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If you have a supernatural problem that won't go away, you need Buck Carlsbad: private eye, exorcist, and last resort.

Buck's got a way with spirits that no one else can match. He was normal, once. Until Something Horrible killed his parents and left him for dead.

Buck has spent years using his gift to trace his family. It's his only hope of finding out what happened to them-and what made him the way he is.

Now the voices say that something big is coming. Buck already knows what it is-a super high-tech bullet train running express across a stretch of unforgiving desert known for the most deadly paranormal events in history. A place where Buck almost died a few years ago, and where he swore he would never return.

But as the train prepares to rumble down the tracks, Buck knows it can only be the inevitable hand of fate pulling him back to the most harrowing unfinished case of his career at four hundred miles per hour.

Black Light Details

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From Reader Review *Black Light* for online ebook

Hope says

It isn't often that a work of contemporary fiction comes along and opens up an entire world of infinite possibilities, yet *Black Light* achieves that effectively in its first few pages, and the authorial team of Melton, Dunstan, and Romano make it seem effortless. *Black Light* is one of the hidden treasures of 2011, and I cannot emphatically recommend this novel enough.

Introduced to an alternate version of our own reality through the funny, cynical, sympathetic, charming, intriguing, and mysterious medium Buck Carlsbad, *Black Light* is a relentless romp through the supernatural from beginning to end. Though the novel does read very much like a script for a fantastic movie or television series and has a few moments that are utterly predictable, it is suspenseful and intricate enough to hold the reader's attention throughout its entirety. Its treatment of modern pop culture is merciless, and it has a sense of humor about it that is absolutely charming.

What is perhaps the most striking and unexpected feature of *Black Light* is the compelling nature of its characters; though this could easily be seen as a thriller or traditional adventure novel or bildungsroman fueled by the current obsession with shows like *Ghost Hunters* and *Paranormal State* and science fiction coupled with fantasy, the novel is very much driven by its cast and the evolution thereof. Surprisingly, very little information is given about any character in the entirety of the novels. What the authors choose to disclose, however, makes each one of the overwhelmingly large array of personalities memorable. Once or twice I did have to go back and check who this or that person was, but these characters were built to last and designed to stick in the reader's mind (view spoiler). These characters have presence, and the authors give the readers just enough to really spark the imagination.

Be warned: this novel was written by the writers of the *SAW* franchise, and it is not for the faint of heart. (view spoiler) There is some material that certain readers who are sensitive to the idea of gore may be uncomfortable with. As for me? I love a blood bath, and I loved the grittier elements of this novel.

Black Light is one of the best contemporary novels that I have ever read, and it has earned its proud place in my Big 3 along side *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman and *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski. In closing, the authors have asked their readers to please let them know if they'd like another book; consider this my official request. And if it is at all possible, please make the next one about Darby Jones and Roosevelt, because I may be more than just a little bit in love with those guys.

Greg says

One of the better read managers at work once said that there weren't any good books written by two authors, this might not be a hundred percent true, but generally a book with two or more authors is going to be some hobbled together fiasco. But what about three authors? And what if two of those authors are the writers of the *Saw* movie sequels? It's got to be good, right? Right? Three authors? Torture horror screen-writers? A recipe for awesomeness right?

Eh.....

Most of the other reviewers here seem to like this book, so I might just be a dick or maybe I'm not exactly the target audience for this book. But, but but I'm one of the people who has seen every *Saw* movie in the theaters! Even when they weren't so good, I still had fun watching them, so I thought hey, I bet I would like this, and besides it was a free advanced readers copy, what did I have to lose?

Eh.....

On the plus side? The middle third of the book was pretty good, and I enjoyed it. The first and last third of the book though were pretty awful. When I started to enjoy the book I thought that I could overlook the weak beginning of the book, but then when it all started to fall apart towards the end I thought maybe the good parts were just a fluke.

