



## The Amazing Mr. Howard

*Kenneth Harmon*

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State Police Detective Willard suspects Mr. Howard is more than what he appears to be. He launches an investigation of the mysterious and eccentric professor setting off a chain of events that quickly spirals out of control.

In the tradition of Thomas Harris,' Hannibal Lecter, The Amazing Mr. Howard introduces a truly memorable character that readers won't soon forget.

Mr. Howard is a nightmare from which no one awakens.

## **The Amazing Mr. Howard Details**

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Author : Kenneth Harmon

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## From Reader Review The Amazing Mr. Howard for online ebook

### Christopher Payne says

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### Tim Potter says

First time novelist Kenneth W. Harmon has scored a huge victory with his new book The Amazing Mr. Howard. It is a new and intelligent take on horror genre standards of vampires and serial-killers and approaches the ideas in dynamic and satisfying ways. The main characters are extremely real and complex and turn traditional ideas about heroes and villains on their heads. The plot is razor-sharp and never stops driving forward towards a perfect conclusion.

Mr. Howard is a three-dimensional character with extraordinary attributes: he's a professor of history and mythology, he helps the police search for missing people using what he calls "visions" of a psychic nature, he's 400 years old and he's a vampire. Despite all of these characteristics he still comes across as a real, living and breathing person. State Investigator Willard is working on the case of a missing person when Mr. Howard is brought in to consult, a situation he is not happy with. Willard is a pragmatist and has no tolerance for psychics, all of whom he dismisses as frauds. Willard is also a not-so-happy family man who resents his family and hides in his job and the world of online kink.

These two characters are presented in a fascinating juxtaposition of the traditional roles of protagonist and antagonist. Willard the logical cop is, not surprisingly, the protagonist of the story, using his cool head and detective's instincts to attempt to bring a criminal to justice. Mr. Howard is the antagonist, his actions creating conflict and powering the bulk of the narrative. The great twist here is that Mr. Howard is, by most standards, the good guy in the story and Willard is the bad guy. The novel has to be read to see exactly how this plays out.

The other major player in the story is Detective Killgood, homicide detective and personal friend to Mr. Howard. Killgood's belief in the efficacy of Mr. Howard's help and his belief in his general goodness provides an interesting foil to Willard, who believes Mr. Howard is hiding something terrible. Killgood's perspective is much the same as the reader's, bouncing back and forth as the story goes on and more of the truth is learned. The other characters are interesting but generally transient, only serving to accent the main

characters and their story arcs.

As the plot develops, Mr. Howard and Willard get to know each other better, becoming more and more fervent in their beliefs about their opposite number. What Mr. Howard really knows about the missing persons he helps the authorities locate becomes the main plot thread, supported by Willard's quest for the truth about the disappearances.

The Amazing Mr. Howard is very well plotted and there is an impressive attention to the fine details of the story and the subtle characterizations of the main players. There are no rehashed horror cliches about serial-killers and vampires here, as the author manages the tough task of acknowledging the tradition associated with these ideas while presenting them in entirely by his own rules. Kenneth W. Harmon has delivered a novel that achieves success on all levels.

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### **Kim Tackett says**

This was an Early Reviewer book that I received this month. I honestly thought this is just "another vampire book. But, it actually was a combo mystery/thriller and vampire book. Mr. Howard is the vampire and even though he is the "bad guy", I felt sad for him. More despicable was the detective, Willard. Overall, it was a good read.

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### **Matt Murray says**

As many other reviewers have pointed out, The Amazing Mr. Howard is a new and different take on an insanely saturated genre. I applaud it for that. Beyond being a novel concept, though, how is it?

At the end of the day, I didn't enjoy it every much. That's not to say it's a bad book, more that it isn't my cup of tea. Rather than call him an antihero, I think Mr. Howard is better described as a sympathetic villain. Again, many compare him to Hannibal Lecter and that's an apt comparison. (He's not quite as charismatic as Hannibal, but who is?)

The problem arises when you get to the novel's antagonist, the detective hellbent on discovering Mr. Howard's secret. He is utterly and completely unlikable. The things he does throughout the novel are cringeworthy. For this story to work (for me), I feel Mr. Howard's 'opponent' needs to be equally sympathetic. You need to struggle with who you want to root for. Hannibal needs a Clarice Starling or a Will Graham. There is a second detective that would have filled the role much better, but that's not what we get. In the end, I'm just left disappointed.

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### **Kim says**

The Amazing Mr. Howard

by Kenneth Harmon

So other than Twilight this is my only vampire read. I quite enjoyed it and may actually read more now.

This story had me from the first chapter, I liked the way it was written and how it switched between the characters and was very fast paced. A vampire story without the romance and love story...I liked it!

