



Creature

Hunter Shea

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The monsters live inside of Kate Woodson. Chronic pain and a host of autoimmune diseases have robbed her of a normal, happy life. Her husband Andrew's surprise of their dream Maine lake cottage for the summer is the gift of a lifetime. It's beautiful, remote, idyllic, a place to heal.

But they are not alone. Something is in the woods, screeching in the darkness, banging on the house, leaving animals for dead.

Just like her body, Kate's cottage becomes her prison. She and Andrew must fight to survive the creature that lurks in the dead of night.

Creature Details

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Author : Hunter Shea

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Genre : Horror, Fiction, Dark

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From Reader Review Creature for online ebook

Carol says

WOW!

CREATURE is **not** your typical horror story, but an emotional mix of a *real life* affliction of chronic pain and misery....**AND** a threatening monster that comes to call.

A good portion of the novel is a deeply emotional ride depicting the struggles of a devoted man who is determined to give his ailing wife her dream vacation at a beautiful lake in Maine....but all does **not** go as planned.

"The meds made her imagine things that would send Stephen King running for his blankie and his momma's breast."

Heavily character driven from the get-go, the dreaded evil in the woods slowly creeps into the storyline not making its presence known and intentions understood until the last quarter of the book....but show its disgusting face it does with ear piercing screams and unsettling noises that rock the house....then things turn deadly.

Hunter Shea brings to the reader a powerful kind of **Fear** and **Dread** you can hardly imagine in this new novel as he takes us on a journey to the dark side.

*(Very best wishes to Hunter Shea and his wife as they fight the **CREATURE** within.)*

Many thanks to Flame Tree Press and NetGalley for the arc COMING SEPTEMBER 6, 2018 in exchange for review.

Marie says

This was a roller coaster ride of human emotions so strong that it brings what the true meaning of pain and suffering is to the raw surface. I have never read a horror book that touched upon the human suffering that people go through the way this book did.

Kate Woodson lives day in and day out with massive chronic pain and autoimmune diseases. She doesn't have a normal life like most people as she has to stay in the house and sometimes is bed ridden. Her husband, Andrew, is a devoted husband who looks after her and tries to keep her in up beat spirits even when the spirits are low to the ground.

Andrew decides to take Kate away from the house and go somewhere peaceful hoping to give her a nice holiday for the summer. Andrew finds a cottage near a lake that is out in the backwoods of Maine. Once they arrive and move into the cottage, the stillness and quiet of the peaceful place is shattered by unearthly screams and howls. They soon realize that the wildlife of the woods is not part of the howling chaos and when more things start happening to them at the cottage, the more frightened they become as something

roams the woods not of this world. The "Creature" wrecks havoc on Andrew and Kate's emotions as they not only have to endure what is going on outside the cottage, but they have to endure what Kate is going through inside with her chronic pain. What was suppose to be a nice getaway, turns out to be a ride into the hellish unknown.

This was a suspenseful, tense, frightening, emotional read and the author, Hunter Shea, builds the story up from the beginning and brings everything to a boiling crescendo about the middle of the book where it just takes off like a rocket with twists and turns. I read this book in two days as I couldn't hardly put it down. Five stars all the way for this one.

My thanks to NetGalley and Flame Tree Press for letting me read this book.

Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says

This is one of Hunter Shea's best works. He is an author that is very talented at spinning tales with much chomping and stomping. That pulpy goodness is at times exactly what a girl needs, even if it does feel a bit rote at times. However, if you're looking for a read with actual substance, his books are not generally not the place to look.

Generally not.

With *Creature*, though, Shea gives people a startlingly raw look into the life of a Spoonie. People with chronic illnesses, especially those that cause extreme pain and fatigue, fight daily battles just to do normal things. These daily battles can cause huge amounts of stress on relationships. Long-term partners of Spoonies find themselves being sometimes as much caregiver as romantic partner. It really was no surprise to read the Afterword of this book and learn that there was a very specific reason for Shea's ability to relay this information so well. Only someone who has lived those aspects could portray them so clearly.

This would be a great book to recommend for a peek inside the stressful and yet loving relationship.

