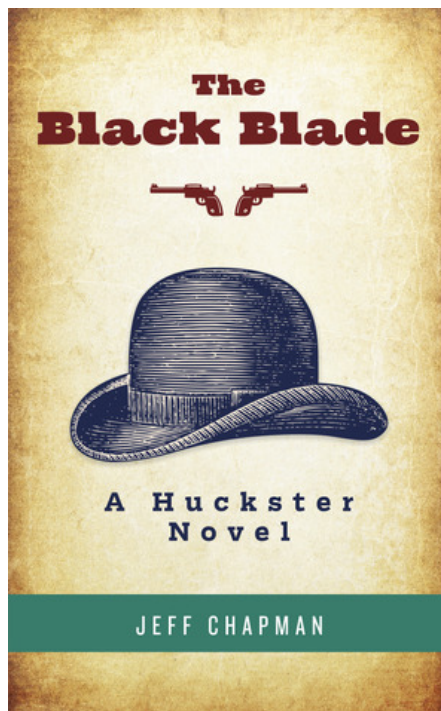




The Black Blade: A Huckster Novel

Jeff Chapman

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An enchanted blade. An evil old man. An ancient spirit.

The Weird West just gets weirder.

Hucksters Orville and Jimmy struggle to buy a decent meal.

When an old man asks for help with a supernatural pest, Orville smells opportunity. Jimmy smells danger.

And danger is what they find. Jimmy must retrieve an enchanted knife, while fighting a huge coyote, a shapeshifting opossum, and an ancient spirit determined to keep the blade where it is, all to save Orville from the old man's clutches.

The Black Blade is a weird western in Jeff Chapman's Huckster Tales series, mixing fantasy, comedy, and horror in an Old West setting. Climb up in the wagon and follow Orville and Jimmy as they once again plunge over their heads into supernatural trouble.

The Black Blade: A Huckster Novel Details

Date : Published February 16th 2017

ISBN :

Author : Jeff Chapman

Format : Kindle Edition

Genre : Fiction, Horror, Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Black Blade: A Huckster Novel for online ebook

Cats of Ulthar says

Review of THE BLACK BLADE: A HUCKSTER NOVEL by Jeff Chapman

I'm familiar with the subgenre of "Weird Western," which I guess is a subgenre of both "Weird Fiction" and of "Western Fiction," in this case "Western" referring to the mid- to late-19th century frontier, in the U.S. And possibly Canada and Mexico. This would be the era of Manifest Destiny, that horrid protocol invented by Western Europeans to countenance their complete takeover of the North American continent. I haven't read a lot of "Weird Western" fiction but let me tell you, Jeff Chapman may just have convinced me to drop everything and start reading this category widely.

THE BLACK BLADE is an adorable, DEE-LIGHT-FUL novel, as perhaps one of its characters might say [or maybe not]. Anyway, this reviewer says so: Jimmy and Orville are a precious duo, and now they've added Isobel on full-time, and that feisty girl is a real kickin' heroine too. Jimmy and Orville are sort of business partners; Orville, a chubby but charismatic fellow, hucksters...he cons folks out of their hard-earned money, and he is always looking for opportunity to knock. Jimmy, younger, rescued by Orville when he was lower than a frog's belly and really poorly off, is always watching out for danger, which usually finds them, then figuring out how to get them safe. In this novel, the two men, and a farm couple, are tricked by a dark magician, a "man" with true power, and Jimmy and Wilbur, the farmer, are sent out on a quest worthy of dark fantasy. They have to deal with shapeshifting animals, a mask that possesses, the dark magician and his various monstrous creations, as well as battle against their own fear, and learn to cooperate instead of compete.

Jeff Chapman's characterizations are precious. His settings are beautifully delineated, and his homespun prattle, particularly Jimmy's, is humorous yet poignant. Jimmy is fond of remembering particular proverbs and platitudes of his late grandma, herself a wise one, and his homage to her and his loyalty to his friends knows no bounds. More Jimmy and Orville, please!

Connie Lacy says

This is a Western that ain't exactly a Western. And I say that with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek. Chapman's novel is a mashup of Western, Fantasy, Comedy and a touch of Horror, set in the Old West. But there's evil in them thar hills, including shape-shifters, a Pig-man, an evil character who would give you nightmares if you ever met him in person, and some ancient spirits guarding a magical "black blade."

