

## BOOKS

"A good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on a purpose to a life beyond life."

John Milton

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# TERRIFYING TOMES

## Thirteen horrifying reads for Halloween

By Vince Darcangelo  
For the Camera

October is the time of year to indulge those horror cravings. As the leaves turn, and a haunting chill fills the evening air, there's nothing better than curling up with a good thriller, be it a psychological mystery or supernatural scare, a genre gore-fest or high-minded literary horror.

We've compiled 13 can't-miss Halloween reads that will have you sleeping with the lights on. To get into the spirit of the season, crack open one of these terrifying tomes ... if you dare.

### "Marabou Stork Nightmares" — Irvine Welsh

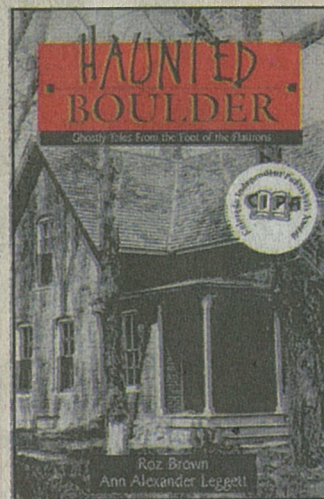
Welsh is best known for his 1993 debut, "Trainspotting," but arguably his best — and most horrific — book is his 1995 sophomore effort, "Marabou Stork Nightmares." The novel concerns Roy Strang, a drug-fueled, ultra-violent soccer hooligan who finds himself in a coma. The hospital-bound Strang fluctuates between three levels of consciousness. In his lucid moments, nearly awake, he is aware of the coming and going of hospital personnel and visitors. In the moments where he's near death, he hallucinates that he's on a safari hunting the marabou stork, a massive scavenger bird that sometimes eats other animals alive. The primary narrative takes place in the space between, where Strang is comfortably comatose and undisturbed by either the world around him or the marabou

## Local haunts

Also try these terrifying tomes either penned by local authors or featuring Boulder locales

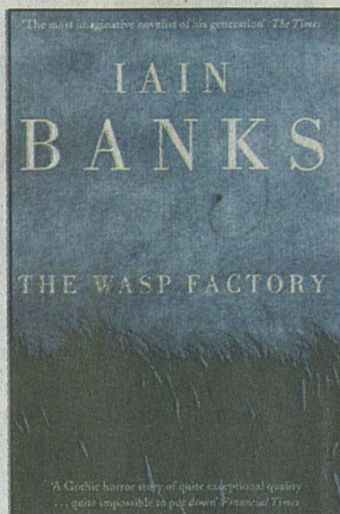
1. "Haunted Boulder: Ghostly Tales from the Foot of the Flatirons" (nonfiction) — Roz Brown and Ann Alexander Leggett
2. "Haunted Boulder 2: Ghostly Tales from Boulder and Beyond" (nonfiction) — Roz Brown and Ann Alexander Leggett
3. "A Winter Haunting" — Dan Simmons
4. "The Midnight Road" — Tom Piccirilli

5. "The Undead Kama Sutra" — Mario Acevedo
6. "Kitty and the Silver Bullet" — Carrie Vaughn
7. "Dark Harvest" — Lynda Hilburn
8. "Dead Time" — Stephen White
9. "Faceless Fury" — George William Frawley
10. "Prototype" — Brian Hodge
11. "Legacy" — Jeanne C. Stein
12. "The Stand" — Stephen King
13. "The Shining" — Stephen King

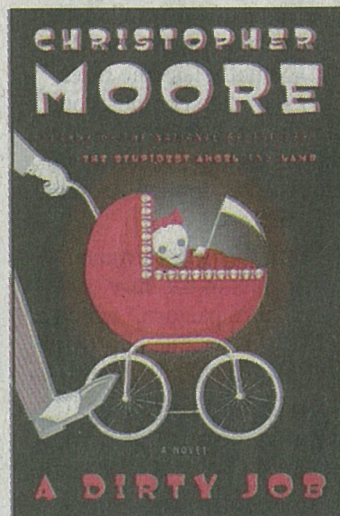


gore-fest consisting of 23 short stories connected into a novel by a narrative thread, is his most notorious. Why so notorious?

