



All the Bells on Earth

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In the dead of night, a man climbs the tower of St. Anthony's Church, driven by a compulsive urge to silence the bells. In a deserted alley, a seemingly random victim is consumed by a torrent of flames. And in the deceptive light of day, a mail-order businessman named Walt Stebbins receives a bizarre artifact--a glass jar containing the preserved body of a bluebird. Things like this don't usually happen in a town like Orange, California. Ordinary people don't expect to face evil--real evil--in their backyards. But as Walt unravels the mystery of the bird in the jar, he learns that the battle between good and evil is taking place every day, where you least expect it...

All the Bells on Earth Details

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Author : James P. Blaylock

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From Reader Review All the Bells on Earth for online ebook

Wayne says

Unfortunately, a true point by point review of this book would involve too many spoilers, so I will endeavor to give the broadest response possible. Two things stood out to me with this novel. First is the fact that it was slow in building its momentum, and by slow, I mean tectonic plate slow, with the occasional quake when something shifted dramatically. I had the feeling that it was always on the verge of exploding with energy, yet didn't. The second thing, and a positive to balance the negative, is the author's ability to create solid, believable characters with real motivations and responses to events around them. The dialogue was superb, and I felt like I was hearing actual conversation throughout. Sadly, by biggest complaint, and the reason for my less than stellar rating, is that I wanted so badly for this book to be what it wasn't. I kept feeling the book wanted to be a horror novel, but it never reached beyond compelling mystery for me. Perhaps that was all the author intended, which I respect. That is why I will still recommend the book highly, because, if nothing else, the author impressed me despite not meeting my expectations.

Patrick Barry says

A deal with the devil runs amok among small town sensibilities. 20 years before three businessmen were duped into selling their souls to the devil. Now during the Christmas season, one of them spontaneously combusts. This leaves the two surviving businessmen to desperately try to find a way to get out of their deals. A charm exists that can get one of them out of the deal, but craziness ensues that can only happen in a small town. Small town sensibilities are more powerful than they seem, but can they overcome the devil? This was a decent fantasy read. I enjoyed it.

Tim says

This delightful tale is one of author James Blaylock's better books, though not the very best. With a typical lovably oddball protagonist and nefarious/magical goings on, it's an enjoyable little adventure. Here we have a mysterious, pickled "bluebird of happiness" and typically Blaylockian everyman-caught-in-weird-happenings fun. Don't be too concerned about the "Christian Trilogy #3" tag Goodreads has given this novel. It isn't really a sequel, and it never once had occurred to me that it was, and I'm a big Blaylock fan.

Lectrice Hérétique says

Oui, bon. On dit qu'il s'agit du meilleur roman de Blaylock. Je ne connais pas les autres, mais ce n'est pas celui-ci qui va m'inciter à explorer son œuvre. Dans une petite ville de Californie, quelques jours avant Noël, le sonneur de cloche meurt écrasé par la cloche sabotée, le curé est agressé dans sa sacristie, un homme d'affaire est victime de combustion spontanée, et Walt Stebbins, honnête citoyen, reçoit par erreur un colis qui ne lui est pas destiné. Le curé s'allie au pasteur, et démarre alors une lutte contre le Mal assez grotesque. L'ambiance hésite entre le conte et la farce, l'aspect fantastique et mystérieux ne m'a absolument pas convaincue, et la pseudo-morale « l'argent c'est le Mal, et pour « tout se paie » m'a fortement fatiguée. Le héros principal est particulièrement insipide et ne contribue pas à relever le niveau d'un roman déjà peu consistant.

Diane says

I bought a used copy of this book a while ago, but for some reason I couldn't get past the first few pages. Then I finally bought the audiobook, and got hooked on the story right away. The story has mystery, quirkiness, good vs. evil, and demons.

It's Christmas time in California. A man running a mail-order business out of his garage receives some strange mis-labeled merchandise in the mail: a bluebird preserved in a jar of liquid, which grants his wishes, but brings an equal misfortune for each. But another man (the intended recipient of the bluebird in the jar) is searching for it urgently, and he will stop at nothing to find it. And a really great story unfolds.

Melinda says

The man wrote a horror-type story set in the City of Orange - God bless him for trying, lol...