This book is about an exorcist / ghost-buster. He can see ghosts and rids the world of ghosts who are causing trouble by, um, eating them. Well it's called 'pulling' them, but pulling them is inhaling the ghosts so that they get in his stomach until he vomits up the ghosts into a silver urn and buries them. There is some tortured past backstory that isn't worth going into here. Oh, and when he eats a ghost, and sometimes when he does some other stuff he can see the 'black light' which is some kind of mystical light in the realm of the dead that allows him to do things like, see everything in the ghosts past, see things in his own past, see things that aren't really there in the real world, and sometimes find physical things and bring them back. This 'black light' at times would sear his eyeballs if he looked at it directly, so he has to wear steam-punk like goggles, but other times it doesn't seem to matter.

Why am I bothering with this 'plot' stuff, I rarely get book reportey, why now? Because it's part of why I disliked this book. Did you catch the last line of the last paragraph? That's the problem with the book, not the goggles, but the sometimes he needs them and sometimes he doesn't, most of the book is like this, there is no consistency. This lack of consistency I like to call Dungeon Master Bullshit, it's where a fictional world is manipulated in any way to make the story more appealing to a hormonally challenged thirteen year old boy who has been punched in the head a few too many times.

There is no consistency in this book. and I'm not talking about little details, this is total failure of world building. Instead of having consistent rules about what can and can't be done in this world the rules are always changing, and they are more akin to an old style video game. The bad guys get inexplicably stronger and more difficult to beat as the book goes on but not for any reason given, actually they usually get more difficult despite the 'rules' of the world from earlier parts of the book.

So the book goes on and gets sillier and sillier with what can and can't happen. Along the way there are also a lot of fighting scenes that go on for pages and pages and they describe things that might be cool to see in a movie but which make my eyes glaze over when I'm reading about it. Then as the book nears the end it's like the writers open up the book of every cheesy Hollywood cliché and 'twist' and decide that it would be good to throw in as many as they can. At this point the book gets even sillier than it was already becoming. And then.....

the cherry on the top.....

the fat lady singing?

the moment in a cheesy movie before the credits role?

(view spoiler)

William Stafford says

What if the Titanic was a high-speed train and what if, instead of hitting an iceberg, the train travels through a super-haunted place in the desert and is attacked by evil spirits? That's the premise for the plot. Our narrator is 'gifted' or cursed rather, with the ability to not only see these evil entities but subdue them, ingest them and regurgitate them for burial... While I liked the concept of this rather violent tale, I found the style of the writing too irritating to enjoy. The writers - it took three of them to come up with this! - have a tendency to list their sentences.

Like this.

Then add another.

And so on like this.

Annoying, isn't it?

And so I lost patience with it. The passages describing the black light - another dimension where the nasties reside - tend to obscure the action and I found myself skimming through the passages printed in italics.

Disappointing.

Mary Gramlich says

BLACK LIGHT by Patrick Melton, Marcus Dunstan, and Stephen Romano
10/11 - Little, Brown & Company - Hardcover, 336 pages

If you are the person who protects us from the ghosts, who is taking care of you?

Buck Carlsbad has been chasing everything that goes bump in the night for more years than he can count. He has a "gift" which captures the dark forces that cause mayhem and disaster with the power to regurgitate them into safekeeping. He lost his family to the Blacklight that holds secrets and keeps the things that scare you very close and under control.

When Buck is asked to take his particular talent and participate on a trip through the desert on a new high-speed train his first thought was "why me"? But after talking to the creator, it becomes too clear that this train will cross the Blacklight Triangle, which is the area where his parents were killed and where the darkest danger on earth still lurks. This area housed the worst that human kind had created in prison facilities designed to contain their evil, but does that ever work? The body may be gone but Buck knows from firsthand experience that their souls can still roam about causing havoc by utilizing another vessel.

The train is full of the rich, famous, and future presidents soaking up the publicity and preparing for the ride of their life. The group is clueless as to the imminent danger right underneath them because they are as equally possessed by their own demons and distractions. This trip is a puzzle to Buck who is trying to put pieces together so they can finally make sense to him and maybe fill in the holes of why his parents were killed. Distraction is not a possibility for Buck as just the mere second he closes his concentration disaster can occur and he truly has no idea who to trust. Everyone that Buck thought was on his side may not be or maybe they really are he just does not know.

The last stop for this train may be the beginning of a nightmare that cannot be controlled by even someone

with Buck's gift.

