



# The Twelve-Fingered Boy

*John Hornor Jacobs*

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## **The Twelve-Fingered Boy** John Hornor Jacobs

Fifteen-year-old fast-talking Shreve doesn't mind juvie. He's good at dealing contraband candy, and three meals a day is more than his drunk mother provided. In juvie, the rules never change and everyone is the same. In juvie, Shreve has life figured out.

So when he's assigned a strangely silent and vulnerable new cellmate, Jack, Shreve takes the younger boy under his wing. But all Shreve's plans and schemes unravel when he discovers Jack is different. For one thing, Jack has six fingers per hand. For another thing, he just might have superpowers.

Soon Jack has drawn the attention of the cellblock bullies as well as the mysterious and chilling Mr. Quincru—*x*—who claims to be from the Department of Health and Human Services. But when Shreve feels Quincru invade his mind and shuffle through his darkest memories, he knows Quincru's interest in Jack is far more sinister. Mr. Quincru means to take Jack away. For what purposes, no one knows.

But Shreve has another plan: escape.

## **The Twelve-Fingered Boy Details**

Date : Published February 2013 by Lerner Publishing Group (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN :

Author : John Hornor Jacobs

Format : Hardcover 280 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Paranormal, Horror, Urban Fantasy, Adventure

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# From Reader Review *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* for online ebook

## David says

Chuck Wendig recommended this to me. (Well to everyone who visits his site, but I like to think that I'm special, don't judge me.) Then low and behold, Barnes and Noble had a sale. Fate, that's what I call that series of events.

I have never heard of Mr. Hornor Jacobs, but I have to say that the man can tell a tale. The story was good and I finished it in one sitting. I was skeptical at first, thinking that this would be a YA story that would be a good ride. That was definitely not the case, even though the characters are mostly teens, this story is one that adults will like.

So the story opens up and we meet Shreveport Justice Cannon, and I liked him instantly from name alone. Our protagonist goes by Shreve, and he's currently doing not so hard time in Casimir Pulaski Center for Boys. It's here that Shreve introduces the readers to the harsh realities of the system. Shreve has an excellent voice; it's light hearted and chocked full of pop culture innuendo. Even the most devout and self-righteous have to love our little juvenile defender because he's witty and charismatic. Plus, he's been handed nothing but lemons in life, but instead of crying about it he's giving it the squeeze, mixing in a little water and selling it for inflated prices. Here is a kid after my own heart. His antics at the beginning of the novel are a treat.

Just as Shreve begins to think that life at Casimir is pretty cush, Jack the pubescent polydactyly peer (say that three times fast) is thrown into his cell. Being polydactyly means having additional digits on the hands and/or feet, which Jack has. And while Shreve believes that Jack is a "titty baby" he becomes surprised that the shy boy can take care of himself. With cool super hero like abilities, that turns their lives upside down.

For me Shreve steals the show, his voice and tenacity had me rooting for him from the first page. Hornor tells a great story and shows what it's like to be both boys, coming of age in rough circumstances, without dumbing down the narrative being told by young protagonists. The way Shreve and Jack viewed life was both innocent and somewhat jaded, which I felt allowed me to familiarize more with the young characters.

Quincruux was a decent bad guy, the perfect combination of creepy and dangerous. His scenes with the boys set me on edge and held just the right amount of suspense. His interest in seeing if Jack was diphallic was a ten on my Predator radar. (Although I'm wondering if I missed the boat on not being born with that condition, once again, don't judge me!) I also loved the way that mind control was depicted in the novel.

Overall the read was really enjoyable and the story was very unique to me, combining a bunch of different elements to tell a coming of age story. The plotting was good, and I really enjoyed the voice of the character. As well as the authors willingness to continually escalate the danger and suspense for the characters. The ending was not what I expected and the book can stand alone even though it's the beginning of a series. I'm ordering "The Shibboleth", book two, as soon as I finish here.

Worth the read, check it out if you like witty protagonists, coming of age stories, and want to read something a little different. It's like *Shawshank Redemption* told by a Holden Caulfield/Percy Jackson hybrid with a *Law and Order* twist. Take that for a blurb!

