



Sunglasses After Dark

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A debut horror novel featuring a vampire, Sonja Blue, who escapes from a mental hospital leaving a trail of corpses in her wake. As we learn about her early life, we are taken on a nightmarish tour of a world inhabited by other types of non-humans - ogres, zombies and, of course, vampires.

Sunglasses After Dark Details

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Author : Nancy A. Collins

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From Reader Review Sunglasses After Dark for online ebook

Willow says

Sunglasses After Dark is a horror novel. So anyone looking for romance and vampire sparklies should skip this book. The vampires are vicious asshats. The heroine is a killer, and there's lots of violence and gore. There's not a drop of UST. Okay maybe a little bit. LOL

Did I like it? Yes and no. I really love Sonja Blue. She's got a tragic backstory. The vampire who made her is nasty, and I think he is the main villain in the 2nd book (which makes me want to read it.) To survive, Sonja made money as a prostitute, and she's unapologetic about it. Sonja is also a little crazy. She has a nasty demon inside her that likes to rip people (especially Neo Nazis) to shreds, and she can't control it. The book starts with Sonja locked in the Danger Ward in an insane asylum, and her stay there was disruptive to say the least. I thought Sonja was a cool character.

There are also some great scenes in this book. The part where Sonja gets changed into a vampire was brutal and visceral. I was moved when Sonja faces her family. The scene where Claude thinks Denise has come to make love to him was beautifully sad. And crazy Catherine Wheel's backstory from podunk, Southern trash to rich and powerful evangelist was wildly entertaining.

Collins has a love of tacky things and she describes them with zeal. Catherine doesn't just wear a pantsuit, she wears a 'pink' pantsuit. Zebulon's painting isn't just a painting, it's 'black velvet'. LOL

"The walls were festooned with rubbish salvaged from the city dump and places even less savory. Baby doll heads were affixed to the walls by nails driven through their eyes. The front end of a '58 Chevy jutted onto the dance floor, a moth-eaten moose head mounted in place of the hood ornament. Instead of glass eyes, golf balls graced the creature's sockets; sawdust dribbled from its nostrils, while a used jockstrap dangled from its antlers. Loops of Christmas tree lights hung from the ceiling, none of them flashing in sequence."

Collins love of dive bars and seedy places is a nice touch.

The problem with the book though, I don't think it's very well written. The point of view jumps from third person to first, and then back again, which Collins uses to describe Sonja's inner thoughts. But since the first person isn't much different than the third person, and Sonja isn't that deep, it didn't really make any difference. There are tons of crummy metaphors and similes scattered everywhere. Descriptions were sometimes long, excessive, and pointless. The prose wasn't always clear, and I sometimes had to backtrack to figure out what the hell was going on.

"While waiting for the bullet train that would take me into Tokyo from the airport, I noticed a young girl dressed in the drab uniform of the Nippon Educational system had copied from German private schools earlier in the century. She looked to be no more than twelve or thirteen, although the roundness of her face made her seem even younger."

*She was chewing gum and paging through a comic book the size of a telephone directory. I glimpsed a woman, naked except for strategic scars and tattoos. A poisonous snake with dripping fangs was wrapped around the monster's erect penis; rather, it was wrapped around where the giant's erect penis **would** have been, if the censors hadn't airbrushed it out.*

The schoolgirl extruded a bubble the color of flesh, flipped the page, and continued reading. The giant pressed his thumbs into his protesting victims' eyes. I realized that finding answers here would not be as

easy I'd thought."

I was like, huh? I had to read this twice, because I had no idea what Collin's was talking about. Why is Collins describing in detail the pictures of a graphic novel that some random commuter is reading on a train? This had nothing to do with the story. Is the penis-squeezing, snake woman supposed to be a symbol for Sonja? If so, I don't care. Get on with the story already! It was annoying to be reading so much pointless crap.

