



## Halloween Carnival Volume 2

*Brian James Freeman (Editor) , Glen Hirshberg , Lee Thomas , Holly Newstein , Del James*

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**Halloween Carnival Volume 2** Brian James Freeman (Editor) , Glen Hirshberg , Lee Thomas , Holly Newstein , Del James

Glen Hirshberg, Lee Thomas, Holly Newstein, Del James, and Al Sarrantonio bring the ghouls of the most haunted night of the year to life in a chilling collection of stories curated by master of horror Brian James Freeman.

## **MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL by Glen Hirshberg**

Halloween is more than just a holiday in Clarkson, Montana; it's a tradition passed down through generations. Only this year, the ghosts of the past may just be a little closer than usual.

## **THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER by Lee Thomas**

When David was young, he believed in magic. In fact, he wanted to become a magician himself. But meddling in the forces of the mind has consequences beyond what an eleven-year-old can see.

## **MISCHIEF NIGHT by Holly Newstein**

Cabbage Night, Goose Night, Devil's Night—they're all the same. Before the treats come the tricks. It's all in good fun . . . until someone gets hurt.

## **THE GHOST MAKER by Del James**

When people need to disappear, I make them vanish. The catch? I've always got to be on guard—because that knock at the door may not just be a little monster looking for candy.

## **THE PUMPKIN BOY by Al Sarrantonio**

When boys start going missing, Detective Len Schneider is determined to make it right. But his partner knows that there are worse things out there than a dead kid.

## **Halloween Carnival Volume 2 Details**

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# From Reader Review Halloween Carnival Volume 2 for online ebook

## Frank Errington says

### Review copy

During the month of October 2017, Brian James Freeman and the folks at Hydra, have gotten together to present a total of twenty-five Halloween tales of horror from twenty-five of the best genre writers working today. Every Tuesday during October there will be a new volume in the Halloween Carnival anthology series.

Volume one was a top-notch set of four shorts and a novella and while the second book is not quite as strong. It's still worth your time this Halloween reading season.

Halloween Carnival Volume Two begins and ends with novella length stories with three shorts in between. The fun starts with..

Mr. Dark's Carnival by Glen Hirshberg - This novella's been published before, including an ultra-limited hardcover edition from Earthling Publications, which became the first of many Halloween limited edition books. "Is it possible that Mr. Dark's Carnival—the inspiration for all our Halloween festivities, the most celebrated attraction or event in the history of Clarkston, Montana—never really existed." if you've never read Mr. Dark's Carnival, you're in for a treat. The best story in this volume.

The Facts In the Case of My Sister by Lee Thomas - The horrors of spousal abuse told in this story of a brother's unwavering love for his sister.

Mischief Night by Holly Newstein - "In Pennsylvania, the night before Halloween is known as Mischief Night. Kids play harmless but annoying pranks, like throwing toilet paper into trees, soaping windows, and egging cars. Occasionally lines are crossed, and what was annoying becomes malicious. Sometimes even deadly..." like what happens when a group of boys decide to prank Mr. Worrall, the assistant principal.

The Ghost Maker by Del James - What happens when a mob hit-man goes to a Halloween party.

The Pumpkin Boy by Al Sarrantonio - Al Sarrantonio is one of my favorite Halloween storytellers. I love his stories set in his fictional Orangefield which is where he takes us for this novella of child abduction and the Pumpkin Boy. "The Pumpkin Boy had a bright orange pumpkin head with cold night steam puffing out of the eyes, nose and mouth cutouts, and a body consisting of a bright metal barrel chest and jointed legs and arms that looked like stainless steel rails."

Recommended and already looking forward to Volume Three.

Halloween Carnival Volume Two is published by Hydra, a division of Random House, and is available as an ebook.

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## **Juli says**

Halloween is my favorite holiday. Put that together with one of my favorite pastimes - reading - and I'm in heaven.

Throughout the month of October 2017, Random House is releasing a series of five Halloween short story anthologies. One will come out each week. The stories are subtle horror....the sort that sneaks up then creeps the bejeezus out of you. That's my favorite type of horror tale. I'm not much into the slasher, blood-spurting, gore fest sort. I prefer the more slow building, atmospheric, creepy kind. This series of short stories has put me in the mood for Halloween this year!

Halloween Carnival Volume 2 contains 5 stories:

Mr. Dark's Carnival by Glen Hirshberg. A college professor in Montana asks for primary source proof of Mr. Dark's Carnival - a horrific spectacle that appears only on Halloween. Ask and you shall receive, Professor Roemer! I loved this story from start to shocking finish! Excellent pace and suspense. Just creepy fun to read! This one is my favorite from this anthology.

