



# Prayers to Broken Stones

*Dan Simmons*

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## **Prayers to Broken Stones Dan Simmons**

A woman returns from the dead with disastrous results for the family who loves her.... An old-fashioned barbershop is the site of a medieval ritual of bloody terror.... During a post-apocalyptic Christmas celebration, a messenger from the South brings tidings of great horror.... From a ghostly Civil War battlefield to a combat theme park in Vietnam, from the omnipotent brain of an autistic boy to a shocking story of psychic vampires, journey into a world of fear and mystery, a chilling twilight zone of the mind.

*From the Paperback edition.*

## **Prayers to Broken Stones Details**

Date : Published October 7th 1997 by Spectra (first published January 1st 1990)

ISBN : 9780553762525

Author : Dan Simmons

Format : Paperback 403 pages

Genre : Horror, Science Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy

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# From Reader Review Prayers to Broken Stones for online ebook

## Martin Fossum says

Oh, Danny boy... what a pleasure it is to meet you again. After all the Hyperion and Fall and Endymion and Ilium and so forth, how fun it is to go back and get a glimpse of where it all began.

For those unfamiliar with Simmons, "Prayers..." gives you an excellent introduction to the youthful art and skill of a developing master. For those who've read his major works, "Prayers..." allows you to peek at where it all began. It's here in "The Death of the Centaur" where we first meet Raul, the namesake of the main character in the Hyperion series... And it's also here where we see an early example of Simmons exploring the moral implications of FTL (faster than light) travel, which becomes such an important consideration in SF, in the romantic relationship between two unlikely souls in the nostalgic "Remembering Siri".

While I tend more toward the SF end of things, it was interesting to see some of Simmon's early "horror." "Iverson's Pits" was superbly written piece - I found myself stunned (really!) at Simmon's poetic talent in this story in the beautifully written prose. It was also fun to hear Simmons comment on the origins of the different stories. He gives a brief introduction before each.

In the end, "Prayers..." is a rewarding read, especially for those wanting to see what he was doing before he hit it really big.

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## Matt Garcia says

What an interesting and literary kaleidoscope of short stories! Prayers to Broken Stones contains a wide variety of Horror, Science Fiction and even Fantasy elements in it. Some of the stories are mesmerizing and tantalizing to the senses while others are adequate to well done. Being my first Dan Simmons experience, I am impressed with his ability to make the plot thicken like blood after it has run cold. Truly imaginative and inventive in its imagery and prose. Great introduction into the mind of Dan Simmons. 4.5 stars

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## Scott Rhee says

"Prayers to Broken Stones" is a collection of thirteen early short works by Dan Simmons, who is the best writer working in any genre (in my humble opinion, at least). Several of the short stories in this collection were the seeds for his longer works. Characters in the short stories "Remembering Siri" and "Death of the Centaur" would play larger roles in his Hyperion series. "Eyes I Dare Not Meet in Dreams" is clearly an early version of "The Hollow Man". The short story "Carrion Comfort" would later appear in the novel of the same name. There are some great stories in here, ranging from hard sci-fi to horror and everything in between. Some of the notables: "The River Styx Runs Upstream", Simmons' first-ever published story is a creepy but superb sci-fi zombie tale of a family dealing with the loss, or rather NOT dealing with the loss of a wife and mother; "E-Ticket to 'Namland", in which the entire country of Vietnam has become an "amusement" park for veterans and their families to "relive" the excitement of the war; "Metastasis", which

reveals the true nature and cause of cancer; and "Shave and a Haircut, Two Bites", which explains why so many communities have a barber shop that no one ever seems to frequent. Occasionally, one will run across a story that is merely mediocre, but keep in mind that Simmons wrote most of these early in his career, and even in his mediocrity one catches glimpses of his genius. This is a must-have for Simmons fans.

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### **Kristen says**

After reading several of Simmons horror novels I was extremely impressed with his writing style. I promptly ordered everything I could get my hands on that had his name attached to it. I'll admit that at first I had no idea this was going to be a short story collection, but I'm usually a fan of short stories so I was eager to dig in.

The actual collection of short stories only comprises about ¾ of the book as most of the short stories have an intro written by Simmons (some are quite lengthy). Also, if you have already read most of his novels, these short stories are the basis for many of his novels, so you may find that you have already read most of this book. These stories are a mixture of Horror and SF (though not together) and one Fantasy thrown in for good measure.

I love Simmons as a horror writer, but had not read any of his SF. The horror stories were fairly good, though I have to admit that as much as I love Simmons, his skill apparently does not manifest itself fully in the short story realm. Most of the stories felt like snippets out of a larger story. Like those reading books you have back in 5th grade that have just a chapter or so from a much larger work. The SF stories were difficult for me to keep my attention on, my brain just isn't set up to digest SF as a genera.

On the whole, this was a decent enough book, though I really don't believe I would recommend it to someone who wasn't already a Simmons fan. I intend to stick with his novels in the future.