In many other areas, *Creature* succeeds as well. The pacing, the dialogue, and the characters are all very well-done. Within pages I was completely immersed in the story, which Shea manages to bring this story to vivid life. I loved both Ryker and Andrew, but the rest of the supporting cast, even if you see them for just a brief moment were great (except for the Mum, but she's easy to look past) . As for the plot itself, it is not new, but it is also not something I've often seen. So I appreciated the breath of fresh air when it came to *Creature*.

For most of the book, I was positive I was going to give *Creature* the highest possible rating. I thought there was no way I could not like anything about this book.

Sigh.

And then I got to the page where one of the characters tells two jokes in such poor taste that they transcend disgusting and hit "putrid" level. I guess it really is almost impossible to expect to read a horror book without a dead baby entering into it in some fashion. It was completely disappointing and disheartening to read back to back moments of crass word vomit shoved unnecessarily into the story.

I was so turned off and felt that the impact of the story had been cheapened so much by the poor choices that I had to force myself to keep reading. Luckily, the dog diarrhea masquerading as 'jokes' does not make a reappearance, and the book resumes the quality I had come to expect of it.

The ending of *Creature* was perfect. I have to give Shea major brownie points for ending this book perfectly. It had to have hurt him, given his personal history, but he did not back down and thus we got the perfect, powerful conclusion the story needed.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher for review consideration.

Kimberly says

CREATURE, by Hunter Shea, is--in my opinion--his strongest, most focused, *"heaviest"* (in terms of theme), and character-driven novel to date. This is a novel that incorporates many sub-genres of horror: psychological, human suffering, suspense, visceral, supernatural, and fear-inducing, among many others. If you're like myself and normally have a couple of books going at all times, you'll soon discover that this is simply not a book that can be read *"lightly"*. **CREATURE** is a tale that demands your undivided attention and focus at all times.

We start with a couple, Kate and Andrew Woodson, who have the misfortune of Kate living with a host of autoimmune diseases, including Lupus and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. While this obviously makes Kate's physical existence a challenge in and of itself, its affect on Andrew is no less potent.

"She'd forgotten what it was like to wake up and not be in agony . . . "

The strength of their union, their love and dependance on one another is the backbone of this story. Through their everyday thoughts and actions, the reader is *"shown"* just how close Kate and Andrew are, without the need for obvious statements. We can *feel* them--the pain and frustration that each deals with in their own ways.

". . . what they had survived made them different from most people . . . "

I cannot stress enough how **REAL** these two characters are to me. I feel like they are people I actually know in life, such is the power of Shea's words.

". . . Her body might be weak, but her will could break a football lineman in half . . . "

Deciding that they need a break from everyday life, Andrew arranges for them to take the summer off, and vacation at a remote lakeside cottage in Maine. Along with Kate's constant companion, an older beagle named Buttons, they set out.

". . . she waved goodbye to their house, a house that doubled as a hospital and prison . . . "

While the main focus overall is on the characterization, once they reach Maine, the atmosphere comes more prominently into play, as well. The beauty of this quaint cottage nestled in the woods, with a gorgeous lake beyond, and only a few "neighbors"--too far away to be seen--is an excellent contrast to the pain raging throughout Kate's weakened body.

"Promise me we can stay here forever?"

Of course, neither could have predicted that something . . . *else* . . . might be inhabiting those very same woods.

While Kate's battles with her own body are always present, there are so many other intrusions that begin to enter into their world--some subtle, some less so. This is where Shea showcases just how "*real*" he can make his novels.

". . . the woods were nothing but shadows, and the only things that didn't belong were themselves."

In addition to the spectacular characterization, he begins to build up the apprehension and unease for each in a myriad of ways. Yet all of it rings true for the reader. Some of the most horrific discoveries are things they choose to keep to themselves, for reasons that make complete sense to us, as it concerns each personality.

"How could she be a part of their lives when she couldn't even partake of her own?"

Some are purposely left ambiguous so that even the reader wants to question "*Is this real?*"? Other things are brought to light in such a brutal manor that it is impossible to deny *something* is amiss.

". . . her dream lake cottage. Yet here she was . . . trapped in more ways than one . . . "

This is what a great horror novel is all about. Shea is able to bring out those feelings of despair and fear that we have all experienced to some extent, making these scenes ring so true in our minds. Once our undivided attention has been captured, even more problems and terror begin to bombard us at every turn.