Tim Meechan says

What a GREAT story!!! Blaylock, you've done it again. This is why I read books. I called in sick today so I could finish reading this one after I fell asleep with the book in my lap last night. If you are already familiar with Blaylock's books, nothing more need be said, if not, I would say this about him. He is like a Lays potato chip - "nobody can read just one".

I've been enjoying him since the eighties, and I'm ready for another-right now.

This novel is one of the three that make up his Christian Trilogy, "The Last Coin" and "The Paper Grail" being the other two, both of which I read long ago. I picked up "TPG" because it had a cool cover and a blurb by an author I trusted. That doesn't always work but this time I struck gold.

Like many of Blaylock's novels, his characters are a rich assortment of everyday people, often caught up in something beyond their capacities, blindly stumbling through the obstacles and pitfalls. His ability to combine reality with fantastic happenings is unparalleled. How his characters react to the unbelievable, and adapt to it throughout the story is so well done.

There is plenty of craziness in this tale as in his others, with violence ready to spill out at a moments notice due to the evil influence from the underworld. Blaylock's great at teasing the psychies of the good characters. I found myself thinking of Disch's "The Sub" & "The Priest", or even King's "Needful Things". Blaylock is a little lighter when it comes to describing graphic violence, but don't worry, he paints some pretty gruesome scenes.

And, like his other novels, in the end, good triumphs over evil in a tremendous climax, and all ends well for our lovable protagonists.

Perfect

Brian K says

Every Christian should read a good book about fighting the devil every now and again. Blaylock is a more approachable Charles Williams, and parts of this book gave me the cold sweats. Nastily inventive. The grouchy main character is a new fave.

Phillip says

I loved this story. It has similarities to *The Last Coin* and *the Paper Grail*, but I think Blaylock has made the protagonist more human than in his past novels. There is a wonderful and hilarious passage in which the protagonist is ordering exotic and mythical items by phone and is trying to ascertain how authentic they are. The conversation that ensues is a gem, like the book itself.

Roger says

Technically well written, the story had a lot more potential than the author was able to wrestle out of it. Its main characters inhabit an otherwise everyday existence that has a current of evil and strange devices lurking just out of the sight of all but its dubious heroes. What is disappointing is the unsatisfactory way in which the author never really strongly connects or explains the mechanisms or logic in resolving of the main conflict and climax of the story. It is as if the author gave up trying to write an ending that made any sense within the rules and logical structure of the world and characters he created.

Mitch says

Well, what did I expect from a book whose main plot device is a dead bird floating in a jar of gin- aka, the Bluebird of Unhappiness?

Said bird has the power to grant tempting wishes but always exacts a terrible price. This has all been done better in "The Monkey's Paw".

The same B. of U. is also involved in resolving the main conflict, though as far as I can tell, things wouldn't really have worked out that way.

Indeed, there were several jarring instances when characters said or did things that didn't make good sense- unless they were just there to move the plot where the author wanted it to go.

The author had his characters spend considerable time considering the moral aspects of their acts, but he likewise twisted those to suit his purposes.

Finally, although the setting in Suburbia was meant to contrast normality with strange, evil incursions, I found so much of the plot bland and boring. It was a pot-boiler.

For all these reasons and at great personal risk, I wish the author had written a better book.

Christine says

This story takes place where I grew up! I loved seeing familiar landscape described in his story. The story itself was a pleasant combination of mystery, supernatural and the ordinariness of life. I can't decide which genre I would place it in. He's a pal of Tim Powers, who wrote Last Call. It was through Powers that I came to find Blaylock's book.

Brian O'Leary says

Interesting connections and good writing, but the main character is flat and boring.

William Humphreys says

I just re-read this (3rd time) and was even more impressed, perhaps aided by the hindsight of disappointment that I felt from Blaylock's latest 'Knights of the Cornerstone'. It is interesting to compare the two, as both could be termed 'Christian Fantasy.' However, ABE succeeds because it deals with dark matter in a sidewise and quirky manner, drawing the reader in whatever their ideological persuasions, while KC just tries to force you to believe. Be that as it may, this is wonderful book, blending atmosphere, dialogue and characterization perfectly with its parable of compulsions and how we might slip comfortably into hell - or not. One of my favourite reads.

Mike (the Paladin) says

I liked this book. I walked down wet streets and wandered in and out of houses with these characters. I still have the memory of the town and the characters. I think it will stay. Good book.
