



Grudge Punk

John McNeer

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Grudgehaven: "A city lost to the darkness, where acid rain drums on a hundred thousand corrugated iron rooftops and cold, mechanized eyeballs squint out of every filth-smearred window."

From the twisted mind of author John McNee come nine tales of brutality and betrayal from a city like no other.

A granite detective has a date with destiny at a motel made of flesh. A severed hand is on a desperate mission to ruin somebody's evening. While a mob war reaches its bloody climax, the Mayor is up to his neck in dead prostitutes.

And Clockwork Joe? He just wants to be a real boy.

Bizarro Press proudly presents the latest in dieselpunk-bizarro-horror-noir. This...

...is GrudgePunk

Grudge Punk Details

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Author : John McNee

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From Reader Review Grudge Punk for online ebook

sappho_reader says

A perfect mix of my two favorite genres: Bizarro and Noir. Like most people I was first introduced to the Grudge via the first and second volumes of the *Tall Tales with Short Cocks* anthology. It didn't take much convincing for me to seek this out.

The Grudge is a harsh oppressive city run amok by a vicious mob war between the King of Eyes and the King of Broken Glass. Everyone is corrupt right down to the police, press and clergy. The city is brim full of prostitutes, murderers, petty thieves, gangsters and other nefarious types. No one can be trusted and there is a lot of backstabbing going on.

If there are any law abiding folks living in the Grudge we never meet them.

But these aren't normal folks who look and act like us. The people in the Grudge are made from spare metal parts, springs, wires and such. Each person is truly unique. One of my favorite descriptions was of a prostitute name Kellie –

She'd only been in the back seat a few moments before Coll realized her beautiful flaming eyes were lit by a coal fire in her skull. Every few minutes she took a briquette from her purse and slid it in through the grate at the top of her head. He had to roll all the windows down because of the smoke.

Another description I loved-

Guv's head was round and flat, like a big silver dollar, and both of his eyes were on one side. He had to turn his whole body around to see where I was pointing.

I loved each of these nine interconnected stories. Hope there will be more written about the Grudge.

Athena Shardbearer says

Go ahead and burn, baby! He called to the skyline. Burn! You can take it! Burn his sickness out! Burn it all down! You can take it! You'll be back in Pappa's arms real soon!

This is my first try at reading Bizzaro genre and I have to say it was quite interesting.

Bodies of rotting wood and metal. Polystyrene breasts fixed with copper wire. Mold and mildew between their legs to give you something to plow, rusting handles on their hips to grip as you go at it, and pipes jutting from their temples belching sulfur monoxide into your face the whole time. Those are the women of the Grudge.

Grudgehaven has street names like Septicemia, Sinister, Chancroid and Gonorrhea. There is a hotel made of human flesh, and screw-in size 9 copper-plated filter head that is a replacement part for a loving wife.

I don't know what else to say without giving away the story. I think that if you are looking for something that is COMPLETELY different from what you are use to, then give this a go.

Brian says

Not since Miéville's world of Bas-Lag in his *New Crobuzon* trilogy have I been completely drawn to an author's world of amazing creation. Like the descriptions of the denizens of Bas-Lag, reading McNee's tales of beings nefarious, broken and unpredictable are hair raising to the point of "anything goes". Remember the first time you saw "Reservoir Dogs" and the feeling you had when the camera panned away from the switchblade-to-cop violence? Yeah, like that. Over and over.

The first story in this brilliant collection sets the tone (my first exposure and anthologized in *Tall Tales With Short Cocks*) for what is in store. But each story of *Grudgehaven* is unique, every character rich in their development, and the way McNee ties them all together by the last sentence of the final story is just fucking brilliant.

And yes, this collection deserves the 5 stars, the 100 stars, the Galaxy it deserves.

But selfishly, can I please have some more, sir?

Gregor Xane says

This is easily one of the best books I've read this year. It's labeled as Bizarro fiction, but I wouldn't categorize it that way. In my mind, this falls more in line with what folks a few years back were calling New Weird. It's the perfect blend of science fiction, fantasy and horror that manages to be none of those things. It's like the film *Sin City* set in some town in Mieville's Bas-Lag, where the citizens are all comprised of meat, metal, fiberglass, and random junkyard scraps. It's a work of gritty noir fiction. Not the hard-boiled detective variety, but rather the type concerned with the criminals, the scammers, the low-lifes, and the creeps. It's like *Pulp Fiction* as directed by David Cronenberg. Speaking of Cronenberg, if you like his nastier works (especially *Naked Lunch* and *eXistenZ*) and like your noir with some extra grit, then you'll like this book.