My reaction upon finishing this book was wow. Not a small, uncomplicated wow but a huge that was awesome WOW. A book that is as fascinating as it is scary is an interesting combination that came across as well as it did due to flawless writing. The chapters flow one into another and every word is critical to the storyline. This book is best read with the lights turned up as high as they can go. Did I say wow?

Mike says

Black Light by Patrick Melton, Marcus Dunstan, and Stephen Romano (hereafter the Writers) is an gritty and over-the-top tale of supernatural noir. The Writers are the same guys who brought us the Saw franchise but (if you're like me) don't let that influence your decision to give Black Light a shot. Black Light is the story of Buck Carlsbad a private investigator with the gift of being able to see the dead and absorb them for later disposal. His gift comes with the side effect of being able to see the titular black light; the dead world around us. Orphaned at a young age Buck is haunted by the fate of his parents who disappeared into a dangerous triangle of black light activity. A triangle that a entrepreneur plans on building a super-speed railway straight through.

The first thing readers of Black Light will likely notice is the over-the-top language the Writers use to infuse the novel with noir sensibility. It reminded sometimes of the first Max Payne video game though never quite as overblown ("Collecting evidence had gotten old a few hundred bullets back. I was already so far past the point-of-no-return I couldn't remember what it had looked like when I had passed it." -Max Payne). Still though lines like: "The woman is cringing in a far corner, near the fireplace, crying as she watches my body quake and rumble, my eyes jacked open, infused with the dull red glow of a madman's cancer." and "The urn sits on the bar in front of Tom, and I can almost see my face reflected in the silver surface. Almost, but not quite. Some kind of poetry in that, I guess." are by and large the norm and work well if you don't take them too seriously.

There is some lengthy exposition at the start of the novel as you are introduced to Buck and given some brief insight into his past and personality. This is by far the most difficult section of the novel, interesting for its inventiveness but not particularly polished in its execution. It is in this early section that readers are introduced to the mystery surrounding Buck's family and are Buck's early exploration of that mystery are relayed primarily through flashbacks. You get the sense that there is a whole other story that could have been relayed had the Writers decided to and there is at least a whole (or several) novel's worth of content buried in those flashbacks. The first hundred pages or so really play second fiddle to the remainder of the novel and then part of the novel that takes place on the bullet train, and after, are some exciting, tense and generally top notch scenes that are definitely worth waiting for.

Are the characters believable or realistic? No, not really. Many are caricatures: the pop-star diva, the charismatic politician, the pushy news anchor, the overly authoritative and slightly disturbed Homeland Security officer, the washed up veteran, etc. Some have unique twists like the pop-star who is actually talented and who has a touch of the gift shared by Buck but by and large the presence of these other characters seems only to serve as an impediment to Buck's quest to solve the mystery behind his parents disappearance. It's not a bad thing in most cases and the books laser like focus on Buck is far more of an advantage than a detriment.

Black Light isn't a perfect novel but is a fun, whirlwind of a novel. With an inventive world and a unique

flair for over-the-top description Black Light is one of the most original novels that I've read in quite some time. Audible and Hachette's production narrated by Peter Ganim brings a liveliness to this narrative and provides a near perfect voice for just the type of fiction. Readers and listeners looking for something quick, exciting, full of dark depths and high action should look no further than Black Light. Hopefully we'll be seeing some more of Buck Carlsbad in the future.

Andrew says

First of all I will admit I knew nothing of this book - this is one of those random out of the blue gambles I took and it paid off.

As usually I do not want to give away spoilers but lets say that when I first started I didn't hold any great expectations - its on a subject that seems quite popular at the moment and with an unrecognised author I didn't think it would be the next award winning hidden gem. I was wrong - the style is quick and easy to read - the storyline though familiar quickly diverges away from my preconceptions and the whole general premise though predictable still manages to throw a few surprise but does not disappoint. In general I really enjoyed reading this for a cold Sunday afternoon and I hope there are others who get to enjoy it to.

Meaghan R. (YA-aholic) says

I received this book from First Reads.

