

Marlborough Public Library Adult Book Club

February 13 or 15, 2024

*The House at the End of the World* by Dean Koontz

Conversation with Dean Koontz abridged from:

<https://www.scifinow.co.uk/books/dean-koontz-on-his-latest-novel-his-favourite-villains-and-whats-coming-up-next/>

Where did you get inspiration for the island of Jacob's Ladder? Is it based on anywhere real?

As a reader and movie buff, I've always liked stories in which the lead character is confined to a limited space, alone, and without easy access to help. That's really a metaphor for life, though it's best not to think about that. I've added Jacob's Ladder and Ringrock to the end of the Thousand Island chain that extends from the St. Lawrence River into Lake Ontario. The Great Lakes are so large that a strategically placed island can feel as isolated as if the surrounding water were a sea.

Do you think an island like Ringrock exists? If so, what do you think might be happening there?

Life imitates art all the time, so surely a Ringrock is out there under another name. I have been humbled enough by life to know that my ability to imagine the extent of human arrogance and foolishness falls far short of the true extent of that arrogance and foolishness, so whatever is happening on the real-world Ringrock is even worse than anything in my book. You should consider reading this novel as vital preparation if you hope to survive what your self-appointed betters will eventually bring down on you.

We spend a lot of the book with Katie alone on a remote island. What was it like writing from this perspective?

Well, she's alone in the sense that she has no one to turn to for help. When in a lonely wood or other remote place, most of us have had the eerie feeling that we're not really alone, that in fact we're watched or even being stalked. This feeling overcomes Katie early in the book, and her instinct quickly proves right. I like the atmosphere that arises out of this circumstance, the creepy sense that there's someone or something unknown in the next room, just outside the window or on the other side of the door. And of course there often is!

The problem for the writer is that there must be a series of reveals that surprise the reader and either deepen the mystery or make the situation more terrifying. I worried that when Katie at last got off her island, the tension and suspense would diminish. When instead everything got worse, I was fiendishly delighted. Some days I wonder about myself.