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## **Jen (Book Den) says**

### **Why did I read The Twelve-Fingered Boy?**

I'm a fan of John Hornor Jacobs. His debut novel *Southern Gods* blew me away. (You can check out my review of *Southern Gods* [here](#).) *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* is Jacobs's first YA novel, and it sounded like an awesome read.

### **The Strengths**

I have a strong affection for coming of age stories, and I don't find myself reading male POV YA books very often. *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* was able to fill that spot in my heart and make me a very happy reader.

I love the friendship between Shreve and Jack. This is something I look forward to reading more of in the rest of the series.

Superpowers! Can a YA fantasy get better than the main characters having special abilities? I'm not sure that it can for me. If you love books like the *Lorien Legacies* (*I Am Number Four*, etc.) then you should check out *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* as well.

I'm very happy to report *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* is a full story. I bitch A LOT about series books not giving a full story in each volume. I firmly believe that any and every book should be able to stand on its own. Even though there is a larger story arch and questions left unanswered, *The Twelve-Fingered Boy* is completely capable of standing on its own.

The design of the physical book is fantastic. I'm very blessed to have a hard copy. It's a great read so I certainly recommend downloading the ebook if that is your thing, but bibliophiles, keep in mind this is a stunning book.

*The front and back matter are printed on dark paper.*

### **The Weakness**

When the big baddie Mr. Quincruix forcibly enters Shreve's mind (not a spoiler/in the book blurb), Shreve has a very strong reaction to how he's been violated. I was uncomfortable with the extent to which Shreve was equating this violation especially given the fact that (view spoiler).

### **Would I recommend The Twelve-Fingered Boy to others?**

Yes! It was a really great read. *The Shibboleth* comes out in March so I will definitely be reading that one soon as well.

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## Adam Rowe says

Writing a book that fully connects with a teenage audience can be tough when one is no longer a teenager. Those guys don't accept any pandering. But with the *Twelve-Fingered Boy*, John Jacobs has found a trick that lets him do just that. He constantly references TV and film in order to describe a scene or give dialogue to the teenage boys that occupy the plot. Shrive, the main character, compares every part of his journey to how life works in a TV show, and when he's hospitalized at one point, even hallucinates that he's in a medical show. It's all cleverly done, engaging, and speaks to a young, media-saturated generation. Wish I'd thought of that first.

*The Twelve-Fingered Boy* follows Shrive as he gets a new roommate at juvenile detention, Jack, who turns out to have a dozen fingers and a superpower. Shrive ends up throwing himself between Jack and the mysterious man who's after him, only to find a hidden world of power and danger.

Jacobs' writing has clear strengths and just one weakness. He's great at characterization, with flair for dramatic description and entertaining lingo that he pumps out at the pace I like: fast. There's a particularly literary style to the prose of good genre fiction, and Jacobs understands this.

The book's gritty, hard-hitting content is also a boon. The topics covered include alcoholic moms, disturbed kids, and serial-killer pedophiles. This focus keeps the story engaging despite the author's one flaw: the individual plot points are run-of-the-mill, predictable stuff. The powers, telekinesis and mind reading, are so over-used by now that Stephen King just throws them into his novels randomly, and the cat-and-mouse chasing continues for the entire book.

That said, the mysteries that the book sets up in the future are intriguing, particularly the shadowy evil lurking in Manhattan, and combined with the excellent characterization, this book is a strongly worthwhile read.

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## Juli says

Life changes drastically for Shreve when he meets Jack. Well, life started changing when Shreve landed in juvenile detention. But, he feels life in a cell is better than living with his drunk, neglectful mother. One day he's making money selling candy to the other inmates....and the next he's got a new, and very strange, cellmate. Jack not only has 12 fingers .... six on each hand....but he has strange superpowers that seem to manifest themselves when he is angered or threatened. Unfortunately there are some dangerous people who know about Jack and what he can do....and soon the boys will find themselves on the run. But it seems that escaping will be difficult if not impossible, as those chasing after them have powers too.

