



## Optical Delusion

*Hunter Shea*

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**Optical Delusion** Hunter Shea

**OPEN YOUR EYES WITH “X-RAY” VISION!**

Put on a pair of “X-Ray” glasses and things will never look the same! These almost magical specs will make you the hit of the party! Astonishing three-dimensional X-Ray visions of what your friends—and girls—look like under their clothes! And all for just \$1.

**THE MORE YOU WEAR THEM . . .**

Martin Blackstone punishes his son for wasting his allowance on a pair of flimsy cardboard sunglasses X-ray vision . . . yeah, right. Martin tries them on just for the hell of it—and all they do is give him a headache . . .

**. . . THE DEEPER YOU’LL SEE.**

Until he sees things he can’t possibly be seeing. Glimpses of things on the other side of a wall or beneath someone’s clothing. He wants to believe it’s just his overactive imagination but the “X-Ray” specs actually work. Then the fun novelty becomes a waking nightmare when the glasses burn into his face and he starts seeing horrifying apocalyptic visions no mortal man was ever meant to see. Images that alter his very personality—from a husband and father to a bloodthirsty homicidal maniac . . .

Because sometimes you can see *too* much.

**Praise for Hunter Shea**

“A lot of splattery fun.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Frightening, gripping.” —*Night Owl Reviews*

## Optical Delusion Details

Date : Published August 1st 2017 by Lyrical Underground

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Author : Hunter Shea

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## From Reader Review Optical Delusion for online ebook

### Dan Schwent says

When Martin Blackstone's son is given a pair of X-Ray specs from a comic book, they don't seem to work. Martin puts them on and discovers a whole new world lurking just beneath the surface. How far will Martin's obsession with the X-Ray specs take him?

Hunter Shea is my go-to guy when it comes to fun horror. When this came up on Netgalley, I couldn't resist.

First we got a horror novel about sea monkeys. Now, X-Ray specs! Like most pre-pubescent boys who bought comics in the late 1970s and early 80s, I saw the ads for these and always wondered what it would be like to wear a pair.

Pretty horrific, it turns out. Sure, Martin cheats at poker and ogles the hottest woman in town but sometimes, you see too much. Optical Delusion is almost a tale of addiction for that reason. It's also gory good fun as Martin goes off the rails.

Much like Just Add Water, Optical Delusion is a love letter to those cheesy ads in the backs of comic books from years past, only this love letter is written in blood. Four out of five stars.

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### Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Is it bad when the first thought after finishing this novella was that it was OK, but it would have been even better if it had been gorier? Seriously, most of the time during the story did it feel like I was waiting for everything to go haywire and when it did was it towards the end of the story, so not much carnage. I found the previous short novella in this series, Just Add Water, to be better, more satisfying to read, especially if like me want a story with lots of deaths and bloodbaths.

Now, the story isn't all bad, it not that long and it kept my interest up (despite the lack of gruesome deaths for most of the story) and one could hardly blame Martin for wanting to see some nice naked bodies. Unfortunately, for him didn't it stop there. I also liked the very end of the story. It felt very fitting.

*I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through Netgalley for an honest review!*

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### Ken McKinley says

Hunter Shea has tapped into our childhood for his latest offering of fear. Remember those ads in the backs of comic books? Muscles like Charles Atlas. Sea monkeys. Joy buzzers. Fake ice cubes with a fly in the middle. Gum that turns your mouth black. Oh, and the ever popular, X-ray glasses. I certainly remember them. More specifically, I remember wanting them and my mom saying "absolutely not". Well, what would happen if she did allow me to get those x-ray glasses and after 10 minutes of making my eyes hurt, I tossed them aside only to have my dad pick them up and put them on. And, what if, in between the fuzzy-eyed headache it produced, he saw a glimpse of a girl's panties she had on underneath her clothing? And what if, in desperate

attempts to get more than a glimpse or two of what the females looked like under their winter clothing, it caused something else? Something more hideous, more macabre, and it wouldn't let you turn away?

