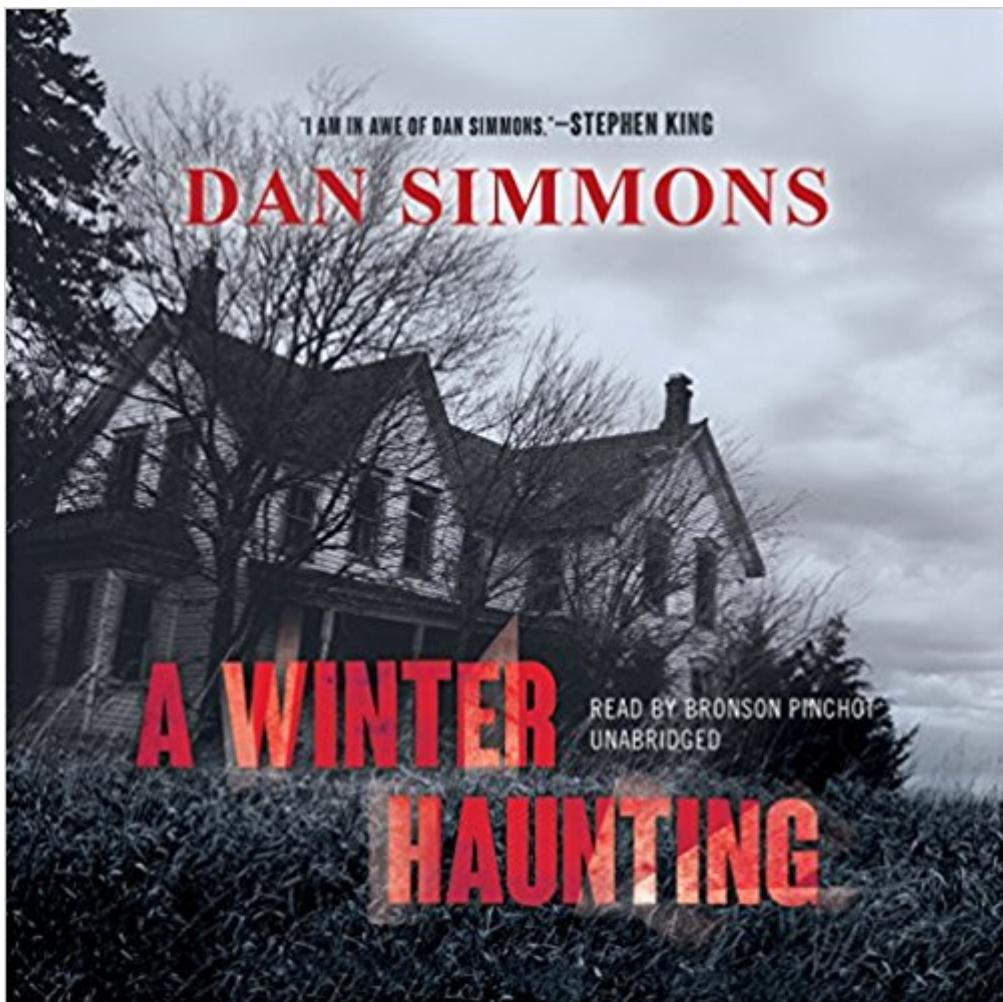


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A Winter Haunting



Synopsis

[Read by Bronson Pinchot] A once-respected college professor and novelist, Dale Stewart has sabotaged his career and his marriage -- and now darkness is closing in on him. In the last hours of Halloween he has returned to the dying town of Elm Haven, his boyhood home, where he hopes to find peace in isolation. But moving into a long-deserted farmhouse on the far outskirts of town -- the one-time residence of a strange and brilliant friend who lost his young life in a grisly "accident" back in the terrible summer of 1960 -- is only the latest in his long succession of recent mistakes.

Because Dale is not alone here. He has been followed to this house of shadows by private demons who are now twisting his reality into horrifying new forms. And a thick, blanketing early snow is starting to fall.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The old saw "You can't go home again" is a chilling understatement for this highly effective supernatural shocker, Simmons's first horror novel since *Fires of Eden* (1994) and a sequel to *Summer of Night* (1991). The latter was an eerie chronicle of a summer of lost innocence for a group of preadolescent chums who confront an entity of irrepressible evil in rural Elm Haven, Ill. Four decades later Dale Stewart, a survivor of that summer, has returned to endure a winter of adult discontent: his wife has left him, his sideline career as a novelist is sputtering and a disastrous love affair has driven him to attempt suicide. Medicated to the gills for depression, Dale seeks inspiration for his next novel in a house that figured in events of the summer of 1960. But remnants of the old malign influence have survived and they manifest as vicious spectral dogs, threatening neo-Nazi

