



Mr. Hands

Gary A. Braunbeck

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Includes The Bonus Novella *Kiss of The Mudman*

It was an odd doll, carved out of wood, with stubby legs but long arms and huge hands. So little Sarah named it Mr. Hands. She loved that doll. . . until the day she was murdered. Now her mother, Lucy, has discovered something amazing about her daughter's doll - it allows her to control another Mr. Hands. But this one is no doll. He's a living, terrifying being with horrendous power.

Mr. Hands's deadly power is at Lucy's command. He will do whatever she tells him - even kill. To Lucy this is a rare opportunity, a chance to see that justice is done. Her justice. She decides who will live and who will suffer a horrible death, and Mr. Hands carries out the sentence without mercy. But once Mr. Hands is unleashed, will anyone be able to stop him?

Mr. Hands Details

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Author : Gary A. Braunbeck

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From Reader Review Mr. Hands for online ebook

Leah says

Rating: 4 of 5

Mr. Hands was my first experience with Braunbeck, and I wasn't disappointed. My favorite aspect was the old-fashioned *feel* of a mysterious stranger spinnin' his yarn around a fire (or, in this case, a bar) whilst the "normal" folks listen and figure out whether he's dangerous, in trouble, or just full of it. The novel's structure was integral to its success; had the story been told in a linear style, I'm not sure it would've been quite as exciting or suspenseful. While neither the premise nor the delivery were original, I enjoyed both very much and never thought, "I've heard this one before." When I arrived at page 269, I didn't want the story to end.

More than entertainment, this one will make you think if you let it.

One aspect that may disturb some readers: the entire story involved the pain and suffering of children at the hands of their parents or other adults. So there's graphic violence, but most was implied.

Note: I have not yet read the novella, "Kiss of the Mudman," included in this edition.

Maicie says

This book ends with one of my favorite quotes: "Whoever fights monsters, should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster."

Dolls are creepy little things, aren't they? Neither one of my kids played with dolls. They were scared of them. And it wasn't just because I told them that dolls come to life at night when their tiny little owners are sleeping.

Mr. Hands is carved out of wood, with stubs for legs and really, really long arms with claws for fingers. Who wouldn't want that under the tree come Christmas morning? Anyway, Sarah loved that doll and it was one of the few things left behind by her murderer. Lucy, Sarah's mom, keeps the doll and discovers she is able to 'set things right' by manipulating the doll's alter ego.

Very creepy. Recommend for camping trips when things are wandering around outside, the wind is blowing and branches are snapping.

chucklethescot says

The first thing that attracted me to this book was it's very creepy and cool cover, and the name 'Mr Hands'. It just sounded so good and the blurb was intriguing and exciting! Sadly this book turned out to be a case of don't judge a book by its cover.

I expected this to be a novel where this creepy creature Mr Hands goes around torturing and killing people in a Nightmare on Elm Street type way. Jeez was I ever let down! In the prologue we get a couple of people under threat from Mr Hands. Then we jump to chapter one and it all goes downhill from there. A man in a

pub starts telling a story which is meant to be about his dealings with Mr Hands but instead we get a rambling story about the mentally challenged Ronnie, a human with a power of death who uses it to kill bad people or end the suffering of good people. We see Ronnie helping a woman miscarry a baby that could ruin her life, his miserable home life, ending up in the social care system, hunting a child abuser who attacks a few of his friends, communicating with all the dead souls he helped, his big mistake...and go to the woman who miscarried to see her story. Her upbringing in a small town, her first date getting her pregnant and shaming her family, the miscarrying event, her life after that, the fate of the one who got her pregnant, her plans for the future...

WHERE IS MR HANDS??? For 116 pages we get a back and forth between Ronnie and Lucy and their lives and I was so bored it was unreal. What did any of this have to do with the creepy Mr Hands? By the time Lucy was talking about her new husband and second baby, I was wondering if the demon was ever going to show and I got tired of waiting for him. This book was dull, bland and lacking the story that I bought it for. A huge big fat let down!

According to other reviews, we don't get to see Mr Hands until the last third of the book. So why is this marketed as Mr Hands and a revenge story when none of that happens until the book is nearly ending? I hate being deliberately misled and won't be reading anything else by this author. I feel cheated!!!

Unapologetic_Bookaholic says

3.5 of 5 rating

Gives you a feeling that you glimpse something out of the side of your eye. When you turn to see what it is, your rewarded with a tendril of fear creeping along your neck.

