



In Sickness and in Hell: A Collection of Unusual Stories

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In this debut collection, award-winning writer Stefan Barkow presents eleven of his most entertaining, disturbing, and morally provocative tales.

Within these pages you'll find "Mystral," the story of a young girl who dreams of being sacrificed to the god of her tribe; "I Loved You Once and Forever," a binary tale of love and identity; "The Last Report from the Front Line," an angelic account of the end of the afterlife; "These Woods Are Dark," a bedtime story for those who don't want to fall asleep; "In Sickness and in Hell," a demonic thriller that will keep you guessing; and "Hi, My Name is Grace," a reflective stage play about hope that won both Best Script and Best Production at the 2013 On Your Marks Festival of one-act plays.

Inspired by everything from childhood fears to existential crises and written for anyone willing to risk a look into the darkness, these are stories of evil and innocence, of damnation and forgiveness.

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Author : Stefan Barkow

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From Reader Review In Sickness and in Hell: A Collection of Unusual Stories for online ebook

Rich says

Overall, 4 stars for a very good collection. "Darkly philosophical" is a perfect coverall for most of the stories. I wouldn't say it is horror but reflecting on the ideas and themes presented can definitely leave you feeling disturbed.

I read and rated each story with a short break in between. I feel this allows each to have its own unique influence.

The 5-STAR stories: "Mystral", "Medium", "Forgive Me, Father" and "What is Lucy for?" These last two were the strongest of the collection with "Lucy" being my favorite.

The 4-STAR stories: "Jen,Now", "The Definition" and the play "Hi, My name is Grace"

The 3-STAR stories: "I loved you once and forever [Parts 1 and 2]", "The Last Report from the Front line" and "In Sickness and In Hell."

The last of the bunch, "These Woods are Dark" I had to put at 2 stars. The MC 'Timmy' suddenly becomes 'Sam' via an apparent editing miss on pg. 11. Stopping to figure it out threw off the pacing which kind of ruined the creepy ambiance. I got this book free as Goodreads ARC in exchange for an honest review. I will definitely keep an eye out for further works by this author.

Jill says

I liked this freshman effort by Barkow. His writing is excellent and he has a gift for writing dialogue. For a complete review, check out abookofadifferentcolor.blogspot.com

Andi Rawson says

3.5 stars

Interesting read with a variety of stories that are more intellectual than they are scary.

Carrie Robinson padula says

I really like this collection of short stories. Some of them were spectacular mind benders. I only wish there were more stories to read.

Pamela Schwartz says

I went into reading the book expecting the usual collection of horror stories but I was so wrong. I was treated to a collection of unique stories that caused me to pause and think. I hardly ever do that anymore when I am reading. Some of the stories I have to re-read as I am up in the air as to what they might mean. I have to say I enjoyed reading this and am glad to have a copy to add to my collection of books.

Kathleen says

Stefan Barkow's short stories are everything short stories were meant to be. A pleasure to read and easy to digest in short batches or devour one after another. They include thoughts of life and death, heaven and hell, and love. I know, profound, right, but they do. I love the clever way the tales tackle the issues they address.

I read Forgive Me, Father last and loved the way the story turned everything we "know" about creation and humankind on its head. People wonder about our existence, purpose and what will happen in the end. This was one "way out there" answer! I was glad I read it after Medium, which also deals with a creator.

It's hard to pick a favorite so here are some thoughts on several of the other stories. These Woods are Dark is great classic horror story that would keep a tweenager from sleeping at night. I really liked I Loved You Once and Forever, pts. 1 and 2. Definitely thought provoking and it exemplifies one of the themes that runs throughout the book that you should fall in love with the way a person changes instead of just falling in love with a person. It is said more directly in Jen, Now which ends nicely.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys short stories or classic horror stories.

A parent who does not appreciate creative writing about religious themes should have their kids avoid this one, but for the rest of you, enjoy! (I received this book in a goodreads giveaway.)

Madison says

Moral dilemmas galore! Definitely made me think.

Joyce says

Author Stefan Barkow says these stories are for "anyone willing to risk a look into the darkness." Though there's plenty of darkness available in many dystopic tales, readers will not often find the kind of thought-provoking touch that Barkow has. Folklore, bible, classical and medieval literature interest him, and his short stories show this background. For example in "Mystral," a girl who wishes to be sacrificed for the good of her tribe, suggests tales of Joan d'Arc or Antigone. Barkow's stories are fun to read--no moralizing, just lively plot and good writing that gives us food for thought.

♣Tessa♣ says

This is a pretty easy book to read in one sitting. I was going to leave some of the stories for tomorrow but I couldn't help my curiosity about finishing them.

I won't go into details about each one, but suffice it to say they were all unique and interesting. All of the stories were well written and thought provoking. Not every story pulled me in as much as some, but overall I think this was a really interesting read and would recommend it for anyone who enjoys short stories and varied stories.

The collection had a bit of everything for me I think. One was spooky, one made me smile, one made me feel a little forlorn, and one down right made me have to stop in the middle BC I was crying (that one I felt a special affinity for the MC and I'm sure not everyone would have the same reaction. I'd give 5 stars for this story on it's own just because of that instant gut reaction).

A few weren't personally favorites but I have to give credit for the writing, creativity, and over all depth to even those stories. Each was very unique and (even if not my favorites) still interesting and worth the read. Overall I enjoyed the book and would probably read the entire thing again sometime and definitely revisit a few stories even more then that.

I received a free copy of the book via Goodreads First Reads and am supplying an honest review in return.
