



## The Children's Hour

*Douglas Clegg*

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## **The Children's Hour** Douglas Clegg

Writer Joe Gardner has brought his wife and family to his childhood home in Colony, West Virginia, to visit his dying mother. Flooded by terrible memories of the town's deaths and disappearances, he begins hearing the voice of a girl who he believes may have been buried alive. As he digs up her grave, Joe breaks through the door that has held back a sinister evil.

## **The Children's Hour Details**

Date : Published October 1st 1995 by Dell Publishing Company

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Author : Douglas Clegg

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## From Reader Review The Children's Hour for online ebook

### **Bandit says**

I've looked for this book for years and I'm happy to say it was well worth the wait. Reminded me how much I love Clegg's horror. It's so exceptionally well written, reminds me of Braunbeck...great take on what could have been a trite vampire story, characters you really care about and surprisingly romantic for a that bloody of a book. I love that about Clegg's work, the depth, the heart. I highly recommend this book.

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### **Rick says**

A superior horror novel that truly elevates the genre. Clegg writes a chilling story while at the same time exploring important issues about families, life, love, and death.

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### **Adam Light says**

I love horror stories set in those bucolic little off-the-beaten-path country towns where anyone and, in some cases, everyone has dark secrets and no one is safe.

Clegg does an outstanding job weaving a bleak and chilling tale about the town of Colony, West Virginia, where an unspeakable evil is being perpetrated on innocent children.

When Joe Gardner, formerly a resident of Colony, receives a call informing him his mother is about to die, he must overcome seemingly insurmountable bitterness and paranoia regarding his hometown and the lingering terror he feels concerning the horrific act he committed there many years ago.

This was my first time reading Douglas Clegg and I am thoroughly enjoyed it. I was happy to discover he is a prolific writer and lots of his titles look very interesting.

I love when that happens.

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### **Peter says**

Joe Gardner is returning to his childhood town of Colony, West Virginia. He is there to visit his dying mother. Joe and his mother are not close at all. Joe had second thoughts about returning to see her. The town of Colony holds some bad memories for Joe and his friends. Joe will wish that he never returned to this hellhole of a place. Something evil has lied dormant waiting for Joe return. Joe has only one friend left in Colony and that is Homer. Joe and Homer talk about the strange things that happened when they were teenagers. Can Joe defeat this evil beast that has been waiting for him all these years?

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### **Kelly says**

**Meh.**

Great start, but fizzled out about halfway through. I had higher expectations for this story. The description made it out to be more than it was.

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### **Jessie says**

I am one to finish books when I start them however, this one was difficult. I normally read a book or two in a week but this one took me almost 2 months to get through. Maybe it was just me .. I don't know?? I found it very poorly written and "boring".

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### **John Weathers says**

I have mixed feelings about this book. It started off well with a nice, tense, and foreboding introduction. It then set about introducing its main characters while switching back and forth between different periods to reveal pieces of the puzzle in a nice non-linear fashion. The author develops his characters well, but for a horror book, he took too much time to kick things into gear. While there had been hints of the sinister or strange from the beginning, the book didn't shift too far away from a simple portrait of a writer and his small town roots until nearly two-thirds of the way into the story. Once the action starts, there is some genuinely creepy and disturbing imagery, and the author delivers some palpable tension. However, the promise of the finale that has been building up then completely unravels as the author fizzles the rushed climax with an underwhelming confrontation surrounded with bad exposition and steeped in cliché (that was bad even in the hands of someone like Stephen King).

I don't wish to spoil the book for those interested in reading it, so I won't name the specific works that I have in mind (and they should be obvious once you finish reading the book), but I found it disappointing that in the end this book borrows far too heavily from a few Stephen King novels.

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### **Tanja Berg says**

I think I'm done with horror novels for a while now. This was awful in the sense of mindnumbingly boring. I thought I'd like it because I quite enjoyed "Neverland" by the same author, but this book lacked both the childlike enchantment and wit of the former. It just dragged, from beginning to end.

Author Joe returns to his hometown of Colony, West Virginia, with his wife and two children because he has been told his mother is dying. She's not, she just wants to see him. Joe has major misgivings because he experienced some rather horrible things in Colony - amongst other, the death of his fiancé Melissa. There is some horrid creature living in the mines underneath the town, something vampiric but not quite. Joe knows, he has heard it.

Maybe this wasn't a bad book. Maybe I'm just tired of monsters and paranormal horrors. It's possible, I'll grant you that. I still didn't like it and I won't be recommending it to anyone.

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### **Marcella Zatwarniski says**

I read it because it was tis the season for Halloween. I found it weird but it did have some creepiness to it and gore as well. It just moved slow. Finally got moving about a quarter of the story to go.

## **Bill says**

A dark and atmospheric novel of small town life and the evil that lives directly beneath the surface. It may have dragged a wee here and there, but it didn't spin me out of the story and the slower interludes didn't last long. Not that this is a fast novel to begin with...because it isn't. It isn't supposed to be. Mr. Clegg takes his time getting you familiar with the characters and the colorful backstory of Colony, West Virginia. And then all hell breaks loose...

Welcome home, Joe. We've been waiting. ...All of us.

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## **Jennifer (Sad Books Say So Much) says**

We all face demons. We are all haunted by malevolent forces we cannot even begin to understand or control. But in the end, there is love, family, community...home. Home is not a building, nor is it a fixed place. It is where we are when we are with the people who know us better than we know ourselves, who have seen us at our worst far more often than our best, and yet...still find the strength and the courage to help us fight our demons and to forgive us again and again and again if we cannot overcome them.

