



The Beast Within

Edward Levy

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A fast-paced horror story. The Beast Within is a classic horror tale guaranteed to haunt your dreams.

Prepare to meet the beast within. A lonely wife cheats. A brutal husband gets revenge. A not-so-innocent stranger hears a cellar door scrape shut—and begins 20 years of indescribable horror, chained in total darkness, feeding on live rats and human flesh, becoming himself the nightmare creature that lurks within us all...

The Beast Within Details

Date : Published December 1st 2000 by Authors Choice Press (first published October 1st 1981)

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Author : Edward Levy

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From Reader Review The Beast Within for online ebook

Jason Vedder says

Found this at a rummage sale in the 80's. Sleazy as the movie it inspired

Eddie Whitlock says

Why did I get this book? My god, I keep asking myself that. I think I thought it was a different author. Ah, well.

I cannot believe it gets some good ratings. It is an awful mishmash of elements that struggles to be a horror story.

It begins with a crazed religious fellow who abuses his wife who has an affair with a traveling salesman. The crazed fellow kills the wife and locks the salesman in the basement for a decade or so, turning him into a mindless killing machine. Or a werewolf.

So. The werewolf rapes a woman and is killed by her husband.

And then the woman has a baby and the baby grows up to be a werewolf.

Or something.

And then more ridiculous stuff happens.

Jesus.

Terry West says

A classic and gory turn on lycanthropy. The story focuses on a psychologically-driven monster created by a sexual assault of pure evil. Do not take the movie based on this novel as the story presented in these pages. There is only a vague resemblance. The Beast Within is one of my favorite horror novels and it is giddily gory and well-paced. I have tried to track down Levy and the man has seemingly fallen off of the planet. I will take the opportunity to personally thank him here. The Beast Within was one of the works that turned me on to writing horror. Bravo, sir.

Joanna says

My #1 favorite book! I read cover to cover in one day. Then I re-read it two weeks later, again in one day. Great book!

Dan Drapak says

I really enjoyed reading this book. The story moves along nicely , not a bunch of "fill in" crap. Gets to the point. Keep In mind This Is A Fiction book so you have to use your imagination or just go with the story and accept it.

Eunice says

I originally posted this review on my blog.

Wow, so where do I start? First off, How did Edward Levy not raise in the ranks with Steven King? Seriously, this book was dark and twisted. It was an interesting take on lycanthrope. Warning, this book does have rape scenes in them. the book spans approximately 20 years and it does it in a way that makes. It starts off with Farmer Scruggs. He was by far the evilest man, and is what set this entire story into motion. He was an elderly man who pretty much purchased a wife (she was 19) to serve as a maid pretty much. He isolates her from her family and she is NEVER allowed to go into the town. So she is in this home by herself with only one dress...you read that correctly. He only allowed her one dress and she could only wash it when he was in town because he would have flipped out if he saw her naked. Seriously, they never ever have sex because he believes it is a sin. And a couple years of being together she asks him to have a baby....well he punches her because clearly she has to be possessed by the devil for thinking such things.

Not much longer after this a young traveling bible salesman ends up on their farm because his car (which just started being made) broke down. And let's just say that while Farmer Scruggs may have had issues sleeping with his wife but this salesman did not! Scruggs finds his wife having sex with the Salesman and knocks out the man. Later on he wakes up chained in their dirt cellar and admits to setting his wife on fire until she admitted that they were in leagues with the devil! He then throws the charred wife down with the salesman so that he would have something to eat. Something TO EAT! Scruggs is insane! To make matters worse he literally keeps this man in the root cellar for 15+ years. The man pretty much goes feral and only escapes because Scruggs had a heart attack, fell down the stairs, the guy eats him, and it wasn't until he was starving again that he pulled on this chains and wood (finally rotted) gave out.

He then goes into the woods, finds a woman, knocks her out, rapes her and then gets bit by a snake and dies alone in a cave. But that was only the FIRST part of the story! The woman gets pregnant but believes it to be her husbands baby. They raise the baby and when he is 6 years old he starts having these dreams and feeling at night. Here comes the whole spin on lycanthrope....At night the beast within him takes over and he escapes from their home and goes on a killing rampage. He kills local farm animals and when his parents find out they do everything they can to help him, including caging him in his room. The book goes on and jumps to when he is 13 and his first sexual arousal which summoned up that beast. Then it jumps again to when he is older. At this point you find out that the beast within was still coming out at night but he was hiding it better. That is until he started killing humans and raped a woman. I won't go any further because I do not want to spoil the book for anyone, but the ending was fantastic.

