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In Orangefield, Halloween is never normal—and this year will be no exception. For Orangefield is now the home of Halloweenland, a bizarre carnival run by the mysterious Mr. Dickens. No one who sees this carnival doubts that it's a very strange place, but its real secrets can hardly be imagined.

Orangefield is also the home of Detective Bill Grant, who thinks he's seen it all. He's on the trail of an odd little girl, a girl who could hold the end of the universe in her hand. The trail will lead Grant to Ireland, the ancient home of the Lord of the Dead, then back to Orangefield, where, on what may be the last Halloween, the ultimate battle between Life and Death will take place.

Halloweenland Details

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Author : Al Sarrantonio

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From Reader Review Halloweenland for online ebook

Christine says

Halloweenland is a novel that had its first breath as the short story 'The Baby,' and it is this short story which opens the book (and lasts the first 77 pages — and not to mention is included again at the end of the book as 'The short Curious History of 'The Baby'', serving no purpose but to seemingly take up space).

Marianne Carlin wants a baby more than anything else in this world. Her husband, Jack, would rather drink and hang out with his friends. On the night when they plan to conceive their child, Jack comes home late and smells of booze. But he promised, and so they make love. Marianne's dream come true and she finds out she's pregnant ... problem is Jack died hours before they made love.

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Cassie says

Very little horror on hand here. It didn't bother me so much that this was part of a series - it stood alone well enough until the ending called back to characters I didn't know - but the plot moseyed along despite the meager page count and nothing scary really happened. I was lured in by the back cover description of the Halloweenland amusement park since I have a thing about amusement park horror, but it features in the action of the story so slightly it didn't even need to be there.

(view spoiler)

DAISY DISNEY says

This was the only Halloween book I was able to read for this season and it was a disappointment. Not a lot of action and the story just did not put me in the Halloween spirit as I had hoped.

Sarah says

This book required a major suspension of disbelief, because the plot was pretty ridiculous when you get down to it – a ghost conceiving with a woman a child that is actually Satan who is plotting to end all of existence, and death personified protecting her, while an alcoholic cop tries to thwart the apocalypse. But if you do suspend disbelief, it's actually pretty fun book. I wasn't crazy about the ending, but I really did enjoy the ride. I would recommend this to fans of horror who want a quick read that is suspenseful and full of interesting detail.

Randolph says

Probably the best of the Orangefield novels. Hardboiled detective Bill Grant is Sarrantonio's best realized character and he stays for the entire novel here. Sarrantonio is trying to capture some of the feel of Charles L. Grant's Oxrun Station novels and stories but he just isn't the writer Grant is. Tying himself to the Halloween holiday especially makes it hard to provide sufficient variety to the plots. Unlike Oxrun Station, these novels should be read in the proper chronology (NOT the order they were written).

Jeff O'Brien says

Probably the most well written of the trilogy, but not quite as much fun as the first book: Horrorween. This one was slightly less B-Movieish than book two: Hallows Eve, returning to the more straight up horror of book one.

Sarrantonio called on some classic suspense, and pulled it off quite well, as I found myself staying up late into the night devouring every page. He even threw in a Dan Brown style surprise toward the end that added to the fun in a perfect way.

It's a bummer that these books are out of print, but it's good that I was able to find them used for less than two dollars each. They are all quick, fun reads, and I would say Halloweenland was the perfect ending to a great trilogy that any horror fan should read.

John Bruni says

I'm not a big fan of the Orangefield stories, but this one was a lot of fun. Detective Grant once again goes up against Samhain, but this time there is a twist. Marianne, who may or may not have had sex with the ghost of her husband, gives birth to a girl who has a very sinister purpose. Grant has to figure out a way to find this girl before she can destroy the world. There is a lot of fun in this, especially when Grant has to go to Samhain's home, to Ireland. Mr. Dickens's carnival is great, as is the mysterious Mr. Dickens. I figure he named himself after the phrase "scare the dickens out of you." The ending is a bit on the silly side, but that's my only gripe. As for "The Baby," the additional novella, it's essentially the same as part one of the book except for the ending. Still, this book is fun.

Beth Roberts says

I feel like some readers have judged this trilogy a little harshly.

I think expectations were a little too high. So, here's my thinking on some of the points others have made:

1. Not scary. Well, no, I myself didn't feel any level of fear from any of the three books in this trilogy. Frankly, I'm not sure I was intended to. I did like a lot of the various characters and I "cared" about them. But okay - so look at the covers, particularly the cute owl in the tree on the cover of book two. Does that scream sheer terror to you? To me, it says "Oh cool, funky nostalgic Halloween schtick. " And guess what? I was

right! That said, there are some sort of gory parts, especially in the first two books. Unless you tend to serious hysterical drama, you'll be okay.