"He's my husband . . . If anyone's going to stab him repeatedly, it should be me . . . "

No matter how "improbable" the scene, at this stage our minds are open to any and every possibility out there. In addition to the internal battles, the external threat and carnage heat things up to an explosive level.

". . . when there was nothing left to lose, there was no reason to hold back . . . "

Overall, a remarkable, unforgettable novel in so many ways! The raw emotion of the characters, the physical problems both within and without the cottage, and the ultimate questions of "what, why, and how", will leave you hanging on every written word. As I stated in the beginning, this is not a "light" story, but it is one that will reel you in so that you can practically *feel* every moment of it right up until the final, unpredictable, end. Without question, this is one of my top reads of the year.

Highly recommended!

AVAILABLE NOW!

Michael Hicks says

Hunter Shea knows all about horror. An author with a score of books to his name, podcaster for Monster

Men and The Final Guy, and writer of Video Vision posts for Cemetery Dance, all point toward a man who has lived and breathed the horror genre since he was a boy. He knows and writes about cryptids, ghosts, crazed killer animals, and plenty more in-between. But he also knows about real horror, true horror, like when your body begins to fail and suffer from a handful of maladies, any of which on their own could be fatal, the person slowly degenerating into a life that is more misery and pain than anything else.

Kate suffers from a host of autoimmune disorders and lives in a state of chronic pain. Her joints slip out of their sockets with painful regularity and a mason jar filled to the brim with her daily regiment of pills sits on the nightstand beside the bed she only rarely leaves. Her husband, Andrew, is her caretaker, reliant on his dayjob to provide them with the medical benefits that help keep her alive, although the specter of chemotherapy is an ever-present threat, as are worries of emergency surgeries and cardiac arrest.

Kate doesn't get to enjoy her life very much. Mostly, her only company consists of her small dog, Buttons, and classic black-and-white movies on television or her computer tablet. Frustrated by his lack of time with her, and a growing dissatisfaction with work, Andrew takes a leave of absence and rents a lakeside cottage in Maine for the two of them to enjoy and while away their summer. He hopes the change of scenery will help, and that, just maybe, Kate can enjoy some sun and sand.

Their arrival, unfortunately, doesn't exactly go as planned. There's something in the woods surrounding their summer retreat. Strange, violently loud animal cries awaken them in the middle of the night, along with the noise of rocks pelting the house as whatever is out there attempts to lure them outside. What began as a hope for escape soon grows into a dire struggle for survival as the creature in the woods, and the monsters within Kate's own body, threaten to kill them.

Right from the very beginning of *Creature* it's clear that Shea has plenty of first-hand experience dealing with severe, chronic medical disorders. As it happens, his own wife suffers from afflictions similar to Kate's, and *Creature* oftentimes feels like a highly autobiographical work. It's honest and unflinching in its depictions of struggle from the perspective of both the afflicted and the partner cum caretaker. When they were dating, neither Kate nor Andrew expected their marriage to take the direction it has, and there's an ever-present sense of loss over the things that could, and should, have been. But there's also an overriding sense of love and compassion for one another, a love that has borne them through the worst of things and will carry them along no matter how grim things get. They manage to carve out moments of happiness, but still bicker and fight when emotional currents run high.

Kate and Andrew aren't a perfect couple, but they work well with what they've been given, and Shea does an excellent job portraying the reality of their relationship, warts and all. He bleeds onto each and every page, imbuing this couple and their shared life with a perfect sense of well-lived in realism. When drawing so heavily on personal experience, one might be inclined to glamorize the characters involved or tack on overly saccharine sentimentalities, but I never got that sense here. Kate and Andrew never struck me as being drawn in any way other than completely and utterly honest, and oftentimes to heartbreaking effect. Kate's disorders are awfully severe and it's impossible to not sympathize with her constant ordeals, and Andrew's by extension.

By now, you're probably wondering about the titular creature. I've spent an awful lot of time here discussing the people, but not the monster. Monsters, of course, are Shea's bread and butter! I can only say, have no worry, because *Creature*'s creature is absolutely present, but oftentimes in omnipresent ways. We hear the creature and see the aftermath of its visits for a good long while before we're presented with it in a fully in-your-face appearance on the page. *Creature* is a slow-burn, one that constantly builds its way toward a grand climax, and Shea meticulously places the various pieces of his frightfest with careful deliberation.

