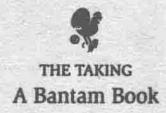


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ACCLAIM FOR

DEAN KOONTZ AND THE TAKING

"The Taking is Koontz's most hair-raising nightmare of a story since Fear Nothing and Seize the Night. This is a slam-bang, all-out thriller . . . but as is always the case when Koontz is in top form, The Taking is also poignant and noble, with heroism, self-sacrifice and redemption as the order of the day. Tightly woven, action-packed and terrifically suspenseful throughout."

—The Flint Journal

"A thrill ride . . . Koontz knows where we keep our bejesus and what it takes to scare it out of us. . . . [He] spins his yarns effortlessly." —New York Daily News

"All of Koontz's classic elements are there for *The Taking*. Koontz, one of the nation's most popular and prolific authors, is equally at home writing horror, science fiction and suspense. In *The Taking*, he handily combines all three. . . . *The Taking* is Dean Koontz's modern-day *The War of the Worlds* . . . the ultimate disaster novel. With cinematic skill, Koontz alternates scenes of unfathomable natural catastrophe with the intimate trials of a main character . . . a narrative more audacious in intent than anything he's attempted to date. The plot is gripping, the pace nonstop and the prose . . . poetic. *The Taking* is surprisingly biblical in scope and spirit."

—Boston Sunday Herald

"Abundant suspense . . . For years, however, Koontz has aimed at more than thrills; he is a novelist of metaphysics and moral reflection. Koontz remains one of the most fascinating of contemporary popular novelists, and this stands as an important effort." —Publishers Weekly

"Opening sequences come no creepier than this one . . .

[a] gripping, blood-curdling, thought-provoking parable."

—Booklist (starred review)

"Koontz hits the ground running with an apocalyptic scenario that will have . . . aficionados begging for more. Despite the grandiose proportions of its premise, the novel tells the story of individual endeavor. . . . Mixing a hair-raising plot with masterly storytelling and a subtle network of well-placed literary allusions, this deservedly popular author has written a tour de force. Highly recommended." —Library Journal

"Genre-bending . . . Koontz's use of original metaphors and similes . . . gives his story a depth rarely found in such tales. He is showing us an ultimate battle between good and evil as only Koontz can. The Taking is an awesome read that showcases the talents of the modern master of suspense." —Tulsa World

"The great scary filmmakers, from Hitchcock to Shyamalan, can scare us and make us think, but they are not as effective as the really scary novelists. The Taking is creepy to the nth degree. Very, very clever . . . And the ending is a good twist. Koontz may like to scare readers, but he also likes to charm them. He succeeds at both efforts with The Taking." —San Jose Mercury News

"The novels of Dean Koontz, one of the modern masters of the supernatural thriller, appeal to a wide range of readers. His fertile imagination has created some truly memorable stories, but none is as spellbinding as *The Taking*. Don't even think you'll be able to walk away from *The Taking* once you begin reading. After the first couple of chapters, Koontz owns you until you reach the final page!" —*Register-Pajaronian* (CA)

"The opening pages of *The Taking* are as scary as anything Poe ever crafted. Koontz has the rare ability to mix despair and hope in almost equal measure."

—East Valley Tribune (Mesa, AZ)

"Dean Koontz has always been a master of plot, dialogue, and description. As gifted a writer as Koontz is, he's a better storyteller. The blood of the shaman and chronicler courses through his veins, as he conjures up stories of decent people placed in terrible circumstances. His theme centers on the Grand Romance with its temptations, love, and the struggle against evil. If Koontz tells us anything it is that we are accountable for the choices we make, and one way or another, the bill's coming due. Fast-paced and dark . . . Koontz knows we live in a world where evil delights in justifying itself, where materialism has become an end in itself, where the gray half-light of moral ambiguity supersedes moral verities, and where mankind has turned its collective face away from God. What will become of such a society? The Taking brings into question the ultimate denouement of mankind. Koontz requires us to examine the condition of our kind and there is much to answer for. The Taking is by far his finest effort, a book with depth and intrinsic worth. He has challenged modernity's contemptuous suggestion that the past and the transcendent have no meaning. . . . The Taking is classic literature and deserves a place on the bookshelf beside Orwell's 1984, Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, and Berry's Jayber Crow." —California Literary Review

"As if bestselling writer Dean Koontz needs any help, his latest novel shows influences from H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, Dante's *Inferno*, and the stories of H. P. Lovecraft, not to mention *The Wasteland* and other T. S. Eliot works. . . . Koontz effectively merges science fiction and horror conventions with Judeo-Christian traditions."

—Rocky Mountain News

"The amazing Koontz hits some brilliantly stylish pages . . . those among his best since 1995's Intensity . . . [a] superb opening that will keep many deeply riveted for the distance." —Kirkus Reviews

"A hard rain is falling on a tiny mountain town, and since it's Dean Koontz's *The Taking* we're talking about, it can only mean one thing: Brace yourself for a totally awesome full-bore alien invasion!" —Entertainment Weekly

"Dean Koontz [is] an undisputed master of words. . . . The Taking draws one in, revealing itself as a novel not so much of horror as of revelations . . . it deals with hope. The Taking left me with goose bumps of the good kind and pondering the ending long after I closed it for the last time. A definite must-read for Koontz fans."—Bookreporter.com

"The sense of foreboding begins in the first chapter and is almost unrelenting as the book progresses. Koontz's ability to evoke terror remains unsurpassed."