Optical Delusion was a fun ride into every boy that grew up in the 1970s and 80s past and warped it with a Twilight Zone twist and an EC Comic turn. My last couple of reads from Shea have been my favorites. He's honed his chops the last few years and is churning out nothing but quality lately. So much so, that he's quickly become one of my go to writers that can't miss.

5 Victoria's Secrets out of 5

\* This ARC was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

You can also follow my reviews at the following links:

<https://kenmckinley.wordpress.com>

<http://intothemacabre.booklikes.com>

<https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/5...>

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### **Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says**

Optical Delusion is another book in the Mail Order Massacres series from Hunter Shea. The first, Just Add Water, was a bit of bloody floof that was Creepshow-reminiscent and awesome. It was also (with a gore warning) something that 10+ year olds could read.

Optical Delusion is not recommended for kids. While it still puts one in mind of the old Creepshow episodes, it's definitely for adults. (Adult seriously channels his inner randy teenager, ya know?)

Blackstone is a typical male head of household for the period. He works hard, and expects to be able to go out with the boys, have a beer, have a few more at home, etc. He's not really a likable character so it's easy to grin when things start going sideways on him.

And it all starts with a pair of x-ray specs in Optical Delusion.

Channeling his inner perv, Blackstone is all riled up when he realizes that his son's x-ray specs actually work. However, unfortunately for him, he doesn't really get to experience much of the 'good stuff' before the consequences kick in.

Hunter Shea is a talented writer. Optical Delusion is a solid follow-up to Just Add Water. There were several scenes that had me grinning, and a few that made me feel as disgusted as the character. (The skeleton wife and kid scene were awesome. I could just see that one translating into bad practical effects on-screen.) However, Optical Delusion didn't appeal to me as much as the first book did. I think I was caught off guard by the more adult themes in the book to begin with. And then, while I was definitely able to enjoy it, it just

never seemed to strike quite the right chord with me.

Another entertaining book by Hunter Shea. Optical Delusion teaches readers that everything comes with a price. (And that price mostly involves lots of blood.)

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from Netgalley for review consideration.

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### **Char says**

3.5/5 stars!

The latest installment in the Mail Order Massacres series is Optical Delusion. This time around the action is focused on some X Ray glasses ordered from the back of a comic book. What could go wrong with that?

Mr. Blackstone's son tosses the specs aside because they gave him a headache and they don't work. When Martin Blackstone spots them, he scoops them up and decides to give them a try. What happens next? You'll have to read this to find out!

I enjoyed this novella for the bit of silliness that it was. It's not trying to be the next Crime and Punishment, it just wants to take you along a quick ride of "What if?" Even though I knew going into it that this was a novella, I found myself wishing for a meatier story. Overall though, Optical Delusion did meet my expectations and I had fun with it.

I'm looking forward to Mr. Shea's next foray into the world of mail order mayhem!

\*Thanks to NetGalley and Lyrical Underground for the e-ARC!\*

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### **Trish says**

*I received this ARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.*

This was my second story by Hunter Shae but, sadly, I didn't connect with it at all.

The story is about a guy who can only be described as disgusting. He works in a factory, needs several beers to be able to get through just a few hours of the day, sits in front of the TV like the personification of the prejudice, fantasizing about actresses while not exactly treating his wife nicely. Then, one day, the friend of his son comes over to play, bringing with him some x-ray specs. I can't even remember why the protagonist put them on, but he did and started wearing them more and more often. The problem? They worked. So what do you expect a perv like that to do when he can suddenly see people in their underwear or even naked? Exactly.

I wasn't so much rolling my eyes any more at this point as I was really frustrated and angry. Despicable behaviour.

Even considering that this takes place in 1978, I just cannot understand how the protagonist immediately reached the conclusion that (view spoiler). Sure, (view spoiler). Way too far-fetched. Many of his other choices were not feeling exactly natural either. Not to mention that despite this being fantasy/horror, I do need a bit of realism and how the glasses worked (on what and when not), didn't make any sense at all.

Add to that the fact that I so did NOT like the protagonist at all. No connection whatsoever, I was just disgusted with this guy's life choices and wanted him to die already so getting through the story was a bit of a chore and I wasn't creeped out one bit.

I'm not gonna stop reading stories by this author, but this one, unfortunately, was a bust for me.