Shea is more widely known for his fun, gloriously violent, B-movie inspired creature feature romps. *Creature* is a bit of a departure from stories like *Megalodon in Paradise* or *Jurassic, Florida*, but readers who came to Shea by way of *We Are Always Watching* will have a grand idea of what to expect here. This isn't a mile a minute gorefest, but it packs in a number of scares that are absolute powerhouses thanks to their authenticity and realism. *Creature* is a slower, characters-first work of horror, but make no mistake, Shea certainly delivers on the horror and in a number of particularly gut-churning, all too-human ways.

[Note: I received an advance reading copy of this title from the publisher, Flame Tree Press.]

Mindi says

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

This is my second book by Shea, and from what I can gather, both of the books I've read are a bit of a departure from his usual writing. I know he is well known for his creature feature novels, but this one and the other book I read are not heavy on the creature aspects, even though this one is literally called *Creature*.

Kate Woodson has a number of autoimmune diseases that keep her from even getting out of bed most days. Kate is in constant pain, and any time she moves around too much she risks dislocating one of her fragile joints. Her husband Andrew works an office job he hates in order to provide good health care for Kate, and he also functions as her main caregiver. Her dog Buttons gives her emotional support while Andrew is away from home. A few weeks after an extremely rough procedure that leaves Kate even more weak and exhausted, Andrew decides to take a leave of absence and take Kate and Buttons for a three month getaway to a remote lake cabin in Maine. Kate is given a reprieve from treatment for a few months, and since she is starting to feel a bit better it seems like a good time for the couple to get away for their everyday miseries.

The early chapters that dealt extensively with Kate's illness and the impact it has on her, Andrew, and their marriage are incredibly hard to read. Kate was a fiery person who lived life to the fullest before her illness. Now she spends her days taking handfuls of pills and watching old movies on television. She lives in constant pain, and has had a few close calls where the doctors didn't think she would recover. Her illness has changed her life and her marriage completely, and it's heartbreaking to read about her struggle. It's equally as hard to read about how Kate's health affects Andrew.

Once her and Andrew arrive at the lake house it seems like a dream come true. However, they very quickly realize that something isn't right in their seemingly idyllic retreat, and that perhaps being so far from civilization was not the best idea. Strange noises outside the cabin grow worse as the days pass, and Kate still remains bedridden for most of their stay. Soon the couple discover that there is something in the woods that is threatening them, and they aren't sure what exactly is lurking outside their doors.

This novel is a slow burn that ends in an epic showdown. I loved it from the very beginning. Kate and Andrew are not perfect people with a perfect marriage, but they love each other fiercely. I was so invested in their story. And Buttons is one of my favorite dogs in the entirety of horror literature. I want to thank Shea for bucking the norm when it comes to Buttons. This novel had me crying by the end because I cared so much about Kate and Andrew. And then Shea's afterword had me crying even more. That's three books in a row that made me cry! Read this one, friends. It's worth the tears.

Sadie Hartmann Mother Horror says

Thank you to the publisher, Flamerree Press for setting me up with a fat stack of Fall ARCs including this novel, *Creature* by Hunter Shea in exchange for an honest review.

This is my first Hunter Shea book and probably the best introduction to a writer's body of work that I could ever ask for. I'm a very emotional reader--probably to a fault, quite honestly. I get extremely invested in well written characters, almost as if they're real people. Of course that kind of emotional relationship depends on the writer's ability to bring the characters to life--I'm always hoping to fall in love but that doesn't always happen; can't happen if an author doesn't deliver.