Mr. Hands is a cerebral horror. It takes reality twists, chops and mixes it with an unbalanced mental perspective and there you have it. Then of course throws in a head chomping monster.

I liked the development of Mr. Hands and POV of the characters and why Mr. Hands was. It was a great story told and I look forward to more from Gary A. Braunbeck.

Bill says

Hooboy, does this book look stupid.

I pride myself in not caring what people see me read. I would proudly display each and every cover of Brian Lumley's Necroscope series (although I'll put myself on record as saying I thought those covers really kicked ass), but to quote the Tragically Hip in Thugs, "Everyone has their breaking point", and with me it was this cover and title.

But, this is Gary Braunbeck, so I knew this was going to be pretty good. Actually, the first 100 pages or so were excellent, and just the type of writing I was expecting from him: poignant, suspenseful, and a protagonist you can care for.

I loved the opening, where a stranger walks into a bar in a small town (where "weird shit happens", and tells his tale to a couple of interested locals. This is the perfect setup to a scary story.

Now, the story doesn't get to where the title and cover of the novel suggests for over a 100 pages, but this the

part of the story where Braunbeck excels. Once the tale takes the expected supernatural turn, his writing still maintains the same quality, but for me, I much preferred Ronnie's story over where Mr. Hands comes in.

Overall, it was a fine read, and Braunbeck continues to be an author on my 'A' list. I'm looking forward to more of the "weird shit" that happens in Cedar Hill.

Randolph says

Another outstanding offering by Braunbeck. He continues to write the most innovative horror in the longer form while avoiding almost all the usual horror tropes and never repeating himself. While not quite as good as *Keepers* or the magnificent *In Silent Graves*, he almost reaches them.

With a plot so twisted and clever that I'm not even going to try to describe it in detail, okay I will, sorta. Mr. Hands is a sort of retribution machine for child abuse who is the progeny of the deceased mentally handicapped Ronald James Williamson who himself is more like a Dr. Kevorkian on wheels for those that are "hurting." The whole tale has a framing story that makes it almost like one of Dunsany's Jorkens club tales. Then there is Lucy Thompson who gets caught up in the web of both Ronnie and Mr. Hands. This is less than half of it, you still have *Thalidomide Man*, the Reverend, Henry/Randy, little Sarah, and child abuser Timothy Beals. To say the plot was confusing at times would be an understatement, but Braunbeck brings it all together in an ending that Stephen King would kill for.

In all this Braunbeck really wants to talk about revenge, retribution (divine and otherwise), and justice; guilt and forgiveness and disguise it all as a really clever and literate horror story.

Included in the copy I have is an award winning novella: [Kiss of the Mudman](#), which in the typical fashion of the award winner isn't near as good as the novel here. It won the International Horror Guild Award for novella. Its inclusion here isn't totally random since some of the characters from Mr. Hands are back for an encore.

Go buy anything by Braunbeck, you won't be disappointed.

Ken McKinley says

Reading Mr. Hands reminds me of the title of the Clint Eastwood spaghetti western - *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*. This book has all three and it reads pretty much in that order. Lets start with the good. This is my first read of Braunbeck's material. Having lived in central Ohio for fifteen years of my life and also hearing good reviews of his work, I was excited to dive into Mr. Hands. It starts off well enough. A strange man sitting at the end of the bar has a story to tell to the bartender, the sherriff, and a reverend. OK. It kind of reminds me of Straub's *Ghost Story* meets the *Twilight Zone*. You've got my interest, Braunbeck. Where do we go from here? Well, from there, he unwinds a story about Ronald James Williamson. a young boy who may be a little slow but has the unique gift of being able to predict a child's future on whether it will be filled with happiness or misery. Based on what he detects, ala shades of *The Dead Zone*, determines what course of action Ronnie takes. Happiness equals smiling and moving on. But if Ronnie detects a future fulfilled with misery and abuse for the child, he becomes judge, jury and executioner. Nobody expects the slow kid, right? Braunbeck's writing style is fast paced and enjoyable. I'm buying into all of it up to this point. Then, at somewhere around the 2/3 mark, he shifts gears and does a hard turn. He introduces us to Mr. Hands, brings