Highly recommended.

Karlyflower *The Vampire Ninja, Luminescent Monster & Wendigo Nerd Goddess of Canada (according to The Hulk)* says

My musings on *Grudge Punk* by John McNee...

I'm going to try reviewing this compilation as I go along because I have Christmas brain – very similar to zombie brain, really – and can't seem to remember anything from one moment to the next.

Firstly, *In the Flesh* is icky, icky awesomeness!! There is something wondrous strange about a short story set within a world – or rather corner of the world – where flesh is foreign and coveted (and not in a "Damn, I'd like to hit that" kind of way). Long forgotten by the greased and mechanised population, set back on a street

from a time long passed, there is a palace of flesh and blood. I'm not sure what fetish laden world McNee is living in exactly but it's an interesting little excursion to visit wherever there is..... just don't try to take the walls with you.

Onward to *A Hand Walks Into the Bar*. Same creepy world, new elements of strange. In this one we get a glimpse of the higher calibre lifestyle within Grudgehaven. A hand scuttles into the bar, interrupting an interaction between Rhino and a female with lovely bronze legs that he can see himself in (sexy, right?!) and ammonia on her breath (not so sexy), the hand belongs to a notorious pimp, dun dun dun. Off we go on an adventure of bizarritiy! McNee is hilariously perverse here and I couldn't help but snort-chuckle to the visual of Rhino walking a hand on a leash down the street like an old lady may well walk a poodle, where does he come up with this shit?! Love it!

Gutter Politics, in a world of such broken, scattered humanity what must their politicians be like?! Thankfully, John McNee answers that in this short, disturbing read about Eddie Coll, future mayor of Grudgehaven. You think our politicians are bad? (view spoiler)

In *Down to the Bone* we spend some time in an acid rain storm with Dana and her half-squid lover. This is a fascinating take on the age old tale of the sinning wife (or husband) who wants to simplify their lives but brings further chaos to their doorstep. Throw in Jericho, an ex assassin from the mob bent on killing them and there you have it. This probably my favourite this far ;)

I never completed this review, perhaps one day (mayhaps this summer even) I will revisit this compilation and review the remaining six stories [HERE](#).... but for now, I bow to this amazing review by Jen(nifer), enjoy!

Matthias says

This book has got everything that spells out "great beginnings".

GrudgePunk introduced me to:

* John McNee

A great author with vivid imagination and vision. An architect of worlds with words. A mechanic of the character.

* Bizarro Fiction

An entirely new genre for me. I still don't know on which of my shelves to put this book, so I'm just keeping it on the nightstand for now. It might very well stay there, and that's saying something. If my books would come alive during the night, that's the place they'd all be vying for. The book throne, so to speak! "**Book Story: Quest for the Nightstand**". Winner: GrudgePunk, the one that just didn't belong. (I hope Disney is reading this.)

* The city of Grudgehaven

A dark place. A cold place. Think "Gotham City", only smellier, weirder and infinitely more interesting.

At first sight, this is a collection of short stories with a singular focus on the "bizarre". The first page introduces one of the protagonists as speaking with whining springs in his brass-plated jaw, while someone in the back is clearing their throat, sounding like sewage churning up through a drain. It gets weirder. You start to wonder if the people from the city of Grudgehaven are, in fact, people, because as you go further

through the pages you see something is off. Natural skin is considered as extravagant beauty, it's healthier to smoke a refreshing cigarette rather than breathe in the air and acid rainstorms are just another occasion to get rid of those dead bodies you piled up in your garage.

There's more to GrudgePunk than the "weird"-factor and this is more than just a "series" of short stories. You immediately feel they're part of something bigger, part of the story that is Grudgehaven. John McNee manages, in very few pages, to make an entire city come alive. Every district, every street, every corner has got life in it. Every filth-smearred window has got a story lurking behind.

The stories are all very engaging, some with surprising twists, all with an astounding cast of characters. Just to mention one: "The King of Broken Glass". Now you tell me with a straight face that this name doesn't intrigue you! The protagonist of one short story can be a simple passer-by in the next, the villain of one chapter the hero of the other. Plenty of perspectives are used and the result is a city teeming with life.

