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Four original horror novellas by four wonderfully macabre authors.

Ah, the carefree, sunny days of childhood. And oh, the terrifying, dark nights. Nights when you closed your eyes tight, afraid to open them and see the painted, eternally leering face of a clown mere inches from your own. Nights when you could look out your bedroom window and watch the scarecrows walk across the lonely cornfields. When every story your parents told you seemed to include monsters. And when even the teddy bear by your side had fangs and plans of his own. Travel back to those nights of horror - and sleep tight!

Childhood Fears Details

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Author : L.L. Soares , J.H. Moncrieff , Christine Hayton , J.G. Faherty

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From Reader Review Childhood Fears for online ebook

Mommacat says

Samhain decided to wrap the CHILDHOOD FEARS series into one nicely packaged volume. Awesome! I didn't have them all, guess I had a brain cramp and missed out(?) so they sent me the complete volume. I'm glad I finally read them all. Every story is gold. From clowns, evil santas, teddy bears to scarecrows, I can't and won't pick a favorite story. Have you read them all?

THE BEAR WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE is a great creep you out story about a teddy bear that comes to life. The boy who is the unlucky recipient of the bear has problems enough at home with stuffed animals that move. He keeps trying to get rid of the thing but...

SCARECROWS is as much a great mystery as it is a scary thing. This extremely well written story relies on suspension of belief more than the others. Yet I find myself thinking about the story still. Murder, insanity and ghosts! Oh my!

NIGHTMARE IN GREASEPAINT - Does anyone out there really like clowns? This is one twisted story that shouldn't be missed. I've never liked clowns and guess I never will.

WINTERWOOD is Norse folklore of the Black Forest, Krampus and the Yule Cat (among others). This wonderfully scary story for kids should give adults some pleasure too.

I loved them all. My only complaint is that the table of contents wasn't very user friendly. Or maybe I'm clumsy. Or both. Just enjoy four great creepy, scary reads in one volume!

Angela Crawford says

I received an ARC of this anthology in exchange for an honest review. This is in no way reflected in my opinion of this book.

Childhood Fears is a collection of novellas from some really great authors. I decided since I had already read and reviewed two of the stories in this anthology to review each separately. So let's get started,,,

1. Nightmares In Greasepaint by L.L. Soares & G. Daniel Gunn [4 stars]

I hated this story!! Why, you ask, especially since I rated it four stars. I can answer that with one word,,, Clowns. I am absolutely terrified of them and the clown in this novella is a doozy. The story is really well written and the characters are easy to care about. This story is filled with a sense of foreboding and terror that ultimately leads to a horrific conclusion. I may need to sleep with a light on after this terrifying 4 star read.

2. The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave by J.H. Moncrieff [4 stars]

The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave covers two childhood fears very well. The evil step-father and the evil toy, in this case a horrid teddy bear named Edgar. The main character Josh is very believable and his friend Sean is

a lot of fun. My heart went out to Josh as he struggled to deal with things that would be hard for anyone let alone a ten year old boy, and I cheered for Sean as he tried to help his friend escape both Edgar and his step-father, who are far more evil than they appear. The storyline is fast paced and very well written. It was delightfully scary and really captured the uncertainty and magic that childhood is full of. Reminiscent of something you would have found in Creepshow or Tales From The Crypt. A really good 4 star read.

3. Scarecrows by Christine Hayton [2.5]

Scarecrows can be very frightening so I was really looking forward to reading this. Especially since the other novella's in the Childhood Fears series have been fantastic. This one not so much. I enjoyed the premise more than the actual execution of this story. The story jumped around through different years which made it very disjointed to me. Some of the elements in this story were well written which made the parts that weren't more noticeable. The ghosts and the scarecrows could have been so scary! My biggest problem with this story was with Cathy, one of the main characters. She's supposed to be a traumatized seven or eight year old girl. She spoke like an adult, and the other characters spoke to her like an adult. Even precocious children are still child-like, more so when frightened or upset. I really wanted to like this novella, unfortunately it just didn't live up to it's promise. I can only give this one 2.5 stars.