The Facts in the Case of My Sister - Lee Thomas. A young boy hypnotizes his sister to protect her from her fear of monsters....with disastrous consequences. Sometimes believing in monsters is a good thing. This is a great story....what a powerful ending!

Mischief Night - Holly Newstein. A Mischief Night prank goes awry. This one was just ok for me...a good story, but not really horror.

The Ghost Maker - Del James. A career criminal dislikes Halloween. After all, you never know who might come knocking at your door. This story really wasn't my cup of tea either....not that it isn't well-written. Just not my style. I have the feeling that it might be a bit hair-raising for others though. Always be careful when you open the door on Halloween. Be prepared.

The Pumpkin Boy - Al Sarrantonio. Children start disappearing, and rumors start about a strange Pumpkin Boy seen roaming the area. Detective Len Schneider is on the case, frantically searching to find whoever is behind the disappearances. He discovers there are some things worse than a dead child. This story has great creepy vibes to it. Nice pace, scary atmosphere and a whopper of an ending!

Great Halloween story collection! There were a couple that just didn't work for me....but the beauty of a story anthology is that the writing, subjects, and characters are varied. Each of these stories is different....not just the same old spooky setting. What didn't gel for me, might be perfect for another reader!

I definitely love the fact that one anthology ebook is coming out each week in October. Great idea! These scary tales are definitely bringing out the Halloween spirit in me! Halloween Carnival Volume 2 will release October 10th, 2017.

\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Random House via NetGalley. Opinions expressed are entirely my own.\*\*

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## **Ken McKinley says**

With Halloween right around the corner, let's get right into this collection.

### Mr. Dark's Carnival - Glen Hirshberg

A Montana ghost story that's got some nice creepiness. David is a college professor that teaches a class that explores folklore and his favorite part of the course is the folk tale of Mr. Dark's Carnival. For many years, it has been rumored that the mysterious carnival pops up in a rural setting and only a few select people get chosen to attend. David has never met anyone that has personally been to the carnival and doesn't believe it truly exists until he gets his ticket. A great ghost story that has a murky ending.

4 out of 5 stars

### The Facts in the Case of My Sister - Lee Thomas

David's estranged sister, Joyce, is in the hospital from an "accident". The prognosis isn't good and David has doubts that her injuries were from an accident. When Joyce and he were kids, David taught himself how to do magic tricks from a book he got. Joyce was always his willing audience and participant. Now, David pulls out a trick from his past to learn what really happened to Joyce.

4 out of 5 stars

### Mischief Night - Holly Newstein

Willard had a good life, a loving family and wife, and looked forward to his retirement. He was never a drinker after growing up with a nasty old drunk for a father. In what seemed like a harmless way to celebrate his retirement, the bottle grabs ahold of Willard and doesn't let go. On Mischief Night, Willard meets a troubled teen that stumbles into his basement. Can one man's bad decisions help alter the path the youngster is headed down?

4 out of 5 stars

### The Ghost Maker - Del James

Halloween has its own set of scares when you're a mob hit man. You have to be on your toes, even if you're the grim reaper. Great voice that makes for a fun read.

5 out of 5 stars

### The Pumpkin Boy - Al Sarrantonio

Jody is a latchkey kid for half an hour every afternoon until his mom gets home. He knows he's not supposed to be outside and he follows that rule. Until, one day, he sees the Pumpkin Boy walking past his window and he can't believe his eyes. For police detective, Len Schneider, Jody's disappearance is bringing back old, haunted memories that he's been trying to lock away for 18 years. What started out as a promising novella, fell flat for me with the ending.

3 out of 5 stars

Overall, a nice little collection with mostly hits than misses. Well worth the time.

4 out of 5 stars

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### **Shane says**

disclaimer - i received a copy of this book from random house publishing group - hydra in exchange for an honest review.

even with just a handful of tales, volume 2 of the halloween carnival series is packed with treasures. not content with focusing on the supernatural, these five tales drag reality itself into question and never quite allow you to catch your breath or regain the solid ground you were certain you were standing on just a few seconds ago.

the best of the tales is unquestionably 'the facts in the case of my sister' by lee thomas, but it only tops 'mr. dark's carnival' by glen hirshberg by a degree or two. the remaining three stories round out the collection well, making this a quick, unsettling, and ultimately worthwhile halloween read.

