

KAIJU RISING

AGE OF
MONSTERS

FEATURING

LARRY CORREIA • JAMES LOVEGROVE • JAMES MAXEY • C.L. WERNER
JAMES MAXEY • DAVID ANNANDALE • KANE GILMOUR
JONATHAN WOOD • NATANIA BARRON • EDWARD M. ERDELAC

AND MORE!

EDITED BY **N.X. SHARPS & TIM MARQUITZ**

WITH A FOREWORD BY **JEREMY ROBINSON**



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MONSTERS ARE TRAGIC BEINGS.

They are born too tall, too strong, too heavy. They are not evil by choice. That is their tragedy. They do not attack people because they want to, but because of their size and strength, mankind has no other choice but to defend himself. After several stories such as this, people end up having a kind of affection for the monsters. They end up caring about them.

—Ishirô Honda, Japanese film director (1911-1993)

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FOREWORD

JEREMY ROBINSON

A JOLT ROLLS THROUGH THE boy's bedroom floor. A truck going by? *No*, he thinks, *too powerful*. Eyes wide, he stands slowly and turns toward an east-facing window. A streak of blue ocean cuts across the view, a mile off and two hundred feet below. The water of Beverly Harbor is hard to see through the maples lining the backyard, but his imagination fills in the blanks. He's spent enough time on the coast of his home town to mentally render the craggy shoreline.

The window grinds open. Early summer heat, thick with recent rain flows into the room. The wet metal screen, warming in the sun, smells so strong he can taste it. Staring out at the ocean view, the boy mindlessly picks at the chipping paint covering the wood between window and screen.

He watches, patiently waiting, until...

Thrum.

The room shakes again.

He's coming, the boy thinks.

The distant ocean swells. A massive form pushes up, the film of water falling away in great sheets of hissing foam. The monster is huge. Massive. Larger than the boy remembered. Fully exposed, rising high above the ocean and higher above the boy's home, the

gargantuan roars.

Smiling, the boy watches the creature's approach.

Buildings implode under foot.

Others explode.

Smoke rises. People flee. Chaos reigns.

And yet, the boy smiles.

A flash of blue light flickers along the spines lining the green behemoth's back. The light bursts from the giant's mouth, carving an arc of destruction through familiar neighborhoods, through the cemetery, through Shane Dillon's house.

Yes...

The monster, a Kaiju of epic proportions, stands at the bottom of Prospect Hill, atop which the boy's house is located. And yet, it towers over the boy, turning its head down and roaring again.

Blue light flickers.

The monster turns its eyes downward, connecting with the boy's for a moment.

The boy smiles and speaks for the first time. "Godzilla."

THE STORY I JUST TOLD you isn't fiction (so calm down, Toho), it's a memory. The boy is me, circa 1983. I'm nine years old. It's Saturday afternoon, and I've just returned home from a victorious soccer match. I've shed my shin guards, but I'm still wearing my orange jersey, number 37, and cleats. However, I'm not thinking about the game, I'm thinking about how I spent my morning before the game. *Creature Double Feature*, which aired in the Boston area from 1977–1983, was my Saturday morning routine. The show introduced me to Godzilla, Gamera, King Kong and the slew of Kaiju they battled. I was also exposed to other monsters like zombies, gargoyles, vampires and a variety

of aliens, but none got so thoroughly lodged in my imagination as the city destroying giants.

In my room, I imagined Godzilla rising from the ocean, which I could barely see, and laying waste to my hometown of Beverly, Massachusetts. In the winter, I became Godzilla, stomping up and down the snow-plowed roads, using chunks of snow for buildings, roaring, as I laid waste to the neighborhood.

Flash forward thirty years, I'm an author. I've written 40+ novels and novellas, and nearly all of them feature monsters—aliens, ancient Nephilim, Greek myths reborn and modern legends, but no Kaiju. While I personally consider all my monsters Kaiju, which means 'strange beast' in Japanese, I had yet to conjure a beast capable of flattening a city. Then, two and a half years ago, I decided to fulfill some childhood fantasies, and Nemesis was born.

Nemesis is a Godzilla-sized Kaiju that stomps down the New England coast, all the way to Boston. On the way, she (yes, she) makes a stop in Beverly Harbor, rises from the ocean and wipes out a good portion of my hometown. The child in me had been waiting a long time to tell that story. Even more than that, the home base for the government agency tasked with handling the Kaiju threat in the story, is located at the top of the hill I grew up on.

A short time later, the movies *Pacific Rim* and the new *Godzilla* were announced, and Kaiju started getting attention. I released *Project Nemesis* in November of 2012, eight months before the release of *Pacific Rim*, which helped Kaiju become a household term. *Project Nemesis* quickly became the bestselling original Kaiju novel—ever. A bold claim, sure, but let's dissect it.

