



Nightmare Seasons

Charles L. Grant

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Four Oxrun Station horror novellas each from a different 20th century decade starting with 1950, keyed to the seasons.

Nightmare Seasons Details

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Author : Charles L. Grant

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From Reader Review *Nightmare Seasons* for online ebook

Thomas says

It's been a while since I've read a short story collection that wasn't by Neil Gaiman or Stephen King, but when I realized *The Long Night of the Grave* was the last Oxbun Station novel, I figured it would be a good time to go ahead and read the Oxbun Station collections. There are four of them, each with four interrelated stories, and *Nightmare Seasons* is the first of them. In this case, the four stories are each centered on one season, and each story is set ten years apart from the previous one. Surrounding these stories is a vignette to tie them together, though it doesn't carry the importance of the stories themselves.

Thou Need Not Fear My Kisses, Love, the 1930 Spring story, is a supernatural story of obsession and murder. Obsession stories are easy to come by, and usually done a lot better than this (which could partly be due to the brevity of the story; the obsession doesn't really have enough time to get convincing), and the supernatural element is a little cheesy. The story is still full of Grant-isms, but his trademark slow build-up seems to be more a hindrance than a benefit here. Reducing the story to a quarter of its length lessens the impact of an intentional build-up of suspense.

Strangely, this doesn't hold true for *Now There Comes a Darker Day*, the 1940 Summer story. Here, Grant tells a slow, casual story of a mysterious woman and the death that follows her, and from start to finish, the tension and atmosphere grows until something as innocuous as a rainstorm portends something significant. In the case of this story, the brevity enhances the story, as if it had been drawn out any further, the events would have been strained, and the story forced.

Night's Swift Dragons, the 1950 Autumn story, feels like it was Grant's first attempt at *Raven*, a book that came later in his career. In it, a group of people is isolated in a restaurant while something begins picking them off; in this novella, a group of people is locked inside a post office while a motorcycle gang with sinister motives waits for them outside. The story was eerie and effective, but then in the last couple of pages, Grant had to go and tack on an ending that came out of nowhere.

The last story, *The Color of Joy*, the 1960 Winter story, follows in the theme of obsession and stalking, though from a different perspective as the other three stories. Here, instead of the stalker being potentially harmful to the stalkee, the stalker is a threat to those surrounding the stalkee. It's not a new twist by any means, but Grant still tells his tale in such a way as to make it unique.

My appreciation of the individual stories depends on whether or not I was able to read the stories uninterrupted, which suggests that these stories might be better read all in one sitting. I think interrupting the story damages its potential, since the stories slowly creep higher into a sense of dread and inevitability. The whole book doesn't have to be read in one sitting, but it helps to be able to read each story without distraction. Under those circumstances, the stories work very well.

Kevin Lucia says

**So awesome, as always. Moving on to *The Orchard*...

Oxrun Station - spookiest town on the face of the Earth, where people go to vanish and never be seen ever again. Grant's prose is like fine, elegant liquor that tingles on the way down and burns when it hits. Oxrun Station and Charles L. Grant - my new literary obsessions. I'm almost depressed to have discovered them both this late in the games....

Xand50 says

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The basic premise in the prologue is that a man, sitting in the library on a rainy, spring day, is given a strange book about "seasons". The book contains accounts of some strange events that

Tobin Elliott says

Now I remember why I liked Grant so much. This is the book I read 25 years ago. I had a vague recollection of one story going by hours through the scenes. So, 6:45, then 7:10, and so on.

It's the third story in this collection, and I think I enjoyed it more this time around than I did back then.

Grant seems to work better in a shorter format. Each of these novellas could easily have been full-length novels in his hands, and they would have lost so much of their impact. Finally, after the obligatory 750-word opening that focuses (usually) on the weather or (less often) on a setting, Grant got right down to business with each of these stories. Stuff actually happened.

And they were, for the most part, really good stories.

My faith is somewhat restored in the author, but the next one is back to novel-length, so we'll see if he returns to form.

Dean says

This is the second I've read of Grant's work and it's made me an even bigger fan. Four chilling tales of quite horror that correspond with the seasons. Grant's writing is the stuff nightmares are made of. Every sentence is alive with character. There is a reason Stephen King called him one of the premier horror writers of any generation--because it's the truth. You will not be disappointed by Nightmare Seasons.

Timothy G. Huguenin says

I love small town horror (possibly because most of my life has been lived in small towns). I also like New England a lot, though I've never lived there (family from there, probably has something to do with it; Dad's from CT in fact). So I was predisposed to like this book.

This is a collection of 4 horror novellas all set in the fictional Oxrun Station, CT, during different time

periods. The prologue and epilogue are from the first person perspective of the narrator living in Oxbun Station who receives an unmarked book containing the stories. He writes them off as mostly fiction, though he recognizes names and events in them. This kind of framing device is more common to older writers like Poe and Le Fanu, but I love it and feel like it makes Oxbun Station seem more real. Grant's strength is in the town's imagery, though a few times his prose was just a little too repetitive (in those places it is meant to be poetic, but it didn't sit right with me; YMMV).