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### **Sarah Joint says**

It had moments I really liked, but fell a bit short for me personally compared to the first volume. I will still most likely continue, because I love having spooky short stories to read leading up to Halloween. The first story was the longest and slow to get moving, but ended up being my favorite in the book. The stories are clever and well written, but didn't spook me as much as the first volume which falls to personal taste. A couple of them were more unnerving cautionary tales than scary stories.

*I received a copy of this book from Net Galley and Random House Publishing Group - Hydra, thank you! My review is honest and unbiased.*

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### **Stephanie says**

Full review and more on my book blog!

Actual Rating: 3.7 stars

TW: Death, Suicide, Murder, Gun, Alcoholism, Abuse

Mr. Dark's Carnival by Glen Hirshberg- 4.5 stars

A ghost story in Montana. David, a college professor, teaches a class about folklore and his favorite part of the course is about the folk tale of Mr. Dark's Carnival. It's been rumored for years that a mysterious carnival pops up and only a certain few people get chosen to attend. He has never met anyone that has been to the carnival and doesn't believe it exists, until he gets his ticket.

I loved the story, the creepiness, the folk lore, the atmosphere, and the carnival. The ending had me wanting to cry!

The Facts in the Case of My Sister by Lee Thomas- 5 stars

At 11 years old David gets into magic and hypnosis, using his new found talent on his 8 year old sister Joyce. Later in life Joyce ends up in the hospital from an "accident" that he doesn't believe was an accident at all. This story was so heart-wrenching and had me in tears. David pulls a trick from his past to bring to light what really happened and learns that magic has consequences, even when meant for good, beyond what an 11 year old can see, and that sometimes, believing in monsters is a good thing. It's all in the wording.

Mischief Night by Holly Newstein- 5 stars

Mischief Night in Pennsylvania some kids play annoying though harmless pranks. TPing trees, egging cars. But sometimes lines get crossed and things can get deadly. Willard, an old man had a good life with a wife and kids. Never drinking due to growing up with a nasty drunk for a father. In his retirement he figures it's a harmless way to celebrate, but the bottle doesn't let go of him. A troubled teen stumbles into his basement on mischief night. Can Willard's bad decisions help the troubled teen on the path he's on?

This story also had me in tears.

The Ghost Maker by Del James- 2.5 stars

You have to be on guard when your a mob hit man, especially on Halloween. Truthfully I liked it until the end only because I didn't get it.

The Pumpkin Boy by Al Sarrantonio- 1.5 stars

Jody is home alone, 5 years old, for ½ an hour everyday after his babysitter leaves and before mom gets home. He knows he isn't supposed to leave the house but he can't resist following a pumpkin boy. A boy with metal for a body and a pumpkin for a head. There's more to it but I didn't understand it. Other people do though so i'm thinking this is a "it's me" problem and not the story.

I loved 3 out of 5 stories and the other 2 I just didn't get personally but others have. I definitely recommend this anthology and enjoyed it even more than the first! I do plan on picking up the other 3 too! Thank you to Netgalley and Hydra for providing me with an e-arc in exchange for an honest review.

My Youtube Channel

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## **Mommacat says**

HALLOWEEN CARNIVAL VOLUME 2 is the second of five anthologies from Random House/Hydra and editor Brian James Freeman due out the second week of October 2017. And like I expected, it's more than satisfying and just a bit chilling.

This volume has two novella length stories by the incredibly lyrical Glen Hirschberg and the king of Halloween Al Sarrantonio. Either story on its own would be reason enough to buy and read this edition, but together - it's a no brainer. Both MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL and THE PUMPKIN BOY are worth reading every Halloween.

Lee Thomas's THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER was a well intentioned horrifying read that I never want to read again. I hope people learn from it.

MISCHIEF NIGHT was just sad. Not really a horror story, it felt out of place in this collection. It was quite dark however.

THE GHOST MAKER was also dark fiction. Enjoyable, and while I liked it, it didn't seem to belong here. A good story all the same.

This is a must read if you're at all into thrills and chills. Do yourself a favor and treat yourself to the whole series today.

I received my copy from the publisher.

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## **Elke says**

Mr. Dark's Carnival (Glen Hirshberg)

Not bad for starters, but I thought there were too many story-lines fighting for attention. However, it got better towards the end. \*\*\*

The Facts in the Case of my Sister (Lee Thomas)

My favorite story of this collection. Subtle but all the more chilling. Though I had a hunch where this would go the ending was a mean gut-puncher nonetheless. \*\*\*\*\*

Mischief Night (Holly Newstein)

Another more subtle story, dramatic and depressing. \*\*\*

The Ghost Maker (Del James)

Didn't do anything for me. What was it about? \*

The Pumpkin Boy (Al Sarrantonio)

I heard of Orangefield before but haven't read a book in the series yet. This story convinced me to check it out. A rather sweet treat. \*\*\*

Just like a Halloween candy bag, you find some outstanding treats among mediocre stuff and maybe

something you don't like the taste of. However, I can recommend this second volume for its second and last story.