Our childish innocence of old may lurk deep beneath the surface, but if we unlock the chains that bind us to cynicism and despair, we can return home and find a way to rebuild our shattered hearts, dreaming new dreams to replace those that are gone forever.

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## **Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says**

No. Just No. This is the second book of his that I've tried to read and, while it's a tad bit better, that ain't saying much. I'm not going to try any more.

Most of this book is just plain boring. I could tell that there is some structure under all of this that could've made this a decent book (maybe not uber original) but it was totally drowned out by everything else.

The story is that kids (and adults, but it's mainly kids) have been dying in mysterious ways. Now they're coming back and Jon is back to his hometown for the first time in a long time.

That sounds very interesting, doesn't it? Instead, what we get in piles and miles and mountains of info dumps. The author doesn't even try to make it interesting. This is unfortunate because all everyone does is whine and mop around. Pretty much the only interesting is Jon's but that's limited and what strength that brings is further cut by everyone else.

This book has like fifty different POVs, it would seem. I don't give a shit about all these characters. We get some interesting flashback with the kids and then we're pulled into some boring persons info dump of the past.

The info dumps/ random characters are a bit like a Jerry Springer show, save Springer's show actually has some kind of action. This doesn't. It's like a bad soap opera.

Like, for example, take the Sheriff. He has a mistress who's gotten pregnant, right? She tells him and says she loves him. He plans to kill her (saying he'll get away with it cause he's the Sheriff.) He goes to see her at the bar and nothing. He breaks into her car and sees the woman screwing another man and he does nothing. Then, miraculously, he decides he loves her and she does a 180 on him. Suddenly, she's sleeping around on him and she's going to get an abortion.

It's freakin' bizarre.

Then there's his choice of words. It's not horrible in the sense that he raped a Thesaurus but the choices are so... awkward. It's like he took his Thesaurus out for a date and they ended up at a BK where he buys it a value meal and a slice of their 'pie'. Then he expects that Thesaurus to 'put out' for him and it just throws horrible word choices at him because it feels rather used and cheap about the whole thing.

For example, one of the billions of characters is caught in a bad situation that is some kind of black mail ploy because he apparently raped a college girl. He stands there and thinks: "All this because I mated and she squealed?" Mated and Squealed? WTF? Who the fuck says 'Mated' outside a Paranormal Romance?

Bleh.

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### **Kathy says**

The story was just okay for me because it took awhile to get into. A lot of jumping around, the detail skips around too much, and too much like Stephen King's "Salem's Lot".

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### **Eva says**

Once upon a time Douglas Clegg finished the last pages of King's *Salem's Lot* and thought to himself "I wish I would have come up with that!".

And as time went by this wish turned into "What the heck! I'll just write the same story again myself!".

To be fair I don't know if the author wrote his book as an homage to *Salem's Lot* or has stated in some interview how his plot was heavily, heavily influenced by King's book, but the many parallels and similarities cannot be dismissed.

Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the first part of the book. It was written well enough and had a sufficient sense of foreboding as well as "creepy-evil-is-lurking-in-every-corner" kind of scenes.

I liked the anachronic narrative that revealed parts of the puzzle only one at a time and was eager to carry on reading to know more about what's going on in the picturesque litte town of Colony.

But then the whole plot took kind of a detour: I felt lost in too many stories of the town's inhabitants that did not really drive the story forward. Worst of all: even though I had read through all those different character's life stories, I still didn't care very much when the plot got back on track and the grand finale hit the town -  
(view spoiler)

## Sara Meehan says

If you were a fan of Stephen King's "Salem's Lot," you'll find a lot to like in "The Children's Hour." Vampires! An ancient evil! Love lost! Troubled heroes who fight the demons of their past!

All this and more, as they say.

Clegg's protagonists are Joe and Hop, childhood friends who have lost touch since Joe left town after high school. He looks back at his formative years in Colony with something akin to hatred. Joe's mother is dying, though, so he packs up his wife, his children and his marital issues and heads back to his hometown. Joe's return sets the wheels in motion for the re-emergence of an ancient evil the men thought they'd seen the last of.

Why do children keep disappearing in Colony? How could a 12-year-old girl reappear at her parents' home, when she ought to be in her 30s, if alive at all? What has been living in the well hidden inside Old Man Feeley's barn all these years? What does it all have to do with Joe?

Clegg's novel jumps back and forth in time, which makes it difficult to summarize. As he works his way through the above material, he revisits Joe's and Hop's childhood, from the first time they came up against Abaddon, the demon in the well, and through subsequent encounters with it. I understand why he structured it that way — a straightforward, chronological retelling would reveal too much, too soon — but it makes the narrative occasionally difficult to follow.

Like "Salem's Lot" — and like many King books — Clegg periodically cuts to the viewpoints of minor characters. We meet a college student dogged by his cruel past, a sheriff caught between his distant wife and his pregnant mistress, a teenager whose parents have disappeared; they all eventually fall to Abaddon. The scenes where the demon and/or his minions overtake those victims are the highlights of the book:

*The child reached out his hand, its shackles pulling at the stone. As its skin met Byron's, he felt as if something within him was fighting to be born, fighting to burst through his skin, trying to burst his bones and flesh and blood, outward in a spray of red.*

*He heard the sound of wet splitting, and where the child touched him, a bone broke through the surface of his flesh.*

*The child's mouth went eagerly to the bone and Byron, shivering and feeling cold, watched while he sucked at the bone of his forearm as if it were sugar cane.*

Vampiric children! What a creepy idea. And, yes, they're the biggest similarity to "Salem's Lot."

"The Children's Hour" is an entertaining horror story, though it suffers from the genre's periodic flaws in logic. But if this is your kind of story, you're likely ready to look past that.

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