This is such an action-filled, fun read! I do admit that when I first started reading it, I almost put the book down. I didn't want to read a book about kids who are incarcerated....too difficult for a Mom to read about neglected kids who end up in prison. But the story soon morphed into something entirely different. Then I couldn't put the book down!

I love the strong friendship that grows between Shreve and Jack. And I completely detest the "bad guys" in this story -- but, I'm supposed to. It's classic good vs evil...with supernatural elements thrown in for good measure.

The Twelve-Fingered Boy is the first book in the Incarcerado Trilogy. I'm definitely going to read the other two books. I have to find out what happens next! :)

John Hornor Jacobs is also the author of The Incorruptibles Trilogy.

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## Noigelloverlord says

Supernatural Killers, Zombies and now a dark twisted YA novel. John Hornor Jacobs could write a shopping list and it would get 5 stars ! Two boys on the run has been done over and over John takes the idea and turns it into a thrilling fast paced heart wrenching tale

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## Molly says

Rating 4.5

John Hornor Jacobs hit my radar with a bang through the great **The Incorruptibles**, and it was only a matter of time for me to pick another of this books. To tell the truth I was more than a little concerned with the label YA attached to this trilogy (there is YA and YA, you never know what are you waddling into) but my worries were put to rest after the first paragraph.

Shreveport Justice Cannon is serving his time in *Casimir Pulaski* the juvenile detention center for boys, taking it easy, dealing contraband sweets (everybody has a sweet tooth) and staying out of trouble. The peace doesn't last for long when he is assigned a new cell-mate. Very soon Shreve discovers how much different Jack Graves is ....and the troubles start ... and grow to epic, explosive proportions.

If you like something different give it a try.

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## Mihir says

Full review over at Fantasy Book Critic

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: I'll admit I haven't read any John Hornor Jacobs' previous releases. I've heard about them being a varied lot and have some fine prose but I never got around to them. When I got an opportunity to review this title, I didn't want to pass it based on the blurb and the very cool title, plus the excerpt which I read added to my decision.

The basic storyline is about Shreveport Justice Cannon, our fifteen year-old protagonist who calls himself Shreve. He's one of the many residents of the state in Casimir Pulaski County Juvenile Detention Center for Boys. He has endured a hard life before his entry into the state system having to take care of his mother and

his younger brother Ferrous Vigor Cannon (Vig) at the same time. Certain events that are described in the plot have led to his incarceration and that's where he meets the eponymous character. Jack Graves is the shy kid with the bilateral Polydactyly condition with his hands and feet. That while being curious, does not even compare to Jack's curiouser and curiouser silence and powers.

The boys meet as they are bunked up together and Shreve gets to know more about Jack and why a very creepy character called Mr. Quincruux from the Department of Health and Human Services is interested in him and his condition. Things soon take a turn for the worse as Shreve and Jack are forced to hatch a plan to escape from the clutches of the state and the Department of Health and Human Services. What happens next is where things get murky and we get to know more about the world visualized by the author.

What I loved about this story was the characterization and even though it is entirely told from the viewpoint of Shreve, it manages to stand out. The world described within the juvenile facility as well all the other characters, it's all very three-dimensional. Of course with any story focussing on life within prison, more often than not comparisons arise with "Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption". With this being a YA story, it adds another layer of complexity to the story as the author has to describe the story at a different level and yet make it believable. This is where the author excels and given the pace at which the story expands. Most readers will be hard-pressed to not finish this story within a single setting.

Plus to add to the further awesomeness of the story, there are some significant paranormal threads to the story as the main character and his twelve-fingered friend discover that there are powers afoot both their own and those of Mr. Quincruux and his ilk. The how and what is what lies at the heart of this story along with superb characterization that will have you rooting for Shreve and Jack pretty much all the way. I enjoyed the main protagonist Shreve and kudos to the author for creating a believable teenager who is also incarcerated. The author creates this entire world within the detention center and of course once the story progresses we are introduced to newer characters and situations.

Things that didn't work so well within this book, would be that the bad guys with their all-out badness, seem to be a bit caricature-ish but I'm going to reserve judgment on that aspect simply because this is the first book in a trilogy. Of course I'm hoping that the author is able to bring the same depth to the antagonists as he has shown with the teenagers. This was the only sour point for me about this story as everything else about the story was simply impressive.