back a character from the beginning of the book, and gives us a scene almost directly out of the movie Pumpkinhead. My suspension of disbelief was thrown into a headlock and beat up pretty good. I tried to get back on track to a story I was enjoying and wanted to enjoy again. I was hoping that this sudden shift would make sense and tie it all together in an A HA moment. No dice. This was the bad. Now for the ugly. For the last 1/3 of the book, Braunbeck tells a tale of revenge that becomes more and more unbelievable with every turn of the page. He introduces us to characters and kills them off not pages later, but paragraphs later. Every character introduced is paper thin. There is no development to either like or dispise them before they are offed. Add that to the fact that the story is getting more and more hokey as we race to the finish line. At this point, I'm only turning pages out of obligation to see if there's a rhyme or reason to this mess, not because I'm enjoying it anymore. No such luck. The character of the six-year old boy is so unbelievable that I'm scoffing at every page. I have a son around his age and there is no way him or any of his peers would say or do 90% of what Braunbeck's character is doing in this one. That, my friends, is the ugly. Its been a long time since I've been this disappointed in a book and my disappointment isn't because its a bad story. I've read plenty of stories that were worse than this one that I've rated higher and it's because they were consistently weak all the way through. This one seemed like it was going somewhere and then it completely derailed and crashed down a mountain ravine. At one point, I thought Braunbeck suffered a stroke while he was writing this and the last 1/3 was post stroke. Sigh. So disappointed. I will read another Braunbeck in the future. I haven't sworn him off. I really want to read something of his that is at the level that I think he's capable of. I'm rooting for Mr. Hands to be an anomoly and not the rule.

2 stars out of 5

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Robert Beveridge says

Gary A. Braunbeck, **Mr. Hands** (Leisure, 2007)

Understand, first, that the horror of Gary Braunbeck is not the horror of the splatterpunks, or of Stephen King, or of Clive Barker, or of Dean Koontz. If I had to compare Braunbeck's writing to anyone's, it would be that of Charles L. Grant, except that Braunbeck's writing is far more immediate than Grant's ever was. Things may jump out of the dark at you in a Braunbeck story, but any disembowelling is probably going to happen offstage. The horror, also, comes less from the monster involved than it does from the characters; hell, as Jean-Paul Sartre so memorably remarked, really is other people, and Gary Braunbeck gets that. I'm not sure why it took me over twenty years after I first heard Braunbeck's name to finally get round to reading one of his books. It will certainly not take me another twenty years to get to the second.

Two stories here. The title piece is the longer of them, about a serial killer who acts out of the goodness of his heart. I know, I know, you've heard that before, but our Ronnie is kind of touched in the head, as well as supernaturally gifted; when he looks into someone's face, he can see all the pain they suffer. Thus, what he

sees himself as doing is freeing these kids from bondage, right? But because he's touched in the head, sometimes he mixes things up. All well and good, and the serial killer is finally wounded in turn, and then goes off to die... until being resurrected in the form of Mr. Hands, a scary doll who is one of the beloved playthings of a child gone missing, and whose mother is consumed with a desire for revenge. Once the power of Mr. Hands is unleashed, though, sometimes he mixes things up... Second story, "The Mudman", will probably remind you a decent amount of King's "You Know They Got a Hell of a Band", though with added mudman goodness.

Braunbeck is a solid writer. In less skilled hands, "Mr. Hands" could have come off as a Lifetime Original Movie script with an added supernatural element. (For that matter, "The Mudman", which takes place in a church shelter, isn't that far off the path, either.) But Braunbeck resists the temptations for easy answers and soundbite-style lines. Maybe if Japan had a Lifetime Movie Network, and Kiyoshi Kurosawa directed movies for it, something like "Mr. Hands" may have popped up at some point. In any case, as long as you don't go into this expecting the ultra-fast-paced gore novels that have become more popular of late, it's a good'un indeed. ****

Kasia says

The unique beauty of this tale has to share the spotlight with the rich emotions the author stirred in, to make it as believable as possible. While reading this I often wondered how personal any of this could have been for him and for the sake of anyone's sanity I hope they never get to experience these events in person.

Mr. Hands starts off as three separate events that come together to form a tight and haunting ending. It all begins with a little boy who was born not out of an act of love but by what his father called - a mistake. He was loved by his weak mother and he was abused by the father, harvesting special powers that helped him seek out children who suffered the same way he did. His mental scars never let him grow past his eleventh year while his body grew into that of a man, a man on a mission to end child abuse and to inflict punishment, not revenge on the parents who did it to them. Ronnie, for that was his name, ran into Lucy Thompson, another main character, when he was a few years old and left her with what he thought of as a gift. In reality his actions started a chain of events that would some day conclude in cataclysmic proportions in the small, sleepy town of Cedar Hill. Much happens in between, mostly bad things that are best not spoiled to the reader. Years later they meet again but under much darker circumstances, where a creature of death and blind justice is born, making monsters out of those who want to do good by helping to kill others. This was part horror and part supernatural with a dose of gray morality thrown into the mix.

