



Summer of Night

Dan Simmons

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It's the summer of 1960 and in the small town of Elm Haven, Illinois, five twelve-year-old boys are forging the powerful bonds that a lifetime of change will not break. From sunset bike rides to shaded hiding places in the woods, the boys' days are marked by all of the secrets and silences of an idyllic middle-childhood. But amid the sundrenched cornfields their loyalty will be pitilessly tested. When a long-silent bell peals in the middle of the night, the townsfolk know it marks the end of their carefree days. From the depths of the Old Central School, a hulking fortress tinged with the mahogany scent of coffins, an invisible evil is rising. Strange and horrifying events begin to overtake everyday life, spreading terror through the once idyllic town. Determined to exorcize this ancient plague, Mike, Duane, Dale, Harlen, and Kevin must wage a war of blood—against an arcane abomination who owns the night...

Summer of Night Details

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Author : Dan Simmons

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From Reader Review Summer of Night for online ebook

Nick says

The thing that impressed me about this book was not so much Simmons' ability to scare, but to build characters and the world they live in. Simmons draws a map of this small town in your head so well that the reader can see everything that happens vividly. I read other reviews criticizing the time the story takes to develop, but I feel that this is one of the strengths. It is a couple hundred pages in before something scary actually happens. By this time, the reader is anticipating these events, which is almost worse.

The story sounds intensely cliche with young boys in a small town battling a larger evil, but I can assure you that Summer of Night is written so well and is so readable that you won't care. This is one of the best books I've read, let alone in the genre of horror. I can't recommend this one enough, but make sure to read it in the summer to get the full effect.

Orbi Alter says

Obozavam knjige koje me ucine nostalgicnom za vremenima s kojima stvarno nemam nikakvih dodirnih tocaka... Prica se dogada sezdesetih u malom farmerskom mjestascu za vrijeme vruceg i mračnog ljeta. Podsjeca na It u smislu da drustvo klinaca vodi bitku sa drevnim, iskonskim zlom i putem prozivljava teror koji ih sve jace povezuje. Naravno i da mislim da je nezahvalno usporedjivati ovaj hororac s nekim drugim jer je on toliko vise od toga. Onako ugrubo, prica je to o nestanku jednog klinca na zadnji dan skole, o mračnoj monumentalnoj skolskoj zgradici koja u svojim zidinama skriva uzasne stvari i koja je predvidena za rusenje i o ezoteriji i zlu koje svoje ishodiste vuce iz obitelji Borgija. Malo eksplorativno, znam - ali fuckas tu premisu kad je to zapravo nasiroko ispisana prica o malom gradicu, galeriji zivopisnih likova, traceva i familija koje se stvarno svim silama trude, ali ih bas nece. Prica je to o svim klasicnim djecijim strahovima od mraka, umotavanja u prekrivace jer ti tako ono ispod kreveta ne moze nista, straha od ormara, zakucastih prostora, podruma i sl. O presucivanjima i generalnom nepovjerenju u odrasle koji ih svaki puta iznevjere, a (u ovom slučaju) podrsku primaju jedino od covjeka koji je potpuno unisten i sklon alkoholu iako ni on nije tu cijelo vrijeme jer i sam vodi bolne bitke. Na par mjesta naletila sam na djecje likove koji izgovaraju ne bas sasvim uvjerljive receni, ali me radnja previse okupira pa mi nije toliko smetalo. Ipak, svako dijete u ovoj knjizi ima snazno izgraden karakter, cvrsto drzi svoj dio price i zaista su zivi unutar korica - kao mala družina iz Pet prijatelja koja sanja o pronalasku posebne pecine i koja brizljivo cuva svoje bunkere, tako da jedva cekam vidjeti u nastavku u kakve su to ljude izrasli. Pocetak knjige je bas seoska, ljetna romantika pa sam se ususkala u osjecaj "daj molim te, pa ovo je macji kasalj prica, a ja hocu jezu" koja je dosla, s malim kasnjenjem doduse, ali me prodrmala kad sam joj se najmanje nadala. Jedina minijaturna mana koju vidim i koja ovdje nije izvedana u mjeri u kojoj obicno bude, a koja mi upropasti hororac, je demistifikacija onog sto/koje progoni jer unatoc iscekivanju finala ipak mi je draze da neka pitanja ostanu visiti u zraku, a ovako moja nadanja da cu se susresti s necim novim i nikad dozivljenim potonu u banalnost opisanog... Stvarno preporucam ljudima koji vole etmosfericne horore, a i fora mi je naletiti na Simmonsa koji je protocan od prve svoje recenice:D Volim ga, al zna zaplat kad 'oce.

