



Sunset Strip

Rick Gualtieri

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My name is Sally.

For over thirty years I've prowled the night, one of the undead. In that time I've walked amongst you - a wolf in sheep's clothing - doing unspeakable things, killing countless people.

Now, on the eve of Armageddon, a chance for redemption presents itself. My past has come looking for me, beckoning me back to the city of my rebirth.

Those who killed me the first time are intent on finishing the job. I'm outnumbered and outgunned, but they've got another thing coming if they think I'm outclassed.

Unspeakable horrors, both old and new, await me in the City of Sin, but in the end they're all going to learn one *very* painful lesson: **Payback is a Bitch.**

Sunset Strip (a tale from the Tome of Bill) is 60k words of paranormal fantasy with attitude by Rick Gualtieri, author of Bill The Vampire and Holier Than Thou.

Sunset Strip Details

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Author : Rick Gualtieri

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From Reader Review Sunset Strip for online ebook

Gareth Otton says

I decided to take a break from The Tome of Bill series after reading Holier than Thou a year and a half ago.

There is a huge amount to like about this series. Bill is awesome, the world building is fascinating and it is genuinely funny as hell. However, the entire series was starting to feel like taking a puppy (Bill) and kicking it over and over. This isn't something I want to see once, let alone repeatedly for four novels in a row. I'm not someone who needs a happily ever after all the time, but at least a ray of sunshine now and again would be nice.

By far the biggest perpetrator in the relentless s***storm that Bill has to live through was my most hated character in this series (and probably the whole urban fantasy genre), Sally.

So, a year and half later and I thought I'd revisit this series. After discovering that this was a book about Sally, I was going to skip it, but then I thought twice. Being as Sally is my most hated character ever, surely it would help my enjoyment of this series if I read a book that would deal with her back story and maybe help me grow to, if not like her, then at least tolerate her a little.

So I read this and... I still hate the bitch!

One of the most overused tropes in the Urban Fantasy genre is the kick-ass female character who has a chip on her shoulder about gender issues and whose sole purpose seems to be to either emasculate the protagonist while inexplicably being a love interest, or in the case of books where she is the protagonist, be a Mary Sue who everyone is obsessed with. However, in most instances, there is always at least one redeemable quality. Maybe it's that she has a heart of gold deep down. Maybe she always tries to do the right thing. Maybe she recognises that she is a hateful creature and wants to change.

Sally is this character with absolutely none of the redeemable qualities.

Seriously. Swap out her gender or just take away her good looks and there is no way that she would be considered one of the good guys. Her actions time and again have either only been tangentially attached to the protagonist's interests because they suit her own personal interests, or they have been outright working against the protagonist. This is the very definition of an antagonist, or in other words, the villain.

Yet, in spite of this, all of the good guys seem to overlook it. It's like they just wave their hands at their antics, laugh at each other and say, "Oh, that Sally. She's a card. What will she do next?" Then, they go on thinking the sun shines out of her ass and she cries rainbow tears. Why?!?!?!?!

Take this book as an example. When the conflict arises, she makes it damn well clear that she is only doing this because it aligns with an interest that she has to resolve from her past, not for any altruistic reasons. Some might say that this is just a front, that she says those things to cover up the fact that she secretly wants to do good. But where is the evidence to support that?

If anything, I feel that because of her actions, any time we are told that she is doing something for the right reasons, it is an instance of an unreliable narrator. In a classic example of why show don't tell is so important, if you tell us that Sally cares about the welfare of Bill but never give any examples where she

acts in any way to support that statement, then it simply isn't believable.

Anyway, I could rant on and on about her character, but let's get back to this novel. In this novel, we explore not only how she is coping in a post-Bill coven, but also a trip that forces her to face her past and relive how she came to be who she is. I have to say that neither story is all that interesting. The first doesn't really have much meat to the story and is a bit too deus ex machina heavy to be satisfying, where as the second story just further expands on why we should hate Sally. It's written in a way as though to give her a tragic back story, but it really doesn't come off that way.