Is this book perfect? I can't say "yes". But I can say "yeah, sure". Not sure if that makes sense, but I guess it will just have to do. I think this is a debut stand-alone publication with a publisher that allows an author some wiggle room for experimentation, and you've simply got to love publishers like "Bizarro Press". You got to. I insist.

Thank you.

puts away dangerous looking metallic devices

Anyway, the prose is very simple and clear, really nothing fancy about it, so don't expect some steampunk Charles Dickens. McNee sometimes uses the first person perspective or the third, depending on the characters. Some situations aren't described as neatly, and at one instance there was suddenly a character that popped up in a room without any introduction and without it making sense she was there. But these are such minor gripes I actually feel ashamed mentioning them. They're a tiny speck on an otherwise perfectly green and fresh apple.

To be perfectly honest, I don't think the book backflap is doing this collection a whole lot of justice. Yes, it's weird. Yes, it's brutal and deals with the underworld. But there is also warmth in these stories. And humour. And things supremely human. Just check out the quote with which I'll close. Then you'll simply go buy this book immediately after you're done reading this review. I trust no dangerous metallic devices will be necessary.

Read the weirdness. Read the darkness. Read the warmth. Read all there is to read about Grudgehaven and hope and pray that there will be much much more to come. (*)

(The following quote is about a mobster-gone-taxi-driver attending to his sick wife)

Too exhausted to protest, she settled down while I got to work, unscrewing the lead plate in her side and exposing an interlocking network of skinny pipes and pistons. Installation instructions were printed on the inside of the filter head's box and I was careful to follow them as I identified and unscrewed the old part. I had to put in a little more effort than should have been necessary working it free, and when it finally slid out of its hole I saw that the open end had been worn down to the nub. I tossed it and pressed down on the nearest valve. Black bile bubbled out of the hole in a long, guzzling stream and poured into the lid. The stink of it - like rotting meat and vinegar - was ferocious, but I held my breath and turned my head to the side, trying not to let my revulsion show. Marianne was deeply embarrassed by the smells of her

sickness.

I pressed the valves a few more times to clean out the tubes, scrubbed away the crusted grime around the opening, then inserted the fresh part, gleaming with its factory-fresh newness. It secured into place with a neat 'click'.

That done, I put the lead plate back, slid out the lid (now brimming with bile) and brought my face up to hers to tell her what a great job I'd done. She was asleep. I kissed her forehead, finding it cold and dappled with condensation, then left the room.

* Rejoice!! The **sequel** has arrived!

Vincenzo Bilof says

A shared universe anthology is sometimes a risky venture, especially if it's fan fiction, or if the anthology doesn't have many well-known authors. I haven't read very many novels that involve an author writing a short story collection that take place in one universe, but I will say this: Grudge Punk will exceed your expectations.

The stories are invariably connected along a timeline; the events in each story have a direct impact on each other and noirish, bizarre city often referred to as THE GRUDGE. Characters pop up and are mentioned throughout each piece, but I felt like each "chapter" could have been read on its own. This is a cyberpunk/bizarro/noir compilation that reminded me of Frank Miller's Sin City.

John McNee made his vision come to life with a flair for originality; the city and its characters was interesting and well-described. The reader is thrust in the middle of political/gangster intrigue that plays with your investment in the story; you will see all manner of scumbags and plenty of underdogs while you see the city through the eyes of several lucky and unlucky characters.

The characters and the city's origins and setting weren't over-explained; there isn't expository information on the city's background that are dumped onto the reader's lap, as elements of the city's bizarre/scientific elements are explained through character interaction and plot development. The Grudge simply lives, and we are walking its streets from the first chapter onward.

I have to admit that I purchased this book because of the cover, and because it sounded like an interesting idea. I didn't know what to expect, and I was pleasantly surprised. I don't think there are many authors who can avoid many of the pitfalls that are associated with world creation, and the format in this particular novel is indicative of McNee's consistent delivery that invites that reader to experience his unique world, rather than have it all explained to us. The mysteries and secrets behind The Grudge are part of this book's mystique, and if McNee told the reader everything without allowing us to immerse ourselves in his creation, it would have fallen flat. My questions didn't inspire me to keep turning the pages, but rather, I wanted more mysteries.