Collins dream sequences were confusing as well, and as with all dream sequences the action comes to a screeching halt. I get the feeling Collins was inspired by *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, but she's not smooth at conveying the multi layers of the psyche. I always think of Clive Barker who can describe wild, amazing stuff and you always know what's going on. But Barker's prose is gorgeous. That is not the case here.

In conclusion, this book was a mixed bag. I'm still pondering if I want to read book 2.

By the way, my copy is the *10th Anniversary Edition*, which has some lovely fan art, which I adored. There was also a bitter introduction written by Collins in the beginning, complaining about how people have ripped her off and how success was a mixed blessing. I thought, wow, shouldn't a 10th anniversary be a celebration?

P.D. says

Sonja Blue is the perfect antidote to Twilight poisoning. The story is scary. The characters are creeped out. Sonja may be a vampire killer, but she is seriously twisted and dangerous in her own right.

Others claim the book is a poorly assembled series of vignettes. Personally, I did not find it so poorly assembled. The vignettes give us Sonja's history, from her birth as a vampire. And they are enthralling.

I think Sonja puts Anita Blake and Buffy both to shame. And I look forward to reading the other novels in this series.

Alice says

Sometimes, context is everything. Nancy A. Collins wrote this book in the 1980's, after the rise of Anne Rice's pretty-boy, drinking-blood-as-a-metaphor-for-sex vampires. She went against that tide by making Sonja Blue the monstrous killer of older vampire stories, but forged a new path by giving her the tools and motivation to kill other monsters.

The book starts out in an insane asylum, which sets the tone pretty well. The story is told partially through the point of view of the overnight orderly who witnesses her escape. After he's badly beaten by the people who captured Sonja in the first place, she rescues/kidnaps him, and we finally learn what makes the monster tick. She's aware of her human background without feeling attached to it, and she wants to kill the monster who raped her into existence.

There is a lot of rape and gory violence in this book, which made the YA-looking packaging of this novel

puzzling. I wouldn't say a teenager shouldn't read this book, but they're not the target demographic. Sonja Blue is not someone people should hope to grow up to be.

Collins manages to make Sonja sympathetic despite her monstrosity mostly through blaming the worst of the violence on an Other deep inside her who begs to be let free to rampage as she pleases. The Other is remorseless, bloodthirsty, and without pity. Sonja, herself, is an amalgam of Denise Thorne, the pretty millionaire heiress who vanished from London in the late 1960's, and the creature forged of rape, near-death, and blood. So by default, Sonja isn't someone you want to snuggle up with.

Collins does not, however, discard the "sexy vampire" thing. Sonja makes men hard when she drains them of blood, and she spends a lot of her first few years as a vampire sleeping with men for money. Through Claude, the orderly's, eyes, we see that she's both fascinating and repellent, and he wants to escape her as much as he wants to sleep with her.

An awful lot of this book is spent explaining the background and character motivation. Once I got through that and a rocky start, the rest of the story flew. It seems like Collins needed the first 50 or so pages to figure out just how weird and heady she wanted the story.

Once I got over that bump, though, I did enjoy this book. It was a nice escape from the modern vampires who sneer and pose and don't actually kill anyone. In its day, this book and its sequels served as a bridge between the vampire-as-monster mythos, and the more modern, sympathetic creature of night. If one is looking for a badass lady Blade, one could do a lot worse than to spend some time with Sonja Blue.

Natlyn says

I remember very much wanting to read this when it came out sometime in the 1990s. I was going through a vampire phase. Unfortunately it was not worth the wait. The "story" is a series of horrific vignettes: Sonja Blue, the protag vampire, goes berserk; someone gets victimized; Sonja Blue goes berserk and someone gets victimized. Toward the end, Collins decides there should be some psychological development so Sonja integrates her sane self and her berserker self, neither of whom I cared about. I suppose if one is looking for just horror, this book would be decent, but I was too unthrilled to bother to continue with *In the Blood* and *Paint It Black*, which were included in the omnibus *Midnight Blue*.

Graeme Rodaughan says

~~3 Stars~~. Downgrading this to 2 stars. On reflection the production values were insulting to this reader, and the exposition was terrible.

