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The King Of Clayfield: Clayfield, Book 1



Synopsis

On a cold February day in the small town of Clayfield, Kentucky, an unsuspecting and unprepared museum director finds himself in the middle of hell on earth. A pandemic is spreading around the globe, and it's turning most of the residents of Clayfield into murderous zombies. Having no safe haven to which he can flee, the director decides to stick it out near his hometown and wait for the government to send help. But the disease and those infected are not his only concerns. He must also contend with armed gangs, strife within his group, his own lack of skills... and his conscience. There are tough decisions to be made if he is to survive. But if he is smart - and a little lucky - he can do more than survive; he can live like a king.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was a great interpretation of the "what ifs" of a zombie apocalypse! Although I read some other reviews that said the main character and his rag tag group were "stupid", I thought it portrayed them realistically. I mean, come on, if zombies overran the world tomorrow what would you do? If you're anything like me, you'd cling to what you knew before until it was forced into your head that the world is no longer the same. What others call whining and stupidity, I call shock and disbelief. As a rule, my budget does not allow me to buy eBooks that cost more than 3.99 because, to be honest, most of them aren't worth it. That being said, I am buying book #2 right now and the 5.99 price tag is not going to stop me! Thank you Mr. Gregory, I've been looking for a post apocalyptic storyteller like you for a long time! QR

It's been almost a month since I put *The King of Clayfield* by Shane Gregory down, and it's lingered with me all this time. I don't attribute its staying power to any raw emotional experience I had with it, nor do I find its relentless grip in any particular shock or horror. *The King of Clayfield* sticks with me to this day because I've yet to be able to truly pin it down. Certain stories fall clearly within a genre, adhering to established guidelines and rules. *The King of Clayfield* is somewhat unique in that it flows naturally, as if it were grounded in reality instead of someone's imagination. Of course, *The King of Clayfield* has many imaginative and creative elements, but while it isn't strictly an epistolary, it reads almost like a journal. Shane's prose is no-nonsense, written in natural language. At times, it may be reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy. He steps out of the way and lets his character tell the story. What's notable here is that, in my experience with first-person narratives, many writers tend to overdo this. They adopt certain tendencies to attempt to force the voice through. Shane doesn't. The difference is he seems to trust his story and his characters to be interesting rather than trying to make or contrive intrigue. The aspect that interests me the most, though, is that *The King of Clayfield* is almost formless in its presentation. It is anything but formulaic, but it isn't without structure or deliberate momentum. It doesn't lull, but it doesn't force action. It doesn't adhere to the typical "three rising actions, climax, resolution," but it follows a logical pattern of building tension to a powerful and satisfying conclusion. Going into it, I was concerned that it would be too many laundry lists and info dumps. After all, the premise is a story about survival on its most basic level. But the narrative never falls into a bog of details. It is not a guide to surviving the apocalypse. It's a story about an average guy surviving. He learns some things along the way, but he makes plenty of mistakes and bad decisions. On the surface, though, *The King of Clayfield* is not exactly a unique pitch. It's a story about the apocalypse. There's a virus going around, and people are turning into zombies. That said, its heart is found within the characters and following them through some unique situations that the narrative presents them with. There is something that is somewhat unique, however. Without spoiling it, there is a way the characters combat exposure to the virus, and I was skeptical about its biological feasibility. I suspected it was intended to be a metaphor for a common affliction, but I am still unsure about that. I certainly never found it a barrier. On other things I wasn't quite sure about, there is a romantic element and a dip into a love triangle. The themes here were somewhat isolated from the main narrative, but Shane courageously explores them. Throughout much of the story, I felt like exploration was part of the point. Outside of the main plot, there's almost a kind of noise that exists, and that's where I found some interesting ideas, themes, and motifs. Since *The King of Clayfield* seems fully enveloped in this kind of fantasized reality, it works really well. It isn't a

neat-and-tidy narrative, and I loved that. At the same time, I found it measured and deliberate. In many ways, Shane writes with a mature author's mind, giving us the things we need without dwelling on them, but also knowing what his story needs without forcing it. He allows the story and his characters to take him for a ride, but it's like he has a good idea where they're going and how they're going to get there. In this sense, reading *The King of Clayfield* was so interesting because it was less like riding along with the author in the driver's seat and you in the passenger seat. Instead, *The King of Clayfield* puts its characters behind the wheel. You watch from the backseat, and Shane is right there beside you, almost as excited to find out what's going to happen. *The King of Clayfield* presents a challenge to any prospective reader. It's not going to baby you. It's not going to give you what you expect. At the same time, it's not going to confound you or hit you with such twists that you'll be left reeling from the revelation and questioning your whole reality. *The King of Clayfield* is exactly what it presents itself as: a museum curator finds himself in an apocalyptic scenario as a virus sweeps the world, and he must survive. It makes no apologies for straying from convention and leaving the gimmicks at home. *The King of Clayfield* is what it is, and that is to say it's a beautiful, honest journey through one world's end and another's beginning.

The King of Clayfield introduces us to a man who is the curator of a small museum in the town of Clayfield, Kentucky the day the Canton B virus comes to town. The virus essentially fries the brain of people affected by it, turning them into what amounts to zombies. But unlike most zombie apocalypse tales, the author made this plague a bit more varied with the effects of infection. It is airborne, which means that if you are near someone who is infected you can also become infected regardless of bites. An odd way to combat the potential infection is by drinking alcohol. It seems to prevent the virus from taking hold of your brain if you get intoxicated. There are different stages to the infection, with those who die from it coming back and acting more like traditional zombies. Those who are initially infected behave like they are somewhat human, with sexual urges and established pecking orders—they are primitive and violent, but definitely not undead cannibals. Those who die behave more like the traditional undead we are more familiar with. Getting bit doesn't seem to insure death, though it is uncertain whether anyone who dies, regardless of the cause, returns. It was certainly an interesting, a complex set of variables that the author introduces. The story is told in first person and the narrator makes it clear how unprepared he is to survive during the course of the book. In fact, it is a running theme—from the first survivor he meets to everything he goes through, it is a reminder of how little those of us used to modern conveniences know about growing food, staying warm, getting water, hunting, and defending

ourselves. He even jokes that he should collect someone who is Amish on a supply run so they can teach him how to function in a society without electricity and running water. The narrator meets up with several other survivors in his trek through his hometown and surrounding area, including a woman he went to high school with who becomes his closest companion as they face down challenges from both the living and the undead. They search houses, collect supplies, deal with other survivors both friend and foe, all as they are focused on sticking to Clayfield rather than trying to find another place deep in the countryside to hide out from the growing population of the infected and undead. The characters, for the most part, seem believable. The main character comes across as somewhat passive at first and while he is forced to toughen up, he seems to acquiesce to the wishes of Jen, his newfound friend, for most of the story. Jen was not a very likable character. She is territorial and pushy, and the narrator seems to accept this as a matter of course, even when she does her best to push away Sara, a younger survivor who they find and that Jen perceives as a threat to her place in their small group. Jen is erratic and foolish at times, taking risks that are plain stupid. The story is an easy read and again, the characters are believable-reacting in ways that are plausible given their dire circumstances. They were a mixed bag though, and no one leaving me with the urge to root for them. Some of the minor characters, like Brian, were interesting, but weren't along for most of the ride. Jen is incredibly annoying, and how the main character responds to her more annoying still, but this isn't to say it isn't completely plausible. The author does an excellent job making them plausible characters, just not altogether likable. There are two sequels, so the main character, who ranges from timid to rash in his thinking and acting may become someone who I can root for in those novels.

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