(Thanks to Netgalley, the author, and the publisher for a copy of the book, all opinions are my own)

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### **Janet Robel says**

An enjoyable collection of unusual stories. These were fast reads for me. If you're looking for some quick scares, these will fit your busy schedule. There's something for everyone among these pages. This is also a great way to find some new authors.

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### **Lisa Cleveland says**

I've kinda been loving these Halloween Carnival books, and this one was one of my favorites. True, there were a few stories that didn't hit the sweet spot, but they weren't stinkers by any means.

Glen Hirshberg-Mr. Dark's Carnival-This was the best damn ghost story that I've read recently. The fact that it takes place here in Montana, just an hour down the road was an added bonus! I've often found certain areas of Montana to be creepy....Something about the emptiness of the plains and prairies just disturbs me. Al Sarrantonio-The Pumpkin Boy-Whew, seriously one heckuva tale! I know this one's been out awhile, and I've heard others talk about it, but it didn't sound all that great to me. So, I was wrong....The whole thing made my skin crawl, and the ending was terribly sad. I wasn't expecting that. So now I'm going to have to see what else I can find and read by this author.

This is one book I'd recommend. My thanks to Hydra/Random House and Netgalley.

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### **Dez Nemec says**

This is the second in a series of five Halloween Carnivals. The anthology features 5 different authors and are centered on Halloween. I like the idea that the publisher is releasing one a week in October, gearing up for the holiday.

As with all anthologies, I had my favorites. I have read some of Al Sarrantino's Orangefield books and stories in the past and enjoyed them. The Pumpkin Boy did not disappoint. My favorite of the bunch though was Glen Hirshberg's Mr. Dark's Carnival. A college history professor well-versed in local legends finds out the truth behind long-rumored tales of Mr. Dark's Carnival. There is a lot of background and story building up to the end, which while close, I did not quite guess. I found it strangely alluring - both the story and the carnival. Definitely the best, in my opinion.

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### **Michael Hicks says**

Brian James Freeman continues to set loose a handful of authors to explore some Halloween horrors in *Halloween Carnival Volume 2*. As with the prior volume, there are five authors with five stories, all centered

around the best holiday on the calendar, although some of these tales are more strongly pumpkin spiced than others...

#### MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL by Glen Hirshberg

Hirshberg kicks off the volume with a wonderfully written short story filled with the rich lore of Mr. Dark's Carnival, as presented to us via a college historian who lives for Halloween. His favorite holiday, unfortunately, is tainted by the sudden suicide of a former PhD student who had previously been collaborating with him. I loved Hirshberg's prose, but couldn't completely buy into the twist ending and abrupt finish to this one.

4/5 stars

#### THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER by Lee Thomas

Halloween lingers deeply in the background of Thomas's short story, and the only ghouls to be found here are of the awful human variety. While it lacked that certain Halloweenish flavor, the story itself is damn good and involves a brother reminiscing about better times while his sister lays in her death bed. Although they've had a severe falling out and hadn't spoken to each out in years, he may be responsible for her current state of affairs, even if unknowingly. I dug this little powerhouse of a short story.

4/5 stars

#### MISCHIEF NIGHT by Holly Newstein

After two solid shorts, I guess it was time for this anthology to slow down a bit. Unfortunately, I didn't find Newstein's story to be anything special. While it's not bad, it's not wonderful either and it felt fairly contrived. It's set on the night before Halloween, and involves an inadvertent home invasion after a prank-playing kid seeks shelter. It's kinda bland, and like the prior story, with its lack of overt supernatural influences, it just doesn't scream Halloween to me...

3/5 stars

#### THE GHOST MAKER by Del James

A low-life hitman gets invited to a Halloween party and frets about his costume. That's seriously it, and it takes a long time before we even get to that part--long enough that I had to double-check and make sure I had opened the right Kindle book and was still reading a Halloween anthology. While there's some good one-liners, the story is instantly forgettable and the Halloween aspect feels like a poorly tacked-on afterthought.