4. Winterwood by JG Faherty [4.5 stars]

Winterwood is a dark fairy tale reminiscent of some of my favorites from the Brothers Grimm. The imagery and story are both whimsical and frightening at the same time. The characters were fantastic. I really liked Anders, Paul and Ulaf. Krampus and his minions were perfect fairy tale villains. The only exception was Anne, who needed to be slapped several times. She REALLY annoyed me but was unfortunately very realistic. A great story from a great author. Curl up some place warm while you enjoy this delightfully scary 4.5 star Christmas tale.

Childhood Fears is a great anthology. I highly recommend this 4 star collection.

Christian Laforet says

Nightmare in Greasepaint

This one starts out pretty slow. Normally I wouldn't complain about pacing, but when what I'm reading is novella, I want things to move a bit quicker. Even then, I might not have noticed the sluggish start if the second half of the story didn't take off like an out of control clown car.

Pacing issues aside, this one was a fun read and still found a way to make a creepy clown interesting.

The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave

My least favorite in the book. Although not a bad story, it felt like something better suited to a Goosebumps book, instead of a horror collection aimed at adults. It's not just the whole evil toy angle I'm talking about either, I mean almost point for point, this thing read like it was following a young adult horror story paint-by-number. The only thing separating it was the occasional curse word and a generous helping of child abuse.

On the plus side, the ending is rather abrupt and seems to break free from the YA mold.

Scarecrows

I had already read (and reviewed) Scarecrows as an e-book. I liked it then and still like it now. By far the most sophisticated story in the book. The time hopping narrative weaves together as the tale progresses, slowly illuminating the mystery at the heart of the story.

Winterwood

Boy, Krampus is everywhere these days! Despite the sudden over saturation of stories (books and movies) featuring the anti-Santa, I think Winterwood did a great job with the material. A face paced thriller which blended fantasy and horror quite well. I really dug this one!

Overall

Childhood Fears was a mixed bag. I thought the last two stories (Scarecrows and Winterwood) were really strong, but the first two (Nightmare and The Bear) were a bit forgettable. Still, all four come together into a nice package. You almost can't go wrong with this one.

Nikki says

I really enjoyed this collection of short stories that is very aptly named as it explores many childhood fears that I'm sure many have experienced.

"Nightmare in Greasepaint" by L.L. Soares and G. Daniel Gunn is one of THE scariest clown stories I've ever read. I'm still not a fan of clowns to this day, and after reading this story I might just run away screaming the next time I see one. It validates the evil I've always felt emanates from behind the painted smile and fake nose. An evil so strong that it stays alive, threatening to drag an entire family down with it. - 5 stars!

"The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave" by J. H. Moncrieff will leave your emotions in turmoil as you follow along in this story that explores the fear of losing loved ones, their perceived replacement, and the evil that truly lies at the heart of man. When Josh is given Edgar, an evil looking stuffed bear, as a gift from his new stepfather he can't help but feel there is something sinister to the gift as well as the man that gave it to him. When strange things begin to happen the evil in the heart of the man who married his mother becomes evident when Josh is left to take the blame. Who would ever believe that a bear could be responsible for so many cruel actions? Perhaps if he can get rid of the bear he can protect not only himself, but his mother and bring their lives back to normal. Your heart will break for young Josh, and you will never look at your stuffed animals the same again. The ending is a testament to the writing strength of J.H. as it truly pushes this story into the horror genre. - 5 stars!

"Scarecrows" by Christine Hayton has the perfect environment; creepy cornfields and murderous scarecrows? Yes, please. As the story opens and we find ourselves facing the horrifying thought that a young child has murdered another with an axe and then we question everything as the story progresses. Is a young child capable of such horror? Are scarecrows really coming to life and performing these heinous acts as she claims? Or do the fields hide a much deeper, darker secret than anyone could possibly predict. - 4 stars!

