

Dead Letters: Age of Consent

AGE OF CONSENT, by Howard Mittelmark  
New York: Signet, 2007

Who doesn't love a ghost story? When you were a kid, you probably read ghost stories under your covers with a flashlight. At least I know I did. But whatever happened to the classic, scare-the-crap-out-of-you simple ghost story? A lot of ghost stories that have come out in the past decade are not scary. In fact, they're not even inherently creepy. I think the reason for this is that a lot of modern stories being told have just become too complicated. So complicated they become unbelievable and hence they're not scary. If you can't believe the events in the story, you're not going to be scared. Well, guess what, folks...I HAVE FOUND A FEROCIOUS RETURN TO THE ART OF GHOST STORY TELLING. The scariest book I've read in 20 years is AGE OF CONSENT by Howard Mittelmark. This is a return to all of that creepy, I can't sleep without the light on stuff I used to read when I was a kid.

AGE OF CONSENT opens with your average family moving into a house in upstate New York that's been abandoned for a lot of years, but it's got a nasty history shrouded in esoterica, which of course the family knows nothing about. The writing is taut, the imagery is refreshing, the story flows very well, there's not one dead spot in the whole book--those are all writing pluses for me. The reason AGE OF CONSENT is scary is because it is a simple revival of preying on the reader's universal fears and experiences.

These characters you know because they were either you fifteen or twenty years ago when you were a kid or a teenager, or they're you now as a struggling adult. They're not characters that are too far out and have too many issues you can't relate to; they're just normal. No matter who you are as a reader or where you are in your life, one of these characters--I can almost guarantee this--you're going to recognize in yourself.

Mittelmark's got lots of creepy paranormal moments to punctuate this, and the moments are executed with sharp believability. There's nothing outlandish or unbelievable about the way these people are being haunted--no frying steaks on counters or chairs stacked in pyramids here. If you're a paranormal investigator, or even if you're not but you've had an encounter, you've seen this stuff before. The black shadow in the window. The thing that you thought you saw zip across the hall in front of you. The footsteps on the stairs. This is all really unsettling stuff. It's stuff you know. It might even be the stuff that triggered your getting into ghost hunting, or at least having a wicked fascination with ghosts, in the first place. All of these terrifying scenarios are set against a very normal backdrop. That's why this book is a masterpiece.

Mittelmark has a true understanding of how to tell a good ghost story. He has taken Poe's idea that true horror sometimes results from whatever's haunting you. And he does it expertly.

Full audio review on April 29, 2007 show. Visit [www.ghostanddemon.com](http://www.ghostanddemon.com)'s archives.

Quick re-cap:

Adult fiction. This is the CLASSIC CREEPY GHOST STORY in all its glory. Taut writing, fresh imagery, suspenseful pacing. Mittelmark is a master at doing horror the way it should be done: taking the every day and scaring us with it. Believable characters to which anyone can relate, VERY believable paranormal situations.

Purchasing information:

<http://www.Amazon.com>

The best \$7.99 you'll ever spend!