



Vampires in the Lemon Grove: Stories

By Karen Russell

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Vampires in the Lemon Grove: Stories By Karen Russell

From the author of the *New York Times* best seller *Swamplandia!*—a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize—a magical new collection of stories that showcases Karen Russell’s gifts at their inimitable best.

A dejected teenager discovers that the universe is communicating with him through talismanic objects left behind in a seagull’s nest. A community of girls held captive in a silk factory slowly transmute into human silkworms, spinning delicate threads from their own bellies, and escape by seizing the means of production for their own revolutionary ends. A massage therapist discovers she has the power to heal by manipulating the tattoos on a war veteran’s lower torso. When a group of boys stumble upon a mutilated scarecrow bearing an uncanny resemblance to the missing classmate they used to torment, an ordinary tale of high school bullying becomes a sinister fantasy of guilt and atonement. In a family’s disastrous quest for land in the American West, the monster is the human hunger for acquisition, and the victim is all we hold dear. And in the collection’s marvelous title story—an unforgettable parable of addiction and appetite, mortal terror and mortal love—two vampires in a sun-drenched lemon grove try helplessly to slake their thirst for blood.

Karen Russell is one of today’s most celebrated and vital writers—honored in *The New Yorker*’s list of the twenty best writers under the age of forty, Granta’s Best of Young American Novelists, and the National Book Foundation’s five best writers under the age of thirty-five. Her wondrous new work displays a young writer of superlative originality and invention coming into the full range and scale of her powers.

This ebook edition includes a Reading Group Guide.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Guest Review of “Vampires in the Lemon Grove,” by Karen Russell

By Alena Graedon



Alena Graedon
CREDIT: Danielle Haas

Alena Graedon was born in Durham, North Carolina, and is a graduate of Brown University and the Columbia MFA program. She lives in Brooklyn, New York. Her first novel is *The Word Exchange*.

The characters in this numinous, electrifying, brilliantly imaginative collection undergo monstrous and miraculous transformations. Vampires morph from old Italian grandfathers to bats to vampires again. Boys turn into mute, mutant scarecrows. Girls metamorphose into *kaiko-joko*: silkworm caterpillars and slaves.

As these changes take place, the line between human and inhuman can seem vanishingly faint. But there are also subtler kinds of transmutations. Bad-luck boys reinvent themselves, with the help of hair dye and rapacious birds who hoard human destinies as scraps in an old tree.

Having the chance to visit each variegated world that Russell conjures—and the sublime words she uses to describe them—is more than reason enough to read these eight very moving, often very funny stories. But the thing that makes them especially mesmerizing and powerful is how profoundly human Russell’s monsters seem.

Implanted in each of their shape-shifting bodies are very familiar things: bloodlust, hunger, superstition, devastating memories, fictions we tell ourselves to go on living. But also buried inside are secret selves, strength, love, salvational creativity. For the characters to transform, these things often have to be wrenched out of them. And these extractions can lead not just to metamorphosis but sometimes to a sort of fusion.

At its best, reading, too, is a kind of fusion. Reading these stories, I felt as if many other lives, monstrous and human, had been poured into mine. But they also stirred my own thoughts and memories, creating something new. In the process, like Russell's characters, I felt transformed.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Russell's electrically original short stories propelled her into the literary limelight, then her first novel, *Swamplandia!* (2011), was chosen as finalist for the Pulitzer and the first Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction. In her third book, she returns to the story form with renewed daring, leading us again into uncharted terrain, though as fantastic as the predicaments she imagines are, the emotions couldn't be truer to life as we usually know it. So even though the troubles of a long-married couple are complicated by the fact that they are vampires, and she can transform herself into a bat while he can only pose as "a small, kindly Italian grandfather," their catastrophic heartache is all human. The same holds true for the courage and ingenuity Kitsune summons in confronting the horror of her brutal metamorphosis and enslavement in a Japanese silk mill. Ditto for President Rutherford Hayes when he finds himself reincarnated in the body of a horse. From the grueling Food Chain Games in Antarctica to terror on the prairie in the sod-house era, Russell, in the same vein as Jim Shepard and George Saunders though unique in her outlook, continues her mind-blowing, mythic, macabre, hilarious, and tender inquiry into the profound link between humans and animals, and what separates us. --Donna Seaman

