



## Jack and Mr. Grin

*Andersen Prunty*

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## **Jack and Mr. Grin** Andersen Prunty

*A surreal and horrifying thriller from Andersen Prunty.*

Jack Orange is a twenty-something guy who works at a place called The Tent packing dirt in boxes and shipping them off to exotic, unheard of locales. He thinks about his girlfriend, Gina Black, and the ring he hopes to surprise her with. But when he returns home one day, Gina isn't there. He receives a strange call from a man who sounds like he is smiling- Mr. Grin. He says he has Gina. He gives Jack twenty-four hours to find her.

What follows is Jack's bizarre journey through an increasingly warped and surreal landscape where an otherworldly force burns brands into those he comes in contact with, trains appear out of thin air, rooms turn themselves inside out and computers are powered by birds. And if he does find Gina, how will he ever survive a grueling battle to the death with Mr. Grin?

## **Jack and Mr. Grin Details**

Date : Published March 5th 2008 by Eraserhead Press

ISBN : 9781933929715

Author : Andersen Prunty

Format : Paperback 196 pages

Genre : Horror, Bizarro Fiction, Fantasy, Thriller, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Jack and Mr. Grin for online ebook

### Edward Lorn says

I listened to this one, which is narrated by the author. First thing I'll note is the melatonin-laced delivery of Andersen Prunty. Throughout the entire audio book, Prunty seemed on the verge of coma. I could see him, bracing himself on his desk with his elbows, his head held up by a ruler jabbed into his brow to keep him upright as he fought wave after wave of imminent slumber. Him popping Ambien like M&M's. In other words, the fucker sounded sleepy.

I decided to listen to this book solely based on the cover and title. I enjoyed Prunty's Fuckness so much, I decided to look up some of his other books. I had a spare Audible credit, so I thought, "Why not?" I do not regret my choice, but I am left wanting a bit more. Not that the story wasn't long enough. I simply feel that Prunty missed some opportunities.

The first three quarters of Jack & Mr. Grin go by at a snail's pace. Add to that Prunty's Rip Van Winkle impression and not even a hardline of caffeine and crack could keep someone awake. Damn book is only 4 hours and 15 minutes long, but it took me a week to listen to the whole thing. If it wasn't for the imaginative final hour of this book, it quite possibly would have been a two-star read for me. I loved the butterflies and the train, as well as the final fight, but everything else felt so damn lackluster. Like a golden room covered in primer. The idea was there, but loads of filler buried it. I wanted more of the other world. That shit was fun. That's what I signed on for. In the end, I felt as if I drove to Orlando, walked across Disney World's massive parking lot, took the train to the front gates, and then found out the park would be closing in ten minutes.

I am disappoint.

In summation: This might be a better read than it was a listen, but I can only comment on the audio book. Given more time in the alternate world, I might have enjoyed myself more. I wouldn't recommend this one, but I will be checking out some of Prunty's other books. Just not in audio.

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### Katy says

**Book Info:** Genre: Bizarro

Reading Level: Adult

Recommended for: Fans of mystery/thrillers with paranormal twist, bizarro

Trigger Warnings: Violence against women, including sexual assault

**Disclosure:** I picked up this book from Amazon on a free promotion. All opinions are my own.

**Synopsis:** Jack Orange is a twenty-something guy who works at a place called The Tent packing dirt in boxes and shipping them off to exotic, unheard-of locales. He thinks about his girlfriend, Gina Black, and the ring he hopes to surprise her with. But when he returns home one day, Gina isn't there. He receives a strange call from a man who sounds like he is smiling—Mr. Grin. He says he has Gina. He gives Jack twenty- four hours to find her.

What follows is Jack's bizarre journey through an increasingly warped and surreal landscape where an otherworldly force burns brands into those he comes in contact with, trains appear out of thin air, rooms turn themselves inside out and computers are powered by birds. And if he does find Gina, how will he ever

survive a grueling battle to the death with Mr. Grin?