I'm eagerly awaiting the next book, which would provide its own challenges as far as a serial construction is concerned. I believe McNee can deliver.

Douglas Hackle says

While some time has passed since I read *Grudge Punk*, and some of the details of the book might be a little hazy, the book's overall feel has stayed with me. Combining elements of noir, horror, bizarro, and dystopian science fiction, *Grudge Punk* collects several interconnected short stories that take place in a city called Grudgehaven, aka The Grudge, where the citizens are amalgamations of flesh, gears, and junkyard scrap metal. This is not hard science fiction; a detailed explanation of whatever cryptic biomechanics/cybernetics allows the city's denizens to walk, talk, love, and hate is never provided. That's a good thing because such an explanation is not needed. The absence of such an explanation, along with the absence of a fully fleshed out history or origin story for The Grudge, lends both mystery and a touch of surreality to this corrupt and corroded metropolis and the stories that take place within its acid-drenched streets. Good, old-fashioned skillful prose—vivid descriptions, snappy dialogue, strong characters, and spotless pacing—coupled with the overarching uniqueness of McNee's dark vision combined to make this one of my favorite reads of 2013.

Meghan says

This is my first Bizarro. I blame it on Shamus. I commented on one of his pictures, the comment section on said picture with him and many others got completely insane (I'll never eat peanut butter again), him and I had a conversation ... and I ended up with this book. I'm not really sure if it's considered r2r. I mean, he gave it to me. I'm sure he would like me to review it. I'm sure he just wants me to say that I really loved it. So, basically, Shamus popped my cherry.

Did I love it? I don't think "love" is a strong enough word for how I feel about this book. And John - oh my God - he's a god haha. I can only imagine what it must be like in this man's head and I'm sure conversations with him are quite entertaining and intriguing.

I loved every part of this book, but I have to say that my favorite stories of them all are In the Flesh, Gutter Politics and The Corridors of Power.

This book has definitely made it to my top 5 favorite books of the year - probably top 20 favorite in my lifetime (and I read a LOT of books) - and I'm only sorry that it took me so long to finally sit down and read it.

I have only one suggestion for you: Let your fingers do the walking by immediately heading online to your favorite book establishment (you should also check out Rooster Republic Press) and purchase a copy of this book. Once it is downloaded on to whatever e-reader you use, put a Do Not Disturb sign on the door, turn off the cell phone and anything else that is going to distract you, send your family on vacation and make yourself comfortable. This is definitely a book you'll want to give yourself time to fully enjoy.

Shamus McCarty says

If you've read Tall Tales With Short Cocks or Tall Tales with Short Cocks Vol. 2 then you've already read part of this book, and chances are you're pretty excited about it. If you haven't, well let me give you a taste of what's to come.

Grudgehaven is not a nice place. It's being blown apart by a bitter Mob war, and nobody is safe from the shrapnel. Being part noir, part horror, and part bizarro it's a difficult world to explain. It's citizens are made out of everything from granite to spare machine parts. Everything from flesh to fleshless skeletons that don't exist anymore, and if you see one... you won't either.

My favorite character is 'The King of Broken Glass'. He's an evil and sadistic son of a bitch who has no mercy for anybody, especially not the innocents between him and his renewed rise to power.

It reminds me of Sin City, or a hard-boiled Dick Tracey. It's not for the squeamish. McNee sentences most of his characters to death, and not the die-in-your-sleep kind of death. The violently-tortured kind of death.

Dan Schwent says

There are a million stories in *The Grudge* and John McNee commits ten of them to paper in *Grudge Punk*.

Not long ago, Arthur Graham, knowing my love of free stuff, detective fiction, and Bizarro fiction, tipped me off that this was free on Amazon. Hard to pass up free.

Grudgehaven is a city of automatons, acid rain, and deception. In *Grudge Punk*, John McNee takes ten fairly standard setups for noir stories and places them in his bizarre city. A detective is hired to find the only flesh and blood woman in the Grudge. A crime lord hires a woman to be his biographer. A mayoral candidate has a fondness for killing hookers. Two lovers conspire to murder the female of the pair's husband. Now imagine the detective being made of granite and you'll have an idea of what *Grudge Punk* is about.