The word ‘original’ means a non-Godzilla novel, because if we look at the history of novels, the only other Kaiju novels of note, up to this point, were the Godzilla novels published in the 1990s. The fourth novel in the series, *Godzilla vs the Robot Monsters* was published in 1999. The fifth novel in the series, *Godzilla and the Lost Continent* was written, but never published...meaning the series failed. I suspect this would be different now, but the result was that between 1999 and 2012, there wasn’t a single noteworthy Kaiju novel published.

Which means that my claiming *Project Nemesis* is the bestselling original Kaiju novel is 1.) Accurate, and 2.) Not especially impressive. Kaiju, as a genre, has been largely ignored by the publishing world. But thanks to technological advances in publishing, small presses and self-publishers now have the ability to tackle subgenres considered too risky by large publishers. Unfortunately, the genre (as of writing this foreword) is still largely represented in popular fiction by *Project Nemesis* and its sequel, *Project Maigo*.

But not for long.

Enter *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters*. This collection of Kaiju shorts continues the traditions begun by Kaiju pioneers, bringing tales of destruction, hope and morality in the form of giant, city destroying monsters. Even better, the project was funded by Kickstarter, which means *you*, Dear Reader, made this book possible. And that is a beautiful thing. It means Kaiju, in pop-fiction, are not only alive and well, they’re stomping their way back into the spotlight, where they belong. Featuring amazing artwork, stories from some of the best monster writers around and a publishing team that has impressed me from the beginning, *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters* is a welcome addition to the Kaiju genre and an anthology of epic proportions. My

inner nine-year-old is shouting at me to shut-up and let you get to the Kaiju. So, without further delay, let's all enjoy us some Kaiju Rising.

—Jeremy Robinson, bestselling author of *Project Nemesis* and *Island 731*

BIG BEN AND THE END OF THE PIER SHOW

JAMES LOVEGROVE

THE FOREVER FUN PIER HAD stood for more than a century, surviving everything the world could throw at it: two wars, three recessions, innumerable storms, and the endless corrosive lick of salt water. But it was no match for a two-hundred-foot-tall sea monster and an almost as gigantic robot.

IRONICALLY, ON THE DAY THE pier was destroyed, owner Keith Brown was trying to decide its fate.

He was on the horns of a dilemma which were, to him, no smaller than the horns of the Kaiju currently wending its way up the English Channel towards his hometown.

On the one hand, he had a firm offer from an entertainment consortium to buy the pier. They would take it off his hands, lock, stock, and barrel, no questions asked, for a cash lump sum.

The money was not retiring money, not head-off-to-the-Bahamas-and-drink-margaritas-for-the-rest-of-your-days money. Once tax was deducted and business debts paid off, there wouldn't be much left. Barely a few thousand. But the pier would not be his headache anymore; it would be someone else's, someone with deeper pockets and friendlier creditors.



Illustration by **ROBERT ELROD**

On the other hand, Keith had been contemplating an insurance job. A fire would do the trick. A jerry can of petrol left in the fuse box room. A burning rag. It would look like an electrical accident, a stray spark from a circuit breaker igniting a terminal conflagration. The pier's ancient, weathered boards would go up like tinder. Its wooden superstructure would be a raging inferno in no time. The fire brigade would have no chance of saving it.

The benefit of this option was that the insurance company would cough up the pier's full market value, giving him twice the amount the entertainment consortium was tendering.

The drawback? Well, if he was caught and convicted of arson, there'd be no payout. Instead, there'd be a hefty fine and a stretch in jail. Besides, how *could* he burn the pier down? It had been in his family for four generations. His great-grandfather built it. His grandfather paid off the last of the initial bank loan. His father presided over the pier's long, slow decline as a going concern. Keith inherited a sizeable overdraft and a crumbling, barely profitable business that incurred eye-watering overheads in maintenance and upkeep and was dependent on the vagaries of tourist crowds and the British summer.

But it was still the Brown family pier, their livelihood since 1885. Keith's attachment to it went beyond the merely financial; was rooted in his psyche. The pier was in his DNA, in his soul. Its rusty cast-iron stilts were his legs. Its white-and-blue finials and cupolas were his brain, his dreams. Its rickety helter-skelter was his heart.

THE KAIJU, NICKNAMED RED DEVIL, toiled eastward up the Channel, inbound from the Atlantic. Sometimes he swam, thrashing himself along with great sweeps of his tail. Other times, when his feet could reach the seabed, he waded, neck deep. Puffs of smoke curled from his cavernous nostrils with every exhalation. His horns rose proud like two galleons.