Pros:

- It is horror at its finest. You will feel uncomfortable at times because of the story and what you are reading.

•The characters all seem like real people who are trying to do the best that they can and genuinely believe they are doing the right thing. Even evil Scruggs believed he was doing the right thing....which is insane, but he really did think he had the devil trapped.

Cons:

•For me there were parts that were just really upsetting, but I guess that is the point. So maybe that isn't a really con.

Overall:

This book is a must read for anyone that hungers for a great horror book. You will be brought into the mind of a mad man, a creature that is no longer a man, and the mind of a young man trying to balance the two. You will find yourself hoping that things turn out ok, but they never really do. It is just one horrible event happening after the other and you will not want to put the book down. Definitely a must read!!!

Mark R. says

I got quite a kick out of this one. Mike Buozis and I are reaching the end of our October-to-June werewolf-themed discussion group, and, unless the last couple change my mind, I'm going to go ahead and say this is the best book we've read in this series.

I've found that, as with the film world, werewolf representation in literature isn't quite where it could be. There are more good ideas and scenes than there are fully realized novels.

This one's pretty good, though. A very fast-paced read that first makes the reader think it's about a guy trapped in the basement of a religious nut, then switches gears, and then switches gears once more, before settling on the story's real protagonist: a teenager afflicted with psychological lycanthropy.

This is the first book I've read dealing with this sort of werewolfery, the werewolf never changing into an actual beast--but doing some fairly serious damage nonetheless.

Danielle Sandidge says

I picked this book up on a whim and was immediately told I needed to read it sooner rather than later since I live wedged in the setting of this twisted tale. This is a classic human horror story on level with Jack Ketchum and Ira Levin. I was hooked at the prologue and finished it in one fevered sitting.

I love that the story spans so many years and pleased that it felt true to the area.

A must read!!!

Robert Beveridge says

Edward Levy, *The Beast Within* (Berkley, 1981)

The Beast Within is the book that should have made Edward Levy a household name on a par with Stephen King and... well, okay, in 1981 Stephen King was really the only household name in horror. But the King was in one of his slumps, major presses were champing at the bit to sign AAA-league writers to produce the Next Big Thing. Well, Berkley already had Edward Levy, and here was the manuscript that was going to dethrone the horror master.

All well and good, and to Berkley's credit, they didn't handle the publicity all that badly. But then it was optioned for film...

If you've had the misfortune of seeing the atrocity that was Philippe Mora's 1982 film of the same name, be assured that what you saw was not, in any way, what Edward Levy actually wrote. (One wag, in a review of the film version of *The Beast Within*, called it *The Script Without*. Indeed.) The following description of the novel, if you're unlucky enough to actually remember the movie, will sound completely unfamiliar.

The scene opens in some past time. Say, sixty years ago, but in the rural area where the beginning of the story takes place, it might as well be six hundred years ago. A woman has been trapped in a loveless, arranged marriage with a Christian fundamentalist who makes Pat Robertson look like a godless heathen. A traveling Bible salesman (yes! Really!) shows up at the door, and you've all heard this joke a thousand times. Well, at least until the farmer catches them and chains the Bible salesman in his basement for years, treating him like an animal, until he actually becomes one. Levy sets the two men up against one another, one devolving, the other already devolved. These fifty pages (the fifty, of course, the filmmakers decided to cut out first) are some of the best writing in any eighties horror novel I've read (and I've read hundreds of them).

In any case, after the fundamentalist's death (by natural causes), the beast finally has a chance to escape. Now, we all know he's oversexed, and you know how sailors are after they've been on a ship for a year? Well, this guy's been in the basement a lot longer, and when you've had to eat off the floor (with a rather unsavory menu) for a long time, you tend to lose some of the social graces. Let's just say his escape and subsequent actions are not pretty, but they do produce a son, Michael MacCleary. All well and good. At least, until Michael reaches adolescence and becomes daddy's boy...