The weirdness level is extremely high in *Grudge Punk* but all of it is fairly logical and doesn't stray into the realm of absurdity or being weird for the sake of being weird. The world has its own internal logical and all the short stories in this collection are linked and build upon one another until the final tale.

By far, my favorite part of the mythology McNee has established is the ongoing war between Grudgehaven's two crime lords, the King of Eyes and the King of Broken Glass. I'd read a whole novel detailing the decades-long conflict.

It's hard to review a book of short stories without giving too much away. Suffice to say, if you like weird detective fiction, you won't want to miss this.

Arthur Graham says

Call me conventional, but I don't typically read books unless there's reason to suspect I'll enjoy them. I probably seem to toss out an inordinate amount of 4 and 5 star reviews as a result, but that could be just because I choose my books so wisely, see? I'm not sure if it was the cover, the title, the description, or a combination thereof that convinced me to take a chance on this one, but *Grudge Punk* by John McNee just so happens to be the latest in my winning streak of wise choices to date.

What can I say? Lady Luck continues to shower her favors upon me. I couldn't say the same for most of McNee's characters, thoroughly mired in this roiling cesspit, the surface of which we're content to skim as tourists. So pull up a stool, buy us a round of motor oil, and don't forget to tip the lizard man behind the bar.

Never mind the unkempt diesel dames or the severed hand crawling up your leg. Just kick back, relax, and let me tell you all about this place called the Grudge.

Dark, dirty, and teeming with the same kind of action, let's just say that Grudgehaven won't be appearing on any "best cities to raise children" lists any time soon. On the other hand, it would be a shoe-in for best city to "live in horrid squalor," "abort your broken dreams," or "die a slow and painful death." Either way, you get the picture. After a day or two in the Grudge, you'll be longing for the good old days of steam power and soot in this city dominated by the internal combustion engine, where even the people run on fossil fuels. If you thought hurricanes were bad, you won't after surviving a category 5 acid storm. That is IF you survive...

This world sets the stage for McNee's perverse brand of noir, replete with gear-driven gangsters, fragmented femme fatales, copper-plated crooked cops, and a host of other antiheroes so flawed readers cannot help but root for them. Interwoven throughout their overlapping narratives are dual threads of hope and despair -- desperate men and women on the verge of something big, a second chance, or one last score. In the cog-eat-cog world of Grudgehaven, your best friend is your foe and your biggest enemy is yourself, a losing battle on all fronts to make it big or simply survive.

As alluded to above, my reviews tend to focus on my own subjective experience with books, rather than any kind of pseudo-objective critique (which I definitely got my fill of back in grad school). That said, *Grudge Punk* earns a full five stars not only for its appealing style and subject matter, but also for how well the book is written. McNee packs each story tight with lurid descriptions and dialogue, splashes them with kerosene, lights the fuse on the whole damned bundle and walks away. The bomb will blow, and as the dust settles and the sirens wail, you'll behold the twisted debris and marvel at just how well its piecemeal parts were once cobbled together.

Danger says

Grudge Punk.

Is it a book? A genre? A living, breathing universe in and of itself? The answer is yes. To all three of these questions. Grudge Punk is the title John McNee has given to this collection of interconnected short stories, but also, it's a glimpse into a parallel dimension. Let me explain:

The residents of Grudgehaven are a patchwork of sorts. Pieced together by flesh, garbage and arcane robotics. The Grudge itself is a city where Skid Row pretty much extends its breadth; where freaks and criminals rule the streets. The stories McNee tells all take place in this city - and although each tale has its own beginning, middle and end - there are many overt and covert crossovers in regards to characters and places. And despite the preternatural happenings in this book - the bizarro aesthetic that seems to lurk just below the surface of these stories - the elements of character crossover is extraordinarily effective in creating what feels like a "real" world. A place that continues to exist beyond the pages it's written on. And if McNee feels like channeling this world once again, I KNOW there are dozens of more stories this place has left to tell.

The stories themselves employ a noir-style narrative. Traditionally, I am not much a fan of noir. I sometimes find the prose a tad too matter-of-fact. But when you're dealing with stuff like (view spoiler) sometimes a little matter-of-fact is what you need. The grittiness of a noir voice is perfectly matched to the grittiness of Grudgehaven itself, and any other style of narration would not have served this city its justice. Not to mention the fact that McNee himself is a fantastic writer. His hand is steady as he writes these tales; the pace is perfect, the plots are solid, the imagery is vivid when necessary or merely teases when it wants to play

with your imagination. There is some serious talent at work here.