2. Not well-written. Other than some minor editing oversights, I didn't find any serious flaws. The author told a story. Sometimes it went in a different direction, but I'm okay with that, too. Then again, I wasn't expecting this Sarrantonio guy to be quite up to par with Joyce or Hemingway.

3. Boring. I'm seeing this complaint in a lot of reviews lately. What does that even mean and how is it a valid complaint? I didn't find these books boring. Nor did I find them as entertaining as, say, finding \$10k in my mailbox. What the hell?

There's more, but really, I don't need to justify myself anymore. Either read these books or don't - it's not like it matters to me. Here's the rub: I got three books for 99 cents. They amused me for a decent length of time. This last one I liked the best.

Kurt Criscione says

This is the third book in Sarrantonio's Orangefield series... the writing was fine, with quick chapters, great pacing, and a pretty straight forward story. I really like Detective Grant... though towards the end i thought his dealings with his "enemy" were a little odd... also i broke my own rule which is never ever read a series out of order...as this was my first ever from Sarrantonio and there was some reference back to the other books... made me really wich i had read them.

Also the back cover of the book is just WRONG. I blame that on Leisure though.... reading the back cover one is thinking they're going to get a creep carnival during halloween (2 of favourite things in horror novels)... well the titular Carnival is only in the brought in in the middle of the first half and then again at the very end of the book. Other than a setting for the climax (and then only HALF the climax is in the carnival) it plays no real role in the book. :(

Donald says

This is part of the 2008 Cemetery Dance book club(September selection). I've just received it in June of 2009. Mine is one of 1250 signed copies.

Al must have written about some of these characters before, particularly the ex-cop - Detective Bill Grant. Or maybe he wrote about the town - Orangefield, New York.

The cop has a real drinking problem which he has to overcome in order to investigate what exactly happened the night Jack Carlin died. His wife thinks he came home and made love to her. Afterward, she finds out she's pregnant. The problem is that Jack died hours before. And Orangefield's residents begin reporting Samhain sightings.

Samhain is the Lord of Death.

This story takes the idea of immaculate conception and turns it on its head for a well paced quick read that

travels from New York to Ireland and back again to Orangefield. The story is well imagined and fun to read.

Deedra says

I listened to the Audible version. The 3rd in a series, this book was nearly great, except I found some of it a bit confusing. We are given back the first narrator, Gene Blake, who does wonderful character voices. Orangefield, once known as Pumpkinfield, is famous for its Halloween traditions. There is a big festival, a carnival and pumpkins are everywhere. Lurking within some of them are spirits and envoys of the Lord of the Dead. Sam Hain finds that his whole being is in question. The battle for the world will happen on what may be the last Halloween ever. A great culmination to a really fun series.

"I was provided this audiobook at no charge by the author, publisher and/or narrator in exchange for an unbiased review via AudiobookBlast or MalarHouse dot com"

Eric says

This wasn't much of a Halloween novel. It took place at Halloween, but the holiday isn't central to the plot. The writing is good, the pace is brisk due to the short chapters, but it also felt a bit disjointed, especially with a five-year jump in time and a detour from Orangefield to Ireland. The secondary characters weren't fully developed and existed only to service the plot. The ending was very odd; the Big Bad proved alarmingly easy to defeat. It struck me as a cop-out. Not the best Halloween novel, and certainly not the author's best.

Donna says

This was a random PaperbackSwap find for me and it sounded interesting enough and all in the Halloween spirit so why not, right? Except it was less than exceptional in its execution and was sorely lacking in its build-up of suspense and any scare factors. A lot of tell going on and short on the way of show so I just wasn't invested in most of it.

The pacing was, at times, awkward and seemed to stagger on some portions and fast forward through far too many more that probably would have been more relevant and eerie to the plot. The carnival itself isn't even mentioned until two-thirds of the way through the book and even then we see it get erected and then not again until the climax so I think to really hinge so much of the story on the carnival is a bit of false advertising.

Grant's your standard hard knock cop who goes off the deep end a bit when a demon child gets born because he's the only one who knows about it and can't prove it. He loses his job and then, of course, keeps posing as a police officer in order to get access to the information he needs to solve this mystery he's building. The initial scary element, this figure of death, gets reduced, rather quickly, to this kissy faced creature with overt concern for this child that was just born in a most unnatural way. Then he gets all existential and anything scary it once had vanishes. The child itself is seen for a moment when it's born and then in flashes as it ages and then once again in full view once the story's climax comes into play. For a demon spawn she really isn't developed enough to be scary. Of course I'm told she's scary because she kills with a touch but beyond that . . . why has no one dropped kicked this serial killing five-year-old yet? It's like, I don't know . . . a killer doll.