1/5 stars

#### THE PUMPKIN BOY by Al Sarrantonio

After several stories disappointingly lacking in the Halloween spirit, Sarrantonio makes up for it in spades with his pumpkin-headed boy Frankenstein. There's kidnappings, a possible serial killer on the loose, urban legends, Halloween carnivals, and a nifty little culprit behind all these shenanigans affecting Oranefield. Thank goodness somebody remembered to bring the Halloween spirit with them!

4/5 stars

While this second entry in the *Carnival* series is significantly weaker than the prior installment, there's at least a few saving graces. My main complaint is that I just didn't get a strong enough sense of Halloween throughout, and some of the authors do little more than pay meagre lip service to the holiday.

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

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## **Hannah says**

### ARC REVIEW

#### **MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL** by Glen Hirshberg

A College professor teaching about the local Urban Legend Mr. Dark's Carnival. He's obsessed with finding the real one of it exists or it is just that an urban legend. But that night he receives tickets to the carnival, will he finally be proven wrong or is this just another frat boy prank.

This is one of those that can leave you feeling "WTF" sometimes it a good feeling and sometimes bad in my case with this book it left me indifferent. It was creepy and I love the lore he put into it but the ending just fell flat. So many unanswered questions.

#### **THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER** by Lee Thomas

When a young boy tries to help his sister get over her fear of monster with hypnosis he taught himself. What he doesn't realize is what he opens her up to not until years later.

It's all in the wording. This was creepy and it was good but I don't know if it belonged.

#### **MISCHIEF NIGHT** by Holly Newstein

"Cabbage Night, Goose Night, Devil's Night—they're all the same. Before the treats come the tricks. It's all in good fun . . . until someone gets hurt." blurb

In all honesty, I did not remember this one. I could not remember what it was about. When I looked back in the book I thought "oh yeah, that one" I was left very underwhelmed with this one.

#### **THE GHOST MAKER** by Del James

Hit man for the mob on Halloween, talking.

I'm not much one for mob type stories. It was interesting but not very memorable.

#### **THE PUMPKIN BOY** by Al Sarrantonio

A young boy gets lured out of his house by a pumpkin boy. Police detective becomes obsessed trying to find the boy. Detective Len Schneider is trying to make up for the past, a serial killer was caught but not before he murdered his last victim a young boy. The young boy's mother sees a animatronic pumpkin boy speaking with her son's voice. Soon after another young boy goes missing.

This is what I like. Cops with baggage, missing kids, possible serial killer on the loose, creepy af. Best one in the anthology.

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## **Irene says**

This is the second in a series of five anthologies that will be released next month, in time for Halloween. Like the first volume it contains 5 short stories which are perfect for Halloween reading or any time of year when you'd like to enjoy a little bite of horror and dark fiction. My absolute favorites were the first 3. Not that the others weren't good but I have previously read all of Al Sarrantonio's Orangefield books (so should

you!) and this one is just not dearest in my heart.

The Ghostmaker by Del James was just not my type.

Living in a small town where local legends abound (I live in the same town as the real Conjuring house) my favorite story had to be MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL by Glen Hirshberg in which everyone has heard of the infamous carnival that is rumored to appear only on Halloween but none of them has ever attended. Stories about it abound, but there are no first hand accounts of what really goes on there. Perhaps it is just a myth and doesn't really exist. This year Professor David Roemer is about to find out.

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER by Lee Thomas was more of a psychological/mystery/suspense

Something horrible has happened to David's estranged sister. We don't know what, only that he is called to rush to the hospital, where slowly we learn how events from childhood led to the suffering of today.

MISCHIEF NIGHT by Holly Newstein When a man in an alcoholic stupor goes to investigate a noise in his basement what could possibly go wrong?

A solid 5 stars to each of those 3 stories and highly recommended for all fans of dark fiction.

I received an advance copy for review.

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### **Julia says**

The second volume in this series. I enjoyed volume one, and I enjoyed this volume too.

MR. DARK'S CARNIVAL by Glen Hirshberg

This story was really interesting. I loved the "urban legend" feel to it, and the ending was great.

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MY SISTER by Lee Thomas

Emotional, psychological horror. Not really what I was expecting from this series.

MISCHIEF NIGHT by Holly Newstein

Interesting, not scary.

THE GHOST MAKER by Del James

I liked the concept of this story. The payoff wasn't there for me.

THE PUMPKIN BOY by Al Sarrantonio

I really enjoyed this one. Had an interesting and unique storyline. The Pumpkin Boy was awesome.

My two favorite stories were also the longest in the book. Overall I think this is a nice collection of stories.

I received a free ARC from NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.

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