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### **Katy says**

**Note:** This review originally written and posted to Amazon 8/11/2006; please do not judge based upon my current format.

*Prayers to Broken Stones* review: [Dan Simmons weaves a web of words into a dream-like trance in this collection of short stories](#)

This book is a collection of short stories by Dan Simmons (*Song of Kali*, *Hyperion*) with a foreword by Harlan Ellison. Each story has a unique voice (although all the science fiction stories seem to take place in the same universe) and they are gem-like in their brightness - characterization, description, voice, all is exquisite, bringing you into these little worlds and opening your eyes to sometimes strange and twisted landscapes.

My only complaints are copy-editing nitpicks - for instance, if something needs oil, it creaks, it doesn't creek. When someone agrees with a statement given, particularly during a toast, they say "Hear, hear!" not "Here, here!" Those sorts of things. Also, the plural of bus is buses!!! "Busses" is "kisses." I kid you not - look it up

and make fun forever more in the future when you see signs at drive-throughs and restaurants that say "busses welcome."

But that aside, this collection of short stories is amazing. I read it much more slowly than is my wont, as it must be supped and savored like a fine wine - not guzzled like a brew. Enjoy it!

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### **Riju Ganguly says**

Today's readers know Dan Simmons as the writer of some of the most exquisitely crafted and chilling horror novels. But this book contains his shorter works, many of which are free from the touch-marks of commercial success. They are fiercely blue-glow in their sheer ability to stun the reader with characterisation, plot, formal and yet utterly brutal prose, and unrelenting narratives. After trying to read the stories at one sitting, I had almost started gasping for breath. Slowly, I managed to spread my reading over a long period, and got to absorb the superlative, and yet haunting stories. If you love stories, then go no further. Recommended.

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### **Ignacio says**

Es un poco incomprensible que con la relativa popularidad de la obra larga de Simmons, y dada su habilidad en el terreno más corto, no se haya traducido ninguno de sus libros de relatos. Ésta pasa por ser, probablemente, su colección más representativa: además de contener algunas de sus obras más conocidas, muestra su versatilidad como autor de terror, horror y ciencia ficción y su consumado talento para tratar historias en un variado registro (intimista, humorístico...). Quizás no contiene ninguna obra maestra, pero el nivel medio es notable. Hasta que alguna editorial se decida a traducirla, si el inglés no es una barrera, merece la pena el esfuerzo; buscar la media docena de relatos que están traducidos puede salir un poco caro.

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### **Karl says**

This hardcover is copy 7 of 550 signed numbered produced and is signed by Simmons and Ron & Val Lindahn on the limitation page.

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### **Daniel2 says**

Great read. Simmons has a more novel-as-short-story approach. There is a lot of movement and coloration where others prefer scene-based and quick motion narrative.

"The River Styx Flows Upstream" and "Vexed to Nightmare by a Rocking Cradle" and also "Iverson's Pits" are my favorites. Simmons is probably the greatest storyteller of the last 50 years. I believe he will be remembered as the greatest writer of the century.

I would like to note here though that NONE of these short stories would be published in todays faux-artistic world of short story publishing. These stories take patience and require the reader to move through scenes as

one might observe them in real-time, all with a perfect balance of strangeness and true to character voice. Magazine editors currently (I'm hoping it's a fad) are almost exclusively interested in "idea stories" or what I call "What if" stories. There is no room anymore for philosophical subtext, clever description or even a puzzling split metaphor. Everything has to be understood by the common idiot. Everything has to be plain as day and to hell with double meanings or even single meanings, they'll be lost on the modern reader. It's sad that writers are almost forbidden to learn from or mimic the great writers. To do so is a direct path to rejection. Rather, there better not be any loopholes in your story about lawnmowers that come alive at night to feed on rascally garden gnomes. Never mind that you can't write worth a shit, and you couldn't spot a plu-perfect verb if it latched on to your only descended testicle.

Oh my, another one of my rants. Oh well.

It was a good book.

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### **Derek says**

This is a great collection. I've always loved Dan Simmons and it's great to see here work featuring familiar stories (*Hyperion*, *Carrion Comfort*) The writing is crisp and fast-paced and doesn't suffer any exposition snugs. I understand the need to introduce every story and give a little context!/background for it, but I skipped all of those, I never read introductions, when I do it's only if I'm confused by something in the body of work that I refer to it as an appendix. Great book though. Great collection.

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### **Ryan Thomas says**

Some of his best stuff. Particularly loved the cancer monsters story, but all were great.

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### **Cody | codysbookshelf says**

*Prayers to Broken Stones* was my first foray into the short fiction of Dan Simmons, and it did not disappoint! This eclectic collection is consistent in quality — Simmons's prose never lets up, and his Devil-like ability to totally overtake his reader is on display.

These stories span the decade of the 1980s, when Simmons was first starting out and not yet quite a household name. Among the pieces included are his first published work, "The River Styx Runs Upstream" and "The Death of the Centaur," a story that was written exclusively for this collection.