The positives (when they were present). A high level of inventiveness, and excellent visuals for scenes, characters and action.

There are some very important negatives.

The narrative flow is broken by some dreadful backstory exposition full of lazy stereotypes that any competent story editor would have cut and thrown into the bin.

The actual manuscript used for the Amazon Kindle version currently on sale (what I bought) is at best a

rough first draft, lacking editing for grammar and semantic meaning. I.e. some sentences do not make any sense as written and have to be re-written by the reader on the fly.

A distinct lack of professional work which I'm surprised to see from a notable multi-book author. I mean, does she not care about her work enough to check that it's in good order before putting it on sale?

To sum up, when it's good, it's very, very good, when it's bad - which is more often than not - it's utterly dreadful.

Read once and it's enough.

Nick says

Interesting world this is set in but it does have some issues.

It was a bit of a mess of flashbacks, bit part characters and side character introductions. When the bad (or lack of) editing wasn't present there was some ok scenes but the whole origin story etc shoved any actual plot out of the way so when you got back to it you just didn't really care or had forgotten who was who and what they had to do with anything.

The editing issues apparently stem from the author 'modernising' the story to include up to date references like DVD's and iPhone earpods. How they then managed to completely wreck the sentence structure I have no idea but obviously nobody cared enough to re-proof the alterations.

Elaine Howlin says

[
The beginning was very strong but it te

K.D. McQuain says

I wasn't sure I would enjoy this book when I started it. It seemed a little disjointed and difficult to follow. However, now that I have finished, I think the incongruities are an intentional part of the atmosphere. Nancy Collins has put forth some interesting ideas regarding the nature of vampires in this book that fans of the genre will no doubt find interesting. I'm not sure if I will continue reading the series, but I did end up liking this one.

Erin says

Honestly, I gave this 3 stars because I didn't hate it and I can see how many people would enjoy the book. Collins is incredibly descriptive and there is nothing wrong with the story. I know intellectually that this is far more likely to be the behavior of someone who drinks human blood. However, it just really wasn't my cup of tea...or bottle of True Blood, be that as it may.

Sonja could have been a very sad character. I honestly believe she could have been written in such a way that my heart would have ached for all that she had lost and what she had become. Likewise, I think I could have liked her. She tries to not be the personification of evil. I can liken her a bit to Dexter Morgan in that she thinks she feels nothing but she clearly does. And what happened to her is so very very sad.

But Collins' style of storytelling...in short vignettes...takes away from the character building in that we don't spend enough time in any one situation to bond with the characters. Nobody is deep enough, including Sonja herself. And I mourn that a bit because I think I could have really like some of these characters, given time and development.

Maybe I will prove myself wrong but I don't think I will finish the series. While I can see why it is a well written book, I frankly didn't like it.

But I am curious to read Vamps, Collins' YA series. Maybe I will like it better.

In summation, I don't like my vampires to sparkle in the sun but I don't like them this way either.

Nancy says

Not worth the paper it's written on. Or your time.

This could have been interesting story that kept you on the edge of your seat. Almost 50% of the book was spent on flashbacks of two characters. There was the first 59 pages of the book. Flashbacks for the next 84 pages. The last 42 pages are back to the story. Talk about completely taking you out of the story. What story there is, isn't much of a story. Just a missed opportunity.

Vanessa says

Like the rest of the Western world, I am vamped out and picked this book because I didn't have other fiction handy over a holiday weekend. I really wasn't burning to read anything more about vampires indefinitely. But, I have liked Nancy Collins since I read her short story "Dancing Nitely" in the anthology Under the Fang and this book turned out to be clever and original and I loved the kickass heroine. Alas, vampires had to go and become culturally omnipresent but do bear in mind this book was written in the 90's when all vampires wanted to do with people was eat them. Not shag them and, God forbid, not mope over their tragic love for them. Kids, things were better then.