At one point in the story she (as a narrator) actually uses this phrase, "Was there no one in the world who wasn't trying to use me for their own purposes?" I actually stopped and laughed out loud as this perfectly sums up why this back story for her didn't work. It tries to show how she is always being manipulated and how she hates it, but she is ceaselessly doing it to other people all the time, including this very story. Could this just be one of those poetic character traits where you become the thing you hate? Maybe, but usually what makes those traits work as a character flaw is that the character is either aware of them and actively wants to change, or is shown taking efforts not to be like that but can't help being that way anyway.

She just feels like a cancer who has a habit of destroying the lives of every person she comes into contact with (which if you look at the history of this series, she is actually making quite a good job of).

Basically, this novel is a 1-star read that gets an extra star because Rick Gualtieri is a good writer, Sally aside. He constantly writes stories that keep me reading even when I'm angry, and I enjoy his writing style if not always the subject matter.

So overall it's 2-stars and not a triumphant return to this series for me.

Travis Mohrman says

This is a spin-off kind of novel from the Tome of Bill (Bill the Vampire) series. I knew going in that this book would have a different sort of "feel" to it than the nerdy one-liners and boob jokes of the regular Bill books. Don't get me wrong, it still had a few boob jokes (whew!) and funny references, just not as many. Basically, this story is all about Sally. It completely opens up her backstory and gives her some serious depth. It was interesting and a good read. My only criticism is that it read like many other vampire books - smart girl gets into stripping, turns into vampire, becomes surprising badass. I enjoyed it because I was already invested in the Sally character and this world Rick Gualtieri has built, but as a stand alone novel it might seem kind of unoriginal.

I don't think it's supposed to be a stand alone, though. If you happen to read this one first, pick up the first Bill the Vampire book and you'll understand much more.

Now, bring on Tome of Bill book 5!!!

Michael Leffel says

OK, no Bill but I could always read about every one's favorite female vampire "Sally!" this is great, if not enough I want more!!!!!! more!!!! more!!!!

Well we will be able to read more soon enough with the upcoming Tome of Bill book 5, Goddamned Freaky Monsters!!!

Novelettes are such a tease and Rick is a major Tease, but get it read it and join me in wanting the next novel!!!

Solace Winter says

I was given an ARC copy of this novel, and honestly I would normally give it 5 stars, because the writing is that damn good. The reason for the 4 stars is that this novel focuses entirely on Sally and therefore feels like a piece of the puzzle from somewhere in the middle where you can not quite completely place it... yet.

Sally has a different tale to tell, and the reader is opened up to a lot of her past and exactly what made Sally who she is today. As the Bill tales had been growing darker of late, Sally's tale is definitely morbidly blackened. She's still airy and goes about her day usually without the inspections on her self that Bill would, but as she tears through people the reader actually understands why she did or does it.

It does a superb job at continuing the storyline from the previous novel, Holier Than Thou. This novel is not just an excuse to give Sally her backstory, though it does it without remorse and the reader is glad of it. This novel is a transition. Spoilers ahead if you have not read Holier Than Thou.

*Spoiler * With Bill missing still, this helps pass the time, and gives the reader a better idea of how long has passed since Bill has gone missing. This shows how things are being run without Bill. This is a needed phase, if anything, to give the reader time to ponder what the damage was they had truly caused. / *Spoiler *

Reasons to Read this novel:

- Gualtieri is the master of writing characters with depth in an easy read
- Sally's story is worth knowing
- It opens up story for the next novels

Reasons Not to Read:

- The humor is going down a much darker route and I believe that this is the final turning point for the Tome of Bill. The stories have grown increasingly darker and had a harder reach for the humor of the first novel, but with good reason. However if humor is entirely what brought you, you might lose interest with the dark and bloody
-

Kat Lebo says

Sunset Strip (Tome of Bill #4.5)
by Rick Gualtieri

This was either a longish novella or a short novel -- but it was interesting. This book is told completely from the point of view of Sally, Bill's second in command in the coven/first in command in Bill's absence. And, as I had speculated before starting the book, Bill himself doesn't appear until the very end, and then only by way of a cryptic phone call.