But there's plenty of humor injected from start to finish and tons of homely adages that our hero, Jimmy, likes to recall from his grandma. Like "hoping for good luck is like eating sour berries and expecting not to get sick." And "ignorance ain't a crime, but only fools perpetuate it."

Jimmy and his boss, Orville, are hucksters who tell people's fortunes and such. But they're suckered into a dangerous trap by the aforementioned evil character – a scary hombre name Marzby. And the story of how they try to turn the tables on their nemesis makes for a galloping tale of bungled confrontations. Jimmy is a likable narrator, although if you're looking for a lot of character development, this might not be your cup of joe. It was an amusing read – kind of like getting your leg pulled – but I must admit I "wasn't never" scared, even by the gory bits.

Jonathan says

In this Western/Paranormal mashup, apprentice huckster and demon-fighter Jimmy must summon his own wits and courage to save his mentor from the clutches of an evil sorcerer. As Jimmy's feisty young sidekick Isobel says near the end of the book, "... it's a grand tale, chock full of fightin' and narrow escapes."

I'll go along with that, and add that the plot moves along lickety-split, keeping the reader engaged and guessing. However, there weren't any plot twists or character developments that hit me like a gut punch, or tore out my heart and showed it to me, still beating. Call me a glutton for punishment, but I look forward to that sort of thing in an adventure story.

The author pours the metaphors on thicker than cream gravy over biscuits, and Jimmy's grandmother's pithy mottos assail the pages like a hailstorm on the prairie. The metaphors I can handle, but if Grandma is going to be so loquacious, she needs to take those old saws and cut a little deeper, like Groucho Marx, who once said: "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read"—and that leads me to the sum-up: whether you choose to read this book inside or outside of a dog, it's an amusing tale that could use a sharper tooth.

Hayley Shaver says

I really loved this book, given to me for an honest review. Two hucksters meet up with a mysterious man. They agree to rid a knocker from his home- - and get involved in something much more sinister than they could ever imagine. Read this if you like horror/weird westerns. I look forward to more tales about these unfortunate hucksters and their companions.

Doug Jean says

Solid tale from the weird west

This was a really fun read. And I enjoyed Isabel and Jimmy quite a bit. Truth be told though, I think my favorite character was Mommy's Grandma. Looking forward to the next one.

Christine Rains says

Orville "foretells" people's futures for coin, but Jimmy hopes to make a more honest living in the Old West. The two hucksters are captured by a dark wizard named Marzby who lures them in with a plea for help with a knocker. Orville is held prisoner as Jimmy is sent out to find an enchanted knife and bring it back to Marzby within three days. Help isn't coming, and Jimmy doesn't know what's more pesky: shapeshifting varmints or a tenacious girl who refuses to be sent home to her ma. The knife is an evil thing and no one should have their hands on it, but how else is Jimmy going to rescue Orville?

This weird Old West tale was a marvelous adventure. It me laughing with Jimmy's similes and Isobel's

antics, and it had me on the edge of my seat with the thrilling action and thick tension. There were a few twists and turns I didn't see coming. It was just the sort of gritty, supernaturally fun plot I enjoy.

Jimmy is immediately likable. He's loyal, goodhearted, and not afraid of hard work. He can be a wily young man too. Orville is exactly what I imagine a huckster to be like. Slick of tongue, able to talk himself out of most situations. I particularly enjoyed the interaction with Jimmy and the girl, Isobel. She's got the makings of a great hero and huckster herself! Marzby was a despicable villain. The kind I love to hate. I always wondered exactly how much he knew and how he would turn the events into his favor.

Erme Lander says

I bought and read The Black Blade as part of a daisy chain review, it looked entertaining from the blurb, but I wasn't sure quite what to expect. A western style adventure with demonic happenings?!

The voice of Jimmy drew me in right away, earnestly full of his grandma's sayings. The story started quickly and twisted cheerfully from the beginning. The author's voice is lively and entertaining throughout.

The one point I found interesting was that people with strange powers I have no problems with. Red eyes, zombies, masks that possess you – fine. Talking coyotes? ...my brain had to twist a long way to accept it.

I enjoyed the ride through the strange world, but would have liked to have been more invested in the characters, they never felt in huge danger. All in all, a fun light read.

O. D. Book Reviews says

Description: Orville and Jimmy are a couple of hucksters just trying to earn a little (dis)honest money.