Creature is possibly one of the most emotional reads I have ever experienced. Shea spends the first half of this book developing the very true-to-life characters: Kate and Andrew. It's really not my favorite thing to go over the plot and I usually skim over plot details in other people's reviews so I'll just tell you briefly that Kate and Andrew are married. Kate suffers from health complications due to an auto-immune disease and Andrew lovingly and painstakingly does his very best to look after her and keep their marriage afloat during this trial. It's this first half of the book that was the most important part for me. Some people will call this "a slow burn" which is really just code for, "It took awhile for the action to heat up" but I realized straight away that I wasn't waiting for the action--I was completely enjoying my time in the marriage of Kate & Andrew. It was fascinating. It was intimate. It was HORRIFYING because it touched on my own personal fears of my husband or myself falling ill and not being able to be a 50/50 partnership anymore. Facing the reality that at any time one of us could depend upon the other for physical dependence and all the emotions that come with that marital transition--it's just...it's probably the single most trying circumstance that a couple could ever face. It's life altering.

The last half the book was just the icing on the cake because Hunter Shea brings the couple another trial--a *Creature*.

This is where psychological/medical horror meets *Creature* Feature and it was perfection. The ending had me in emotional agony--just beside myself. Overcome, really.

After reading Hunter's afterward, I'm in awe of his bravery. Hunter Shea writes horror. He's been doing it for a really long time and he also lives out a real life, a real marriage with real struggles and one day, he decides to bring the two together in this book, *Creature*. It's a real privilege and an honor as a reader to be allowed into such a private affair. I just want to thank Hunter for giving us that gift. He blazed new trails of horror and I'd gladly follow him anywhere now.

Karl says

At the conclusion of this version of Hunter Shea's book "Creature" is an afterword where the author goes on for a couple of pages explaining how personal this book was for him to write and that the book recounts aspects of his personal life, his relationship to Don D'Auria (the legendary book editor and also editor of this book) and the difficulties he encountered writing this book.

Following the 'Afterword' there is a question and answer 'interview' with the author where he is asked "What is this book about?" His partial answer "It centers around a very sick woman and her husband. They've been through hell and back, and the future isn't so rosy. Needing a break, her husband takes a leave of absence and rents a dream Maine lake cottage. It's everything she ever dreamed of... except she is too ill to enjoy it."

Another question asked of the author is, “What are you writing now?” and Shea answers, “I’m actually trying my hand at ghost writing , penning a novel for a very successful author. Naturally, I can’t reveal any more information.”

I did not care for “Creature” in the slightest. Although you might. Absolutely nothing happened for the first two hundred pages that kept me from abandoning this book. I persevered. It’s infinitely inane and repetitive. I have never encountered a worse novel by this author, who has up until now not let me down. I hope that this is not some kind of portent of things to come. You are certainly free to differ in your opinion.

This Is an advanced reading copy uncorrected proof of the book and is signed by Hunter Shea.

Release date: September 2018.

Trish says

This was quite different from the other Shea stories I’ve read so far. For one, it was much longer (novel length); for another, as we get to know in the afterword, this is deeply personal for the author, adding additional heartbreak.

We follow Kate, a woman with an auto-immune disease as well as various other afflictions, and her husband Andrew. They decide they need to get out of New Jersey for a bit after all the illness-related horrors they’ve managed to get through together so Andrew takes a leave of absence for three months and takes his wife to a cottage at the shore of a lake in Maine.

Anyone ever having even only heard of Stephen King must now hear all alarm bells going off. *lol* It’s no different with Shea.

What starts as a three-month vacation in a beautiful and remote part of America quickly turns into a living nightmare.

Another thing making this quite different from other Shea stories is that at least at first the horror here is Kate’s physical and mental situation. The poor woman can sometimes barely get up to use the bathroom, let alone shower. Moreover, she’s constantly catching other illnesses because she no longer has a real immune system to speak of. Thus, she spends her days in a daybed, watching the outside world, unable to participate.

I must say that I agreed with Andrew that (view spoiler). Then again, I can understand her need to not feel like a constant burden, that she wanted to help.

All in all, I loved the almost claustrophobic feel of her days and nights as well as not knowing what was real, what was imagined and what could be supernatural, IF there was something supernatural - after all, she did take incredible amounts of drugs that can result in hallucinations. (view spoiler)

I might prefer the b-movie-like shorts by this author (or maybe also longer ones, I have yet to read one of his longer creature features), but this was done very well and I was appropriately creeped out while simultaneously feeling for Kate and Andrew.

Bradley says

I have three ways to describe this novel:

Body horror, metaphor coming alive, and it's a deliciously painful romp.

