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Five Days in May

By Christopher D. Hartpence

Reviewed by Ellen Tanner Marsh, New York Times bestselling author

Fans of Stephen King and Dean R. Koontz have reason to cheer at Christopher D. Hartpence's latest book, *Five Days in May*. Following the lead of these horror genre masters, Hartpence has crafted a chilling tale of ordinary people pursued by supernatural forces; in this case an ancient evil unleashed by the curse of a Cherokee Indian murdered by white men generations before.

Lurking in a remote North Carolina forest, this stalking monster has reaped the Indian's revenge on countless innocent victims—men, women and children alike. Now it has set its sights on someone else: Frank Boyle, a single father intending to spend some quality time with his son by taking a group of his friends camping in the North Carolina mountains for five days.

Having provided chilling glimpses of the evil that lurks in the misty valley where Frank and the boys are headed, Hartpence's warning when the excited campers drive off that, "with one exception, it was the last time any of their parents would see them again," would seem redundant but for his deft gift of foreshadowing. Even though you suspect that the campers are doomed, you can't help plunging ahead to find out what happens. And you can only hope that the "one exception" Hartpence mentioned will be young Danny Aiken, the precocious son of Kevin and Patricia Aiken, who will later be called upon to exhibit extraordinary heroism when Danny and his friends meet head-on with the otherworldly horror waiting for them.

Like Stephen King, Hartpence has a gift for the macabre, and his description of what befalls Frank and the boys in that dark mountain cave is not for the faint of heart. Yet every good horror story should give readers a healthy dose of the creeps, and Hartpence delivers in bloodcurdling style. Furthermore, Hartpence makes skilled use of Koontz's common theme of tapping into the goodness found in people who endure incredible violence and pain. Thus Hartpence manages to pull a subtle heroism out of Danny's parents as they battle to overcome the evil that has claimed their son.

Five Days in May is not your typical horror story with a happy ending. Rather it's a thoughtful work that mixes wrenching horror and dauntless bravery in a finely tuned tale of a couple's love for each other and their son, and of the courage they exhibit as they plan their ultimate redemption.

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About the Author

Chris (known to his friends on the 'net as Velociryx) lives in the sun-kissed, emerald forests of the deep south, and has had a long love affair with writing. Inspiration for his stories and poems comes mostly from the consumption of vast quantities of Tortilla chips smothered in liberal amounts of Conqueso dip, oceans of sweet tea (the drink of choice for every good Southern boy), and his habit of averaging three hours of sleep a night.

Collectively, these elements produce hallucinations more than vivid enough to feed the muse. He can often be found in his home on the 'net (<http://clik.to/renaissance>), lurking in one of any number of Mexican restaurants, or howling at the moon, and can be reached via e-mail at: Velociryx@greatunpublished.com