The book is a very fast read and the author does a great job of describing everything in an immaculate detail. After reading it I am still haunted by the pain and suffering the kids endured, especially since that kind of abuse happens in real life, and the ice pick feeling of sheer fear in throats of their parents, those who genuinely loved and missed them was more than real. The element of cruel punishment inflicted on the guilty was satisfying but it came with a hefty price tag to those who administered it.

- Kasia S.

Mark Warner says

Ahhh...started off wonderfully...good character development, intriguing, unique story, interwoven

plot...really a fine job of a horror book. For me, however, it seemed to suffer from the one flaw in most horror books..an ending that left thinking, thats it ? This book grabbed me from the beginning with great writing, but slowly crept downhill. Still, better than most in a genre that yields great ideas but so-so endings....Ah well, on to the next..

D.D. Price says

They say that you can't judge a book by its cover. That's true. But what is equally untrue is saying that you can't judge a book by its title. You can in fact judge a book by its title and if title is the medium with which we judge the quality of books then we find that Mr. Hands is severely lacking; the title puts into mind all of the wonderful and terrible things that can be done with ones hands and that statement holds true for most of the book and even as I think on such profound morbid obsessions that Mr. Braunbeck has with the saving or the ending of a life that can both be done with either hand, my hands begin to shake with the momentousness implied by such a statement of higher intellectual capacity (this guy must have been seriously abused as a child). In short I would describe this book as at first being fed by spoon a mouthful of sweets and then the person giving you the sweets stabs the spoon downward at your throat and then you choke; it tastes good in that first instance but your throat is left sore and parched. This explicit stuffing of a theme down the reader's throat is the kind of thing that triggers my gag reflex, over and over and over again.

If you've read In Silent Graves then let this be a warning, 'this book is not anywhere near on the same level!' Whereas In Silent Graves was innovative and intellectual, I found Mr. Hands to be weak and pretentious and nothing more than classic horror disguised to look literary under the cloak of a repetitive theme. A number of readers here on Goodreads speak of how emotional this book is (as if emotion alone could make a book great) which is true but the problem is that the author is reliant on this emotion to hold readers attention and thus literary techniques are not being used adeptly since there's not much build up towards these moments. I admit I was feeling the story at first but it didn't take long for the plot to feel really repetitive and stupid as the same point about children needing to be protected from abuse and danger gets hammered into the reader's brain again and again. Oh God! Make it stop please!

When I read horror books by Dan Simmons I feel terror and suspense; I did not feel that here. When I read Robin Hobb I feel highly emotional but that impact is felt after reading hundreds and hundreds of pages of buildup which there wasn't much room for here. Braunbeck has potentiality to be a great author but his repertoire is simply too limited and his storytelling to self serving to utter his name in the pantheon of the greats. Emotion and other rants aside, the writing was for the most part good but there were some scenes in which Braunbeck started writing in this ridiculously pretentious prose style that I think was meant to look poetic but didn't come across that way. I think there was an entire sentence that went on for over a page at one point.

Kristen says

I was not in a hurry to read this book, the title just seemed so... Dumb, but I let Rosco (the family sheepdog) pick my most recent read and this is what he came up with (mainly by sniffing this cover first out of the stack of 100 or so books stacked neatly on the floor). I was surprised that I enjoyed this as much as I did. I wasn't a huge fan of "Coffin County" but I do remember that I enjoyed 9/10ths of the book, so I did have a flicker of hope.

Short synopsis: The tale is told by a mystery man in a bar, he tells the story of a child who is a killer of children, and a woman who has lost her child, and slowly the three stories weave together into the story of

Mr. Hands.

This is a tale of vengeance, pity, and monsters... not the creeping around under the bed, or hidden in the sewer grates monsters... people who are monsters - child abusers, neglectors, and killers... and those who have to cope with living in the same world as them. The title story in the book is 269 pages, with a short novella in the back titled "The Mudmen" to bring it up to the standard 330 page Leisure Fiction length. I know that this is a horror story, but it really never FELT like a horror storey. Rather than scaring me, terrifying me or disgusting me... I felt pity, remorse, and a bit of loathing at what Braunbeck points out. Being a parent, the concept of losing a child and the damage it would do not only to me, but to my relationships and my sanity was all too real. Now should that actually happen, and someone hand me the tool in which to gain vengeance, not just for my child, but for all children that have been brutally murdered and abused... and I am not sure that I would be strong enough to turn that away. When seeking vengeance it is all too easy to become what we hate most... a monster ourselves, and that is exactly what Braunbeck points out in this novel.