This book is the first of a trilogy about Sonja Blue, a woman who was attacked by a vampire and left for dead in swinging 1960's London. Through a series of coincidences she lives and becomes a hybrid. And once she finally regains her memory, she is exceptionally pissed about the whole thing. So she travels the world killing vamps and other assorted predators while looking for her maker. Unfortunately there are things after her as well, including a creepy televangelist. Ok, ok I know, you're thinking are you sure this chick isn't named Blade and played by Wesley Snipes? But this book came out well before the movies and at any rate, Collins builds a uniquely imagined, well-crafted world that probably has something to say about feminine identity and violence toward women if you care to delve beneath the shiny layers of mythology and ass kickery. Or if you want to just revel in those top layers, that's fine too.

I got this book as part of an omnibus version of the trilogy and most of it is dedicated to Sonja's backstory. I definitely will read the other two parts eventually. I have the feeling if the timing were different, I would have devoured these books back to back to back.

(one of my male coworkers read the first Sookie Stackhouse book recently and complained that after an epic chain fight in the first chapter, it was all downhill. I wonder if I should have steered him this way instead.)

Strix says

Content warnings: gore, more gore, rape, sexual violence, abuse, emotional abuse, and animal death. This book is not for the faint-hearted.

While Sunglasses After Dark may have been written in '89, it is the most gothic punk 90s horror novel I could've asked for. The finale involves a mirror-shades wearing vampire invading a suburban mansion, setting it on fire, having a psychic battle with a half-succubus, shooting out guards and having a personal revelation about how comfortable she is with violence.

Should I mark that for spoilers? Nah. This isn't a book based on suspense, it's about gore and vampire lore and mixing creeping dread with radical violence.

Here's a quick breakdown of the book's structure: it opens in the present, with Sonja Blue captured in an insane asylum, and follows her and other characters for about a hundred pages, then it abruptly stops and goes into flashback mode, where you spent the next hundred pages finding out exactly how Sonja Blue became a vampire and what she did until the present day. It's a great flashback, fast and awful and it sucks you into this fledgling vampire's life - and once it's done, it immediately jumps back to the present and crashes into that explosive finale. Great, great stuff. Because it's so fast and punchy it's hard to read it slowly, you get sucked in.

All of that gore and sex does lend it a lurid air - but I want to salute Nancy Collins here, because it felt like it was trashy deliberately. Everything felt over the top that by the end I was just riding with every awful thing. Man strung up by his intestines? Not the first time, won't be the last. The sexual violence was treated almost exactly the same, too - you're horrified, it's awful, and it makes that horror sing.

One more really important note: the two major driving forces in this novel were women. Sonja Blue and the villainess. They both get backstories, they both get interesting motivations, and I really appreciate that. There's a lot of dudes in this novel, but the women are in the lead, deciding where to go and what to do. And Sonja! Sonja spends a lot of the novel figuring herself out - which makes sense, she's a baby vampire and completely ripped from society, and she's still not comfortable with the violence she's capable of. I like how her struggle was genuine, and fit with the vampire themes well.

All in all, highly recommended, I could not ask for more from this novel. For what it is - 90s gothic horror splatterpunk - it's one hell of a ride and I want more. Just be careful if you check this out, it's 100% gross horror and if you're not up for that this book is not for you.

Dfordoom says

A fun vampire tale; a wild erotic ride. More gore than I usually like, but very stylish. An Sonja Blue is such a kickass female vampire.

Shanon says

I enjoy “bad” vamps. The drop dead gorgeous, over-sexed vamps that abound today get tiring and are very unreal. Sonja Blue seems genuine to me and I love that about her. Sunglasses After Dark is gritty, dark, violent and FUN!

Latasha says

this book started out good but then we spend the next big chunk in flashbacks. I like flashbacks but there was so many, I forgot where we left off at the present. These Vampires and other pretenders are mean and vicious. There was a hellva lot of rape casually thrown around in this book, too. Sunglasses was ok but I'm not sure if i'll go on to read the next one or not. Maybe if I find it super cheap...