"Winterwood" by JG Faherty is a delicious tale of the Old Ways. Before everything was sugar and spice, and everything nice, when holidays were much darker than they are now. Fantasy with a bit of horror dashed in happens to be one of my favorite things and I think this was gloriously written. The vivid imagery was delightful and I found that once I began, I couldn't put it down until I knew the fate of the characters. Best not to forget the old tales once told, or you might find yourself lost in Winterwood's cold! - 5 stars!

Kimberly says

CHILDHOOD FEARS is a collection of the four novella's Samhain published under this line. I won't go into great detail with these, as all were completely different, written by different authors. Overall, I felt that this was a great line-up of "adult" stories focusing on the fears that we have as children. Each writer brought something unique, and I can honestly say that I didn't "dislike" a single one of them.

NIGHTMARE IN GREASEPAINT, by L.L. Soares & G. Daniel Gunn was--ironically--my least favorite in the bunch. Although I find clowns horribly repulsive and nightmare inducing, in general, this story took it to a different level. Again, I still found it worth reading, and feel that many others will probably like it much more so. 3 stars.

SCARECROWS, by Christine Hayton was a tale that was told from two different time frames. In this one, I felt that the style worked very well. It gave us a perspective from a child's point of view, and later, from an adult's. The story turned out to be more complex than I was expecting, and had some nice twists in it. 4 stars.

THE BEAR WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE, by J.H. Moncrieff was my absolute favorite of the four. This story about a child's "teddy bear" given to him by a horribly manipulative stepfather, was anything but typical. The characterization here was great--I honestly didn't know who/what I feared more: the stepfather, or the bear! The emotions were strong, and I was immediately drawn into this story where nothing was as I expected. 5 solid stars.

WINTERWOOD, by J.G. Faherty is a story concerning the legend of the Yule Lord, Krampus. I've read quite a few tales of Krampus in the last two years, but this one had a particularly gruesome edge to it, and quite a lot of originality in terms of the "inhabitants" of Winterwood. I loved the descriptions, and the expanding of the legend to include what happened to "other unfortunates" beyond what the original legends tell. 4 stars.

I would highly recommend this collection to fans of original horror. Don't let the title "Childhood Fears" fool you into thinking this is a young adult collection--these are stories that are sure to get under the skin of any adult who's ever wondered about the evil hiding in the dark corners . . .

Frank Errington says

Review copy

In May of 2015 Samhain Publishing released four new novellas exploring things that go bump in the night, the things that scared us as kids, and in many cases still frighten us as adults. Now, those four stories are available in a single volume called. Childhood Fears.

NIGHTMARE IN GREASEPAINT by L.L. Soares and G. Daniel Gunn. L.L. Soares is the Bram Stoker Award-winning author of the novel *Life Rage*. G. Daniel Gunn is the author of the novel *Destroyer of Worlds* and the pseudonym for Daniel G. Keohane, a Bram Stoker nominated author in his own right. *Nightmare in Greasepaint* does not disappoint. The start of the story is more psychological horror with a house bringing back memories of what had happened to the protagonist as a child and what he had done, but as the story develops the tension builds, much like the climb to the top of a super-coaster and then reaches incredible speeds as you plummet back to earth. A quick and satisfying read.

THE BEAR WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE by J.H. Moncrieff. J.H. Moncrieff has been a professional writer all of her adult life with a number of those years spent as a journalist tracking down snipers and canoeing through crocodile-infested waters. *The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave* preys on our childhood fears and manages to juggle the three possible scenarios in a way that kept me guessing to the very end. Is it really Edgar, the teddy bear, doing all these bad things, is it Josh's step-father making it look like Edgar, or is there something wrong with Josh himself. Although the idea of an evil teddy is not terribly new, and at times you could easily predict what might come next, the result still hits you in the face like a ton of bricks.