According to legend, more than 60 people have passed out during public readings of one of the short stories, "Guts." The novel's plot centers on a writer's retreat, in which a troubled hodgepodge of vintage Palahniuk misfits are locked inside an abandoned theater to get their creative juices flowing. What results is a bloodbath of mutilation and murder worthy of the Grand Guignol. As much comedy as tragedy, "Haunted" is over-the-top even by Palahniuk standards. This isn't his best literary effort, but for splatter-punk thrills "Haunted" is as good as it gets.



"The Best of H.P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre" — H.P. Lovecraft  
Lovecraft was Poe's 20th-century heir apparent,



Tales of Mystery and Suspense," a collection of short stories about female killers.

"Drawing Blood" — Poppy Z. Brite  
Renowned for her vampire

ments are the least of their fears. "Night Surf," originally published in 1969, is a precursor to his defining book, "The Stand," and "I Am the Doorway" is the creepy account of a retired astronaut who found he was not alone in deep space — and he brought back a souvenir that just might drive him mad. Some of King's best-known works are in this collection as well, such as "Children of the Corn," "Trucks" (which became the film "Maximum Overdrive") and "The Lawnmower Man." Perhaps the book's best fright is "Sometimes They Come Back."

### "The Wasp Factory" — Iain Banks

By the age of 16, Frank Cauldhame has already killed three children, including his younger brother. These days

### "Birdman" — Mo Hayder

You're more likely to find English author Mo Hayder's 1999 debut novel filed under crime or mystery than horror, but don't let that fool you. "Birdman" is more gruesome, sadistic and delivers more chills than almost anything you'll find on the horror shelves. It's got everything: graphic violence, necrophilia, torture, mutilation, the creepy next-door neighbor, the tormented detective with a troubled past and an unsolved child murder that haunts the entire tale. The kill count is impressive, as are the book's numerous twists that keep you guessing through the final page. In subsequent books, including a sequel to "Birdman," Hayder has yet to live up to the promise of her debut, but for a Halloween shock (you'll never

recounts his life, from his days growing up in a housing project to joining a violent gang, culminating in one of the most brutal and disturbing scenes in literary history. It explains why Strang is in a coma, then builds to a mind-blowing, gut-churning ending. It's the only book that's caused me to lose sleep as an adult — a well-conceived, brilliantly crafted work of literary horror.

**"The Works of Edgar Allan Poe"** — Edgar Allan Poe

It's just not Halloween without a little Edgar Allan Poe. This anthology collects his entire oeuvre, including his poems. While his works include detective fiction ("The Purloined Letter"), the grotesque ("Hop-Frog") and even seafaring epics ("The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket"), Poe was at his best when writing horror. The highlights of this collection include "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher" and one of his most demented pieces, the dark tale of eternal love (and amateur dentistry) that is "Berenice."

**"Darkness Peering"** — Alice Blanchard

Blanchard's 1999 crime novel is one of the most promising debuts ever.

Sadly, she has yet to live up to this standard with her later works, but "Darkness Peering" is a mind-bending psychological thriller set in rural Maine (classic Stephen King country). Detective Rachel Storrow is still haunted by an 18-year-old unsolved murder that happened when she was a child, and a recent disappearance has brought that case back to the forefront. For Storrow, the killer might be closer than she thinks. If ever a book was written for a stormy October night, this is it.

16-stary collection includes some of Lovecraft's finest work, including existential horror gems like "The Picture in the House," the story of a wayward traveler seeking shelter from a storm in a house he thinks is abandoned, and the psychosis of "The Rats in the Walls," in which an heir learns of the troubling appetites of his elders. It also includes Lovecraft's better-known works, such as his Cthulu Mythos beginning with "The Call of Cthulhu," about a cult that worships a creature from another realm, and "The Dunwich Horror," which centers around a forbidden book of the dead — the Necronomicon — and the horror it summons. The prose might be a little dry for some readers, but no horror fan's collection is complete without a Lovecraft tome or two on the bookshelf.

