



Phantom Nights

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The year is 1952. Fourteen-year-old Alex Gambier is rebellious by nature and scarred by childhood tragedy in the southern community of Evening Shade. An outcast in his own family, mute from a bout with diphtheria at an early age, Alex expresses himself by writing imaginative stories and by conceiving daredevil stunts that test all of his physical resources while putting his life in extreme danger.

The aftermath of one of his hair-raising stunts finds Alex in the care of a young black nurse named Mally Shaw. An unlikely friendship results, which is ended by an unspeakable crime that costs Mally her life.

Or not quite ended, for Mally finds herself trapped in a nether world by the force of Alex's will and his need to exact a terrifying revenge on the man responsible for Mally's death.

But the revenge he seeks is a two-edged sword, the price Alex's own soul as he recklessly pursues his quarry in a chilling double twist climax that surpasses anything John Farris has written before.

Phantom Nights Details

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Author : John Farris

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From Reader Review Phantom Nights for online ebook

Samuel P. says

This was a great read I felt sorry for Alex and really dislike his sister in law and her mother would love to read more from John Farris

Debby Dimeglio says

this book was somewhat confusing and slow at first, it took me a while to understand the story. Once you are a little past the middle it starts to come together. This story is very sweet in a lot of ways. A misunderstood handicapped teenager, a black woman who is looked down on and treated second class but who is kind and forgiving. Murder, rape and guilt seem to rule this story and of course all is made right in the end in an unexpected way

David says

This was my first book by veteran horror/thriller writer John Farris, a ghost story of sorts that could function almost as well without the supernatural element. Alex, a mute troubled adolescent, witnesses the rape and events that lead to a later murder of a woman who has become his most trusted friend. Alex's will causes the woman's spirit to stay behind and help bring justice. There are great themes here: that revenge has a cost that may be too high to bear, that we help nobody by hanging on to the past. There are great characters in older brother and guardian Bobby, acting sheriff who tries to do well, Bobby's loving wife with conflicts of interest regarding Alex, her mother who is self-serving and vindictive enough to set up Alex for false accusations in attempt to force Bobby to send him away. There is the power-hungry villain in Leland Howard and the anti-stereotypical negro Father of the murdered woman. The sleepy Tennessee town setting during the 1950s is Gothic and appropriate. Where the book mildly disappoints is in how it sets up all of these personal conflicts for Alex and then completely dismisses them after the murder at the halfway point. Nicely redeemed by the finale and epilogue.

Gmaharriet says

I enjoyed this a lot...a ghost story just spooky enough to give me a small frisson at the end. There were actually several satisfying endings in a way, and it made me smile. I think this book will stay with me and give me pleasure for quite awhile to come.

Jess Hanna says

This one falls between 2 and 3 stars due to the fact that it felt like two stories forced together. One was a

gritty, depressing thriller filled with vulgarity and lewd sexual content. The other was a ghost story with sketchy theology. The author could have left out some of the more graphic descriptions and had an engaging story. Instead, he resorted to cheap tactics to keep the reader shocked. I almost stopped after reading the first 30 pages, but kept going because I felt there was something redemptive. And there was, it just wasn't very satisfying.

Elizabeth says

In the vein of iconic ghost stories, this takes a leisurely pace and slowly amps up the tension and menace surrounding its very likable young hero. If we had the option of half-stars I might have given it a 3 1/2 because, while very good and an excellent armchair or beach read, it would be helpful to be able to save the four- and five-star designations for those phenomenal linger-in-your-brain stories. Faced with the three versus four choice, though, I readily give this four because the issues of race and the struggle to come-of-age in the absence of strong parental love or guidance give this book heft and resonance. Added to the classic ghost story, that takes it past the merely "nice ride" happy medium that three stars could suggest. Eerie and inventive ghost stories are hard to find, but you found one.

Tobin Elliott says

Farris is definitely one of the more literary quote horror authors unquote...and I say this because this is truly more thriller than horror, but then, for all that, it's a slow-burning thriller.

Reading a Farris novel is like taking a long stroll with a storytelling friend who hails from the south and has a great vocabulary. He'll mete out the story at a languorous pace, but never bore you. He'll fill in details that, while they may add nothing to the story, definitely add to the characters or the atmosphere.

In this particular story, Farris details some horrific events and, at times, dips a toe into the supernatural. It's never heavy-handed, it's never unnecessarily gory, but for all its restraint, it seems that much worse.

I'm not going to say that he's one of my favourite authors, because I'm actually one of those crass individuals who enjoy a quicker pace. But, having said that, once in a while, it's really good to slide over to a book with a slower pace.

I quite enjoyed this one.

Jason Goodman says

Phantom Nights is an interesting blend of the natural and super natural under the sub title as a rape and murder case. Set in the antebellum South, which I estimated to be the 1950's, by its tone and usage of terminology, especially in addressing race relations. The story has all of the standard making's of a drunken rape, then subsequent murder which takes the reader into a number of different directions from there. One of the only reasons I became interested in this book had to do with the promise of the paranormal. I have never read John Farris before so had no idea as to his writing style or strength in subject matter, with that in mind, I cannot speak to his past endeavors nor draw any conclusions as to the quality of the story other than

my own observation. The "ghostly" side to the work, which initially attracted me to it to begin with, wasn't to bad, it was easy to understand.

This book was a 5 hour flight, and a leave on the seat book upon departure. Nothing to write mother about.

George says

One of my All Time Favorites! I can't wait for the movie!

Lee says

With the combination of a thriller/ghost story, and Alex a rebellious 14 year old mute, that's befriended by Mally, a young black woman in 1952 Tennessee. Farris writes a tale with dread and also tender moments. The description of that era and wonderful writing make this a recommended read, by a long time thriller/horror writer.
