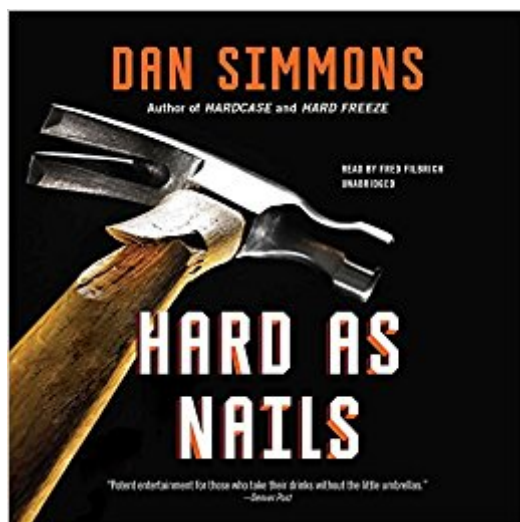


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Hard As Nails (Joe Kurtz Series, Book 3)



Synopsis

Ex-private investigator Joe Kurtz's survival is on the line when an ambush leaves him badly wounded. His profession has ensured no shortage of enemies, so narrowing down the suspects isn't easy. But Kurtz knows who's at the head of his list: Angelina Farino Ferrara, the lethal beauty who leads the Farino crime family, and her mob rival, Toma Gonzaga. Strangely, each would rather hire Kurtz than fire at him. Someone's causing trouble beneath the gray skies of western New York, and it's drawn the notice of the mobs and the cops. Kurtz is caught in the middle along with the rest of them, and no one knows who's tightening the vise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After last year's well-received *Hard Freeze*, Simmons stumbles with this disappointing mishmash, the latest entry in his series featuring ex-con-turned-PI Joe Kurtz. The book opens promisingly enough with a (literal) bang: "On the day he was shot in the head, things were going strangely well for Joe Kurtz.... Later, he told himself that he should have known that the universe was getting ready to readjust its balance of pain at his expense." The shooting leaves Kurtz with the headache of a lifetime and a female probation officer on life support. As if that weren't enough, Kurtz has to deal with Toma Gonzaga, the gay don who owes him a debt in blood. On top of that, someone is killing heroin addicts in Buffalo and hauling away the bodies. And on top of that, a serial killer known as the Artful Dodger (why do fictional serial killers always have colorful names?) launches a bizarre plot. There's more, much more, leading to a climax that's well-nigh incomprehensible. Any one, or

two, of these plots would have made for a suspenseful mystery. Why Simmons insists on cramming them all into a 288-page novel is a mystery in itself. Surely he can't lack the courage of his fictional convictions? Unfortunately, it seems that way, and with so much going on, the novel lapses into a welter of absurdities. One can only hope for better things from this talented writer and Joe Kurtz in the future. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In his third outing, hard-luck Buffalo PI Joe Kurtz is back in the wringer, and the versatile Simmons cranks it for all its worth. The ever sardonic Joe is slapped around, shot in the neck and back, precipitated down a ziggurat, and leaned on from every angle by Mafioso (amorous and otherwise), cops (ditto), hit men, an arms dealer, a drug kingpin and his cadre, and a ghastly and prolific psycho killer known as "the Dodger," unleashed by some shadowy Fagin on the world to treble the body count. All of which would be plenty to account for his searing migraines, never mind being shot in the head in chapter 1. With the exception of some sloppy backstory, the plot moves along well, although the uneasy marriage of gritty crime and macabre melodrama may leave some hard-boiled fans balking at baroque excesses worthy of James Patterson. In sum, a nice, dark, all-purpose thriller with some of the appeal of Mike Hammer, Parker or Burke, and all of the fun of Mac Bolan, Executioner. David Wright Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Love the protagonist. A real anti-hero. I hope Simmons does some new stories with him.

Please write more Kurtz novels! He is the biggest bad ass! I thought Jack Reacher was tough but Joe could take him!