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### **Connor says**

I received this book as an Early Reviewer on LibraryThing and really found this to be a great read. It combines the best of a police story with the horror of a vampire story. While that may sound like an odd combination, it was both fascinating and eerie. I would, in some ways, compare this book with "Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris. The main character Mr. Howard is a lot like Hannibal Lector, in that he is both mysterious and likes to play mind games with the authorities, while hiding in plain sight. The author gives a lot of insight into what all the characters are thinking throughout the story. At times, a reader can almost find themselves rooting for the wrong side, because the personalities seem so real and draw you into the story. Hopefully, this is just the first of a series of these books.

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### **Anthony says**

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The premise is a bit odd. We have a vampire who pretends to be a psychic, in order to help the police find the bodies of his victims. I didn't have any feel for why he was doing these things. Maybe it gets explained later in the book, but I didn't care enough to try and find out.  
(hide spoiler)]

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### **Patricia Stoltey says**

Mr. Howard is a vampire. He's pure evil. There's a cop in the novel who is, in my opinion, even more depraved than Mr. Howard. The novel is horror, and it's mystery, and it's thriller. There are scenes that are explicit. It's well written and will please anyone who enjoys the genre as I do from time to time, but don't read it unless you're tough enough to take it. Seriously.

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### **Emily says**

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1. The dialogue felt forced and unnatural, and the characters did not hav

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### **Crystal Hutchinson says**

Mr. Howard is a well written vampire novel. I enjoyed the investigative aspect from the police force. I believe this is a good YA novel as well. Some taboo activities, but nothing so descriptive that it would not be appropriate for teens. I thought Killgood was an interesting "eyes wide shut" character, and I was hoping for some demise to the awful officer Willard. If someone does not enjoy vampire books, this is not the book for

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them. Vampire lovers may enjoy this fresh perspective to a vampire life.

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## **Leah says**

I struggled with my rating and review of [The Amazing Mr. Howard](#). It was not a pleasant reading experience for me, and yet I don't enjoy bashing an author's work, even if I found it severely flawed. In such situations I prefer to spotlight what the author did well, which proved difficult to nearly impossible with this book...

Once again an interesting idea obliterated by poor execution and a lack of revisions and editing. From the lackluster characterizations to the discursive plot - it read as if the author submitted a manuscript after only one or two drafts. Since it was the book description that lured me into requesting this book, I'll address what I thought the book's biggest problems were, by way of its description. This way others can decide if these would be problems for them, too.

***A girl from a wealthy Colorado family goes missing and in desperation the police turn to Mr. Howard to help locate her.***

The girl's kidnapping was described from the abductor's POV on the very first page in three paragraphs. Then, in the opening chapter, detectives showed up to Mr. Howard's class - he teaches mythology, I think - requesting his help. We know nothing about the missing girl; we are given zero opportunity to connect with her, feel scared for her, get a sense of the danger she was/is in. (This was the first clue that the woman in this book were going to be used merely as "victims" or disposable objects.) Also, in our introduction to Mr. Howard, we're shown very little about him except that he enjoys looking up skirts, he's arrogant, and he's boring.

***Mr. Howard is a professor and self-proclaimed psychic with a history of assisting investigators, or so it seems.***

Chapter two, page 15, the reader learned the truth behind Mr. Howard's "psychic" powers. I couldn't believe it; no suspense, no build-up, just BAM! Here's the answer to what could've been a compelling mystery for at least 50 or 75 pages. And the fact that he's a vampire is NOT the "big reveal", so no spoilers there. Although, him being a vampire could've also been played up and stretched out a bit for added mystery and suspense.

Next arrived the plot holes or, more accurately, the logic holes. Mr. Howard's long-time lover, Leslie, the dean of the university where he teaches, just appeared outta nowhere and surprised him in the shower with some morning sex. Uh, if I'm a vampire and I also have other secrets, why would my "girlfriend" have the ability to just show up with no warning?

***State Police Detective Willard suspects Mr. Howard is more than what he appears to be. He launches an investigation of the mysterious and eccentric professor setting off a chain of events that quickly spirals out of control.***

Here's an excellent example of what a solid edit/revision process should have revealed: had the author merged Killgood (a good cop) with Willard (a bad cop at best, but more likely a psychopath) into one person, and toned down Willard's overtly offensive behavior and thoughts, the author would've had a much stronger antagonist for Mr. Howard.

[Side note: I stand firm in that being offensive *purely for the sake of* being offensive is a scapegoat. It also says "amateur" to me. It's like authors are trying to distract readers from the glaring faults in their story by

throwing pointless violence, abuse, and sexual perversity at us.]