All in all, I was pleasantly surprised by this book, both in its scope and in its execution. I recommend to anyone looking for a little dirt in their pancakes (proverbially speaking). A delicious mix of storytelling and originality.

5 stars all around!

Jenn(ifer) says

"You are now entering the Grudge. Only fools come clean."

If you were to browse my shelves, you would probably notice that they are not rife with noir, horror, dieselpunk or bizarro books. No. You'd probably see a bunch of pomo novels and dusty old classics. I'll just go out on a limb here and say that I am probably *not* the target audience for a book like 'Grudge Punk.'

So why did I read it? Well, see, I read it because John 'The Scourge' McNee has *"it."* You know, that indescribable something that needs no explanation. It just *is*, and if you have *it*, baby, that's all you need. I knew instantly that McNee had *it* when I read his story 'In the Flesh' published in Tall Tales With Short Cocks. This was my introduction to Grudgehaven, and also the first story to appear in Grudge Punk. I was so excited to revisit his Grudge world when another of his stories was published in Tall Tales With Short Cocks II. It was 'A Hand Walks Into a Bar', and it got me hooked. Sounds like the opening line of a dumb joke, am I right? I was all set to dismiss it for that reason. But the title makes no difference, you know why? That's right. *It*.

I was literally on the edge of my seat waiting for this collection of short stories to come out because I couldn't wait to see what The Scourge would do with Grudgehaven and its band of nefarious citizens. I even got mad at my friend when he waited an entire week to tell me that the paperback had been released (okay, so not mad, but at least a little miffed!).

Doesn't matter because it was more than worth the wait. I couldn't have imagined that it would be so... perfect. If you don't believe me, read it yourself. You're guaranteed to enjoy it from start to finish -- you know why?-- uh huh *it*. It has universal appeal and it will blow. your. mind. You'll be chasing the mechanical dragon, begging for more more more! And the great thing about it is, if the author is so inclined, there are endless stories that can be spun from here on out. And since we are all in on the ground floor, I for one have high, high hopes for the future of Grudge Haven in the able hands of John McNee. I would venture to say that we have not heard the last of The Grudge.. She will rise, like a phoenix from the flame!

Keep the story going, Scourge. Your fan(s) have spoken.

"Now leaving the Grudge. Take your sins and secrets with you."

Anita Dalton says

I first encountered John McNee in 2011 when I read a relatively mediocre extreme horror short story collection. His story was the best in the book, a dystopian, transhumanist nightmare that made the rest of the stories in the collection seem almost amateurish in comparison. I wondered how McNee would do in longer form, if he could take the amazing world-building and characterization and keep the intensity of his monstrous characters outside of the limits of a short story length. Turns out he can. If I had been in a position to have a “Best of” list in 2013, this book would have been at the top of the list. I can say with no equivocation that this is an excellent book.

Though this book is released by a bizarro imprint, I hesitate to call it bizarro. It’s noir. It’s trans-humanist. It’s extreme horror. It’s brutal and intense and at times strangely touching. It defies classification because it is a perfect synthesis of so many different influences without becoming a pastiche. This is not an imitation – it’s a creation. Because I am not a person much given to steampunk or noir, I should not have liked this book as much as I do but it speaks to McNee’s skills that he mixed subgenres I don’t much care for and I still couldn’t put the book down.

Quick synopsis of the book: In the city of Grudgehaven, we are presented with a place much like Gotham late at night combined with Sin City at all hours, with some side steps into Blade Runner and Repo: The Genetic Opera as run through a Cherie Priest novel. Criminal syndicates are at war, wreaking havoc. A gorgeous dame sings at a club and forms a strange friendship with a taxi driver. A man fights to keep his ailing wife alive during a riot. A sentient severed hand is on a mission. Human motels, in that they are motels made of human skin, have relationships with real humans. A writer finds herself in a sticky situation when she is hired to write the autobiography of a very bad man. The daughter of a preacher makes a deal with a devil of sorts. A boy made of clockworks longs to be real. And all of these single threads weave the tapestry of The Grudge, a town without pity but with plenty of malice.

You can read my entire discussion here.
