

# Kilowatt

A Novel



**You never know** who you are going to meet at a conference or exhibition. One thing is for sure – there will be many interesting people from our industry. But this time while I was attending the Western Power Delivery Automation Conference in Spokane, Washington I met someone who is not from our industry, but was drawn to the exhibition area in the Davenport hotel by his interest in electric power and all the issues related to it.

Upon meeting him, he held in his hand a book, his book it turns out, *Kilowatt*, which is the subject of this review. It triggered an interesting conversation and I decided right then and there that I would find the time to review this book – even though it isn't a technical book, but fiction.

I think a quote from the web site [http://www.readkilowatt.com/joe\\_mchugh.html](http://www.readkilowatt.com/joe_mchugh.html) describes the author quite well as "... a professional storyteller, public radio producer, playwright, museum director, festival organizer, old-time fiddler, educational consultant and home-grown philosopher. He regularly lectures on the art and practice of storytelling in the electronic age and has written two collections of folktales and humor and an illustrated children's book about the early days of aviation."

It is difficult to define the category of the book, because it is multidimensional. On the surface it looks like a thriller, because we have a couple of ordinary people – two journalists from a small town radio station – trying to find the truth about a mysterious power plant in Texas that is making the employees sick. They are standing up against different villains – ruthless corporate executives and their cronies, corrupt politicians and the Russian mafia.

At the same time the book is philosophical. The subject of time is directly related to the main plot, but it is also discussed from the point of view of our existence in time and how it changes depending on our state of mind. The book raises a lot of other questions (e.g. the meaning of "clean" power). We define things based on what we know, as well as our personal experience. Something that does not produce CO<sub>2</sub> and radiation may look clean, but if it caused the sinking of a Soviet submarine – is it?

This brings us to a different line in the story – the moral responsibility of the scientist while letting the Genie out of the bottle.

Another difficulty with classifying

the book is due to the technology used to generate the power in the rural Texan plant. For us, as protection engineers, it is clear that such technology does not exist – so maybe this will make *Kilowatt* a science fiction book. Regardless of the fact that everything is happening here – on the planet Earth, and today – not somewhere in the future.

It is impossible to talk about this 400 pages book in the limited space we have available here. But what is important to say, is that this is a very well written story that keeps you turning the pages trying to find the answers to the many questions that Joe McHugh raises:

- How does the power plant work?
  - What is the energy source?
  - Who is going to win – Alice and Reb or the villains?
  - What happens to the inventor of the technology?
- And many more...

Well, I am not going to tell you. You will have to read the book.

*Kilowatt* by Joe McHugh  
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