—Oklahoman

"Taking nightmarish fears to the next notch, Koontz delivers his creepiest and most horrific story yet. This apocalyptic thriller is truly haunting." —RT Bookclub

"Spooky." -New York Post

"[An] X-Files style thriller that . . . will climb bestseller lists like King Kong scurrying up the Empire State Building." —Denver Post

"A shivery, fun read . . . satisfyingly hair-raising [with] an imaginative revelation at the end."

—The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN)

"Chilling . . . Koontz at his best. Readers will never look at rain the same way." —Midwest Book Review

BOOKS BY DEAN KOONTZ

Relentless * Your Heart Belongs to Me * Odd Hours Darkest Evening of the Year * The Good Guy Brother Odd . The Husband . Forever Odd . Velocity Life Expectancy . The Taking . Odd Thomas . The Face By the Light of the Moon . One Door Away From Heaven From the Corner of His Eye . False Memory . Seize the Night Fear Nothing • Mr. Murder • Dragon Tears • Hideaway Cold Fire • The Bad Place • Midnight • Lightning Watchers . Strangers . Twilight Eyes . Darkfall Phantoms * Whispers * The Mask * The Vision The Face of Fear * Night Chills * Shattered The Voice of the Night . The Servants of Twilight The House of Thunder . The Key to Midnight The Eyes of Darkness * Shadowfires * Winter Moon The Door to December * Dark Rivers of the Heart Icebound * Strange Highways * Intensity * Sole Survivor Ticktock * The Funhouse * Demon Seed

DEAN KOONTZ'S FRANKENSTEIN

Book One: Prodigal Son * with Kevin J. Anderson

Book Two: City of Night * with Ed Gorman

Book Three: Dead and Alive

This book is dedicated to Joe Stefko:
great drummer, publisher of exquisite special editions,
dog-lover . . . three virtues that guarantee Heaven.
The bad feet can be overlooked.

"When you're alone in the middle of the night and you wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright . . ."

-T.S. Eliot, Fragment of an Agon

THE TAKING



PART ONE

"In my beginning is my end."

THE TARRE

-T. S. Eliot, East Coker

A FEW MINUTES PAST ONE O'CLOCK IN THE morning, a hard rain fell without warning. No thunder preceded the deluge, no wind.

The abruptness and the ferocity of the downpour had the urgent quality of a perilous storm in a dream.

Lying in bed beside her husband, Molly Sloan had been restless before the sudden cloudburst. She grew increasingly fidgety as she listened to the rush of rain.

The voices of the tempest were legion, like an angry crowd chanting in a lost language. Torrents pounded and pried at the cedar siding, at the shingles, as if seeking entrance.

September in southern California had always before been a dry month in a long season of predictable drought. Rain rarely fell after March, seldom before December.

In wet months, the rataplan of raindrops on the roof had sometimes served as a reliable remedy for insomnia. This night, however, the liquid rhythms failed to lull her into slumber, and not just because they were out of season.

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For Molly, sleeplessness had too often in recent years been the price of thwarted ambition. Scorned by the sandman, she stared at the dark bedroom ceiling, brooding about what might have been, yearning for what might never be.

By the age of twenty-eight, she had published four novels. All were well received by reviewers, but none sold in sufficient numbers to make her famous or even to guarantee that she would find an eager publisher for the next.

Her mother, Thalia, a writer of luminous prose, had been in the early years of an acclaimed career when she died of cancer at thirty. Now, sixteen years later, Thalia's books were out of print, her mark upon the world all but erased.

Molly lived with a quiet dread of following her mother into obscurity. She didn't suffer from an inordinate fear of death; rather, she was troubled by the thought of dying before achieving any lasting accomplishment.

Beside her, Neil snored softly, oblivious of the storm.

Sleep always found him within a minute of the moment when he put his head on the pillow and closed his eyes. He seldom stirred during the night; after eight hours, he woke in the same position in which he had gone to sleep—rested, invigorated.

Neil claimed that only the innocent enjoyed such perfect sleep.

Molly called it the sleep of the slacker.

Throughout their seven years of marriage, they had conducted their lives by different clocks.

She dwelled as much in the future as in the present, envisioning where she wished to go, relentlessly mapping the path that ought to lead to her high goals. Her strong mainspring was wound tight.

Neil lived in the moment. To him, the far future was next week, and he trusted time to take him there whether or not he planned the journey.

They were as different as mice and moonbeams.

Considering their contrasting natures, they shared a love that seemed unlikely. Yet love was the cord that bound them together, the sinewy fiber that gave them strength to weather disappointment, even tragedy.

During Molly's spells of insomnia, Neil's rhythmic snoring, although not loud, sometimes tested love almost as much as infidelity might have done. Now the sudden crash of pummeling rain masked the noise that he made, giving Molly a new target upon which to focus her frustration.

The roar of the storm escalated until they seemed to be inside the rumbling machinery that powered the universe.

Shortly after two o'clock, without switching on a light, Molly got out of bed. At a window that was protected from the rain by the overhanging roof, she looked through her ghostly reflection, into a windless monsoon.

Their house stood high in the San Bernardino Mountains, embraced by sugar pines, knobcone pines, and towering ponderosas with dramatic fissured bark.

Most of their neighbors were in bed at this hour.