SCARECROWS by Christine Hayton. Introduction to Edgar Allen Poe at age twelve, hooked Christine Hayton on the horror genre and her attraction to the macabre continues to this day. *Scarecrows* was yet another enjoyable story in this quartet of novellas. "Cathy isn't in her bed and I can't find her anywhere." As a parent I find those words alone to be fear inducing. Although the story is told moving back and forth over a period of years in the late '60's, each chapter heading came with a note to let the reader know where they were in that scene. *Scarecrows* has a solid twist and proves that truth is stranger than fiction.

WINTERWOOD by JG Faherty. JG is a Bram Stoker Award and ITW Thriller Award finalist. He's the author of five novels, seven novellas, and more than 50 short stories. *Winterwood* unleashes the monsters. Krampus, the Holly King, the Wild Hunt, and Gryla (the Holly King's wicked bride, the mother of the Yule Lads and the evil sister of Mother Earth. A witch with a fondness for children.

Overall *Childhood Fears* is a solid read and accomplishes its goal in examining the things that scared us in our childhood and beyond. The book is available now from Samhain Publishing in both paperback and e-book formats.

Recommended.

Jim Vuksic says

I actually assigned a 3 1/2 star rating to this 4-story horror anthology; however, since only whole stars register, it was increased to 4 stars. It is the average of four separate ratings assigned to each story.

"Nightmare in Greasepaint" by L.L. Soares & G. Daniel Gunn - 3 stars.

The progress, plots and subplots were too predictable. An adolescent boy is forced to accept a toy clown that he doesn't want from his father whose own father happened to be a clown. He is afraid of the toy and attempts to get rid of it several times. Guess what happens? Although not a prude by any standard, I felt that the crude language occasionally inserted into the dialogue of both parents and the child were totally unnecessary and added nothing to the story. There are 25 chapters, but each usually averages only 1 to 3 pages. That said; editing and layout design are professionally executed.

"The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave" by J.H. Moncrieff - 3 stars. An adolescent boy is forced to accept a teddy bear he doesn't want from a step father he doesn't like. Afraid of the bear (guess why?), the boy attempts to get rid of it several times, but it keeps miraculously reappearing. The story's progress and end are predictable. However, it is professionally edited and laid out.

"Scarecrows" by Christine Hayton - 5 stars. Superbly written and skillfully narrated. The reader is swept up in a little girl's ten-year living nightmare. It soon becomes impossible to determine what is real and what is not. I am usually able to accurately predict the ending before finishing a book. This time I was wrong and pleasantly surprised.

"Winterwood" by JG Faherty - 3 stars. The story centers around a tale told by a grandfather to his grandchildren about a creature referred to as the Yule Cat because it eats children who do not obey and behave well enough to earn their Christmas presents. The grandfather bears scars on his back to substantiate his claim to have actually been attacked by the creature in 1911. To me, the dialogue was often forced. If it was not pointed out which character was speaking, it would be nearly impossible to differentiate one from another. Again, the editing and layout design were skillfully and professionally executed.

David Sharp says

Review from HorrorUnderground.org

Childhood Fears

Samhain Publishing

Authors: Christine Hayton, L.L. Soares, G. Daniel Gunn, J.H. Moncrieff, J.G. Faherty

“Four original novellas to make you hide under the covers!

Ah, the carefree, sunny days of childhood. And oh, the terrifying, dark nights. Nights when you closed your eyes tight, afraid to open them and see the painted, eternally leering face of a clown mere inches from your own. Nights when you could look out your bedroom window and watch the scarecrows walk across the lonely cornfields. When every story or fairytale your parents told you seemed to include monsters. And when even the teddy bear by your side had fangs and plans of his own. Travel back to those nights of horror now with four original novellas by four wonderfully macabre authors. And...sleep tight!”

As a child, what scared you? Was it the way shadows danced on your wall during a thunderstorm? Creepy crawlies? Monsters in the closet? In this collection, Samhain Publishing set out to tell that tales of childhood nightmare fuel. The result is a strong collection of novellas that brings out the child in all of us, and then proceeds to beat the everloving crap out of them.