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### **OutlawPoet says**

Okay, so honestly, I liked the Sea Monster (Monkey) one better, but I still really enjoyed Shea's latest book in his Mail Order Massacres series.

Yet again, Shea takes the product you always wanted from the back of the comic book and imagines what it would be like if the product really worked...horribly, terribly worked.

The book is a lot of fun, gory, and eventually takes some unexpected turns.

I just didn't love the ending.

The ending made sense. I just wanted a slam bam ending and didn't get one.

Still enjoyed the book and can't wait for whatever horrible goodies Shea brings us next!

\*ARC Provided via Net Galley

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### **Autumn Is Azathoth The Haunted Reading Room says**

Review on release date

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### **Barb (Boxermommyreads) says**

"Optical Delusion" is the second installment in Shea's Mail Order Massacres novella trilogy and while "Just Add Water" remains my favorite so far, this one was still very enjoyable and a strong addition to the series. Martin Blackstone is a hardworking blue-collar worker who enjoys his time at home, especially if he has a good beer in his hand. His son is given a pair of cheap x-ray glasses by a friend and when he casually tosses them aside, Martin gives them a try just for fun. Before long, Martin is addicted to the glasses. He is initially shocked when he's able to use them as a voyeur on unsuspecting town women, but soon the x-ray abilities deepen and the glasses become harder and harder to remove.

This book is definitely full of blood, gore and is a lot of fun. The main problem I had is that I despised Martin. However, I'm sure Shea intended it to be that way because he is in no way some poor misunderstood character. Throughout the book, I often felt sorry for the people Martin encountered and although I think he had a decent enough relationship with both his wife and his son, I think they deserved better.

"Optical Delusion" is a book which is hard to review without giving too much away. It's a fast read and any horror lover would be missing out if they at least didn't give this series a try. There's one more novella coming up and I already have my copy and am just waiting for the perfect night to curl up and read it.

This book was provided to me from the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Michael Hicks says**

*Optical Delusion*, the second in Hunter Shea's trilogy of Mail Order Massacre novellas from Kensington Press, is a more serious affair than *Just Add Water* and focused more on the psychological threat posed by X-Ray glasses. That's not to say Shea skimps on the gore, though! There's plenty of fun Harryhausen-like visuals on display as Martin Blackstone gets an eyeful of everyone he sees.

On a lark, Blackstone tries on his son's X-Ray specs, ordered from the back of a comic book, and finds, much to his surprise and eventual chagrin, that they actually work. At least for him. Brian and his buddy have already declared them a failure and waste of money, but after Martin's wife tells him he looks pretty cool in his new sunglasses, well...maybe they shouldn't be relegated to the trash heap quite so soon. The more he wears them, though, the harder it becomes to take them off, and pretty soon Martin is seeing far more than he wanted. What starts off as some peeping tom perviness quickly turns toward the grotesque. Beauty may be only skin-deep, but the darkness of the soul...well, that runs much, much deeper, and it's a foul thing indeed.

Whereas *Just Add Water* was a fun creature feature romp, *Optical Delusion* takes a decidedly more serious approach with its focus on an adult cast and deepening madness. I dug the direction this installment took, and while it's a darker work it is still compulsively readable. My only complaint comes in the story's resolution, which lacked much of a punch for me. Shea was building toward some really intriguing ideas, and while I dug the central thoughts behind the climax I wish he had explored it a bit more deeply. The story ended a bit too abruptly for my tastes, but the build-up and execution of the story overall was pretty dang satisfying.

Now bring on Money Back Guarantee!

[Note: I received an advanced copy of this title from the publisher via NetGalley.]

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### **Edward Lorn says**

First off, I know I'm not supposed to take this series seriously. I know it's supposed to be mindless fun. For fuck's sake, that's what made me want to read it. The first book, *Just Add Water*, was a big bucket of gory fun. Had a blast and gave it four stars based on fun factor alone. This one is nowhere near as good, but not entirely terrible either.