Willard was a wholly unlikable character, and he was just that: a character. On top of pages of long tirades about his wife's and children's weight, he also frequented online swingers clubs to fulfill his perverse fantasies because he was unable to suck it up and actually leave the wife he so often complained about. He also physically abused his family. Oh, and did I mention he sniffed the missing girl's panties? WTF. I understand that populating one's story with unlikable characters forces the reader to sympathize with the least detestable of them - e.g., Mr. Howard - but I don't enjoy that tactic, especially when the characters are such flat imitations of each other.

***In the tradition of Thomas Harris, 'Hannibal Lecter,' The Amazing Mr. Howard introduces a truly memorable character that readers won't soon forget.***

Okay, let's get really real here. If you're going to call out one of THE greatest villains of all time - Hannibal Lecter - you best be damned sure your protagonist is at least in the same ballpark! If I'm being extra generous, Mr. Howard wasn't even in the same *league* as Lecter. What about Mr. Howard is so hard to forget? That he's a 300-year-old vampire who has to take Viagra? That he has to wear glasses and loves classical music? That every woman he encounters submits without fail and without a fight? Or he's so gosh darn sexy that when his "girlfriend," who's moving away, walked in on him having sex with Jennifer, the new dean at the university, they have a spontaneous threesome? I'm sorry, an old dude in a threesome does not equal unforgettable to me. In fact it screams "delete, delete, delete!" But that's just me.

***Mr. Howard is a nightmare from which no one awakens.***

Really, a "nightmare"? There wasn't anything subtle about him - no mystery, no intrigue, no suspense. By page 20 I knew what he was going to do the rest of the story. There was nothing scary about him, nothing to keep me awake at night, and definitely nothing with the potential to invade my dreams.

Thankfully, The Amazing Mr. Howard was a quick read.

1.5 stars (because I was able to finish it and, with some practice and polish, the author's stories \*could\* get better)

*Received trade paperback from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Cameron says**

This vampire tale is as far from the spangly YA Twilight mob as it's possible to get.

Harmon's protagonist, the eponymous Mr.Howard, has been around for a while, bumping off pretty young girls and living on their blood. He does this in the nicest way, unlike the despicable detective who is more than determined to catch him. And so I found myself rooting for the bad guy because the good guy was so, so much worse.

All in all the characters were well drawn, and it was a good read - though possibly not for those of a gentle disposition. I can't wait to see what Kenneth W. Harmon writes next.

N.B. I received a free ebook version of The Amazing Mr. Howard from the publisher. This is an honest review.

## **Nospin says**

The Amazing Mr Howard 3.5 stars

Mr. Howard is a professor of esoteric studies and aids the local police using his psychic skills. A bit of a recluse, Mr. Howard only teaches night classes due to a skin allergy to the sun. I am sure it is obvious to even casual readers that Mr. Howard is a vampire.

Mr. Howard's latest blood donor is from a wealthy family so the police are under intense pressure to find the girl. Willard, a state police detective, is soon on the hunt to unmask Mr Howard. However, the character Willard is so abhorrent - calling his family names and beating his kids - that the reader has zero affection or respect for him. While Mr. Howard kills, he is remorseful about the killing and seeks to return his victim's remains to their families.

The writing is fine and the story moves along nicely. Although while I could accept the premise of a wealthy vampire, the exorbitant payout to a private detective would draw suspicion and attention that was unwanted by the main character. Sometimes fairly minor details like this throw the reader out of the story and detract from its enjoyment.

Received free copy in exchange for honest review

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## **Hal Bodner says**

I've learned that one can never be quite certain what one's going to get with a JournalStone title. I've read some amazing novels put out by this publisher. I've also read some that made me cringe at the taste of anyone who thought they were worth publishing. Fortunately, Kenneth W. Harmon's THE AMAZING MR. HOWARD is one of JournalStone's better offerings.

Harmon manages to do something which I found truly amazing; he's able to breathe new and interesting life into the tired, over used vampire trope. It's quite a feat and Harmon succeeds at it with aplomb. The reader is distinctly aware throughout that s/he is reading a vampire book but there are almost no vestiges of those wearying vampiric details that we've all read dozens of times before such that we want to roll our eyes with every page. Nor, thank all the gods, do Harmon's vampires glitter!

This is even more impressive if, as seems to be the case from what I could discover about him, this is his first fictional novel. Though the book has a few major bumps in it (which I'll discuss in a moment), Harmon's skill and his ability to capture the reader with an intriguing story, especially for a first-time novelist, is astonishing.

Harmon's take is fascinating and, though it's not particularly innovative, he somehow makes it seem vastly different from almost anything we've read before. His notion of a vampire killer who masquerades as a psychic to help the police solve his own crimes is a rich one. That the vampire is compelled to do so in order to avoid being haunted by the specters of his victims is even richer fodder.

The presence of these innovations to the traditional vampire story is partly why THE AMAZING MR.