Review

"Astonishing. . . . *Vampires in the Lemon Grove* stands out as Russell's best book . . . with prose so alive it practically backflips off the page." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

"From apparent influences as disparate as George Saunders, Saki, Stephen King, Carson McCullers and Joy Williams, [Russell] has fashioned a quirky, textured voice that is thoroughly her own: lyrical and funny, fantastical and meditative." —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"One of the most innovative, inspired short-story collections in the past decade. . . . There's absolutely no living author quite like Karen Russell." —Michael Schaub, NPR

"Karen Russell's imagination is once again on full, Technicolor, mind-bending display. . . . Russell's stories will be seizing our imaginations—and nibbling at the edges of our nightmares—for years to come." —*The Miami Herald*

"Hilarious, exquisite, first-rate." —Joy Williams, *The New York Times Book Review*

"One of the great American writers of our young century." —Maureen Corrigan, NPR

"Darkly inventive, demonically driven." —*Elle*

"No one combines the fantastical with the mundane quite like Karen Russell. . . . The stories in *Vampires* portray ordinary life with an otherworldly twist in a fascinating and unexpected way. And yet these haunting tales are written with such clarity and recognizable perspectives that they manage the greatest feat of all: in the surreal, we see ourselves. —Jessica Gentile, *Paste Magazine*, #1 Best Book of the Year

"Sea deep, scary smart, richly inventive." —*More*

"Delightfully weird." —*Esquire*

“A writer to track and to treasure.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“In another ten years Russell will be her generation’s George Saunders: the writer whose books are stolen and studied, flashed like badges, and worn to death with rereading. . . . Breathtaking.” —*The Boston Globe*

“One of the most remarkable fantasists writing today.” —Elizabeth Hand, *The Washington Post*

“Witty, and wise, and brimming with vitality. . . . In Russell’s stories, malice strolls with morality, horror tangos with humor, and the spirits of Franz Kafka and Flannery O’Connor meet with unexpected comity. . . . With a voice that could spring from an unleashed demon—or an angel on amphetamines—Russell fills this exuberant collection with life’s radiance and shadows.” —*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

“Consistently arresting . . . startling . . . profound. . . . Even more impressive than Russell’s critically acclaimed novel.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Dazzlingly strange. . . . Vacillating between horror and humor, Russell’s writing recalls both George Saunders and vintage Stephen King, sometimes simultaneously.” —*Time Out Chicago*

“A darkly surreal treat.” —Wired.com

“Eight new cages of horror and heart and winding metamorphoses that would take a normal writer a lifetime to dream into being.” —*Interview* magazine

“Bone-chilling . . . fantasy and horror underlined with social commentary.” —*People*

“As Russell’s imagination soars, so does our joy in reading this collection.” —Oprah.com

“Wildly inventive. . . . Wondrously strange and moving.” —*Reader’s Digest*

“In these stories, familiar human emotions leap into relief against backdrops of almost Tim Burton-like weirdness. . . . [Russell’s] stories are as robust as can be.” —*New York* magazine

“Karen Russell’s stories defy definition. They are at once warm and sinister, a bubble bath with a shark fin lurking underneath the suds.” —*The Millions*

“Clever as hell.” —*BookRiot*

“Wildly imaginative. . . . Gorgeous. . . . Russell has once again mapped the dark country between our everyday and more primal selves.” —*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“A master of magical realism.” —*New York Observer*

“Powerful. . . . Russell pulls the rug out on our imagination, creating perplexing, surreal scenarios that bump into the common reality that most of us take for granted.” —*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Wondrously strange and moving.” —*Reader’s Digest*

“Nearly flawless Russell’s best work manages to both create a fascinating, surreal world and coax meaning out of it.” —*The Onion’s A.V. Club*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandon Harmon:

With other case, little individuals like to read book Vampires in the Lemon Grove: Stories. You can choose the best book if you like reading a book. As long as we know about how is important any book Vampires in the Lemon Grove: Stories. You can add knowledge and of course you can around the world by way of a book. Absolutely right, mainly because from book you can understand everything! From your country right up until foreign or abroad you can be known. About simple matter until wonderful thing it is possible to know that. In this era, we can open a book or perhaps searching by internet system. It is called e-book. You can utilize it when you feel fed up to go to the library. Let's read.

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Carol Rosborough:

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