**My Thoughts:** By the time I picked up this e-book on Amazon under a KDP promotion, I was just grabbing anything by this author I could find, since I found I quite enjoyed his work.

This one is quite different from the previous books I've read. Whereas the previous books I read tended toward horror or urban fantasy, this one is more along the lines of a thriller, albeit with supernatural aspects.

One thing I have found that I really appreciate about Andersen Prunty is his gift of describing things so perfectly. Take this description of a blandly "corporate" America:

*"It looked like every highway exit area on every interstate in America, lined with chain hotels, chain restaurants and chain gas stations. Like the developers had dropped their pants and shat out what every mid-size city in America had."*

The reason I've rated this four stars is not due to any deficiency in the writing, but I rate based upon my enjoyment and I didn't enjoy this one quite as much as I did the last two – I think it's because this just didn't have the same level of dark humor as *Satanic Summer* and *My Fake War*. However, it is a well-written and entertaining book, and I think fans of bizarro literature, as well as those who enjoy mystery/thrillers with a paranormal bent will enjoy this book.

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### **Tressa says**

I really enjoyed this book, much more than I thought I would. I like when non-superhero, garden-variety Joe Schmo characters face extraordinary situations. That's what Jack is and does.

I related to Jack, who has a job he's not necessarily turning cartwheels over but puts in his hours so he can get his fulfillment through his personal life. This is working out fine until his beloved girlfriend Gina is kidnapped. Let me just say that as a woman, I appreciate the positive aspect of Jack and Gina's relationship. Jack isn't afraid to show or express just how important his girlfriend is to his life, yet he doesn't smother her.

Sam, Gina's brother, supplied some much needed comic relief. I kept picturing The Simpson's ponytailed Comic Book Guy whenever Sam was in the picture, only much seedier and smellier.

The ending takes us on a tour through a strange, deserted motel on the edge of town. I really enjoyed the ride. I find myself looking forward to Andersen Prunty's next book. I was thinking of donating my copy of Mr. Grin to the library, but I think I'll keep it for my permanent collection, which I rarely ever do.

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### **Marvin says**

This book is strange. The plot is strange. The author clearly must be strange. Normal people don't write things like this. And I must be strange cause I loved this novel.

This bizarre but delightful horror novel has a "down the rabbit hole" sense of wonder. The main character sounds fairly average in every way but his job (packing dirt?) and his biggest problem is how to propose to his girl friend. He then get a call from someone who has his girl and sounds like he has a perpetual grin

(shades of the Cheshire Cat?). Our hero has 24 hours to find her (You're late. You're Late" says the white rabbit)...

Am I overdoing the Alice in Wonderland comparisons? Probably, but this does feel to me like An Alice in Wonderland for the perverse. Lewis Carroll meets David Lynch in a collaboration of Slaughter of The Lambs. Bizarro novels delight in being weird but the best Bizarro novels always have one foot in reality and do not go overboard just for the sake of weirdness. Using that criteria, this may be the best Bizarro novel I've yet to read and certainly one of the strangest horror novels I've read. I'm making room for more Andersen Prunty novels.

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## Dan Schwent says

When Jack Orange's girlfriend Gina goes missing, he soon gets a sinister phone call from a man that sounds like he's constantly smiling, Mr. Grin. Mr. Grin has Gina and Jack has 24 hours to find them. In the mean time, Mr. Grin is going to have some fun...

**This is the ninth book in my Kindle Unlimited Experiment. For the 30 day trial, I'm only reading books that are part of the program and keeping track what the total cost of the books would have been.**

This is my fourth Andersen Prunty novel and my favorite so far. Jack & Mr. Grin is a psychological horror novel about a man racing the clock to find his girlfriend and the psychopath that is holding her hostage. Complicating things is that Mr. Grin seems all-knowing and people who Jack encounters wind up with a brand on them and get possessed with psychotic rage and try to kill him. Not to mention Mr. Grin repeatedly calling him.