2.5 stars.

only a few chapters in so far, but it seems really interesting.

i like the new take on ghosts and ghost hunting.

i can't wait to see how the rest unfolds and possibly discover more about Buck's mysterious past.

i don't even know where to begin with this one. it started out alright (grammatically and structurally speaking), i was thinking of 4 stars (it had promise), then the writing was just so horrendous, it was a challenge to read. i really felt 2 stars, but i couldn't pick between that and 3, so it's 2.5 stars

i have thoroughly detailed notes on this book at home, so i will give an in0depth review later today. it was just bad. i was this close to giving up on the notes and just writing directly in the book itself....i know, a sin!!!! i was so close. anyway, come back tomorrow, 1/4 for the in depth review...

it was a real struggle for me to get through the first third of the book. i try to read 50 pages of whatever book i'm reading before i leave the house for work, and then 50 pages before bed, as a minimum. a lot of the time, i go over this in one day. soooo not the case with this book. i think it took me 2 days to even get to page 50! Like i said earlier, this book started out with promise. i trudged along through those slow first parts because of that promise. once i hit around page 100, the book totally picked up....pace-wise. it was really good for about 50 pages. then came the discrepancies, in inconsistencies, the the made up words (the authors seemed to like to combine two words in to one....spidercrawls for example, i have more coming tonight, this is all

just the top of my head....) there were a lot of other issues as the book progressed.

by the final third, that when it got to be a major problem. there was an instance, when Buck put the gun in his pocket, and then on the next page, he put the gun in his pocket. wtf?

near then end, Buck's gun goes flying in to the pool. a few pages later, buck is thinking: if only i can get a little further to reach the gun on the tarmac. then, after another few more pages, buck is in the pool retrieving the gun.

-seriously! this happens a few times in the book.

either all three writers didn't talk to one another, read the other's work, or collaborate at all, and just wrote what they wanted and compiled it all together.

or, there was one really bad writer in the mix! the issues were normally in specific chapters, and didn't bleed too much into the other ones! omg, that's another thing that got to me...

"there was a flower of blood on his shirt/blooming on his back"

this was great when i came across it, the first time. i even marked it with a post-it flag as i do when i come across good/great lines of prose whilst reading. saw the "flower of blood" come up a second time. didn't have as much impact at the first, but oh well.

when i came across it the third time, i'd had enough. learn more and new imagery techniques please. i understand that you may have really liked the phrase, but the more you use something, the less meaning and impact it carries. please reference John Updike's "Superman" poem.

i've lost my train of thought, so i will right more later tonight...

Virginia says

If you like nonstop action like the kind found in impossible car chases, or violent video games, you will love this book. If you liked the writing in The Bridges of Madison county, you will love this book.

I'm all for heart stopping action scenes but really? There are no actual car chases in this book, but that's all I could think of when our hero is fighting angry ghosts. I truly think action scenes went on a lot too long. The hero seemed at the brink of death for half the book. I felt like I was watching the climatic fight scene of a Marvel movie for hours. I got exhausted, and lost focus. I had the urge to flip past the "noise" but that's pretty much all there was.

Perhaps this is geared toward people who play hours of violent video games. They have the stamina but I don't.

That being said, I actually liked the story. I love the ideas. I just think it could have been better presented.

Adam James says

Black Light is a book written by idiots, written for idiots. And I'm an idiot for reading it.

The warning sign should have been the three authors who somehow managed to screw up an already ridiculously cliched and idiotic story. Black Light reads like the fiction vomited out by freewriting fourteen yearolds in a remedial English class.

It feels as though this story was a failed screenplay that these three idiots decided to showcase as a fleshed out novel. The problem is that there's nothing about this "book" that makes it a fleshed out anything.

I feel dumberer for reading this.

Miriam says

A fun, wild ride about a sort of rogue exorcist on a train of ghostly terror. A perfect Halloween book.

Lou says

"Mommy I see dead people!" that's the line from the distressed young boy in Sixth sense the movie. And definitely the main protagonist would quote the same.

There a lot of talk of dead people in this novel

This novel comes from the writers of SAW. The protagonist has been surrounded by the dead most of his life and his gifted talent is of the exorcism strain. He eats dead souls up then expels them from his own body again.

The story had the makings of a real page-turner but I expected much more fright, considering the writers of SAW were the authors. There was something missing for me, the elements where there for a good story but the delivery was not engaging enough, it's the way it was written it lacked a certain character and edge for me, it lost my interest a few times and I found it a struggle to enjoy, I really wanted the story to work. This kind of story has been written successfully before and suggest titles like book Odd Thomas by Dean Koontz and The Turtle Boy by Kealan Patrick Burke. This was presented free for review but I cant let that give me a biased approach i must give a genuine experience of the story and not big up something I did not find that great.