The story is told in alternating present day/flashback technique and it tells not only the story of Sally's situation in the present, but the story of how she came to leave home, travel to Las Vegas and become a vampire residing in New York City. As per his usual style, Gualtieri includes scads of action scenes, enough gore to satisfy any vampire loving reading, a lot of introspection on the part of his main character, and danger galore for everyone. Great characterizations, right down to the least important character in the book. Good editing and proofing. I did find one minor error (a misplaced/misused apostrophe at 288 on my Kindle), but nothing else.

I missed Bill. But I did enjoy learning what makes Sally tick and how her exposure to Bill and his friends is changing her.

On to Book #5 "Goddamned Freaky Monsters."

Earl C says

The very short version:

- writing: 4 stars
- story: 3.5 stars
- characters: 4 stars
- accessibility: 3 stars
- setting: 3 stars
- metaphysics/magic: 3 stars

A departure from our main narrator and an origin story for one of our main players in the series, Sunset Strip is actually the strongest entry in the series so far. Sally as the main point of view character was a bold and interesting turn from a series that was becoming a bit formulaic.

Taskeen Ahmad says

Full review at : <http://busking4books.wordpress.com/20...>

Sally Sunset is one of the best urban fantasy characters ever written. She is devious, cunning, manipulative and utterly fearless. In fact in some respects, she is more of a badass than the main character of the series, Bill. Much of this book takes place in Las Vegas where it all started for Sally, unlike the Tome of Bill books that are set in Brooklyn, New York.

Bram Slaats says

this companion piece to the tome of bill was the first one that I read. I liked how we got some extra back story about some other characters.

While I liked how the story went I like the clumsiness of Bill in the adventures a lot better.

I give it 3 out of 5 stars

Joshua Wood says

Another great book

Just when you think you have figured out where or who some one was and how they fit in with the grander things in the series. Bam you catch a book from right field and you need to rethink your whole views all over again. This book will make you change your views of Sally if you don't like her, if you do it will reinforce your views about what you do like about her.

Michael Loring says

Sunset Strip is a side story to The Tome of Bill series by Rick Gualtieri, spicing up the overall series theme by switching to the POV of Sally The Vampire.

Throughout the series Sally has been the sidekick, the character to appear when needed. But now she's got an adventure all her own in this book. We finally get to learn her real name, and discover the circumstances around her turning into a vampire and what she was like in her human life and how she became the snarky woman she is today.

It was a rough start to her life, and it's about to get even rougher as Sally is forced to confront her beginnings in the vampire world. But, outfitted with her less than shiny morality and quick eye-roll, she's ready to raise some hell in the City of Sin.

The tone of this book is much different from in the previous installments of The Tome of Bill series. Sally is by no means Bill, as in she's much more willing to leave behind a trail of bodies than he is. This book held more of the usual tone of a vampire horror novel, but laced with the usual humor Author Rick Gualtieri is so well-known for. Sally is quick to snap someone's neck and then criticize their shoes. In her own right, Sally is a badass!

Once again I'm blown away by this series, even if this is just a side-story. I am absolutely in love with this world, and am so eager to see how it will all tie together. The ending was a very teasing way to lead into the next book, and it definitely has me ready to jump right back into the world of Bill The Vampire!

Victoria Marie says

Much darker than the regular Bill-POV books. Loved reading a story focused on Sally. The tone fit the character, her backstory, and the main plot perfectly. Wouldn't have worked as well if it had been as comedic as the Bill books.

C.T. Phipps says

4.5/5

THE TOME OF BILL series by Rick Gualtieri is a guilty pleasure of mine. Much like my Supervillainy Saga books, they're a lot of nerd references with a semi-serious take on the supernatural. Unfortunately, the books have an oft-putting quality to them due to Bill's causal use of sexist, homophobic, and abelist remarks (he constantly refers to Sally as a b*** for example). Indeed, those are a good reason not to buy them even though I otherwise enjoy the series.

