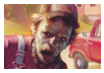
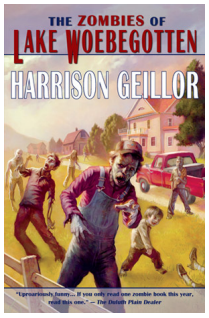


Over the years, Garrison Keillor’s A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION has become a salute to a world that once was. It has delighted millions of listeners as they huddle around the radio, much like they imagine their grandparents did, and hear his soothing voice describe the comings and goings of the mythical town of Lake Wobegon in rural Minnesota. The town is populated by a number of iconic figures, and the show has become sort of an aural Norman Rockwell—nostalgic, heartwarming, and the kind of place folks wish was still around. Now, in the tradition of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES and ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER comes THE ZOMBIES OF LAKE WOEBEGOTTEN by “Harrison Geillor,” coming September 1 from Night Shade Books.



Geillor deftly satirizes his source material by taking certain key characters from the radio program and plunking them right in the middle of an all-out undead attack. The writer, however, is smart enough to realize that he cannot just rely on someone else’s characters, and so invents several others to further the plot. ZOMBIES is written like a well-crafted play in three acts, with the first serving to set the stage and introduce the protagonists. As the cause of the rising dead is beyond the scope of explanation, he merely presents the event and the immediate results. This opening section is actually the weakest of the three, as the author has to cover so much ground in order to introduce the characters while incorporating them into the fictional world Keillor created.

The second act of ZOMBIES, however, is a brilliant collage of events that is beautifully crafted in a non-linear way. Geillor presents the meat of the story in bits and pieces and leaves it up to the reader to mentally reassemble them into a complete picture. It’s a bold and courageous choice that forces the reader to be a more active participant. Act three brings the ghoul attack to its climax as the surviving members of the town band together for their own protection.

Along the way, we’re introduced to the strange characters that inhabit the community: a priest, a pastor, a smattering of bachelor Norwegian farmers, a cafe owner, a college kid, a small-town sheriff, an ambitious mayor’s wife, a philanderer and many others. You might find them in just about any village in the world (well, maybe not the bachelor Norwegian farmers; those folks tend to stand out more in a small-town environment). Keillor himself, or at least someone written to seem like him, occasionally wanders through to narrate portions of the action.

ZOMBIES actually works on a couple of levels. First, it is a quick, solid, fun read that deftly gives you a poke in the ribs with the wink of an eye toward the good people of Garrison Keillor’s Lake Wobegon. Second, it works as a creepy story of small-town paranoia, sort of a tongue-in-cheek version of ‘SALEM’S LOT but with zombies instead of vampires. Any way you look at it, THE ZOMBIES OF LAKE WOEBEGOTTEN is a lot of fun—and could help you get into The Pretty Good Brotherhood of Cnut.

{jcomments on}