The Beast Within was the first novel I read where the setup took longer than the actual action, and I couldn't care less. After that first fifty-page whack to the head, Levy uses Carolyn (Michael's mother)'s pregnancy and Michael's early years solely to build suspense, taking up well over half the book's full length, and he does so wonderfully. By the time you get to Michael's teen years, the book would have to fall off a cliff to be bad. And it never does (certainly not to the "we had a few thousand extra in the special effects budget" way the film does). Levy takes the setup and delivers a climax that, well, let's say if the rest of the book were plausible, the climax would be the most plausible way to resolve things. But you suspended disbelief when you realized the first part of the book was going to be based on a bad joke, right? You should have. If you did, *The Beast Within* is one of the most rip-roaring horror novel rides you are ever likely to take. Sits on the short shelf, with Russo's *Living Things*, Trachtman's *Disturb Not the Dream*, King's *Pet Sematary*, and a very few other novels as one of the best horror novels of the eighties. It's an old, and very overused, cliché. But really, you don't want to finish this one late on a dark and stormy night. **** ½

Mark Mancini says

A brutal reimagining of the werewolf mythos set in the backwoods of Arkansas. I loved it!

Keith Chawgo says

I picked up this book as I am a fan of the classic cult film with the same name. After reading this book, I can assure you that this book is far superior to the film. Levy builds tension and story to a very readable level making all the characters three dimensional.

It starts out in the 20's and works its way up to late 50's and the style and mood are captured fantastically by Levy. The home grown whimsical story telling works well against its American Gothic setting lending itself to a good yarn and setting itself to be an excellent American horror classic.

The Beast Within is well worth a read and very enjoyable page turner as well. This is highly recommended and feel that if you are a true horror fan, this is one novel not to be missed.

The only bad thing I can say is that I would really like to read another book by this author. He has the potential of becoming one of my favourites based on this book alone.

Jackie says

This is one of the creepiest books of all times and has been the stuff of nightmares for me for years--the traveling salesman chained in the basement by a madman, the cheating wife's corpse fed to him, the inevitable escape and reign of terror.....the story lingers still.

Other books/stories on my list of "lingering creeps":

It by Stephen King (I didn't have a problem with clowns until this book, and now all the painted faces at Cirque du Soleil make every hair on my body stick up!)

American Psycho by Bret Easton Ellis (I actually go out of my way to NOT work the nights when Ellis is signing at the store--dark and crazy things live in that man's head and I just don't want to be anywhere near him.)

The Monkey's Paw by E.A. Poe Made me afraid of the knock on the door!

Hannibal by Thomas Harris (the dining scene!)

Hannibal Rising by Thomas Harris (the soup!)

Rosemary's Baby by Ira Levin (over 40 years of inspiring nightmares!)

Jenna says

The way in which I happened across this book is a funny story in and of itself. Over the summer me and family were camping, and the camp store had a box of free books. My brother who is ten saw this book but it had no jacket, and therefore no description. My brother being ten thought the title sounded awesome and my dad thinking it was a silly children's monster book let him have it. My mom asked me to double check that it was age appropriate so I looked on goodreads and after reading a few reviews realized this was anything but a children's tale, and enraged the beast within my brother when my parents took it away. But I digress.

I found the book on my shelf a week ago and decided to give it a try, and was not disappointed. This book though very far fetched was one of the creepiest stories I've read (especially the first few chapters). It's a quick easy read for those who don't mind a lot of blood and gore.

Nandakishore Varma says

This story creeped me out totally when I first read it - and I can even now, after a gap of more than 30 years, remember it almost scene by scene: which speaks for its power.

A philandering salesman seduces the frustrated wife of a puritanical madman, who discovers the transgression. He chains the salesman up in the cellar, tortures his wife to death, and feeds the corpse to his prisoner. Imprisoned Jimmy Connors is forced to exist on rats and vermin in the cellar for twenty years, when the accidental death of his captor frees him. He has almost regressed to a beast. Before his death by snakebite, the salesman gets the chance to rape a girl (Carolyn McCleary) and to pass on his (regressed?) genes...

The author has created this highly improbable scenario to ask us the question: is there a beast lurking within us all, looking only for a way to get out?

Michael, Connors' misbegotten son, takes off from where his father left-off. As he grows up, his sexual hunger is inextricably mixed up with his hunger for blood. The climax, when it comes, is shattering.

Edward Levy has done a masterful job of interweaving horror and sex, so that this novel is at times positively erotic (at least, for twisted psychos like me!). And the story stays with you long after you finish it - for me, the true hallmark of a good horror story.

Pat Devlin says

I loved how the story began with the old travelling salesman, farmer's daughter joke. Then it just spirals into a twisted tale of revenge and terror.

The tale of the boy growing to a young man, and the subtle innuendos of puberty increasing his feral nature worked for me. Falling in love and lust after the school slut helped show the duality of his nature.

