


Xala xalior xlati

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© 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its Ghost Story affiliate Peter Straub **Blurb:** What was the worst thing you've ever done? In the sleepy town of Milburn, New York, four old men gather to tell each other stories - some true, some make-up, they're all scared. A simple pastime to distract themselves from their quiet life. But one story comes back to haunt them and their little town. A tale of what they did a long time ago. It's an evil mistake. It's a horrific accident. And they are about to find out that no one can bury the past forever... My reaction: Find this title on GoodReads list of horror fiction, I chose it for the strength of its high ranking. This was my first experience with the author, Peter Straub - and since it is widely described as his best work, I'm not sure I'll try another. It just depends ... The book had its moments, but I had to fight to get through its parts - and I mean the fight. I kept nodding! Even during some of the most stressful sections! Maybe I'm not so easily scared of books, but of course it shouldn't be so easy to slip into Dreamland during the nail-biting grand finale. It all started promisingly; prologue hooked me up. Intense and intriguing, it kept me guessing and wondering who was the good guy and who was bad. What's going on here? Then the prologue ended and the book started in earnest and it threw me a little away from kilter, with its completely different setting and cast of characters. But well, I can adapt and be patient. It wasn't the first time I read books that change between points of view, settings and chronology. However, it was distinct let down, after the excitement and feeling of fear of the first few pages. Worse, it doesn't really pick back again for a long time. The biggest problem I had with this book was that it was too drawn out. A tauter editing would have done wonders. It was also very uneven in mood and quality. Some of the tense moments were done well, but then there were long expanses of paragraphs and pages where not much happened. Yes, you need a place to build an atmosphere and a sense of fear, but if you leave too much space, fear disappears and is replaced by boredom. I also found many of the characters quite different. I understand that they must be people with flaws and weaknesses. However, so many of them must be so flawed? (More on this in the spoiler section below...) The last straw was that Big Bad didn't make much sense and seemed to change according to the needs of the story. I kind of come to terms with the fact that in a lot (most?) supernatural horror is usually not a really satisfying explanation. However, in a short story or a relatively brief, fast-paced novel, I can more easily cope with the ambiguous nature of evil du Jour. If I've just slogged through than five hundred pages, on the other hand, I expect a little more cohesive, clearly defined enemy. (Again, more specific below.) below.) enjoy the aspects of the book well enough, but it might have been better. Specifics (with SPOILERS): -- It seemed that every other character was an adulterer. Lewis has been dealing with married women for years, including the wife of one of his supposed best friends. Then there's Christina Barnes, the insurance salesman, and Stella. Uh, Stella. I could never bring myself to take care of her and she just kept showing up again and again. Okay, so maybe she kind of had to, since she's married to Ricky... Anyway, I just found her very annoying. It didn't help that every man in the book between the ages of 14 and 100 apparently finds this sixty-year-old woman almost irresistibly tantalizingly tantalizing. I mean, come on. --I'm not usually one to harp on things like this, but I feel like this book (or maybe its author) has some strange problems with women. The main (human) characters are all men, for starters. It's allowed, of course, but when the main characters are all men, it makes women's secondary characters stand out more, and among them we have two unfaithful wives - Christina Barnes and especially Stella Hawthorne. Stella has been cheating on her (the most similar character in the book) for years, but we still have to admire her. She's beautiful in age. She is strong and knows how to take care of herself (the Hatpin incident). She (finally) decides to stop doing business and devote herself. (Wau. victim?) But my reaction to Stella is deafening YUCK. (Sorry, don't like the girl.) While Ricky is probably the most sympathetic character in the book, there is also this strange moment, after Stella tells him that her cheatin' days are over. Ricky held his wife's shoulder, knowing of her timeless profile beside him. If she didn't look like this, could he have endured it for so long? However, if she hadn't looked like this, she wouldn't have been Stella - it was impossible to speculate... I know men tend to be more visual than women, but this little piece was decidedly not putting. So he can put up with his wife philandering because she's knocking out... And he can't separate her appearance from her essence -- personality, spirit, mind? It's a good thing Stella never had a freaking accident or illness! I think Lewis' wife was normal, but she's dead... Don Vanderley has a strange relationship with a not-so-beautiful woman he falls after he meets the delightful Alma... Sears has his curious-creepy memory of desecrating the blouse of an attractive woman whose children he babysat... Dedham girls are oddballs, but OK, there are some oddball peripheral male characters, too... Then there's the fact that the mainstream werewolf seems to (almost) always choose a female form - and engages in sexual relationships with a number of men, too, before killing them. I do not know. Maybe it's just me, but the non-normal female thing kept going to me as Read. On the other side not much really well balanced, honest, normal masculine character, either. --More strange feminine things: Eva insulted local women, so that after her fiance died under unusual circumstances, old women, women whom she ignored ... put in it. She said she destroyed Stringer. Of course, half of them had unmarried daughters, and they had their eyes on Stringer long before Eva Gully showed up. ... They made it to be the real Jezebel. And if we had called her, the female malice would have gone into high gear. And more! She seemed the devil, but she was like something possessed. You know how when a woman gets angry, very angry, she can come back into herself and find enough rage to blow any man to pieces -- how does all this feeling come out and hit you like a truck? It was so. --What was all that about the cult/order called X.X.X. (Xala Xalior Xlati)? It was a lot creepy when it first came up, but towards the end of the book, it didn't make sense at all. Why would Alma intentionally court for Don's fear and suspicion by bringing it up, anyway? --As for the Forces of Evil in this book to go, sometimes they seemed to be all-powerful beings that no ordinary man could ever hope to be defeated - but then they hide behind chapter after chapter, for no apparent reason. And when it came down to it, they were actually pretty easily killed. There was something strange with the timeline. If I didn't miss something, Sears had his distillation with the Bate brothers before he was at hand in killing Eva Gully. Why did they end up in Eva's service? Just a coincidence? Did Eve know that Sears would be in her future (although we learn that her psychic abilities and/or guesswork are imperfect)? Or did she watch Sears and the boys, and only then decided to follow Sears home to Milburn? I think Alma/Eva messed up with Don because of her uncle's hand in her death - but why go after him before dealing with the rest of society chowder? Why were only some members of chowder Sosit's family targeted? It is hinted that the ghost story of the Chowder Society tells somehow feeding Eva. With the energy of your fear? Who knows?! This is never fleshed out to my satisfaction. About! And at least a couple of times you could see that Don had drawn darkness on the city -- focusing it -- that he had brought it with him, anyway. A what? Why? He wasn't even one of the people who killed Eva. Just the nephew of one of these people. Is it because he's a writer with great imagination, and they feed on it? It doesn't make sense. There are apparently more of these werewolves out there. The man with the Jehovah's Witness pamphlets is alone; Florence de Peiser is different. Both of them seem to be quite closely related to Eva/Alma. Well, now that Don has finally really killed Eva/Alma, they're not going to take revenge? How did the men know (or even guess) that if they could kill the lynx, would they finally really kill the werewolf? And why werewolf is always animal in the first place? I wondered if it would turn out to be something like the movie Fallen, where a demonic spirit can possess a human body, but sometimes takes refuge in an animal if there is no better perspective available. However, I don't think it's ever really explained at all, so who knows... Why they ... things -- not ghosts, things ... keep saying to life that I'm you? The only attempts to explain that I saw were not enough for me. Oh, you know what? I give up. I don't think there's any answer. It just doesn't make sense, and with this long book, I want a little more explanation. Maybe it's unreasonable, but that's what I want. Want.

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