Secondly, with the fact that this is supposed to be mindless fun in mind, I still can't help but point out some inconsistencies that took me out of the story. The main character, Blackstone, is a douchebag. He likes undressing women with his eyes and thinks unkindly of anyone who isn't a big-breasted female. You know, your typical night-club attendee. He's a shithead throughout the entire book. But, suddenly, toward the end, he finds some heart and rushes to save some kid. It's completely out of character. Not to mention that, after finding the kid, he goes on to do some horrible shit. Trying not to spoil this, but the messages were mixed as fuck. Like, am I supposed to be rooting for this fuckwit? Honestly, I just wanted to see him die a horrible fucking death.

Thirdly, this guy, at some point, sees through everything. I don't think that's a spoiler. When reading a horror novel about x-ray glasses, you expect that to be the escalation, right? Anyway, so he sees through every-fucking-thing, but when he looks in the mirror (twice) for some odd reason he sees an x-ray image of himself instead of just seeing through the mirror. Minor inconsistencies, sure, but they were enough to remind me I was reading a book and fuck with my escapism.

Fourthly, the formatting in this book is god-fucked broken. You got the title in the middle of paragraphs (I've seen a lot of shit, but that's a new one for me) and sometimes the author's name is inserted in the text. There are zero indents, so the book reads like one long paragraph in places, and in some areas, sentences stop mid-sentence and start again a few spaces down. Here, have some images:

and...

If you read that clusterfuck up there, you'll also see a character named Holes. Several times that name fucked with me. Like in the sentence shown, "Holes burst from the bar." Because the sentence begins with "Holes", you don't notice that it's the character name. Several times this happens, and I was constantly having to go back over the paragraph wondering what the fuck he was on about.

But I think the biggest problem I had with this book is, it's just not any fun to read. It's a slog until the 64% mark, and then it ends at 88%. Fucking really?

In summation: Not much to see here. The book did swing in a different direction than I initially expected, but that's not necessarily a good thing, seeing as how poorly the change of direction was set up. The last ten percent of the book, which is about ten pages in a novella of this length, is a rush to the finish line, and then you get 12 pages of promotional materials for a book I've already read, which simply left a bad taste in my mouth. Read it for yourself and see if you have a better time. A very low two stars.

Final Judgment: Disappointing.

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### **Laura Thomas says**

I remember those silly ads in the back of comic books. I actually bought those sea monkeys. And if I'd come across an ad about X-ray vision glasses, I'd probably have bought those too. When Martin Blackstone tries on his son's silly glasses he doesn't expect anything to really happen. Imagine his surprise when they work.

He can see under peoples clothes, and more. And the more he dons the glasses the more he sees. Until he sees too much. And the glasses won't come off.

Who says you have to like the main character to enjoy a book? I've read many a good story where I didn't and had fun seeing how bad things could get for them. Martin isn't really likeable to begin with. You'll come to loathe him when the changes begin. When the glasses he scoffed at turn him into something terrible. It made me wonder if Martin might have shown his hidden ugliness in some other way if he'd never put on those glasses. All that evil couldn't come from out of the blue could it? It had to be there, under the surface, waiting for a chance to come out and play, right?

This is such a fun series. I really enjoyed Just Add Water, the first in Hunter's Mail Order Massacre series.

While this one didn't wow me as much as the first book, it was still worth the read. The author gave me the gory fun I'd come to expect.

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### **Kimberly says**

3.5 stars!

**OPTICAL DELUSION** is the second novella in Hunter Shea's "Mail Order Massacre" series. One thing I really enjoyed about this tale is how effectively Shea places us in the family-life of the past, by showing us a typical evening at the Blackstone home. Martin, husband and father, comes home from work to his wife (who has supper waiting), and his son playing upstairs. Even the movies he references will give some a sense of nostalgia for this era.

Young Brian Blackstone--having missed a week of school due to the chicken pox--is playing with his good friend, Noel. As a gift, Noel ordered two pairs of "Amazing X-ray Glasses" from an advertisement in a comic magazine. Although the boys are quick to dismiss them as "uncomfortable", Martin tries them on as a joke.

*Only they turn out to be anything but.*

The best part of this novella was how accurate the characters were portrayed in this time period. The "enhancements" Martin begins to feel are not without their physical side effects though, as the glasses seem to send a physical pain to his brain each time he reaps the rewards of their enhanced vision.