Adam Light says

I'm not sure I would go as far as to say that Dan Simmons' Summer Of Night is a "must read" for all horror fiction fans. I made it forty years before ever hearing about it.

What I will say is that I find it almost criminal that this coming of age horror tale is so obscure. I am thankful for the friends I have on Goodreads for cluing me in on Simmons. The first one of his books I read was the astonishingly complex and brilliant Carrion Comfort, which is a "must read." This one should be read by anyone who enjoyed It, Boy's Life, Something Wicked This Way Comes and their ilk.

I have to say that this is a slow-paced novel, more atmospheric than action-packed, but the pacing felt perfect for me, and there is plenty of creepiness throughout. The last 100 pages were relentlessly exciting.

I loved it.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

What all happens during the summer of night? it's not pretty

Old Central School still stood upright, holding its secrets and silences firmly within. Eighty-four years of chalkdust floated in the rare shafts of sunlight inside while the memories of more than eight decades of varnishings rose from the dark stairs and floors to tinge the trapped air with the mahogany scent of coffins. The walls of Old Central were so thick that they seemed to absorb sounds while the tall windows, their glass warped and distorted by age and gravity, tinted the air with a sepia tiredness.

Time moved slowly at Old Central, if at all. Footsteps echoed along corridors and up stairwells, but the sound seemed muted and out of sync with any motion amidst the shadows.

That school was creepy as all get out. A three story school of creepiness and what secrets are in the basement and other parts of the school.

The gang was Dale, Mike, Duane, Harlen, Kevin, Lawrence (little brother to Dale) and sometimes Cordie.

The story starts out when they are waiting to leave the school for summer break and they were never going to come back again as they were going to go to a newer school. And a death occurs pretty much right out of the gate. That's all I'm sayin'.

This is a coming of age story with a creeptastic twist! I loved all of the kids, some of the side characters and the town where everything took place. I loved the setting Dan Simmons wrote for this book.

The book talks about each of the children in the book so we know all of their stories. There are parents,

neighbors, priests, school teachers, ghosts, evil beings and so forth and so on.

And yes, there are deaths. =(

There is this creepy Rendering Truck that follows the boys from time to time. They think it is someone associated with the school but they can never see them. They only smell the stink of the dead animals it picks up.

I can see all of the scenes in my mind. The story is set in 1960 and you really need to read it if you have been planning on it. I love old school books where you feel like you're a part of things past. Of course, I wouldn't want to go to this town!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Just wait until you get to all of the creepy stuff =)

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

Maciek says

Summer Of Night is a bloated book (I have a 500 page hardcover) that could really, *really* use some good editing. Dan Simmons clearly has good intentions, but most of them are lost in complete staleness and cliches of the plot.

So far, one of my favorite books I've re-read this year has been King's *IT*, which I consider one of his true masterpieces. After finishing *Summer of Night*, I can't help but think that Dan Simmons also shared my enthusiasm and sat down to write his own *IT*. Ultimately, though, he failed to recapture the magic which King did so effortlessly.

What could have been a beautiful coming of age novel turned out to be little more than a B-movie horror with all the traditional staples: haunted schools, possessed objects, creatures taking over people's bodies (there's even darkness that creeps under the bed!). The book moves with a snail pace and even when something finally happens, there's not enough suspense or interest to turn the page to see the resolution. Simmons overuses cliffhangers (sometimes several times per chapter) and makes such amateurish mistakes like starting several sentences with the character's name - one after another.