AND it hits uncomfortably close to home for not just the author, whose wife is going through a long-term illness in too many similar ways, but for almost all of us. At least, I assume so. Enough of us either know or have been through family members sliding down that horrible slope to make this part of the novel truly harrowing all by itself.

But here's the best part: there's a lot of love between these two. He takes her off to a cabin retreat for 3 months while she's going through her decline, and in a lot of ways, it's just another familiar SK Maine cabin horror setup. Or, to me, I was deliciously reminded of *Evil Dead*.

But no worries, Hunter Shea pulls off a very tight and emotional body horror that leaps out of the confines of that particular horror category drives the great characters down into a particularly difficult hell.

It's all about the choices, man.

This is the second longer Shea novel I've read after a long stream of novellas that are just plain great. The thing about the longer ones is this: he tends to write sympathetic characters in them. The shorter ones are where we can cheer for every death. But this one? I kinda love everyone. It's just that kind of ride.

A very decent horror, and while it relies on a number of cliches to start off, the author, as always, has full command of his arsenal and knows exactly where to diverge to great effect. :)

Char says

CREATURE! It. Knocked. My. Socks. Off.

Kate and Andrew have certainly been tested. Her health, (a horrible litany of problems due to auto-immune diseases and problems arising from the treatment of them), and his care of her, has tested the strength of their marriage at every turn. Now with Kate trying an experimental treatment, they are in for their biggest test ever. In an attempt to alleviate the tension and bring some relaxation to their lives, Andrew rents an isolated cabin in Maine for the summer. Instead of being the serene, quiet time they had both hoped for, their cabin becomes the target of *something* in the woods. Will they return from their vacation relaxed and refreshed? You'll have to read this to find out!

This is not the book I expected from Hunter Shea. What I expected was a creature-feature, (one of those words is right there in the title after all), and it sort of was. But what it mainly was, was the story of a strong marriage and how chronic disease attacks every component of your life-and this is a tale I recognize from my own life. I had a period of years with an un-diagnosed disease, which in the end WAS diagnosed as an auto-immune condition. I know what it is to be frustrated, to have my patience tested, to be told it's all in my head, and to be poked, prodded, and experimented with like a lab rat. So, when Mr. Shea wrote about Kate's inner thoughts I totally understood and I recognized the pure truth of them.

What Mr. Shea did with Kate's thoughts is another thing entirely. It was brutal, yet beautiful at the same time. The imagination and creativity here was astounding. It was also frightening and spellbinding. I read the last 40% of this book straight through, because that was what the story demanded of me. I loved these characters, each and every one of them, and I rooted so hard for them all-I simply could not leave them at the height of their struggle.

Now, I find myself almost speechless, (and if you know or follow me, you know that's rare!). I want you to understand that this is a powerful tale, about so much more than what it appears to be on the surface. I hope that if you've ever trusted a review based solely on a reviewer's word, that you choose this one to trust. You will not be disappointed.

CREATURE gets my **highest** recommendation!

Available everywhere on September 6th, but you can pre-order here: <https://www.amazon.com/Creature-Ficti...>

Thank you to Flame Tree Press via NetGalley for the e-ARC of this book in exchange for my honest feedback. This is it.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

This is actually a love story. Yup, a Hunter Shea love story. So, of course, that means that something will go absolutely wrong. Not in the usual kind of love story way, in a more bloody way. This is also a book that demands patience. Pretty much all the action, all the carnage happens at the end. But, there are, of course, hints along the way that something is wrong that something WILL GO wrong.

The star of the book is for me, is not any human, it's Buttons or But-But that he's so lovey called by his humans. This adorable old beagle is the one that I worried most about while reading the book. It is a horror book, and God knows that no one is safe, especially not pets when it comes to horror books. So, I had some moments of angst for poor But-But...

As a horror book is this not as scary as THE JERSEY DEVIL, my favorite Hunter Shea book. However, the author's note after the book explains why this is such a personal book for Shea. The knowledge that the theme of this book is very personal for the author made me look back at the story with much more understanding. That is why I wrote that this is a love story. The heart of the story is the love between two humans (and a dog) and the knowledge that time is limited for their love.

