



Scratch

Brian Keene , Russell Dickerson (Illustrator)

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Featured Artist: Russell Dickerson

April showers bring May flowers. But as the rain-swollen creeks recede, the residents of one rural town learn that April showers also bring something far worse than destructive floods and property damage. This year, the April showers have brought a cryptozoological nightmare... Scratch.

Bonus Feature:

This special edition also includes a reprint of Nick Mamatas's insightful interview with the author, which originally appeared in Cemetery Dance magazine.

Hardcover Limited Edition of 550 signed and numbered copies bound in full-cloth and Smyth sewn with illustrated endpapers.

Scratch Details

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Author : Brian Keene , Russell Dickerson (Illustrator)

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Geoff says

Scratch is similar in vein to another monster story by Keene called Earthworm Gods. They both start with an unusual rain, and where in Earthworm Gods they are giant worms here in Scratch it is a more believable giant snake. Old Scratch is the name of the giant snake of folklore in Pennsylvania, and he happens to come out of myth and into a rural area of Pennsylvania and starts to wreak havoc. And the story is about a man named Evan recruiting his old neighbor to help out female neighbor and her children across the flooded creek, and what ensues in their rescue attempt.

This was a fun short read that wasn't great in any respects but still had me entertained. I'll read this one again down the road. Of note there is an OLD interview included at the end of the book. It's interesting but a lot of the information is irrelevant because it was done about three years prior.

Billy Vazquez says

Just when I thought Peter Benchley Jaws and Shelley Katz Alligator had scared me out of my mind with fear of nature then Brian Keene tells this great short story about no other than a giant snake.

Mr. Keene sets us in a rural setting in Pennsylvania. A family of three at their country home all of the sudden face the wrath of nature with a torrential storm. But this is the least of their worries, as the rain subsides danger of flooding is evident but what was not expected is that an old ginormous snake will make its way to them. So why is the story so good? Well, we have our protagonist against this snake. Snakes are terrifying animals. Just think of the way they kill and the way they feed. Their fast reactions and slithery movements evokes a feeling of dread and danger. Brian Keene writing made me feel as part of the scenes in the book. I felt I was there witnessing the encounter with this aberration of nature. And was I scared? Oh heck yeah!

This story is part of Cemetery Dance Signature Series, number 7 to be specific. Illustrator Russell Dickerson lavishly draws the illustrations for the book. And as a bonus, you get an interview by Nick Mamatas to the author. Overall, I think it was a quick great read. If you are scared of snakes, you will be terrified by this story and if you are not, I can tell you that after this story you must likely will.

Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says

Another Brian Keene's story I've read this last week.

"Scratch" - was not to my liking. It felt disappointing that this tale didn't developed a bit more on the characters and the monster.

The Second story "Halves" was another thing. I really enjoy this one. For cat lovers this one is a must. I will not say much because it will spoil the story. With only 10 pages it's small but compact. Probably this one if it had more pages would be repetitive.

This is not a book I would recommend. It less than 100 pages for a price of full lightened novel it's too much and don't give much info either on Brian Keene potential or his excellent Mythos.

Curtis says

Brian Keene never disappoints! I have read several books by him. His work speaks for itself.

Scratch is small town horror with an enormous villain. The story is set in a rural Pennsylvania town that is seeing torrential rain for the first time in years. The Susquehanna River crests and the waters begin to rise. Legend has it that a giant snake called "Old Scratch" dwells in the river. The giant snake is hungry, so he goes hunting in the rising water.

Brian Keene creates an excellent setting and a great cast of characters. The main character seems like the average American dad. He's just trying to provide for his wife and kid. He must protect his family from "Old Scratch."

I don't like snakes, so I was on edge the entire story. The scenes are vivid and the storyline is smooth. The ending was great as well. I can still picture "Old Scratch" slithering about.

5/5 stars!

Halves is a creepy bonus story about a cat. If you love cats, then you will love this short story! Halves is a really short read, but it packs a punch.

5/5 stars!

I highly recommend this book!

5/5 stars!★★★★★

Benjamin Uminsky says

Not the worst piece of horror fluff I have ever read, but this story really never rises above the superficial nor does it every become compelling in any way.

SCRATCH is nothing more than a breezy monster/mother nature-attacks-an innocent-family/community-type of story, filled with wooden characters and laced with cringe worthy maudlin reactions by those single dimensional characters.

Keene can be a decent enough genre writer but this one is worth skipping. Likewise, as SCRATCH is part of Cemetery Dance signature series (which is known for highlighting outstanding art to go along with the story), the art work by Russel Dickerson was less than stellar, appearing more like a cheap 3-d rendering of various story scenes. Highly unimpressive all around.

Jonathan Echevarria says

I read Brian Keene's Scratch on the Kindle and it contained a bonus story called Halves with it. Scratch is about a father who (like any good father) wants to be a good parent and husband to his wife. He struggles with many of the fears a man subconsciously faces during his daily life. *"Can I protect my family?"*, *"Am I doing what is best for my kid?"*, *"Can I always provide for them?"*. You can really tell that Brian Keene is channeling his own fears as a dad and as a husband throughout this novella. I would say that is definitely the strong points of this short story. The other half of it is focusing on a gigantic snake called Scratch who is described in such great detail, that you feel the fears and anxiety of the main protagonists. I suppose that Brian's real life fear of snakes really helped with Scratch's description and horrors.