As the plot (slowly) moves along, the children start recognizing what's happening in their town. What's more, they finally decide to fight the creeps with Holy Water (Salem's Lot anyone?) and when the final confrontation arises they are all gun trottin' little rambos. What's the worst, none of this is even remotely scary, and I dare to say that the interest that's set up in the opening chapter (which is a quite neat Shirley Jackson tribute) completely wanes at the end, as the novel reaches utter mediocrity.

Reviewers compared *Summer of Night* to classics like *Boy's Life* and the mentioned *IT*; it's like comparing a wheelbarrow to a handsome muscle car. Simmons had some interesting ideas, but ultimately lacked someone who would point him in the right direction as to where to go with all these things - then it might have turned out to be a great novel. That's unfortunately not the case.

I really wanted to like it.

?Susan? says

I read "A Winter Haunting" it is the sequel to this book. The characters in this book are a group of friends when they are tweens. In a Winter Haunting, (Dale), one of the boys, returns to this area as an adult. It is not as YA as this one.

Anyway, this was a good horror that starts in a soon to be condemned school the day before summer break is to start. After a blood curdling scream the disappearance of a young student, strange sightings and odd deaths, a group of young buddies feel obligated and pressed by fear to take things into their own hands, especially when none of the adults will believe them, and if they say anything will probably have them admitted to the crazy house.

Yes; scary, gross, ruthless deaths. This is not a nice story and yes, people are horribly mulered. The tweens must come up with an idea of how to rid the town of this horrible situation. Their very different personalities help them to develope and execute an elaborate but believable plan that puts all of their lives in serious danger. They all know going into this dangerous situation that their plan must succeed in order to restore safety to the town, themselves and their loved ones.

This book was a bit like a paranormal "Stand By Me". It was a good story and I liked it, however, I liked the next one, (The Winter Haunting), much better, it was more of a ghost story and wicked, goosebump, good. Perfect for Halloween.

Marie says

This was a great story! Schools out and four friends have a wonderful summer to look forward to until something evil appears and turns their summer into something else. I loved the detailed information of the story and how the author weaves the story around you till it feels like you are experiencing what the boys and the town were going through.

This is definitely a masterpiece and it has become a favorite for me. Will be putting this on my favorites shelf and will re-read it in the future. Five stars for this one!

Edward Lorn says

Preface: Some of you will read this review and wonder why I gave it such a high score when I had such a big problem with a certain aspect of the storyline. Those of you who feel confused by my rating should know that, yes, this book is terrific. It transported me to another time and place. For me, it effortlessly captured a sense of nostalgia for something I never experienced. I wasn't alive in the 60s. I didn't grow up in a small town, though I did live in one for my final years as a teenager. I only had one close friend and not a group of buddies. And while I was a fat book nerd like Duane is in the book, I never had a good relationship with my father. Those are the aspects of this book I enjoyed, even though I have no experience with those things. This book allowed me escape. That, above all else, is why the book's getting 4 stars instead of a much lower rating. Because if I scored it based solely on the plot, I'd likely give it a low 3.

Minor spoilers from here on out.

The 800-pound gorilla in the room, I believe, is the school. We find out in the very first chapter that this is the last year Old Central, the school all four of our main characters attend, is going to be torn down the summer in which this story takes place. And that's the problem I have with the plot. The entire time while I was reading, I kept thinking, "If the boys do nothing at all, the evil will be vanquished. If they only wait, it will be destroyed, or found out, or, at the very least, moved to another location." Simmons tries very hard to give the reader reasons for the boys to act, but red flags kept coming up throughout the narrative. The reasoning behind the boys' research into the school is weak and, in the grand scheme of things, does not matter. Why should they go looking into the school at all when it's being torn down at the end of the summer? None of the boys liked Tubby so why the fuck are they looking for him? Why isn't the school being torn down until AFTER the summer is over? Why isn't the school buzzing with the activities of the demolition crew? It takes weeks of preparation to bring down a building that size. Where the fuck is everyone? The human henchmen weren't working to keep the demolition teams away. They were wasting their time trying to kill or scare four kids and anyone who helped them. The boys should not have been the greatest threat to the evil within the school. The threat should have been the imminent arrival of a wrecking crew. Which begs the question, "Why did the school have to be torn down in the first place?"

