Locked Doors: A Thriller (Andrew Thomas) by Blake Crouch

Seven years ago, suspense novelist Andrew Thomass life was shattered when he was framed for a series of murders. The killers victims were unearthed on Andrews lakefront property, and since he was wanted by the FBI, Andrew had no choice but to flee and to create a new identity. Andrew does just that in a cabin tucked away in the remote wilderness near Haines Junction, Yukon. His only link to society is by e-mail, through which he learns that all the people he ever loved are being stalked and murdered. Culminating in the spooky and secluded Outer Banks of North Carolina, the paths of Andrew Thomas, a psychotic named Luther Kite, and a young female detective collide. Locked Doors is a novel of blistering suspense that will scare you to death.

My Personal Review:
LOCKED DOORS is Blake Crouchs second novel; his first, DESERT PLACES, somehow got by me, an error that I will begin correcting later this afternoon. In doing my homework for this review, I noticed that the reviews of his debut novel were mixed. Dont let that keep you from reading this sophomore effort.

I began reading LOCKED DOORS at 10:00 p.m. on a Monday evening, and kept reading until I was too tired to hold the book properly. Crouch quite simply is a marvel. He changes perspective, points of view, and tense at whim, challenging you to hang on and ride with him. And its easy to do. Hes so good youll want to hug him because you love him or smack him because youre jealous; sometimes you want to do both, simultaneously.

Ill give you an example. LOCKED DOORS involves, among other things, a gentleman named Luther Kite who is as dangerous and fearsome as anyone you could meet. One of the best passages in the book concerns a visit Kite pays to a Waffle House, where he orders pancakes. You know that either itll turn out okay or hell be painting the walls, but youre not sure
which. I guarantee you though that if you read LOCKED DOORS you'll visit a Waffle House, just once, to see if Luther Kite is there. You won't be able to resist; Crouch's descriptive powers are that finely honed. Then there's another scene, darn near perfect, where Kite goes into a Wal-Mart...

But I'm getting ahead of myself here. LOCKED DOORS nicely summarizes DESERT PLACES, telling the story of bestselling thriller writer Andrew Thomas. Thomass idyllic existence, consisting of money, a modicum of fame, and a comfortable residence in Davidson, North Carolina, is shattered when he's framed for multiple murders by his fraternal twin brother Orson and the aforementioned Mr. Kite (and yes, if you're a Beatles aficionado, there may be a link), causing him to flee for his life. At the beginning of the novel --- several identity changes and location switches later --- Thomas is living an anonymous, quiet, and isolated life in Haines Junction, Yukon, when Kite begins a horrific killing spree that targets everyone that Thomas ever cared for. Believing that the horror in his life was buried by his new identity, Thomas is drawn back to his old world as he leaves his self-imposed solitude and puts himself onto, and into, Kite's path.

Violet King, a homicide detective of quiet but deep and abiding faith, is put in charge of the investigation of what is believed to be Thomass new string of murders. She soon finds herself on a collision course with both Thomas and Kite. Meanwhile, a hapless, would-be writer named Horace Boone has stumbled onto Thomass identity. Boone, who suspects, correctly, that Thomas is going to pursue Kite and bring his insane killing spree to an end, follows Thomas with the hope of turning his eyewitness account into a bestseller. Kite has a plan of his own: luring Thomas out of hiding so that Kite might exact a twisted, long-simmering revenge upon him.

LOCKED DOORS is as good as anything I've read all year, a stay-up-all-night thriller that will have you chewing your fingers down to the nub even as you're reading its last paragraph. Highest possible recommendation.

--- Reviewed by Joe Hartlaub

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