Nightmares in Greasepaint by L.L. Soares and G. Daniel Gunn

Will, along with his wife and son, move back to the house he grew up in after the passing of his mother in effort to settle the estate affairs. Quickly, Will's past begins to haunt him and it even takes a toll on his son, Billy, as he begins to have night terrors centered around Will's past.

Playing on the fear of clowns, basements, and things that go bump in the night, Nightmares in Greasepaint kicks off this collection in a huge way. The story suffers from perspective and direction issues, as well as a lumbering start, but over all this is a great read with some tense moments.

Scarecrows by Christine Hayton

Scarecrows tells a murder mystery set in the year 1964. When Cathy, a nine year old girl, is discovered in the middle of a cornfield, passed out and covered in blood, she is the prime suspect in the mutilated corpse of her classmate Emily. Cathy is rushed away to an insane asylum for children, all the while blaming the murder on the scarecrows that protect the field.

This story is scary as hell. Not only does it tell a well placed horror story that feeds right into the mind of a child, it tells a very adult story of the investigation. The pacing is perfect and the story is very lean, never being bogged down by meaningless exposition. You can read further thoughts on this story from my review of the novella written earlier this year.

The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave by J.H. Moncrieff

This is the most pure horror story in the collection. No jokes, no mystery, just fast paced horror that will ensure that you never put a toy in the closet again.

Edgar, an ugly stuffed bear given to Josh from his new Step-father, is rejected and placed in the closet. Little does Josh know, Edgar has other ideas in mind, ideas other than being a banished toy.

Fast paced, fierce, and just all out crazy, this is a fun story to read. This novella pulled me back into my youth to a time when my sister and I had watched Child's Play to scarring effects. For months, my sister would turn her dolls to face the wall because she felt their eyes looking at her. The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave is a brilliant reminder that even the most innocent things in the world can be frightening as hell.

Winterwood by JG Faherty

The story of Winterwood is set around Anders Bach, the kooky grandfather that tells tales of Krampus and other old, long forgotten traditions. Of course, no one in the family, including his daughter, believes the old man until both grandchildren go missing on the first night of the Yule. Bach, with daughter and son in-law in tow, travel through the portal and go after the Yule King to rescue the two children.

Although I have some issues with the fairytale side of Winterwood, the horror elements are well done. There are some genuine moments of tension when the author allows the story to breathe. Winterwood is surprisingly evil at times; the Christmas themes are deceiving. It is too bad the horror wasn't more consistent throughout as it was done expertly in this tale. That being said, I did enjoy this novella. I just wish it had more focus and ironed out the pacing issues. The complete review can be read [here](#).

Childhood Fears has its bumps in the road, but not enough to prevent you from loving this collection. The idea of having stories based on the things that scared us as children is a fun and entertaining one. I hope it is something that Samhain will revisit in the future.

Christine Hayton says

Childhood Fears released October 6, 2015 by Samhain Publishing Ltd, is available in both print and e-book. This is a compilation of four top notch horror authors.

It just received a great review from Publishers Weekly - check it out...

"...This collection of four horror novellas explores the fuel of children's nightmares with sympathy and inventiveness. In "Nightmare in Greasepaint" by L.L. Soares and G. Daniel Gunn, a murderous clown seeks revenge on his son, who refused to carry on the family tradition. J.H. Moncrieff's "The Bear Who Wouldn't Leave" features a malicious stepfather who gives his new wife's son a fiendish teddy bear. In Christine Hayton's "Scarecrows" and J.G. Faherty's "Wildwood," cautionary tales about sinister scarecrows and menacing Yuletide creatures hold unexpected truth. All the authors effectively evoke the dread that comes from knowing the children can't rely on their parents for protection or rescue, and real-world concerns such as child abuse and committing the mentally ill to institutions—which also highlight adults' unreliability—sometimes loom larger than any paranormal menace. The novellas tend to focus on plot and sensory detail over character development, so the dialogue and behavior don't always ring true. Even so, horror fans looking for new spins on familiar scares will appreciate this anthology..."