CONCLUSION: Why would you want to read The Twelve-Fingered Boy, well it could be because most folks enjoy a tale well told or that you like read a story about two boys on the run from something sinister (à la Nathan's Run meets X-Men) or it could be that you love paranormal YA stories. Whatever be the reason, make sure that you don't miss this fine effort from John Hornor Jacobs. The Twelve-Fingered Boy is a book that will make you believe in its awesomeness.

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## Patrick says

Recently, while packing for a trip, I found this book in my luggage and was filled with shame.

I read it half a year ago, you see. And when I read something I really enjoy, I make a habit of mentioning it here on Goodreads.

This is doubly true of books that are off the beaten track. Books by newer authors. Books by small presses.

Books that are brave enough to try new things.

This book is all three of those things. And I really, really enjoyed it. I enjoyed it so much that when I heard the sequel, Shibboleth, was available. I e-mailed the authors and used all my considerable powers to get a copy of it.

Okay fine, I pretty much just begged him for it.

Why did I like this book so much?

Lovely mysteries. Coming of age story. Clever plot. Good language. An element of the fantastic in the modern day, without falling into the done-to-death urban fantasy stuff. It was fresh and fun and actually made me a little weepy in places.

It's absolutely worth your time. Seriously. Read it.

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## **Lectus says**

Via <http://onlectus.blogspot.com/2013/03/...>

OMG, this is a series! I need to process this.

Okay, processed.

I totally loved the story. Think if X-men in a very subtle way.

Shrev is in juvie and gets a new roommate, Jack. But Jack is not ordinary kid, he has a very unusual talent. Circumstances lead Shrev to develop (or discover) a special talent of his own. Because some people are after Jack, they break out of juvie and are on the run.

I loved how Shrev abilities developed. It wasn't something taken for granted, like he had it from the beginning. No, it came to him and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

Jack and Shrev escaped juvie and are on the run from Quincrox, a man with a power of his own who wants Jack who knows why.

I loved the connection b/w Jack and Shrev and I especially loved that there is no pointless romance in the story!

Shrev's character is very realistic. He is not a saint kid but he is not evil either. There is a nice balance there.

I totally loved the writing style, the setting... everything.

I don't know what else to say about this book without giving it away. It totally blew me away and it will be one of my favorites forever!



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## **Liviania says**

I have got to stop assuming that books are standalones. When I reached the end of THE TWELVE-FINGERED BOY, I couldn't believe it. I was relieved to learn that two more books were coming and that the story would continue, but all the open threads were a bit of a shock.

The twelve-fingered boy in question is Jack Graves, the new kid at Casimir Pulaski Juvenile Detention Center. The narrator is his roommate Shreveport "Shreve" Cannon, the biggest candy dealer in all four blocks. Soon after Jack arrives, a man named Mr. Quincruux shows up to interview him. Shreve eavesdrops because he has a bad feeling about the man and his interest in Jack - a feeling that turns out to be very prescient. Soon the two boys are busting out of juvie and desperately running across the country to protect themselves.

THE TWELVE-FINGERED BOY will appeal to fans of the X-Men and Spider-man. Jack has special abilities, and their encounters with Mr. Quincruux awaken a power in Shreve. Although they're concerned with keeping themselves alive and safe at first, they start to realize that they might have extra responsibilities due to their extraordinary capabilities. That's not a thought that comes easily to Shreve, whose short life has taught him that it is acceptable to hurt others to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

John Hornor Jacobs imbues Shreve with a unique, absorbing voice. His morality is slightly skewed, and he has the potential to grow up to be a good person - or a really bad one. And his relationship with Jack, who reminds him of his younger brother, is quite sweet. Their journey across America is harrowing, not just because of who is chasing them and what they might run into, but because the corner they're backed into might turn them into what they're running from.

I'm not enamored with the ending of THE TWELVE-FINGERED BOY. While Shreve and Jack do manage to accomplish something important, because the ending made the entire novel seem somewhat pointless. I'm certainly curious about what will happen next, and at least next time I'll know that the end isn't really the end.

