Human monster Frank Snow is a wonderful creation.”

–Jason Starr, author of *The Follower*

“I didn’t just *Eat the Dark*—I gorged on it. It’s a master class in fast-moving, scary-as-sh*t storytelling.”

–Duane Swierczynski, author of *Severance Package*

Eat the Dark Details

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From Reader Review Eat the Dark for online ebook

Ru says

Joe Schreiber's atmospheric, claustrophobic, and achluophobic novel "Eat The Dark" is the equivalent of a brief, fun popcorn horror movie. It works well to read in total darkness and total silence, save for a booklight, and maybe even in one sitting. It gets down to business right away, and there is little wasted effort on any of the pages right to the very end.

All the set pieces and main characters in this story just scream out to be used as elements of horror: a hospital on its last night of operation, a skeleton crew of staff, a wife and young son coming to visit... and, of course, the authorities bringing in a serial killer for tests and treatment. Inject a little implied supernatural occurrence, plunge the hospital into total darkness, and you've got yourself a whiz-bang scary story. Everything that could go wrong, does, and as usual, Schreiber is so great at capturing each and every moment.

There are some genuinely creepy moments in this story, especially as it relates to Eli, the young boy in the story. Frank Snow, a notorious serial killer, exploits and manipulates this kid to the point where you feel his parents absolute sense of dread, but you cringe as a reader unsure of what might happen Eli. There are just little things, like a repeating recorder, that also unsettling in the scope of this tale, that probably wouldn't be otherwise. Again, I have to chalk it up to Schreiber knowing how to use his environment to convey just what he wants the reader to experience.

It's Hallowe'en and I wanted a good scary story on this day. This book by one of my favorite authors fit that bill. "Eat The Dark" is, to me, a classic short horror story (it's 192 pages, so, not actually a short story, but a short novel). It won't appeal to everyone, but I liked the pacing and the psychology of it, and I truly wanted to find out what would happen with Eli, Mike, Jolie, and of course, the bizarre Frank Snow. Happy Hallowe'en!

Robert says

Now I really did like this one it just seemed a bit off at the end. So let's start at the beginning. You have all of the elements of a great story, creepy old hospital in the middle of nowhere that is being closed down, a skeleton staff at the hospital, a sudden visit by the police bringing in a serial killer for an MRI and a sudden last minute visit of the wife and child of a staffer. Can you see where this would make for a real creepy story? OK so what happened? Well I will not spoil it but the end just seemed kind of like a last minute splash of paint that an artist has thrown at a canvas. Does this make this a bad book? Not by any stretch of the means. However I know Joe's writing, having read several of his books, and he does have better novels to choose from in my opinion. Is this the right one for you? I do not know. Give it a shot and find out. Being under 200 pages it should be quite painless.

Kristina Foster says

Drags you in right from the first page!!

Ailsa says

This is apparently a horror or something but it's just a weird, convoluted mess of a book. Snow is no Hannibal Lecter. And I'm just glad it was only 200 pages.

Topher says

What can I say. It was fine I guess? I was in the mood for some horror, and I guess that's what I got. It's basically a direct-to-video B slasher movie that attempts a more character oriented story but fails mostly at that. It was entertaining enough that the audiobook kept me awake in early morning gym sessions, but writing this review a couple weeks later, I'm struggling to even remember what happened in it, which is NOT common for me. The main character (Hero? Not remotely. Protagonist? Technically?) was a jerk who did not get the redemption his arc was desperately begging for. Every other character was some forgettable variation on a horror archetype, and the plot was so by the numbers that it even had the "family drives away from night of bloody horror, ready to start a new life together after sharing trauma, but a few days later, the monster's back--DUM DUM DUUUUUUHHHHHHNNNN!!!" ending that I ended up feeling kind of stupid for actually sitting through, because there was no reason to even fully describe it. Schreiber could literally have just written that sarcastic sentence and it would have done just as well.

That review was a lot longer than the book deserved. I feel dumb.

Paula says

Feels like reading the script of what could be a more than passable B movie.

