



# Mandibles

*Jeff Strand*

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## **Mandibles** Jeff Strand

Fire ants. Even when they're normal sized, they're horrible, wretched insects whose sting causes burning pain.

But these ants are far from normal. And the city of Tampa, Florida has become infested with the oversized creatures.

From the demented author of GRAVEROBBER WANTED (NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY) and PRESSURE comes a relentlessly paced novel of insect terror. As the city descends into pure chaos on a hot summer afternoon before the Fourth of July weekend, four groups of survivors must make their way to safety, past thousands of hyper-aggressive ants that can finish you off with just one searing sting.

Dustin, an entomologist, may have the secret to what is happening. Unfortunately, he's being held hostage by a pair of psychopathic convenience store robbers who are just as happy to let the city burn.

## **Mandibles Details**

Date : Published June 30th 2003 by Mundania Press LLC (first published August 1st 2002)

ISBN : 9781594260063

Author : Jeff Strand

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Genre : Horror, Humor, Science Fiction, Comedy

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# From Reader Review Mandibles for online ebook

## Matthew Young says

Another good book from Jeff Strand--one of my favorite writers. The story here is great and, after the necessary blood and gore, the plot actually develops into something quite interesting. I know Strand's a great writer, but I was really surprised with how well he strung this story together. I don't know what I expected out of the book before I started it, but the plot was much stronger than I expected, which is a really good thing.

My one complaint is that point of view jumps happen A LOT in this story. It works because more often than not that person's point of view is exterminated by the ants eating them. So even though there are ten or more people who the story centers on, in the end, there's only a couple POVs that actually matter. A lesser writer wouldn't have been able to pull this off, but Strand is extremely gifted.

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## Rebecca says

Mandibles is exactly what I like about a campy horror. It has giant monsters that chase people down and eat them in horrible ways! In this case, it's a man-made crisis in the form of super huge red ants. Add to that the fun fillers -random victims in their last moments, experienced in a paragraph or less-, the moments of "woah-did he really just off that character?", and the author's trademark dark humor, and you have a spectacular winner in Mandibles.

What else can I say? What more do I need to say? Giant. Ants.

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## Dan Schwent says

Unusually huge fire ants terrorize Tampa, Florida. Will anyone survive this plague?

Mandibles is a creature feature by Jeff Strand about large fire ants overrunning Tampa. That's pretty much it. It follows the lives of office workers, people in a dentist office, a couple stickup men, and an entomologist during the rampage of the ants.

It might be that I've come to expect home runs at every at-bat from Jeff Strand but this one didn't make me want to sit outside his house and "pretend" to run into him so we could eventually be best friends like a lot of his other books.

I love the premise but the characters didn't really do it for me this time. In my opinion, for a story like this, there needs to be a couple strong central characters to build the story around. Since this one had a death rate per page equivalent to a George R.R. Martin book, there was no one to root for for very long. It seemed like the characters I cared about the least were the ones to make it to the end. Also, I thought the ending was kind of weak and the source of the ants didn't make that much logical sense.

Still, it was a fun read for the most part. People getting stung and eaten by fire ants of unusual size was pretty

entertaining and they made a believably frightening enemy. Unstoppable fire ants the size of squirrels (and larger)? No thank you, sir.

Three stars and Strand had to work hard for every one in this outing. I guess I can't be mad at him for not being perfect, though.

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### **Ashley says**

4.5 Stars. So fricken good. Incredibly entertaining creature feature horror romp featuring giant fire ants. Fun plot and excellent well - developed characters. Very fast and very entertaining read. I can't wait to read more Jeff Strand.

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### **Gatorman says**

An enjoyable, if somewhat disjointed, read from Strand. The book comes off as a campy B-movie from the 50's with giant ants attacking Tampa citizens. Well-written and fast paced, the story zooms along and provides plenty of action and gruesome scenes of violence. The beginning of the book is all over the place, with different scenes and characters that don't all take place in the present, which comes across as unnecessarily confusing. In the middle Strand includes a few too many needless scenes of random Tampa residents during the attacks that don't add anything to the main storylines. I wish Strand had streamlined the story a bit to focus on a few main characters instead of juggling so many different characters that you find it hard to really care if any of them live or die. I commend Strand for not being afraid to kill off any character in the story no matter how likeable they may be. Overall a good book but not on the level of, say, *Pressure* or *Benjamin's Parasite*.

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### **Jessica T. says**

Mandibles is like one of those cheesy giant critter movies from the 70's and it is set in my home town!!

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### **Chris says**

I took off a star mainly because the first third of the book was a bit disjointed and ran like a misfiring roadster. It was a bit disconcerting to say the least to be following several story lines only to find out that one of them, for no apparent reason, took place 8 years before the other action in the book. The prologue, although amusing, really didn't relate to the story. It was like a really good movie that suffered from bad editing. It leveled off after that and was smooth and fast to the conclusion, although I could have used a bit more back-story as to how and why anyone wanted to create a large breed of vicious ants in the first place. As with the other books by Strand that I have read, the writing is smooth, the dialogue witty, and the story was compelling--exciting even. I will also say that as soon as I finished this I bought two more Jeff Strand books on Kindle. He is one of those authors that I will read absolutely everything he writes.