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## **Holly says**

I have mad love for this book and I SO want to meet Shreve and Jack! And even Booth, the big lug! Jacobs made me feel so intensely for these boys and I loved every minute of it. The nasties are so freaking creepy I shuddered and winced more than a few times (not to fear, though, it's not like there's a lot of gore here - it's a different kind of horror). I wanted to smother both boys with hugs and kisses and give them the love neither of them had ever gotten; my maternal instincts were *\*really\** kicking in while reading this. (I think being the mother of a 5-year-old little boy added another level to the story for me!) I thought the writing was tight, detailed without being too much, and fast-paced without the frantic feeling you get sometimes where you can't turn the pages fast enough. In other words, PERFECTION.

One final thing I'll say is that Jacobs did a great job, in my opinion, describing the, shall we say, "talents" of certain characters in the book. I think it must be so much harder to write about superheroes (though that's not quite what we're dealing with, not exactly...I believe the word "supernumeraries" is used in the book) - anyway, I think it must be so much harder to write about superheroes in prose form than in comic book or

graphic novel form, because with the latter you have the power of the comics/graphics to say so much for you. With prose, though, you must use words to describe superpowers that can be really difficult for the reader to imagine without pictures! So I was thrilled to find that I had no trouble understanding what Jacobs was telling us about these characters; it was truly like his words created the picture in my head. That's no easy feat when you have a reader like myself who tends to have an analytical mind and not really an imaginative, creative one!! Well done, Mr. Jacobs! OH, and lest I forget, props for having the denouement occur in my home state, one city over -- even if we did have some of the worst evildoers in the book and the easiest "vessels"... ;)

Okay THIS really is the final thing I will say: when I finished the book today I tweeted how much I loved it. The author immediately tweeted me back thanking me (that's always a nice thing :) ) and also telling me BOOK TWO comes out February 1, 2014! Oh, glorious day! I am thrilled to know there is a book 2! Although the story of Shreve, Jack, and the rest could have ended there and I would have been satisfied, I absolutely want to spend more time with all of them! (EVEN the despicable Q and the Witch!) So it made me a happy girl indeed to find out I will be seeing them again.

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## **Oliver Eastwood says**

This was one of those "Well that's a shame" books, because it started out really good but then went downhill from there. I just thought that the plot was all wrong, and that maybe it wasn't a good idea for a novel.

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## **Will says**

After seeing praise heaped on Mr. Jacobs by the likes of Pat Rothfuss and Mark Lawrence, two of the greatest wordsmiths in fantasy today, I knew I had to check out some of his work myself.

Well, I can verify what everyone is already saying: this book is beautifully written. The prose is clear and flowing, and the first person perspective puts us squarely inside Shreve's head. Jacobs did an admirable job writing a believable teenage character without the voice being stilted or obnoxious. The relationship between Shreve and Jack is genuinely heart-warming, and I appreciated the dark elements of the setting, especially the violent and bloody super-powered battles. The story does end on a bit of an unresolved note, but I expect the already-released sequel to pick up where this one left off, and I'm excited to find out what's going on in Maryland and how Jack and Shreve develop from here.

Recommended for fans of gritty, realistic treatments of superheros, or the movie/comic Akira.

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## **Readeralex says**

We're born into pain, and we leave in pain, and we cause it along the way too, it seems. It's a damned hard lesson.

Shreve in THE TWELVE-FINGERED BOY

Fifteen-year-old Shreve Cannon is in Casimir Detention Center for Boys, but it seems that he doesn't mind it. Sometimes, Shreve sometimes doesn't know when to keep his mouth shut but he is a smart-ass and

somehow he always finds a way how to work the system. He has got a pretty good position in juvie because of his good running business as a candy dealer.

For the moment, he is quite okay with his life in juvie because he has a bed, his own three squares and the regular meals in the prison are something he wasn't allowed to enjoy in his life with his mother, before. The only thing he is desperately missing is his little brother, because he fears that their alcohol addicted mother might not treat him well.