I'm not a big fan of giant animal monster movies unless they were corny like Godzilla or Cloverfield. I never saw the appeal of Jaws or the giant crocodile horror films. I think it was the main protagonist's believability and Brian's fear of snakes that won me over in the end. Apparently this book has minor references to Ghoul, most likely in the way of location or setting. I haven't read Ghoul but I have heard that it is one of his best novels to date.

I give Scratch a four out of five stars. For the price it is offered under it is really a steal. Especially when you consider that his other novella Halves is bundled with it. I have given Halves by itself a five out of five stars. Halves has minor references to his Labyrinth mythology and just like Scratch it's message is really strong and meaningful.

Chris says

3 1/2 Stars.

Sort of a B grade creature feature by Keene. I would probably have given it 4 stars if it was anyone else. Keene is really good so I guess the bar is pretty high for me when it comes to him. Still, for my money one of the best of the new(ish) writers but this is not even close to being one of his best.

Wesley B. Caldwell says

Another great read from Brian Keene.....

This was a great story from Brian, and though it was short, it was awesome as always. There is a bonus story here that is one of my favorites as well, so pick this one up while you can.

Chasity says

Same family different story

This book consisted of two short stories about 2 family's with 2 parents and one kid and o yeah 357. Each story had the same weapon. I had hoped that they wouldn't be so similar to one another so I just placed them as the same family's. Good stories though.

Douglas Castagna says

Another fast paced story that was over too soon. We have a family in jeopardy from a torrential storm that brings with it damaging winds, torrential rains, and something far more sinister. Well drawn characters and great dialogue. The ebook featured another story called Halves which was deliciously evil and short as well. Both stories made for easy reading and well worth the time spent with the brief worlds they offered the reader a glimpse into.

Justin says

If this was listed as a short story I would have given it a 3 stars, it wasn't bad but it wasn't anything special either and there is no way it should have been sold as a novella. The kindle file size on this is 1305 I don't know how many pages or words that is but it is about the typical file size of a novella. The problem is that the story is over at 53% and the rest is a second short story and an excerpt from a novel. I am glad I got it on sale for .99

Kaisersoze says

A perfectly serviceable short story by one of the most dependable voices in modern horror. Sure, it's nothing ground breaking, but it managed to make me squirm. Scratch is presented with another Keene short, Halves, which is arguably better than the story for which this kindle download is named. Recommended for all Keene fans. New readers would be best to start elsewhere to see what this man is truly capable of ...

Gef says

The river that winds up the valley where I live looks like a snake when seen from above, with one oxbow after another, and it has seen its share of strange creatures swimming through its waters. But it's never had something like what Brian Keene has concocted for this story, Scratch.

Evan Fisher is a comic book illustrator and devoted father to his son, Dylan, but his limitations in keeping his family safe are tested when the Susquehanna River floods during the spring. It's not so much the rising waters that creep along his backyard that test his mettle, but the tentacular impossibility he sees on the other side of the river. Old Scratch is supposed to be nothing but folklore, but it's hard for Evan and his neighbor to dismiss what they've seen reach out of those torrential waters.

In quick fashion, Keene captures Evan's fear and resolve when the flood comes. The guy has a knack for taking the most wondrously terrifying creatures in horror and shackling them to our mundane reality. The flood waters ought to be terrifying enough if your child has ever strayed too close to a riverbank, but throw in a slithering monstrosity and what should be cartoonish in some regard feels downright palpable. That said, the ending offered up feels a bit anticlimactic, though there is a piece at the end that spikes the tension right back up.

Along with Scratch, there's a short story called "Halves" that was as comical as it was creepy. If you've ever owned a cat that brought you "gifts" to your door of the recently killed variety, you'll know what I'm talking about. Throw in an afterword from Brian Keene about the stories, and this ebook is a nice little glimpse into the horror master's mind. It might not be the book I point to as a gateway for new readers, but they could certainly do worse when searching out something short and scary to read.

Neil Davies says

Excellent novella. I recently gave up reading the first in a series of apparently popular books (no I'm not saying what) which was fairly well written (I've read a lot worse), had lots of action, creatures, death etc. but just didn't engage me. There was little or no tension and when characters died I really didn't care. Then I read Scratch, also a 'creature' story but there the similarity ends. This short novella is full of tension and when people died, or come close to death, I really cared, even though I'd only met them a few pages earlier. That's what makes Brian Keene such a good writer, and that's why I keep coming back and buying (and reading) his books. This is a quick read but very good. For that matter, the extra short story, Halves, in the kindle edition was very good as well (and I have to admit that sometimes Mr Keene's short stories don't work as well for me as his novellas and novels - but this one did). Worth every penny to get hold of.

Frank says

SCRATCH by Brian Keene is a self published short story eBook. This eBook contains two short stories, Scratch and Halves both with afterwords with the author. These are great reads by one of the foremost names in horror fiction. Perfect for those already familiar with Keene and those who want an inexpensive way to try him on for size. You now have no further excuse for not reading Brian Keene, he is a MUST.