The stories didn't blow my mind for originality or deep characterization, but I do want to read more of Grant's stuff, especially to learn more from his descriptive talent.

Aric Cushing says

Four stories that are good and encapsulate a time period in the 80's when paperback horror books were plethora. What happened to the pulpy covers? We don't see enough of that today.

DeAnna Knippling says

Well written, and similar enough in style that I can only hope to write that well, but...

Why does everything "horror" have to be poisoned with sexism? WHY IS THAT THE STORY THAT HAS TO BE REPEATED. Women flee men because the women are so pretty that it's a curse. Women destroy men...or rather those unwanted excess children of single mothers do. Single mothers, amirite? Men eventually have to throw women away; otherwise they'll be trapped in a marriage forever. Joke! Your dreams died anyway. Women destroy the men that pressure them, so it's their fault anyway. Haha, so original.

The truly creepy part is enjoying some delicious fictional creepiness...only to run into that old tale again, that the only important things about a woman are her beauty and subservience. And when those things aren't used in service to a man, the RIGHT man, she's either killed or turned into a monster. I'm tired of it.

I was SO hyped to read this when I started. It was like a slap in the face.

But well written. Yeah.

Randolph says

My quest to read everything about Oxbun Station, the worst place to live in the US, maybe the world.

Another fine outing for Mr. Grant. This time instead of a novel it is four longer stories set a decade apart in Oxbun Station: 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, and each dealing with a different season of the year. Each story is slightly linked to the others and there is a framing story for the whole lot. There is also a little reference to other Oxbun Station goings on but it is not necessary to read any other OS novels to get in on it here.

I would say the first (snakes) and third (motorcycle gangs) story were the least effective for me just because the type of menace wasn't quite up to snuff for me, but 1950 and 1970 were outstanding for me. I find the

motorcycle gang particularly dated since most Harley riders these days have to transition to a walker once they get off the bike. The other two stories were still good and all four plots were sufficiently different from each other (and the other Oxrun canon) that you won't get bored.

Typical of Grant is a gradual buildup of menace as things go along with maybe one or two dramatic events early on in the story but otherwise just a slow build of disturbing details as the story goes on. Grant has strong endings and this is no exception here.

Laura Ruetz says

Horror is not always in your face blood and guts. Sometimes it is something more subtle; something that is felt but not really seen until it is too late. Four stories are the subject of this book, four stories, one for each season and each one containing something hellish and evil.

The writing is rich with imagery but just enough is left to your imagine that your mind fills in all the blanks. I had forgotten how much I enjoyed reading Charles L. Grant's works and if there is a complaint about this book it is that it is too short...I was left wanting more. The stories are captivating, you do not see what is coming until it is there; always a twist and always something that makes you want to look over your shoulder and turn on that extra light.

Sarah says

?Book Review! ???

So I picked this book out at a library sale, not knowing what it was about. It caught my eye because of the review from Stephen King on the title: ". . . one of the premier horror writers of his or any generation." I also liked the cover art and the name of the book.

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So this book is broken up into four different short stories according to the seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. There's a story about an obsessed lover who becomes a killer, a child who eliminates her mother's lovers with storms, a group of people trapped in a Post Office that get picked off one by one, and a dark figure that stalks a stressed woman and gets rid of what makes her unhappy. They're creepy short reads that I enjoyed, but were pretty predictable. I still had fun with it, though.

Kate says

Four interlinked short stories of animal attacks, mysterious deaths and disappearances, and unresolved mysteries, set in a book given to the narrator of the prologue on a rainy night. Four seasons, four decades to explain what goes on in Oxrun Station.

The narrative style of the stories is difficult to follow at first, particularly with the first short story. The past and present are intertwined when the reader is introduced to Sam (Samantha) and her two rival boyfriends. The subsequent stories become easier to comprehend as the reader builds momentum. Some characters who appear in one story will appear in the next, ten or twenty years older. They all know Oxrun. They know strange things happen in Oxrun, but live on in their familiar environment until the strangeness gets them. The

strange is normal and inevitable.

Peter says

One of the early 80s classic collections. 4 classic novellas played with a kind of sneaky pete tone, starting slow but getting absolutely page turning. Spooky stuff for every horror fan! Read it with Time of the Season for a background soundtrack. My personal favourite was the summer story!

Anand Gautam says

The magic of Charles L Grant. The USP of his writing is not the horror in itself, but the atmosphere it creates: quiet and tense at the same time. Nightmare Seasons takes the reader into the season, and the Oxrun station and makes one feel there as a spectator of the events and conversations. Good book for a night read.

Charles says

Excellent.