Shreve's regular daily routine is over, when Jack Graves, his new cellmate, arrives at Casimir. Jack is very shy and scared and reminds Shreve in some ways of his little brother. So he doesn't hesitate and takes Jack under his wing to protect the younger boy from the juvie bullies. Unfortunately, it doesn't take long and Shreve messes things up for Jack when he unintentionally blabs Jack's secret – that the boy has six fingers on each hand.

This of course makes Jack the center of attention in juvie, one thing he wanted to avoid at all costs because now he cannot hide anymore that he has even a way bigger secret. Jack has an outstanding dangerous superpower that he hasn't completely under control. With this superpower he piques the interest of the super-villain QuincruX who wants to lay his hands on Jack and his extraordinary skills.

Jack and Shreve are afraid of QuincruX and bust out of juvie. Once they are outside, they have to learn that breaking free is much easier than defending their freedom. To protect themselves they have to cut across lines and often do not know what's wrong or right.

I'm not exactly sure, how to pigeonhole THE TWELVE-FINGERED BOY, is it a realistic prison story, XMen-like fantasy, mystery or a thriller? No matter what – I really liked this fast-paced, suspense-packed, creepy, dark and funny novel with those not so heroic superheroes. The characters are fascinating and pretty rough around the edges.

The author John Hornor Jacobs tells the story with the voice of Shreve that is sarcastic, rich with slang and easy to follow. A really cool read – I'm looking forward to the next book in the series. Five out of five stars.

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**Brigid ☆ Cool Ninja Sharpshooter ☆ says**

**Actual rating: 3.5 Stars**

**ARC provided by NetGalley**

Fifteen-year-old Shreve is in juvie. He's gotten used to the routine, and he thinks he has it all figured out. Everyone around him is the same, and they'll leave him alone as long as he keeps dealing them candy. (Yes, candy.)

But everything changes when Shreve gets a new cellmate—quiet and mysterious Jack. And Shreve soon discovers a few unusual things about Jack: First of all, he has six fingers on each hand. Secondly, he seems to have superpowers.

Jack has attracted the attention of his fellow prisoners, and also the attention of a man named Mr. QuincruX—who says he's from the Department of Health and Human Services. But Shreve soon discovers

that Mr. Quincruux has a superpower of his own, and that he has plans to harm Jack. And to Shreve, this means one thing—that he and Jack have to escape.

*The Twelve-Fingered Boy* was quite an addicting read. I started it one morning and couldn't put it down until I'd reached the end. The plot never stops moving and quickly shifts from one thing to the next. It's a story full of action and mystery, and it also has a sense of gritty realism that sets it apart from most "superpower" stories. (It reminded me a lot of *The Marbury Lens* by Andrew Smith, so it didn't surprise me when I got to the end and saw that Smith had done a blurb for it.)

Shreve's narration is one of the best parts of the book, and he's an easy character to like. He seems hardened on the surface, but throughout the story it's clear that he also has a caring side. And yet, his voice remains consistent and true to his personality.

*"We're born into pain, and we leave in pain, he says, "and we cause it along the way too, it seems. It's a damned hard lesson."*

As you can see, he has kind of a Holden Caulfield vibe.

I wanted to know more about Jack, but he was still a likable character, and I thought his friendship with Shreve was developed very nicely.

I think there were just two major things that I thought could have used work:

- The pacing. Even though the book moved at a fast and addicting speed, as I said earlier, it felt a little awkward and/or choppy at times. I felt that the part that took place in juvie went on for a little too long, and that Shreve and Jack's adventures once they escaped felt a little crammed together. Towards the end especially, there was a lot going on and I sometimes got a little confused.
- Mr. Quincruux. I had trouble taking him seriously. Sure, he was creepy, but he just wasn't a very fleshed-out or developed villain. It seemed like he was evil "just because" and he didn't really need another reason. He was scary, but he was two-dimensional in my opinion. I would have liked to know more about who he was and what his motives were.

Over all, though, I thought this book was enjoyable. It wasn't amazing, but it was at least exciting and was well-written. I'd gladly read more work from John Hornor Jacobs in the future.

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