Much of these issues are the same issues I had with *Carrion Comfort*. I did not believe the villains' motivations in that book, and I did not believe the motivations in this one. It bugged me. Throughout the entire book, it bugged me.

All that being said, I enjoyed myself. Simmons took several risks that paid off in spades. Halfway through, the mood of the book changes drastically. It's been a long time since I sat back, mouth agape, thinking, "That did not just happen. No way was that real. Where could the story possibly go from here?" Having such a shocking mood-altering scene in the middle of your book takes a lot of balls.

Overall, what this book does exceptionally well is the Three Ds of Horror: Dread, Disgust, and Death. Simmons nailed that aspect. More than once I found myself chewing at my nails or crinkling my nose, and I never knew who was going to die next. Bravo.

In summation: Do I think everyone or *anyone* else will have the same issues I had with this book? No. In fact, it's likely no one else has mentioned the problems I had while reading. And that's because this book provides a means of escape. Don't mind the gorilla and you should have a lot of fun.

Final Judgment: Come for the Three Ds, stay for the nostalgia.

(Big thanks to Thomas Strömquist for reading this one with me.)

Kimberly says

Considering how long ago I read this the first time around, I had forgotten most of the "little details" concerning this book. Still one of my favorites. :)

Johann (jobis89) says

"Old Central School still stood upright, holding its secrets and silences firmly within. Eighty-four years of chalkdust floated in the rare shafts of sunlight inside while the memories of more than eight decades of varnishings rose from the dark stairs and floors to tinge the trapped air with the mahogany scent of coffins."

This book is a story about five 12-year old boys who live in Elm Haven in 1960. It follows them through their summer holidays as they encounter a number of strange happenings within their town and as they come to realize evil is lurking in their town, and they must stop it.

THIS BOOK. Honestly. One of the best books I've ever read. I thoroughly enjoyed every page of this book. Dan Simmons created such amazing characters and a little town that I felt like I knew inside out.

I'm a huge King fan, obviously, so I am no stranger to horror, but this book scared the **** outta me. This is potentially my fault for doing most of my reading at night, but there were definitely a few restless nights. The tension created, the building of the story to an absolutely terrifying conclusion...these are some of the best things about this book. Yes, it does take a while to start, and I think it's maybe a hundred or more pages into the book before something scary actually happens, but you can feel it building and that makes the horror somehow worse.

The kids themselves were impeccably developed, each with their own personality and unique traits, as well as different family set-ups. I felt a connection to each one, particularly Duane, but I want to keep this review spoiler-free so I won't go into how much I loved Duane and how I felt about his story arc. The kids riding around on bikes is heavily reminiscent of Stephen King's IT. In fact, quite a number of different themes within this book remind me of IT, but this is its own unique story, believe me. Other similarities include the themes of childhood friendship, friends coming together to combat a bigger evil in their town and the story being set in the 60s, of course. It's terrifying on so many levels, what these young boys are enduring.

Simmons takes certain situations, which might be considered cliche, such as things hiding under your bed, a presence at your window, walking through a cemetery, and yet somehow seems to reinvent them in a way which makes you think twice about glancing out through your window in the dead of night.

I cannot praise this book highly enough, definitely one of the best and scariest books I've ever read. Simmons has acquired a new fan!