Because they're so difficult to overcome, what with their size and strength . . .

The conception of this death child was the most interesting part and it gets glossed over. Anything scary is glossed over. Suspense is glossed over. Really, there isn't very much that isn't slid over for the sake of advancing the plot. I think this could have been genuinely creepy if a little more care was given to really homing in on suspense. If I'm not actually afraid of anything, what do I care what's going on? And it did become difficult for me to keep reading because I just wasn't interested in what happened. Plus, the "bonus" novella at the end that was talked up as being so different from the opening part of the book turned out to be nearly exactly the same but where Part 1 of the book obviously had to open the story up the novella's ending finished it.

Meh. I didn't dig this one. The ambiance wasn't there. I didn't FEEL like it was Halloween and I didn't get carnival feelings once that came into play either. I wasn't scared, I wasn't on the edge of my seat. I just wasn't digging it at all. It's a story. It serves a purpose. But it seemed it was more interested in getting the story out than giving it time to grow and that care is what I'm missing. Without it I feel nothing.

1 1/2

Hazy says

This book is based on a 80-page short story by the same author called 'The Baby', which also came with the edition I got. Read that story and skip the actual novel. The short story is decent, gets to the point, and ends on a satisfying note.

The novel dicks around Ireland for forty pages, doesn't establish the villain that well and makes you feel that not much got accomplished by the time you read the final page. Also, the 'twists' are just random curveballs from left field that don't make sense and much of the novel is reliant on you reading the previous installments and not standing on its own two feet.

Carrie (brightbeautifulthings) says

I picked this up at a used book sale because it had Halloween in the title, and I have a problem. (Maybe several? They include a bottomless love for horror and pathological book buying, to start.) I realized after I bought it but before I started reading that it was third in the series, and then went ahead and read it anyway. Life offers so few chances to be a rebel.

Detective Bill Grant is used to the "weird shit" that happens in Orangefield every Halloween, but either he's getting older or the shit is getting weirder. When a hit and run accident results on some strange events, Grant knows it has something to do with Samhain, the ghostly Lord of Death who rules over Halloween. It isn't until a sinister carnival called Halloweenland is set up outside of town that he realizes the "weird shit" this time might actually lead to the apocalypse.

I don't think it's completely necessary to read this book with the rest of the series. I didn't have any trouble following the plot or the characters, although I suspect a reveal late in the novel lacked some of its punch for me because it connects to earlier plots. It has a nice Halloween atmosphere, and it's a fun, easy ride for fans

of paranormal detective fiction. I may go back and read them eventually if I happen across copies, but I probably won't go out of my way either.

The novel starts with an awkward sex scene that actually ends up being one of the creepiest moments in the book, but... I'm just not sure I would start a detective novel that way. I'm fine with an occasional steamy romance novel, but I probably would have put it down if that weirdness continued. Fortunately, it doesn't. The writing is passable but not overwhelming, and the pacing is strange due to a five year gap in the timeline and an unnecessary and undeveloped field trip to Ireland. Structurally, I wasn't that impressed by it.

Detective Grant is basically the stock detective: tragic past, drinks too much, but is incredibly good at his job. I like him because I like that archetype, but it isn't exactly groundbreaking. The rest of the characters are fleeting and forgettable, with the exception of Samhain. While I love the idea of incorporating him as a character, it wasn't as effective as I'd hoped. The rule for most monster films (or books) is that the more screen/page time the monster gets, the less frightening it is, and Samhain gets considerably less frightening as the novel goes on. (My favorite Samhain character is still the one from Trick 'r Treat.) The most interesting interactions take place between Grant and Samhain though, and if I were going to read any of the other Orangefield novels, that would be why. He's certainly more interesting than the actual villain, which is a flatly evil child of Satan that the story doesn't do much justice. Her motivation for ending the world is pretty much because that's what children of Satan do. Yawn.

The back cover promises a creepy, Halloween-style carnival, and I'm always chasing stories like this after falling fast and hard for *Something Wicked This Way Comes*—which is really unfair because who can compete with Ray Bradbury? No one. And *Halloweenland* doesn't even come close. The place barely features until well toward the end of the novel, and other than a nonsensical tour through the freak tent, there isn't much to it.

There's a novella called "The Baby" at the end of my edition, which is word for word the first seventy-five pages of the book with a minor twist in the last two pages. I was skimming after the first few chapters and a little annoyed that more hadn't changed—otherwise, why bother to include it? For all the buildup, the changed ending didn't make a lot of sense, and it doesn't bring anything more to either story.

I review regularly at brightbeautifulthings.tumblr.com.