Working as a faux clairvoyant, Orville has a knack for reading people to figure out exactly what they want to hear in exchange for a little coin. Jimmy is his faithful friend and assistant who hides behind the curtain adding the special effects that take their act to the next level. One day they are a little too convincing and a mysterious Doctor employs them to help with a supernatural matter. Chasing dollar signs Orville gets himself into a heap of trouble and forces Jimmy on a quest to save everyone involved. The quest is of course for the Black Blade. Set in the wild west with supernatural creatures and a magical blade, this book is a #mustread Weird Western.

In Short: I have never read a book set in the weird west before and I was pleasantly surprised by this book! I loved the magical aspects that were so flawlessly blended into an old west setting and the story was incredibly action-packed, exciting, scary, and fun to read. Jeff Chapman's writing never ceases to amaze me, with just the right amount of suspense and wonderfully crafted characters I was glued to their story.

Pros: The writing is fantastic. I have become a huge fan of Jeff Chapman and would read anything he writes. This book is the perfect length. It is non-stop action and makes for a quick read without leaving anything out. At times I laughed and other times it was scary. Like his other books the language wonderfully matches the time and place of the story. I loved the grandma character who is often quoted by Jimmy. These quotes add humor to tense situations and give you a really good impression of this off-screen character. I also loved the stubborn and brave Isobel. I loved to hate the creative invention of the Pindigo. Think wendigo, then think pig, pretty scary right? The magical elements were not underplayed at all and I really appreciated how diversely and consistently they were used throughout the story. The main bad guy was terrifying but also flawed giving you just the smallest strand of hope for the heroes. I loved the ending it was both satisfying and ominous and it was not a cliffhanger but did make me want to read more. I need to know what happens next and also want to read more about these characters that I have grown so fond of.

Cons: I have no notable issues with this book.

Parent's Guide: Violence, fantasy violence, death, blood. (No sexual content).

Renetta says

This was a wild (west) romp of a read! Not your typical western, which is why I wanted to read it. It has monsters, magic and more. Filled with "my grandma used to say" quotes and funny similes and metaphors, I found myself smiling and laughing through this book.

A couple of con artist hucksters get themselves involved with a shady character who forces Jimmy on a dangerous quest to retrieve an item and save his friend Orville.

This book was a fast paced, clever, and funny adventure with enough danger to keep you intrigued and wanting more. A real page turner as my grandma used to say. (For real! She really did use that one!)

Stuart West says

Yeehaw! Gather round cowpokes, you ain't never seen the ol' wild, weird West as portrayed in Jeff Chapman's *The Black Blade* before! Chapman's first full-length novel is a rollicking, funny, fantastical, spooky romp based around his two lovable "huckster" characters (seen in earlier short stories)--Orville and Jimmy--as they're forced into an epic quest to find the mythical, titular black blade. Along the way, they stumble across numerous, strange critters not of this earth, an evil magician, and a gun-crazy farmer looking to save his wife. The two lead characters share a prickly, amusing relationship (which is more the pity one of them fairly vanishes for a good portion of the book; but that's a nitpick), and the western details, dialogue, settings, characters all ring true. A marvelously entertaining book and recommended. I look forward to more.

Ian Miller says

Something different – a western with supernatural elements. Basically, the story follows Jimmy, who is an apprentice to Orville, a huckster, i.e. someone who basically cheats people out of their hard-earned money, e.g. by fortune telling. The two of them come to the attention of the local doctor, who has a job for them, namely to get rid of a knocker. Orville can't turn down the huge amount of money for this task, even if he knows nothing about knockers, including whether they even exist. Later, Jimmy gets hit by some buckshot. The doctor digs it out the usual way, but he runs his hands over the wound and all is healed. However, the doctor is not a good person, and when he captures four people, he sends two to get the black blade, which involves more supernatural problems.

The book is well written, and the style of the speech is consistent with what the speech of the time might have been. The characters are well-drawn, although there is a problem at the end of the book that could have focused on character but didn't. The action scenes are genuinely attention grabbing, and there is plenty of imagination. Ever heard of a luminous opossum? I had one issue, which I can't explain for fear of spoiling, but the last few pages, which more or less cement in the ending, leave a number of issues "hanging". This is more a novella than a novel, and I would have preferred to see these issues dealt with because in some ways they go to the real heart of how I saw the story. But a reviewer cannot grade on what the story should have

been, in his opinion.

Shelley says

Author's guest post at my blog:

<https://bookfare.blogspot.com/2017/06...>