Kristen says

I know many will call it blasphemy, but this book put Simmons ahead of King in my mental list of great horror authors. "Summer of Night" is closest in story to "It" only without the haphazard ending (and 400 pages shorter). When you pick this book up at the store, you will notice that it is a thin book, and make the same assumption that I did, which was that I was about to read a 200-300 page story. About 100 pages in, it dawned on me that there was still a long way to go, flipping to the back I discovered that the "light read" I had picked out was actually 600 pages exactly, written on what appears to be rice paper it is so thin, and every page is about to crawl over the margins (if you can call typing to the end of the paper a margin). There is no wasted space in this book either; chapters begin on the same page as the last chapter ended, with only a few returns in between and a chapter heading. Prepare yourself for a lot of reading... now the good news...

every page is wonderful.

I compare this book to "It" in the sense that it is about a group of young children, most of which are 10-11 but there is a younger brother at the age of 8. These boys (and girl when she shows up) are the only ones who know that something is terribly wrong in their little home town. The setting is a very rural small town surrounded by cornfields... it takes place in 1960. The boys are all instantly likeable and are very real. I listen to the descriptions of Lawrence, the little brother, and he is my youngest son to a "T." Each of the boys is different, has different living situations, and none of them are some sort of magical superman who wrestles monsters with superhuman ability.

The tale is patient and brooding, slowly building to a terrifying crescendo; starting with the disappearance of a child on the last day of school, followed by sounds under the beds, faces peering in windows, and growing with ferocity from there. As you read your stomach will churn and your heart will race as you pray for the survival of the children. How can they stand against these dark forces? I read all 600 pages in 2 nights, hating to give it up on the first night, but work forced me to have to sleep. Odds are that you will want to read all 600 pages in one sitting, it's that hard to put down... you will find yourself worried about those little boys all day until you are able to finish the book. I highly recommend it for anyone who was afraid of the basement, the creatures under the bed, walking through cemeteries, the bathrooms in the basement of dark and ancient buildings, or of the faces in your windows at night.

Ctgt says

Loved this book! It goes right to the top with Boy's Life, Something Wicked This Way Comes and The Body as one of my favorite small town, coming of age books. If you like any of those books you should enjoy this story. A group of friends band together to battle a supernatural menace and in the process take me back to my days of adolescence. I have struggled with some of Simmons's work in the past and even though this was just over 600 pages I never felt like it bogged down. There were a couple of scenes that seemed a bit far fetched but that's what these supernatural tales are all about, fighting back against seemingly impossible odds.

Medicine smell? Mike thought it was a medicine smell if you made medicine out of dead and rotting bodies. It was a medicine smell if you counted the coppery scent of blood and the stench of week-old decay as medicinal.

10/10

Kasia says

Summer of Night was one of the most incredible books I have ever read and mind you it's not because I'd rather read a book on a Friday night than party, much to my boyfriends dismay as I so often do.

Dan Simmons wove a masterful tale of 1960's Illinois with its cozy little town and streets, Saturday outdoor movies and the kids who were the true heroes of the story. It reminded me of Goonies in places as we quickly grow to like Dale and his younger brother Lawrence, Mike, Duane and Kevin and Jim Harlan, friends, schoolmates and brave, lovable kids who have turned this book in a magical tale that swept in front

of my eyes. I have never read a more real story that has horror, fantasy and people dying feeling as real as this tale. The characters all stand out in their own way, so clear, so precise so pristine that when bad things happened to some of them, I had a tissue dabbing my eyes. The book is long, counting 600 pages but I know I will read it over again in a few years and I'm sure it will taste even better, just like leftover dinner with the deepening flavors and spices.

The story itself is around a school called Old Central, where Tubby, a not so god kid disappears on the last day. It's a huge old building that is going to be closed down as all the kids are supposed to go to a new school. Dale, Lawrence, Mike, Duane, Kev and Jim all go to the same school but they are very young, around 11 yrs old, some younger, some tad older yet they are real kids; at times with bratty tough attitudes, yet Simmons doesn't pretend to sketch out a superhero in a child's body, he takes each characters and builds on it making them as real to me as my own family. I grew to love each one of them as they enriched my book with their plans to find the missing kid. As the kids started to piece together what was going on, very bad things started to happen. Unusual dark forces such as walking corpses and black worms polluted their world as sun settled and sent real life terror that was really more terrifying than any other horror book I have ever read. I laughed, cried and even took a day off from work just to sit and read this book as it slowly and beautifully unfolded its mysteries to me.

