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NOS4A2: A Novel



A NOVEL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JOE HILL

PERFORMED BY KATE MULGREW



Synopsis

Audie Award Finalist, Solo Narration - Female, 2014 Joe Hill, the acclaimed, award-winning author of the New York Times best sellers *Heart-Shaped Box* and *Horns*, plunges you into the dark side of imagination with a thrilling novel of supernatural suspense that will have you flinching at shadows and checking the rearview mirror again and again....

NOS4A2 Don't slow down Victoria McQueen has an uncanny knack for finding things: a misplaced bracelet, a missing photograph, answers to unanswerable questions. When she rides her bicycle over the rickety old covered bridge in the woods near her house, she always emerges in the places she needs to be. Vic doesn't tell anyone about her unusual ability, because she knows no one will believe her. She has trouble understanding it herself. Charles Talent Manx has a gift of his own. He likes to take children for rides in his 1938 Rolls-Royce Wraith with the vanity plate NOS4A2. In the Wraith, he and his innocent guests can slip out of the everyday world and onto hidden roads that lead to an astonishing playground of amusements he calls Christmasland. Mile by mile, the journey across the highway of Charlie's twisted imagination transforms his precious passengers, leaving them as terrifying and unstoppable as their benefactor. And then comes the day when Vic goes looking for trouble...and finds her way, inevitably, to Charlie. That was a lifetime ago. Now, the only kid ever to escape Charlie's unmitigated evil is all grown up and desperate to forget. But Charlie Manx hasn't stopped thinking about the exceptional Victoria McQueen. On the road again, he won't slow down until he's taken his revenge. He's after something very special - something Vic can never replace. As a life-and-death battle of wills builds her magic pitted against his - Vic McQueen prepares to destroy Charlie once and for all...or die trying....

Joe Hill's acclaimed works of fiction, *Horns*, *Heart-Shaped Box*, and *20th Century Ghosts*, have already earned him international acclaim. With **NOS4A2**, this outstanding novelist - "one of America's finest horror writers" (Time magazine); "a major player in 21st-century fantastic fiction" (Washington Post) - crafts his finest work yet. Disturbing, mesmerizing, and full of twisting thrills, Hill's phantasmagoric, devilishly playful masterpiece is a terrifying high-octane ride.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the fun things about reading a lot of horror novels is watching the faces of your more well-adjusted friends as you explain, straight-faced, the premise of a book you just enjoyed. When I say that I just finished a great book about a vampire Rolls-Royce Wraith that sucks the life out of children and keeps them trapped forever in a Christmas-themed fantasy world, responses range from polite disinterest to something like self-righteous indignation (the latter reaction generally coming from friends that would list Ulysses as a favorite novel). When I explain this to a horror fan, though, I anticipate a slight widening of the eyes, and an enthusiastic response -- possibly followed by a trip to Wikipedia. This is not because the people that read horror novels are idiots or have low standards. Quite the opposite -- it's because we know that good writing -- the gift of storytelling, the gift of execution -- can override a ridiculous sounding premise, and we take immense joy in seeing this being done successfully. There's almost a sense of rebellion in this process -- take THAT, Flaubert! -- and a great deal of fun. And I imagine that Joe Hill had -quite- a bit of fun while writing this monster of a novel. He overcomes the relative weakness of a far fetched plot idea by making great use of his strengths: a natural gift for characterization and a large, welcoming imagination that birthed an interesting new mythos. Taken as a whole, it feels as if we are witnessing something very exciting: a writer growing in confidence, skill, and discovering his own unique voice to craft what is rightfully being called a breakout novel.

Joe Hill called NOS4A2 his "senior PhD thesis on horror," about a very bad man with a very bad car". Manx is a 140 year old man who drives around in a 1938 Rolls-Royce Wraith with the vanity plate NOS4A2 and kidnaps children, taking them to Christmas-land. He entreaties helpers as needed to "take care" of loose ends (like parents). This is a truly horrifying tale that grabs you in the first chapter and doesn't let go until the end - at which point you're almost guaranteed to have a nightmare or two. Through all 700 plus pages Hill does not waste a single word. Each character is

well thought out and presented; each a solid building block in this fascinating and chilling tale. To me Bing Partridge, who is the chosen assistant in our timeline, is the most disturbing character in the story as he is not deliberately malevolent. Victoria, Vic, the Brat is the young lady hero who is a "finder" and can move through the inscapes thus putting herself in harm's way. There is always a toll; a price for our actions and passing into another place/time causes Vic to become very ill the longer she remains "over there". When Vic rides her bike through the no-longer-existent, rotting covered bridge and meets a punk styled librarian, she learns of Maggie's talent for reading impending events through manipulation of Scrabble tiles. Though Victoria is warned to stay away from the Rolls Royce Wraith it becomes like a magnet drawing her closer and closer. Christmas-land holds a horrible end for the children whose bodies are never found since they are ordained to live there forever. It becomes Vic's destiny to put an end to Manx, the vampire of the chi, who does not drink blood but takes from his victims something far more precious.

This is certainly well-written, and intense in chunks; Joe Hill does a good job at creating his main character, Vic McQueen. Some of the other things about the book that did not work for me may very well be considered pluses by other readers. I didn't dislike this book - it was 'okay.' But there's already plenty of positive reviews by other readers that really enjoyed it; I'll focus on my criticisms so potential readers can see another side. Mostly, I think "NOS4A2" is a tight, concise, intense 300-page thriller watered-down over 700 pages. It's written like an epic, but it lacks an epic scope - the book's length extends conversations and scenes, but often without growing the story. Unlike a book I excitedly blaze through, I really felt the length. There's only four main characters (and two important supporting characters), and for all the book's length, only Vic McQueen gets a real in-depth treatment. Even the two villains, while a lot of time is spent with them, are never much more than evil people - again, there's limited scope to the story. It doesn't feel like there's anything at stake - one side's good, one side's bad, and that's pretty much it. It's a very long chase story. A comparison might be to Justin Cronin's equally long "The Passage," which gives his villains a much deeper backstory. So you're not "rooting" for Cronin's villains, but he provides a more three-dimensional struggle. But - Joe Hill is a great writer, no doubt. In individual scenes he does a very good job of conveying the intensity needed in a good thriller. And, when the book starts picking up speed at about Page 400 it moves rapidly to a decently satisfying conclusion.

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