I will end this review by saying that I have had a couple of days to reflect on the book and I've come to the conclusion that had I read it with little less hope of being really horrified or creeped out had I perhaps liked the story a bit more. Part of what made me a bit disappointed was that I figured out the twist quite early on. And, that just took away part of the enjoyment for me. The horror part did just not rock my boat.

I want to thank Flame Tree Press for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!

Edward Lorn says

I don't read much indie/small press horror, quality issues being my number one reason. But Hunter Shea is someone who produces a quality product every time. This being his best to date. If you'd like to see me elaborate on why I liked this book so much, you can find my full review here: <https://youtu.be/C-IZTtEGhOg>

Barb (Boxermommyreads) says

I can probably say that I've reviewed more Hunter Shea books on my blog than any other author and for good reason. One, the man's writing is prolific. I seriously don't know how he finds the time to write so much. Two, he writes such action-packed creature features which are always fun. However, I had a feeling when I picked up "Creature" that I was in store for something outside of the norm. And I can honestly say that what I read solidified Shea as one of my favorite three horror writers.

"Creature" starts out introducing us to Kate, her husband Andrew and their beagle Buttons. I have to mention Buttons because that little dog was the cause of much anxiety for me throughout the whole book. Anyone who reads a lot of horror knows pets don't stand a fighting chance. Kate is seriously ill and has been for years, suffering from an autoimmune disease and everything else it triggers. Andrew works hard to provide for the family and care for Kate. Wanting to something special, he takes a three month leave of absence and rents a cabin in the Maine woods as a surprise for Kate. Little do they know when they arrive, something else is waiting for them.

I found "Creature" to be a very character-driven book. I loved Andrew and how hard he worked to take care of Kate. I also loved that he certainly wasn't perfect. I also loved the relationship between Kate and Andrew. It clearly was forged from love and adversity. We also get to meet Kate's brother and his wife and they are a fun addition to the horror in the woods. I must also say that Shea did a good job of making the woods/cabin a character in and of itself. Especially since it takes some time for the reader to put all the pieces together.

"Creature" does provide plenty of action in the end and once again, Shea is not afraid of blood and gore. However, this book carries so much more. If you are going into it expecting Shea's creature-feature type books, then you might be disappointed at first. However, give it a chance because you might find a horror that is much more scarier - real life.

I received this book from Netgalley and Flame Tree Press in exchange for an honest review.

Bark says

CREATURE surprised me. I've only read one Hunter Shea book, THE JERSEY DEVIL, and that thing was pure madness from beginning to end with its out of control body count and frenetic pace. I was expecting a crazed people eating monster to pop out of the woods and eat everyone and the pup before moving on to town and slaying more innocents but this is a completely different type of horror story. This one is about the physical and emotional toll an incurable disease has on a woman and those who love her. It's slower paced and allows the dread to slowly creep in as the characters face an ever present and unconquerable monster.

Kate has Lupus and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, both are incurable diseases that are managed with pain medication and surgery to fix body parts as they break down. The diseases and multiple surgeries have all but stolen her life. She's housebound with her dog Buttons and a devoted husband who has turned into her caretaker. After a grueling trial of an experimental treatment, Andrew takes a leave of absence from work and surprises Kate with a getaway to a cabin in Maine where she can recuperate and they can spend some quality time together with Buttons. But it's not long before strange events begin to taint their tranquility.

This book was incredibly hard to for me to read. My sister and two family members suffer from EDS, have all had multiple surgeries and were all disabled in their 30's. Shea's portrayal of Kate's pain was heartbreakingly and grueling and viciously accurate based on everything I've heard and seen. This is why it was a difficult read for me but I imagine it will be the same for most anybody who picks up this book because it is a punishing depiction of chronic pain, that insidious destroyer of lives.

If you're looking for a stomp 'n' chomp this isn't it, for the most part, but it isn't any less of a horror novel than The Jersey Devil. It's a different kind of horror novel. One that is slower paced and thoughtful and full of all the emotions. There is so much pain and suffering and guilt and love that when the slow creeping dread begins to interfere on the couple's idyllic sabbatical, you'll need to hang on tight to your heart. It's breathtaking how well the author weaves it all together. I wasn't expecting this type of story at all but I wasn't disappointed. Very highly recommend if you enjoy a book that'll tear you to pieces.