Dan Simmons used the most intense, sublime and imaginary language to spin his tale, that I have never read before in a scary book. I could feel the first day of summer, the sunshine, the happiness and the approaching gloom with the kids he so intensely described. I could probably use every single one of his sentences as a quite but when he said this about the evil things my hair really stood straight, as it was true: "Beyond the cone of light, large things circled and waited". Evil did strike at night but made some terrifying appearances at day time. When the kids run into mysterious soldiers, butchered animals in a barn with human sacrifices, mysterious holes in the ground, random neighbours dying with cries of terror on their face they know that nothing is imagined and that it won't go away unless they stop it.

So don't miss this glorious story, but have some time to read it and don't miss the sequel that follows where the ending stopped years in the future, it's called *A Winter Haunting* and I can't wait to read it!

Pouting Always says

Honestly most horror or suspense books feel lacking because it's hard to build a plot that keeps someone interested without giving everything away while balancing that with interesting characters and a unique plot line but somehow this manages to do that. I honestly haven't read anything else like this but I don't really read that extensive an amount of horror so take that with a grain of salt. I really appreciate how well the ending was written too because honestly the only other writer I've read who writes this kind of genre is Stephen King and sometimes his endings are just flat and he's really good at building stories not so good at finishing them off. Anyway I really enjoyed this one, especially all the characters, they were likable and had me rooting for them.

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

4.5 stars

Summer of Night is one of those books where the story is a delight to read but the review is kind of hard to do. It's also my first novel from Dan Simmons. After finishing this book, I definitely want to read more of his work soon.

The story is a sort of coming-of-age tale centered around a group of children growing up together in a small town in the 60's. School is out, summer is here, how exciting. The author brings alive the excitement of that first summer day when school is out and only months ahead await children who are eager to explore, to live, to have fun without responsibility. Idyllic summer days and nights. It opens in an old school that has seen its last class for it's about to be closed down, and the children all coming together on different days to try and solve the mysteries of the town, the horrors which await them. Each child comes from a different household holding its own basket of dysfunction. The households become as interesting as the main tale.

Although the story is deep and steeped richly in imagination, it's a fully characterized book, focusing on the internal thoughts and relationships for each of the children. I was dismayed at the death of a favorite, which I never saw coming. Simmons doesn't hold back the horrors of the death punch when delivering shocks for the book.

Nothing is predictable with how it will turn out and what will happen next. The ending with the villain and the wrap-up is in-depth, intelligent, and heavy with created history. There are no convenient or suddenly established plot points, but instead it was well constructed before the book was born to be slowly unraveled as small pieces are slowly handed out to the book's characters.

It's a slow ride that didn't invest its hooks into me right away, so patience IS needed to trust this one to take off successfully. Still, despite the slower start, the internal character shifts are handled effectively and work well to not try the reader's patience. Huge emotional stakes in the characters' lives helped me keep reading.

Simmons was also talented with writing some truly creepy scenes, especially when deaths were involved, very awful and haunting stuff. Violence and blood isn't backed away from when it's needed, but it's not splashed on the page for mere shock effect.

I did knock off half a star for some sluggishness and the death of a character who brought much to the story so that when they were gone, some of the magic left with them. Overall, though, this was an incredibly ambitious book that worked on all levels.

If you're a horror fan who enjoyed the childhood trials in Stephen King's *IT*, or the bonding and tragedy in Robert McCammon's *Boy's Life*, you'll almost certainly love *Summer of Night*. There's something especially effective about drama-horror focusing on adolescence and coming of age in the midst of trials and struggles, calling upon the power of friendship to draw strength to defeat foes so much larger than individual self.

Convincing in drama, rich in mystery, with hefty doses of genuine horror - all make this book an experience not to be passed up.