HOWARD is so frustrating at times. The novel comes tantalizingly close to being a great read as opposed to merely a very good one. Yet it ends up being a near miss because of several glaring flaws.

Nor am I willing to place the blame for the novel's shortcomings squarely on Harmon's shoulders alone. Being an author of some experience myself, I understand that the relationship between author and editor can be a complicated one. Yet, in this case, I cannot help but suspect that the fault is editorial and not creative. A few notes from the desk of a perceptive editor, and a single pass-through edit by Harmon could have made the difference.

Most of the novel's problems pertain to one of the cop characters, foiling an otherwise interesting twist where the officer, even while trying to catch the villain, is actually the antagonist of the piece. The character, one "Willard", leads an unhappy home life with an obese wife and two rotund children. Not content with establishing this plot point, Harmon hammers it home with an unending and tiresome series of commentaries by Willard concerning his wife's size and affinity for Ding Dongs until the reader, in frustration, is on the verge of yelling aloud, "For the love of all that's holy, give it a REST!" Moreover, while this conceit would have been just fine and dandy in a farce, this book isn't one. Furthermore, there is a sameness to the wisecracks that quickly becomes repetitive and, shortly later, downright annoying.

The Willard character in general is portrayed on one-note, a caricature of an angry, sexually repressed cop. But that flatness extends to scenes with his family; they become tedious after a time. One particular moment stands out, the painfully badly written scene at his daughter's dance recital. It serves virtually no purpose and borders on ludicrous as the author would have us believe that the daughter is so fat that other young dancers are being mowed down like wheat before a thresher, to the point where they have need of a doctor's attention. Again, this would be delightful in a farce, but THE AMAZING MR. HOWARD contains no other farcical elements and, thus, the scene is jarring and out of place.

Harmon also resorts to the amateurish practice of "information dumping", something which I truly believe should have been caught by a good editor and corrected. For instance, Willard discovers everything he needs to know about vampires via a book written by... the vampire character himself! It's not only a silly contrivance, it's an unbelievable one as well and, to my mind, smacks of laziness on the part of the writer.

Similarly, while Harmon has created a lovely unique variation on the standard vampire, he inexplicably adds "details" which struck me as inorganic and needless, and which again seem to originate from lazy writing. Almost three quarters of the way through the book, we discover that Harmon's vampire can "levitate"; four fifths of the way through, we find out he is not only somewhat of a mesmerist, but that he also possesses a degree of telekinesis (enough to open locked doors) as well. These traits originate out of nowhere and cheapen Harmon's extraordinary re-imagining of the vampire trope. What's more, it is as if the character had, up until the point when they become naught but plot mechanisms, forgotten he possessed those skills. Cutting those passages would have been the work of a few scant minutes; leaving them in is rather jarring to the reader.

I have two more points of contention that mar what is otherwise a truly wonderful tale. First, when the protagonist creates a second vampire, the newly made creature immediately begins to speak as though he is a refugee from a badly produced Hammer Horror film; the dialogue becomes abysmally bad for no discernible reason. When the new vampire intones, "You've come to kill me, and though you may try, it is you who will die," this reader winced; when he followed with "You are powerless against me," I cringed. Again, a sharp editor with a red pen could have remedied this in a jiffy.

And finally, there is a tremendous deus ex machina where the cop character suddenly "solves" the case... in the middle of a sex scene with a dwarf. Yes, you read that right. And, strangely, Harmon makes it work! It's not the dwarf we question but rather the ability of the cop to come to the conclusions that he does while his diminutive sexual partner is suspended above him in a leather harness like Peter Pan.

Yet, with the exception of Willard's ceaseless harping about his "porker" wife and her affinity for Ding Dongs, the rest of the flaws can be overlooked. If one does so, THE AMAZING MR. HOWARD becomes a refreshing variant on a musty old warhorse of a monster. In spite of these literary peccadilloes, I fancy that Harmon's novel may very well be one of the best novels I've read all year.

With some slight reservations -- and I emphasize "slight" -- my recommendation for this novel is whole hearted. For fans of the vampire genre, it is a must. For readers of general horror who have tired of the careworn vampire tropes, I urge you to give THE AMAZING MR. HOWARD a try. I doubt you'll be disappointed.

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### **S.g. Lee says**

Other than amazing, how should one describe Mr. Howard?

Take one part Hannibal Lecter, one part Dracula, a healthy dose of sarcasm, and immeasurable intelligence; mix it together and you've only scratched the surface. This raw, edgy, thriller will keep you turning pages long into the night. Harmon's bold, unafraid portrayal of human monsters only pales in the light of his bloodthirsty ones. If you're looking for happily ever after, you've come to the wrong place! This is NOT your daughter's vampire story. The Amazing Mr. Howard gives vampires back their fangs.

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