The horror story is there, but the writing skill is not.

The author just doesn't have the skill of a King or Lovecraft to imbue the book with the creepy-factor that makes for good horror. The tricks he tries to employ are more suitable for the big screen. Without creepy music or sound effects or the visual startle of bad-guy-flashing-into-frame-from-no-where the book just doesn't work (reading "then he jumped out of no where" doesn't have the same effect). All I could think the entire time is "they could probably make that work..in the movie."

Kate says

Tanglewood Memorial Hospital is closing, but on the last night, a special patient is brought in for an MRI - Frank Snow, the famed serial killer. Mike, his coworker Jolie, Dr. Walker, and guard Steve Calhoun are supposed to be there; Mike's wife Sarah and his son Eli are not. When Snow escapes, they find themselves part of one of Snow's deadly games. They all have a choice, and if they make the wrong one, Snow will kill them. And Snow isn't exactly human...

This would have been a bad situation even if Snow was fully human. I pretty much knew as soon as Sarah and Eli showed up that (view spoiler). I liked Jolie's personality, I just wish she hadn't been cast into the role of temptress with Sarah as the righteous wife. I also wish that more of the story had focused on Frank Snow, maybe about his former crimes, especially given his relationship to Dr. Walker and Dr. Walker's knowledge of Frank's history. But, great pacing and I loved the setting.

Luann says

Two stars but only because it was a quick read and did hold my attention to the end. Two stars because I read up to the end and still am not sure what exactly happened in this book. The premise of the story is strong - albeit weird for only an MRI staff to be the only crew working in a closing hospital - but the writing was so convoluted I found myself rereading passage just to try and figure out what was happening, and that didn't even help. You never learn exactly what happened that night although it's hinted at but never really clear. Just did not enjoy this book as much as I expected I would.

Chibineko says

I'm rather mixed over this book. I liked it, but not enough to where I can entirely rationalize giving it four stars.

Part of what both helped and hindered the book was the narration by Renee Raudman. I had remembered hearing a review of the audiobook that said that the almost entirely male cast didn't do her many favors and they're correct. Raudman does a decent enough job with the male voices to where you won't really mind this, but I can't help but wonder what it would've been like if they'd managed to get someone like Michael Kramer to voice it. Her voicing of the young Eli was slightly irritating at times. Where she really shines is towards the end when the action starts heating up and the moments get more tense. That's where her narrating is spot on and I couldn't help but think "OK, now I see where she's perfect for this".

The story itself is decent. It's a good setting and a cool idea for a book. You do have to put a lot of suspension of disbelief on the line at times, but most of the problems I had with the book were eventually explained away in one way or another. The ones that weren't I didn't have that big of an issue with, such as why the MRI department staff were the only ones in the hospital. It's pulp horror, so some concessions have to be made. My only big problem with the book was that I wished that the twist at the ending had been explored just slightly more. I won't elaborate, as it'd be semi-spoilerish but I did want to know just a little more here.

It's just that while I enjoyed this and see where it would make for a great horror movie, I just wasn't overwhelmed by this. When the book is good, it's good. When the book isn't, it's just sort of meh. It's neither a stellar example of the genre, nor a subpar one, if that makes any sense. It's better than much of the other fare out there and definitely entertaining enough to where I'll pick up Schreiber's other stuff, but I just didn't get into this as much as I wanted. I think it's partially because this so neatly straddles two different horror genres that I kind of didn't know how to feel about this at the end.

Horror fans will probably want to add this to their TBR pile for Halloween. It's one that I definitely recommend picking up, but it's not something that you'd need to stampede out and get.

L J Field says

This is a "real-time" story that describes the incidents of an evening at work over a time frame of about six hours. The novel gallops madly from one horrible occurrence to another as a vicious madman stalks the innocent through hospital corridors. The story is one of the better examples of horror novels that have been my pleasure to read over recent years.