**"Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque"** — Joyce Carol Oates

Nobody does literary horror better than Oates, and nowhere is the fear more palpable than in this 1994 collection of psychological terror. In the book's title story, a woman recounts a tale from her youth, when she and a childhood friend would explore a supposedly haunted farmhouse. But it's a very different type of horror that awaits the young girls. "Don't You Trust Me?" is an unsettling account of an illegal and controversial medical procedure — and the exploitation it brings. And the disturbing "Extenuating Circumstances" is a mother's confessional that reveals its excruciating conclusion like a mummy unwrapping its bandages (think David Foster Wallace's "Incarnations of a Burned Child"). See also Oates' less-heralded sequel, "The Collector of Hearts: New Tales of the Grotesque," and "The Female of the Species:

and prominent gay characters, Brite was horror's rising star in the early 1990s, and this joyride of a novel is partly why. Published in 1993, "Drawing Blood" centers on the romantic relationship between two transient youth — cartoonist Trevor McGee and computer hacker Zachary Bosch. The two meet up in an abandoned house in North Carolina where Trevor has returned to face the demons of his past. It is a well-written, fast-paced read concerning murder, suicide and the jazz music of Charlie Parker. Vividly graphic (befitting its cartoon theme), "Drawing Blood" is a picturesque tale of classic horror and goth sex. It's even got its own ghost story: Legend has it that a man set himself aflame while firebombing a mail store in Los Angeles where original copies of the book were waiting to be shipped. The books supposedly absorbed the smell of his burning flesh and became collector's items, with copies of the \$7 paperback selling for hundreds of dollars.

**"Night Shift"** — Stephen King

No list of Halloween reads would be complete without an entry from the master of horror. King's career arc has shifted away from true horror and more toward the fantastic, and while his more recent work, such as "Lisey's Story" and "Bag of Bones," shows an incredible emotional depth, King's latter-day sentimentality lacks the creepy thrills of his early work. To get the most bang for your October buck, we recommend revisiting King's first short story collection, 1978's "Night Shift," which features his darkest material. In one of the book's forgotten treasures, King takes us to a lonely Maine bar during a blizzard in "One for the Road," in which a wife and daughter are stranded in a snow bank — and the ele-

menting and ending animals on the tiny island he shares with his father and going to punk-rock shows with his drunken dwarf buddy, Jamie. This 1984 debut from Scottish writer Iain Banks stirred up a mess of controversy when it was initially released, and remains a dark and twisted read nearly a quarter century later. The story's tension — and greatest literary device — comes in the form of Frank's sadistic older brother, Eric, who has just escaped from a psychiatric hospital. Throughout the book, Eric calls his younger brother from pay phones, each time closer to home, each time more psychotic, threatening to kill Frank upon his return. The tension builds to a violent climax with a shocking twist that reframes the entire story.

**"The October Country"** — Ray Bradbury

A must-have for any horror aficionado, this collection of macabre morsels is Bradbury's finest. Featuring revised stories from his 1947 debut, "Dark Carnival," this 1955 book has stood the test of time because of its well-crafted tales of gothic horror and fantasy and Bradbury's endearing sentimentality. Lesser known than classics like the dystopian "Fahrenheit 451" and Bradbury's masterpiece, "Something Wicked This Way Comes," "The October Country" is loaded with bite-sized Halloween treats, like "The Scythe," in which the Grim Reaper assumes an unexpected form, and "Homecoming," which features the most dysfunctional of families.

**"Haunted"** — Chuck Palahniuk

Palahniuk has a knack for blending literary fiction with horror elements.

Any of his novels would make for a good Halloween read, but 2005's "Haunted," a

play) you can't go wrong with "Birdman." Befitting of its tagline, "For some killers, murder is just the beginning ..." this book will disturb the most hardened of readers.

**"The Church of Dead Girls"** — Stephen Dobyns

As with "Birdman," the ghoul in this 1997 Stephen Dobyns mystery novel uses human corpses as an artistic medium. But while "The Church of Dead Girls" offers terror and thrills, it also has high-minded literary aspirations and becomes a sociological work about small towns and suspicion. A rash of murders and missing teenagers plays second fiddle to the reaction of townsfolk who begin pointing fingers in every possible direction. Speaking of fingers, whatever happened to those missing left hands?

**"A Dirty Job"** — Christopher Moore

OK, we've got some pretty dark offerings on this list, so we'll end with a comedic piece, Christopher Moore's "A Dirty Job." As much a humor writer as a horror writer, Moore (best known for writing "Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal") penned this 2006 tome in response to the recent passing of loved ones. The light-hearted result is the tale of Beta Male (as opposed to Alpha Male) Charlie Asher, who wakes up one day to find himself the Grim Reaper (or rather a Grim Reaper, as we learn that Death requires a large network of independent contractors to keep up with demand).

Hijinks ensue when he must protect his daughter Sophie (who has two hellhounds for pets) from the forces of evil. This is a rib-tickling romp playing off of traditional horror themes, and another fine effort from Moore — whom one might consider the Tom Robbins of the horror realm.