SUNSET STRIP, by contrast, is a story about Sally Sunset and is easily the best of the series. It follows the adventures and history of side-character Sally as she goes from a girl with a repressive family background to a troubled Las Vegas stripper to a vampire. It's all set against the backdrop of rescuing the sister-in-law (potentially) of friendly antagonist Christy from meeting the same fate Sally did as a young woman.

I really like Sally, much more so than Bill, because she's a more serious character. She's suffered and been transformed by her experiences as a vampire. There's real pathos to her losing her humanity and trying to deal with the fact she's had some of her past morality returned to her. It's also cool to see her relationship with Colin and how much betrayal and hurt there is.

Las Vegas is the perfect location for a vampire story with its mixture of glitter, lies, sex, and broken promises. I'm surprised more stories don't take place there with the undead. I also like how Sally's story starts off fairly banal. She's just yet another girl in the Big City mislead by promises she might do something successful (albeit not quite as trite as if she'd been in Los Angeles). The characters of Marlene and Marc are also excellent antagonists as their connection to Sally makes her story more personal.

The book benefits from the fact Sally is significantly more mature than Bill both in attitude as well as storytelling context. While Bill mostly retains his humanity despite the fact he's still running a mass murdering coven (mostly by ignoring what's going on), Sally is a fully embraced fiend who we see walk the highway to hell up to the point she finally does the unforgivable (or so she thinks). You even cheer her on when she confronts her sister who assumes, automatically, Sally is a prostitute.

In conclusion, this is a really good book and I think not only will fans of the Tome of Bill enjoy it but that people who have no experience with the series will enjoy it.

Peg says

So that's what happened.....

This book filled in a lot of blanks about Sally.... Lucinda's... past. And explains her actions and attitudes in some of the rest of the series. She is awesome.

Nicole says

This companion book to the Bill the Vampire series tells the story of everyone's favorite stripper turned vampire, Sally. This was a much darker and more gory story than the other books, and it was a bit depressing. I had a hard time deciding on the star rating because it was well written, and it's great to know Sally's origin story, but it wasn't quite what I've come to expect from the Tome of Bill.

Mr. Matt says

A young woman is missing and all the clues point to the seamy side of Las Vegas' night life. Oh, and the night life is quite literally the night life. Who runs Vegas' finest strip club other than a coven of vampires. Where can the poor woman's family turn to for help? They turn to a former stripper turned vampire, of course!

Sunset Strip expands the universe of Bill the Vampire. In this book we learn more about Sally, who returns to Las Vegas to help out a friend. The book has all of the snark that I've come to expect from the author. Sally drops one-liners (at least mentally) all the time and they are simultaneously amusing and annoying. Reading, I was reminded why I set aside the story.

Snark aside, it was nice to return to the stories. The Bill the Vampire series is pretty straight forward urban fantasy stuff, if thoroughly soaked in snark and off-beat humor. Sunset Strip continues the story line from the last books, only without Bill. There is a supernatural war brewing between the vampires and other elements of the supernatural community. So, of course, the trip to Vegas involves so much more than facing down the Vegas coven.

It was also nice to learn more about Sally; however, of all the characters we knew about in Bill the Vampire, Sally was the one that we knew the most about. It might have been nice to explore some of the other characters, Tom, for example? (I suspect some of that is that known of the other characters could have had the titillation factor of being an ex-stripper.)

While on the subject of Sally, it was nice to see that despite being a vampire for 40+ years, her humanity was returning. Half of her snark was self-directed, incredulous that she was doing things like not killing people simply for being inconvenient. Sally was learning (re-learning) how to care for others. It was not just all power and survival. It was good to see the development of her over the course of the series.

Three and a half stars rounded down to three. Fun books, good but not great, enjoyable but not mind-blowing.