I am a big Dan Simmons fan - he is by far my favorite author and he has captivated me for many years. From 'Summer of Night' through 'Ilium', he masters genres like a pro. The Joe Kurtz series is a wonderful idea, and I enjoyed the first 2 books in the series a lot. However, with 'Hard as Nails', Simmons stumbles. I found quite a few plot holes and grammatical errors as I read the book, which I normally overlook, or (quite honestly) tend not to notice. However, when Simmons refers to the character Rigby King as "Ridley" at one point, I have to say I was a little concerned with my favorite author. Perhaps he rushed the book or perhaps he didn't have a good editor. Nonetheless there were a couple of points where his narrative contradicted what happened previously. It dragged me

back to reality, and spoiled the book for me. Also, SPOILER ALERT, if you read the 2nd book in the Kurtz series, there is a very similar resolution at the end of the novel. Kurtz' ass is saved by the exact same character who saved him in book 2. Repetition of plot resolutions do not amuse me! It felt forced, and even though it does not technically qualify, it felt like a Deus Ex Machina. I love Simmons and will read everything he writes. I just wish this book were better. As it stands, though, a middling Simmons novel is still better than most anything else! In keeping with Simmons' style, I refuse to proof-read my email, so let the typos fly, baby! -newfers

This is the third in Simmons' hard-boiled series of Joe Kurtz books, and it's another winner. It's a little more predictable than the first two (not surprising with later series entries), but still a good read-- and we now know who Kurtz's father is (or we do if we are fans of Richard Stark). I'm used to noir heroes getting beat up and abused: Philip Marlowe and the Continental Op and Travis McGee and every two-bit gumshoe gets pummelled into unconsciousness or winged by a gat or tortured unmercifully on every other case. But Simmons is REALLY cruel to Kurtz. In every book, he's so abused you just wanna tell him to sit down and have a beer and watch Oprah and recover a little. Hell, I thought he was pretty much dead at the end of the second book. Now, here he is, back again. Ten pages in, though, he's pretty much dead again. Simmons: Give Kurtz a break! Simmons is always worth reading-- if you've read the first two Kurtzes, you'll want to read this one.

This is the third and so far last installment in the series with Joe Kurtz as the main character. This book was a great read and I truly hope that Mr. Simmons decides to pick up this series again. "Ex-PI Joe Kurtz's survival is on the line when an ambush leaves him badly wounded and his parole officer, Peg O'Toole, barely clinging to life. Their respective professions have ensured that neither suffers from a shortage of enemies, so discovering which of them was the intended target isn't easy." And the action continues from there and keeps you engaged until the last page!

Typical Dan Simmons. Gritty, easy to read, interesting novel. Joe Kurtz is a great character. My one complaint is lack of any love interest (though opportunities present themselves). No doubt by design but it makes Kurtz difficult to relate to.

Joe Kurtz, ex PI, ex con is one of the most interesting antiheroes currently being written about. Simmons blends the atmosphere and mood of western New York into a modern noir canvas, and Kurtz and his former lover Rigby inhabit that world in a gray area of law and order that is both

disturbing and realistic. Even after getting shot in the head, Kurtz displays the almost herculean toughness that would make Spenser wince - hence the title. The plot moves from place to place with a randomness that seems incongruous, but ultimately is very satisfying in the end. One of the best mystery/detective novelists working today. I highly recommend going to Simmon's back list and catching up with the rest of his fans. He seldom has disappointed.

Just about the time you get to relaxing and get into the story, another incomprehensible typo jangles the storyline. I've applied for a refund. The sad thing is that I'm an avid Dan Simmons fan. Here are some sample sentences from the first 7% of the book *T11 get an orderly and a gurney. But he had to admit that tins old man was a finalist in that contest. Later, he told himself that he should have known that die universe was getting ready to readjust its balance of pain at his expense. It had a Confederate flag hung on die side of it and a clapped-out '72 Camaro parked outside. "How about die cheerleader?"

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