Most of these stories fall squarely into the horror category, but a couple do have sci-fi leanings, and "Remembering Siri" (a story that takes place in the *Hyperion* universe, apparently) is full-on science fiction. At first that made me side-eye a bit, but the gorgeousness of the writing won me over. The plot . . . meh, not my thing.

This is a fun and near-perfect read for the Halloween season. If you're looking for a skillful and varied collection of stories from a master writer, look no further.

## Story ratings:

1. The River Styx Runs Upstream - 5\*
  2. Eyes I Dare Not Meet in Dreams - 5\*
  3. Vanni Fucci is Alive and Well and Living in Hell - 5\*
  4. Vexed to Nightmare by a Rocking Cradle - 4\*
  5. Remembering Siri - 3\*
  6. Metastasis - 5\*
  7. The Offering - (Is a screenplay, I skipped this)
  8. E-Ticket to 'Namland - 3\*
  9. Iverson's Pits - 5\*
  10. Shave and a Haircut, Two Bites - 5\*
  11. The Death of the Centaur - 5\*
  12. Two Minutes and Forty-Five Seconds - 5\*
  13. Carrion Comfort (Short story later worked into the novel of the same name, I also skipped this as I have not read the novel.)
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## Lutin82 says

Ce récit épique qui s'étale sur une année scolaire, met en jeu plusieurs personnages un néo-chat, un sorcier et un centaure, Raul, qui tentent de rejoindre un portail entre les mondes. Ils sont pourchassés par une foule de mages qui cherchent à mettre la main sur un artefact. Le conte mêle SF et fantasy, et séduit les enfants avec ses combats, ses actes d'héroïsme, sa générosité, son sens de la responsabilité, ses sacrifices, sa grandeur... Il est évident que Raul, le centaure - à rapprocher de Raul Endymion - aura un impact crucial sur ces aventures. Le procédé utilisé par Dan Simmons permet de découvrir une Amérique profonde, approximativement dans les années 70, si différente de nos fantasmes européens. D'ailleurs le portrait de cette communauté bucolique me rappelle fortement la population décrite par King dans Salem, même si le format choisi ici n'offre pas la même profondeur et analyse. Le texte de Dan Simmons est sympathique et ne révolutionne pas franchement le genre, mais l'intérêt n'est pas là. Il s'agit surtout d'une première ébauche d'Hypérion et des récits partagés par les pèlerins, notamment celui du Consul (Siri). D'ailleurs, nous y retrouvons de nombreux éléments.

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## Greg Frederick says

This is a collection of short stories by my favorite author. I love his sci-fi, and even enjoyed his novel Carrion Comfort, though I would generally shy away from horror. The stories in this book are mostly horror, or if they're sci-fi, tend to have a bit of a thriller type morose edge to them. Though his writing is still superb, and the intros are interesting, I must say that I much prefer his novels. This is because Simmons is the undisputed king of the backstory. He writes up the most unimaginably complex web, and ties it all up with a pretty little bow at the end. Short stories just don't have time for that. Also, his novels tend to end at least somewhat happily, but not necessarily so for his shorts. I guess I'm a sucker for a happy ending, but none-the-less, I have to acknowledge these stories (even or perhaps especially the darkest ones) to be well written and enjoyable to read. Remembering Siri is my favorite. Glimpses or hints of the Hyperion universe are also quite fun in a couple of the stories.

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## **Bev says**

Prayers to Broken Stones is a collection of the early short stories by Dan Simmons. I remember being knocked out by his novel Hyperion when I read it in the early 90s. My best friend sent me this collection of short stories shortly thereafter and I somehow managed never to get around to reading it. All I can do is shake my finger at my younger self and say, "You missed something. Should have read it sooner."

Wow. I don't remember making the connection to Harlan Ellison when I read Hyperion, but if anyone comes close to writing like Ellison, it's Simmons. (And, interestingly enough, the introduction is written by Ellison and he claims to have discovered Simmons.) He has that same ability to move effortlessly between genres...a little horror here, a little science fiction there, a little bit of the dark thriller...and all of it making deft and accurate comments on the human condition. And this is his early stuff--the "I'm just getting into my writing groove" stuff. Makes me want to run out and buy the most recent thing he's written just to see if he kept it up and made it better.

This book has it all--from psychic vampires who get their jollies (and "feedings") from making other people kill to a story of Resurrectionists who can bring your mom or dad or son or lover or whoever back from the dead. But is that really a good thing? There are stories built on the battle of Gettysburg and the loss of the Challenger shuttle. And stories cutting the televangelists down to size. There's even a story explaining why there seems to be so much more cancer nowadays....and stories that hold the seeds that would grow into Hyperion.

The man can write. He can take you back in time to a Civil War battlefield or whisk you away to planet you've never heard of--and you absolutely believe that you're there. He may have just started in these stories, but he's miles ahead of other first-time writers

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