Lynn says

Being a huge fan of the "Saw" series of films I was eagerly wishing this to be as good. Unfortunately though, the premise of the story was intriguing but failed to deliver the goods for me.

Buck Carlsbad is an exorcist with a difference. He uses the Blacklight of the dead to rid the world of spirits that tag onto those remaining, more often than not the ones who have killed them in the first place. His journey into the Blacklight has allowed him to piece together the jigsaw of clues that surround his parents death but each visit he becomes visibly older and intensely fatigued by the power of the dead.

After taking a call from a mysterious Billionaire, Buck finds himself in a quandry as to whether to take the job as it involves the scene of his parents murder that nearly left him for dead.

I think, for me, I was expecting more of a gore fest so felt disappointed that the narrative just chugged along

rather slowly. The ending being so obtuse that I could have thrown the book across the room with an angst praying that it doesn't lead onto a follow up!

Jessica Bronder says

We start the story as Buck is extracting the ghost of a pedophile from his own home. He absorbs the Mark then later locks the remains in a silver urn. This is hard on Buck and takes time off of his life, which is measured in gray hairs. Buck is one of a handful of people that can remove spirits from the areas that they are haunting. This is not a pretty procedure or one that is healthy; most of the people that have these skills turn to alcohol to live with what they do.

Buck also has parental issues. He remembers nothing before he was found at the age of seven. He is trying to find out more about his parents. When he has a Mark inside him, he sees glimpses of the past and has been able to retrieve items from the past. But this power comes with a price. The deeper he goes, the harder it is to return to real life.

He is convinced to help out Jaeger Laser with some trouble he has had on a new super fast train that he has made to link LA to Las Vegas. It seems that the train runs through a section of haunted area called the Triangle. This is a super high concentration of spirits. Buck has had some experience in the Triangle that got him the closest to finding out about his parents and almost killed him.

Because of his past, he decides to help out incase he can find out more about what happened to his parents. But when the train gets moving, things go to hell very fast. This is going to be the biggest job of Bucks life, if he can survive it.

I liked this story. There is a great concept and I was very surprised by the ending. I have to say that the descriptions of when Buck was in the Blacklight were a little disjointed. They are short, blunt statements that did get a little annoying after a while.

Having said that, I did like the book and would recommend it to those that like the paranormal thrillers. I would be interested in finding out if there may be a sequel. There is the possibility.

I received this book from the Goodreads First Read program in exchange for an honest review.

Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says

DNF @ 50%

Black Light had a lot of potential. Unfortunately, it didn't live up to it. I got about halfway through it and found myself asking why I was continuing to read a book I wasn't particularly enjoying.

So, I stopped.

J.C. Hart says

This novel follows Buck, a man who drags the vengeful dead out of the living world and into himself, in order to remove them from the land of the living permanently. His whole focus in life is to answer the question of what happened to his parents – unfortunately for him, the only place he can find those answers is the last place he wants to be.

I really liked the take on the paranormal shown in this novel. It was something new for me – the main character physically taking the spirits into himself before being able to dispose of them – and I liked the dark and gritty setting. Buck is a bit of a tortured soul, getting old before his time, burning years of his life in the pursuit of answers. These questions that haunt him prevent him from living life, to the extent that he might as well be one of the dead already – his way of handling situations doesn't lend itself to reaching old age

There were quite a few secondary characters, some of which I really liked (his sidekicks lend some comic relief to the story and the few women he comes into contact with are all very different). For the most part though, they played their cards very close to the chest and it wasn't until near the end that I felt like I was getting a grip on who was controlling the situation and what the outcome might be. I was genuinely surprised at several points with the twists written in and the ending didn't disappoint.

The writing is highly visual, incredibly detailed at times, and it's here that you can tell this was produced by people who write movies. While sometimes I had to read something over, in order to make sure I had it all straight in my head, I could see how this would translate to film – and it's a movie I would want to see.

If you're the kind of person who likes this level of detail, who likes a dark and gritty tale with a paranormal bent, then you should probably check this out.