For the most part this novel is well written and keeps your attention. What drove me completely insane though is the use of run-on sentences that never ended. Page 102 in the paperback is all one sentence... and it runs on to the next page. It never occurred to me what effect run-on sentences like that would have on a reader... but it made my head hurt a little, like I wasn't able to stop and regroup to let the previous sentence sink in. These run-on sentences occur throughout the book, though none stuck out so blatantly in my mind as that one. I'm a bit disappointed in his editor for letting that one slide by. Also the combination of the cover and the title make this a hard book to take seriously and really get excited to read. The good news is that it reads fast, takes place in the familiar territory of Coffin County and seems to have a pretty good resolution to it all (which was my issue with the book "Coffin County"). This book is not at all scary though you will find yourself reading from beginning to end, and there is quite a bit to think about, particularly if you are a parent.

The three star rating is due mainly to the typos and run-on sentences in the book. There is nothing worse than reading a book and suddenly your mind slams on the e-brake because of a typo or bad grammar. You are pulled completely out of the story as your brain tries to process the bad data. Still, it's an entertaining read if you can get past that.

Howard Cruz says

This really was an incredible book and now i'm actually saddened I waited so long to read it. It sat on my shelf staring at me for months but I did finally get to it.

And was it ever worth it! It takes a story and makes you question your own personal ethics and morals and the way you look at life and death, crimes against children and pushes it to a limit.

The story ends with a quote saying that in your fight to stop monsters, make sure you don't become one. Based on the contents of this book, that line alone could come up much of it, but the details of the lives of the people contained within the cedart hill universe are quite intricate and this book was one hell of a read.

Read in one sitting, I couldn't stop nor pull myself away from the incredible writing stylings.. Do read.

Erin *Proud Book Hoarder* says

I've owned this one years; finally read during a buddy/group read with Horror Aficiandos group.

It's been years since I've dived into a world weaved by Braunbeck - I remember him as serious, sobering, and depressing. I also remember him as creative with his plot structure, hard to put down, and good with blending dark-fantasy horror. This book fits my memory of his others - a complex story that isn't merely about a killer figurine as I figured. In fact, the back cover is so vague based on what the story is really about (who writes these lazy blurbs?)

I won't fill review space laying out all the plot here, I'll let you find out yourself if you read this one, but let's just say there are different structures that tie together about midway through. Not really a straight protagonist to follow, this one has grey characters who are bordering on black most of the way through. Tragedy forms their motivations and and downfall, for they're tainted by cruelties of the world that aren't fun to read about. Child abuse, child neglect and abandonment, isolation in grief, all sobering stuff. Mr. Hands makes the point of getting a sort of vigilante justice that goes upside down on the misled crusaders.

Pacing stays focused and the story never grows boring. I especially liked the bar where certain characters gather - the shelf with the objects that all hold stories was a nice touch. I got a small fairy tale vibe from this story, from Mr Hands and the man at the carnival, to childlike wishes for very adult situations, to mystical ways of solving things. Bleak but interesting. Braunbeck writes well and spends plenty of time in the characters heads with effective inner monologue, even if sometimes the characters can seem a little straight-forward and simple in their thought processes.

It's certainly not a tale that exists to use shock value, violence for violence sake, and senseless gore. It's an emotional punch wrapped around an intriguing story, not a simple horror tale, but a sobering one of the sad realities of the world of which there is no right or wrong solution.

William M. says

Mr. Hands may be the finest work of Gary A. Braunbeck's career, and quite possibly, the best thing he'll ever write. I was absolutely spellbound by the story, characters, and rich mythology he created. I can't recall a horror novel that had me as emotional as this (right up there with Jack Ketchum's THE GIRL NEXT DOOR - both involve the endangerment of children and their helplessness).

Besides a few typos (shame, shame, Leisure Books!), I found every chapter, every paragraph, and every sentence infused with such passion, it was hard for me to get the lump out of my throat. As a parent of two young children, this was a difficult book to read, but the message of hope and helping others in need made it easier to get through. I can't recommend this book enough. So far, this is my favorite book of 2007, in horror, or any other genre. Mr. Braunbeck, I feel priviledged to have read such a wonderful and powerful book. Thank you.