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**Josh Randell says**

This is a 5 star read but I think it could be a little better edited so half a star gets docked for that. Fun, awesome read and worth the money.

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**Amanda says**

Giant ants overrun Florida!! Giant stinging ants!! And I mean giant!!

Sometimes you just need some fun in journey life, and I for me this provided fun in bucket loads. This novel is the literary equivalent of all the bad things your not supposed to eat, but that taste oh so very good.

As you can tell I really enjoyed this book, it felt like I gave my mind a break and allowed it to spectacularly veg out. But this is a good thing! The book is all the b movie horror that you can imagine, but was still well written. Highly recommended for those who just want to be entertained.

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**WendyB says**

Fun, fun, fun... it's like being at the drive-in watching a creature feature.

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**Sean Grigsby says**

I've known Jeff for years, but this is the first time reading one of his books. I don't know why GRRM gets so much fame for killing nearly every character. Jeff did just about the same in this fun, creature-feature read.

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**Braden A. says**

Incredible fun. Strand has a great sense of humor. One of the fastest, most fun reads I've had all year.

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**Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says**

I'm beginning to think I haven't read nearly enough Jeff Strand. This is the third book I've read by him (Haunted Forest Tour, The Sick House being the others), and every time he manages to make me laugh in pure delight at whatever he's throwing at me.

I think if there is a single writer whose books can define 'B-movie cheese', it's him. Sometimes other authors get lucky and nail it, but with them I'm noticing a trend toward feeling formulaic that's made me

decide to back off a bit. (I know creature features are all formulaic, but when it starts to feel like it, there's a problem.) And some just try too hard, and lose it right from the get-go.

Mandibles is sheer ridiculousness that's also a little skin-crawly, especially if you aren't particularly a fan of ants. (I'm not. What purpose do ants serve? At least with spiders I can convince myself they're nature's pest control!) There's no friendly "antie" a la Honey I Shrunk the Kids in this book. These ants will find you. They will find you, and they will kill you.

From pretty much the moment the book starts, horrible deaths start happening. With the scene set and things quickly ramping up, I found myself swiftly vowing that if there wasn't a good resolution to this book, I was never setting foot in Florida again. First it was Shea's massive iguanas, then Strand's ants. With my luck, the next book is going to involve gigantopod octopods coming to land to sacrifice us to the Old Ones and... (actually, if someone wants to write that, I'd totally read it.)

One thing I loved about Mandibles was I consistently wrong on who was actually going to survive. (I got quite a few deaths right, but didn't peg but one survivor correctly!) I was very happy to see certain people get what was coming to them. Strand managed to push basically all of my happy bookworm buttons with the sheer amount of death, gore, and violence contained in this book. It actually reminded me a bit in parts of Cabin in the Woods (except this was much better).

Also, the smart-ass remarks. One can't forget the sheer amount of smart-ass remarks that are scattered through this author's books. They'll make you snort, roll your eyes, scoff at the unlikelihood and then jot them down so that you can repeat them at inappropriate moments to make people look at you like you're crazy.

Mandibles is a must-read creature feature. Against other ant-based books (Wendig's Invasive, Colucci's The Colony), it's a clear winner as well. Definitely check this one out if you haven't already. Ridiculous fun.

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## **Eric says**

Giant ants invade Tampa. Highly recommended for anyone who has fond memories of *Them!* and other big bug movies.

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## **Todd Russell says**

Fire ants terrorize Tampa! Seems like a headline you might find in a 50s B-movie and I'm guessing Jeff Strand is a fan. Similar in frenetic pacing to Wolf Hunt, this one gets right into the ant vs. man carnage. Because so many different characters are introduced in the beginning I found it a bit harder to connect to anybody until additional scenes from characters already seen started happening.

Dustin, the entomologist, appears first to be the primary protagonist, but he shares a lot of time with a couple others. Dustin is known as "the ant expert" by my two favorite criminal characters, Hack and Slash. Hack & Slash are pure Jeff Strand mad scientist creations. Few authors compare in the ability to make unlikable characters like these two miscreants (somewhat) likable, or at least enjoyable as a guilty pleasure. In many of Strand's books, you'll find characters who are on the wrong side of the law and the author makes you care

about their misadventures.

The body count is high in this one and there is more than a few surprise twists. The humor is a little toned down in favor of some scenes that literally crawl. People you think will live die and people you think will die live, which is another credit to the excellent story telling. I didn't *love* this like some other Strand books (Dweller, Wolf Hunt, The Sinister Mr. Corpse), but it's a very strong four star read and recommended for those in the mood for a good killer insect read.

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