***"Eventually, the desire not to wet the sheets like a baby trumped the need to burrow under them and not move a muscle for a few more hours . . . "***

As time goes on, the changes begin registering to Martin in different ways. Rather than questioning, he simply "accepts" that his new glasses are showing him a window never before opened . . .

***". . . he saw them for what they really were . . . "***

The majority of this novella was a fun, fast-paced journey which brings up the question "what if?" when thinking back to all those old comic book advertisements. My only complaint was that the end felt a bit rushed and "anticlimactic" in contrast to the mysteriousness we started out with.

Overall, an entertaining story with some great characterization.

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### **Bradley says**

Do you remember those bare-bones hokey horror shows from the seventies and the eighties, the ones that played upon fifties values and aimed at the lowest common denominator by giving us a MC that IS the lowest common denominator?

How about some really cheap made-for-tv horror episodes that were amusing more for the schlock value than the shock value? Do you miss those?

I admit I do, to my everlasting shame. But I don't feel that guilty. Not really. It's comfort food and Shea is great at giving us exactly what we want. No nutritional value at all. :)

In this case, we have a slothful drunk dad that goes on a journey with his new x-ray glasses that really function as advertised, only they're cursed and he can't get them off. Of course, the old complaint about x-ray glasses also comes true when it starts working a little too well. The simple concept even has the horror-moral built in, and I didn't care what happened to the guy so...

Enjoy! Nothing in here except popcorn wish-fulfillment as long as you're a 12-year-old boy inside a sad grown man who just wants to see titties.... gone wrong. :) Amusing for what it is. Please don't expect anything more, though, unless you're expecting a bit of a nice gross-out, because that's here, too. :) In this respect, it's quite a bit better than the made-for-tv horror shows. :) Very modern sensibilities there, at least. :)

Thanks to Netgalley for the ARC!

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### **Marvin says**

*Optical Delusions* is the second of Shea Hunter's series called *Mail Order Massacres*. They are based on those comic books ads children of all ages are familiar with. I'm sure you remember them. The "Sea Monkeys" that were just brine shrimp and made the water smell bad. The "submarine" made out of cheap card board and fell apart when it actually touched water. The 3-D glasses that boasted you will be able to see through people's clothes and did no more than give you a headache. Shea's first book of the series, *Just Add Water* covers the Sea Monkeys and a third installment will center on the submarine. *Optical Delusions*, as you already guessed, covers the glasses.

In this short read, Martin Blackstone's son orders a pair of those 3-D glasses from an ad in the back of a comic book. Martin sees it as a waste of a buck but on a lark tries them on. At first he just gets a headache but after a while they seem to kick in and actually work. At first Martin finds this to be a lascivious pleasure but soon the effects of wearing the glasses turn terrifying and deadly.

The first thing I noticed on reading this short piece of fiction is there are no physical monsters in it. That may seem a small thing but Hunter Shea is sort of my monster guy. He writes some of the best monster books out

there. This story's scares comes from the effects of a mysterious object and the dark psychological results. I enjoyed seeing an author I admire go off into a different type of horror that I am familiar with him writing and doing it with the same effortless skill as he shows in what I have read before. I'm not really surprised , I just find it delightful and reassuring that this horror writer can make pretty much make anything a reason to keep the lights on.

I also like the setting. Both the first and second installments of *Mail Order Massacres* take place in the 80s which was pretty much the apex of the comic book ad craze. But while *Just Add Water* has a nostalgic Speilbergian feel due to its two young main characters, *Optical Delusion* feels more serious and scary. For those movie buffs, it made me think of that great but obscure Corman film with Ray Milland, *X: The Man with the X-Ray Eyes*. But while the Corman film had Greek tragedy overtones , *Optical Delusion* goes for the EC Comics styled quick kill. Just what these neat little books should do.

I do not know if Shea Hunter plans to keep this a trilogy but if he does and the next one keeps up the momentous, it may be the horror trilogy of the year. Until then, you cant go wrong with this pint sized scare fest.

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