punks, cryptic messages that appear magically on his computer screen and delusions that suggest he's losing his mind. Simmons orchestrates his story's weird events craftily, introducing them as unremarkable details that only gradually show their dark side. In a nod to Henry James, whose psychological ghost story "The Jolly Corner" is repeatedly invoked, he blends jaw-dropping revelations of spiritual intrusion with carefully manipulated challenges to the reader's confidence in Dale's faculties and motivations. Though it features its share of palpable things that go bump in the night, this novel is most unsettling in its portrait of personal demons of despair that imperceptibly empower them. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School—"Forty-one years after I died, my friend Dale returned to the farm where I was murdered. It was a very bad winter." What follows proves to be just as spooky as this opening suggests. Dale Stewart suffered a traumatic summer in 1960 when he was 11. His friend Duane McBride was mysteriously killed by a runaway piece of farm equipment. That story is told in Simmons's *Summer of Night* (Warner, 1992). Now, Dale, who is a professor and author of mountain-man adventure stories, is not doing well. He left his wife and family during a love affair with a graduate student who has since left him. He survived a suicide attempt and is being counseled for severe depression. Against his doctor's advice, he travels to his boyhood hometown in Illinois to spend his winter sabbatical in the now-empty home of his deceased friend. Even inattentive readers will spot the signs that Dale is in the midst of a horror story: the second floor of the farmhouse is sealed off with layers of plastic, yet a light glows at night as if someone were in there; he is repeatedly threatened by a group of dangerous skinheads; and a dog that appears to increase in size stalks him. And plenty of other spine-tingling events occur. Whether it's just horror fiction or Dale is actually insane hardly matters. It's good spooky fun that teens will love—but may not want to read when alone, at night, during a storm etc. Carol DeAngelo, Kings Park Library, Burke, VA
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Simmons wows again with ever-growing horror! This is the story of Dale, a writer of so-so, pays-the-rent novels and literature professor. Down on his luck after life kicks him in the balls one too many times, he takes a sabbatical to return to his childhood home where he hasn't been in over forty years. This is a sequel to Simmons' *Summer of Night* (another awesome book), so he is headed back there as an adult to take on... something...started then. You don't need to have read

the other book to 100% understand and enjoy that book, but it will give you a fun extra layer if you have. Dale returns to Elm Haven, Illinois to live at the farmhouse his childhood friend Dwayne called home. The friend who was murdered. The friend whose murder--or that whole fateful summer of 1960 (the plot of *Summer of Night*)--he cannot really recall. And so begins a wonderful tale of mounting dread. Simmons starts slow, so stick with it, and you will be richly rewarded in mounting fear and dread and delightful storytelling. Simmons' horror is one of mounting tension, of brick stacked on brick stacked on slow brick, until we find we've been walled away to rot entombed. In other words, he starts out pretty slow, and I was tempted to set the book aside. DON'T. The details mount with each wonderfully written description, and the floor begins to give way. When the floor finally drops out from under us, flesh has been crawling for chapters and chapters. I could not put this book down and read it all in one sitting. I won't need to sleep with the lights on tonight...but I don't think I'll be going up to the second floor of my house anytime soon. Bravo, Dan Simmons.

The story was interesting, I enjoyed hearing what happened to the characters in *The Summer of Night*, but ultimately did not think this book was as good as that book. I found I could not warm up to the main character, although I did when he was a boy, nor did I particularly like his his younger girlfriend. The ending was somewhat confusing, too, I wasn't sure what happened with the girlfriend or how the man had changed from his brief stay in his former childhood home. Was he ever aware of what happened in the past that had caused him to have memory loss of the event and PTSD? A good twist with all the people who turned out to be ghosts, or were they all from his imagination? How about the ones he evidently did not realize was deceased. So, there had to be ghosts. The skinheads were real enough and scary, however.

40+ years after the horrific happenings in *Summer of Night*, professor Dale Stewart is back in Elm Haven, Illinois. With only vague memories of that long ago summer when he was 11 years old, Stewart is trying to get his life back together. A failed marriage, a failed love affair and a failed suicide attempt all have Stewart bottoming out and wanting to find some peace. Where better to find that peace than at Duane McBride's house - his childhood friend that was killed in a piece of farm equipment. Sounds relaxing to me! Stewart gets to his destination and strange things start happening immediately. Strange black dogs, skinheads, and a self-typing computer are just a few of the spooky happenings - and things escalate from there. Author Simmons has a way with bringing the commonplace to the forefront and then letting you see that it didn't really exist. This ended up being one of the spookier books I've ever read. It had me turning lights on and peering into dark

corners. It was a fitting follow-up to "Summer of Night." Oh, you don't necessarily need to read "Summer of Night" to enjoy this book but it does fill in some of the nooks and crannies and make for a better reading experience, I think. It, also, is an excellent horror novel. I reread it for probably the third or fourth time just prior to "A Winter Haunting" and I just keep finding new things to appreciate about it. Now Simmons only needs to write books about spring and autumn and scare the bejeebers out of me, setting up the entire year quadfecta of horror-filled seasons.

Really good. One of those sequels that's more than just another iteration of the original -- it stands perfectly well on its own and it probably doesn't even matter in which order you read them. Unless, of course, you're just a tight-*** like me that errs on the side of but-that's-the-order-it-happened-in. The themes and subtexts in this book are almost exactly opposite to Summer of Night. Where it was about childhood friendships, conflicts and freedom in 1960, A Winter Haunting follows a few of the original characters and the small Illinois village forty years into the future and into middle-age. Rather than free-wheeling eleven year-olds trying to deal with something too big and strange for them to fully understand, the scale is smaller, focused mostly one of the boys who grew to adulthood haunted, both literally and figuratively by that Summer of 1960. It's compounded his mistakes along the way, to the extent that he's not even sure of their magnitude. So it's different from the original. If you want another Summer of Night, you'll be disappointed. On the other hand, if you want a creeping, subtle, Dan Simmons blend of supernatural and psychological thriller, this is for you. You can never quite track where the line between the two is, and you never get bored while he pushes it in one direction or other. I'm a slow, impatient reader and I absolutely tore through this one. Highly recommend.

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