Tripp says

Horror has to have one of the lowest quality to junk ratios in all of genre fiction. While mysteries writers manage to nod to their pulp origins while remaining intelligent, horror writers tend to wallow in excess in escalating attempts to overwhelm jaded readers. So when you find someone like Joe Schrieber who writes horror novels well, it is worth getting excited.

His first novel, *Chasing the Dead*, was a solid horror/suspense hybrid that set Schrieber up to be one of the leading lights in genuinely scary horror writing. His second novel, *Eat the Dark*, fulfills the promise of the first.

The set-up is a tad pedestrian. Frank Snow, a jailed serial killer so vile that characters shudder upon hearing his name, needs a MRI and is being brought into a hospital due to close the next day. As it is understaffed, only a few police medical personnel and their families, including MRI tech Mike Hughes, are there that night. No prizes for guessing what happens.

Schrieber gets away with this because his plot is well constructed, his characters are realistically flawed and he provides just the right amount of information. Most horror (or even mystery, thriller and scifi) plots hide a major secret and then hit the reader with a big reveal, which is often a let down. Schrieber slowly (Ok, as slow as you can in a 200 page novel) ladles out developments, with enough information to keep the suspense building. Frank Snow treats his victims in a peculiar way, hunting some and testing others.

The tested people are confronted with many of their secrets. Like characters in a Stephen King novel, these characters cheat on their spouses, drink too much and are happy to do bad to make a buck or two. While these make the story seem more real, like *Lost*, the backgrounds tie back into the story.

Finally and this is perhaps most important, Schrieber provides just enough information to either scare or intrigues the reader. We never really learn what Snow did to his victims, Mike just recalls "grainy newspaper photos of a remote barn with black stained ropes and chains on the floor, notes, piles of clothes and sneakers in corner." There is a reference of sorts to *Blair Witch*, another movie that is parsimonious with the detail. Later, as the story becomes increasingly strange, Schrieber also evokes dread by balancing what he says and doesn't say.

I'm looking forward to what he does next and I hope other writers are paying attention.

Josh says

EAT THE DARK is an intensely rich and deeply satisfying survival horror.

Serial killer Frank Snow is transported to Tanglewood Memorial Hospital for an emergency brain scan. Accompanied by a police escort and a handful of hospital staff for the MRI he finds himself in the bowels of a near fully evacuated hospital as Tanglewood officially closes its doors with Snow, the last patient.

MRI Technician Mike Hughes is on hand to assist Tanglewoods last and most famous patient undergo the final form of healthcare provided at the decommissioned facility. He's soon visited by his wife and young son who show unexpectedly – it's a surprise that could end in tears and bloodshed as Snow escapes the shackles that so tentatively corrupted his free will allowing him to once more bathe in the blood of his victims in the darkened halls of Tanglewood.

Terror at every turn, heart pounding suspense in every chapter, fear and violence omnipresent throughout – EAT THE DARK is a great fast paced supernatural/survival horror.

Author Joe Schreiber encapsulates all that consists of nightmares – ghosts, serial killers, claustrophobia, thick dark, and the unexplained, into a tightly wound bundle of madness. Despite having read EAT THE DARK previously, I still couldn't turn the pages fast enough.

Eric Evans says

Pretty good book about a serial killer terrorizing a hospital. Loved the feel of this story and the supernatural elements were great. The story line was a little lackluster though. It's one of those who you can tell who's going to live and who's going to die.

Jerry says

Don't, just don't. Once again a bum steer from the Stoker Awards nominee list.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

This book is described as "dark, chilling and scary." It is all those things.

What starts off as a confrontational visit by Sarah Hughes and her young son Eli to Tanglewood Memorial Hospital, her husband Mike's work place (she has found a love note and a receipt for a diamond bracelet in his pocket), turns into a night of abject terror. Murderous psychopath Frank Snow, who is scheduled for an emergency brain scan at Tanglewood on its final night of operation, manages to escape. And so begins a truly terrifying game of hide-and-seek.

I could not stop listening to this book. It is fantastic on audio, and I am sure just as good in print.

If it is at all possible for a thriller/horror novel to be delicious - this is it!