Around the halfway mark, the book was so hard to put down it was as if it was stapled to my hands. Jack manages to figure out where Gina might be held and things get pretty bizarre. It reminded me of the story of Orpheus a few times.

I wanted to love this book but I only wound up liking it quite a bit. Jack had a case of the stupids a few times, like wondering if Mr. Grin had supernatural powers late in the book despite all the supernatural things that had already occurred. Also, there were a few too many unanswered questions about Gina and Mr. Grin. Other than that, it was an easy four star read for me.

**Current Kindle Unlimited Savings Total: \$49.09.**

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## Lea says

I'm not going to lie, parts of this were pretty brutal, but the story really kept me guessing and it was one of those books that you just can't put down until you find out what happens.

Jake leaves his girlfriend, Gina, at home while he runs out to pick up breakfast one Sunday morning. When he returns, Gina is missing and in that moment Jack just knows that something terrible has happened. When he receives a phone call from Mr. Grin, his worst fears are confirmed, and Jack has 24 hours to find the

woman he loves or he will lose her forever.

Throughout Jack's odyssey to save Gina Mr. Grin torments him, calling Jack so he can listen to Gina's screams as Mr. Grin tortures her. I really wasn't sure how the author would resolve Gina's abuse -- it was difficult to see how Gina or Jack would be able to move past their ordeal -- but Prunty threw in a couple of nifty twists to ease the reader's heart on that matter. (A big thank you to the author for that, BTW -- I would have finished this book on a very sour note if that hadn't been the case.)

I was very surprised by the identity of Mr. Grin -- I wasn't sure the author would be able to make the villain evil enough to make his actions make sense (he did) or that, in the end, his motives would seem realistic within the framework of the story (again, he pulls it off).

There was also a very sad moment that I thought Prunty turned around in a very interesting way, pulling in what could have been a loose end in order to do so. Very nice!

This is the third book I've read from this author, and I've liked each of them. I will definitely read more of his work.

One final note -- the cover of my copy scared the bejesus out of my kids, so you might want to be careful leaving it out if your children are also easily frightened! (Because of the cover, though, my kids were extra intrigued by this book and keep asking me if Jack rescued his girlfriend!)

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## Jeff says

Andersen Prunty is a new name to the horror fiction scene. He has had many short stories published and one collection of flash fiction ("The Overwhelming Urge"). With his first novel, "Jack & Mr. Grin," Prunty shows that he is a new voice that all dedicated fans of horror fiction should take note of.

Jack Orange has been living with his girlfriend Gina for a few years and now he feels ready to take their relationship to the next level. He goes to get the ring and comes back home to propose, Gina is gone. The phone rings and on the other end is a man who sounds like he is smiling, Mr. Grin.

Mr. Grin has taken Gina hostage and Jack has twenty-four hours to find them or else he will lose Gina forever. Their "game" (as Mr. Grin calls it) has one rule, no one may notify the police or Gina will die. With these circumstances in place, Jack begins a race against time to rescue the love of his life. Along the way he will encounter forces and knowledge that causes him to question everything in his reality.

The plot is a simple set-up and has been done many times before, but Prunty writes with such a fierce drive that no reader will care. Jack's journey to find Gina is plagued with tortures as Mr. Grin tortures him both emotionally and physically. The torments are extremely disturbing as Prunty seems to already have mastered the art of suggestion. The book is not that graphic in terms of "on-page" violence, however he hints at acts that will stay with the reader long after the book finishes. This is the hard-core of emotional horror.

Eraserhead Press has signed an extremely talented writer in Andersen Prunty. The "game" Jack is forced to play is frightening and will haunt you long after you close the covers. Here is hoping that Prunty will be able to give us more of this high-quality horror (we will find out, when "Zerostrata" is published later this year). If you do not read "Jack & Mr. Grin", you lose.

## Lance says

I read Prunty's Overwhelming Urge first and thoroughly enjoyed his short stories/flash fiction. So, I was looking forward to reading Jack and Mr. Grin. Jack and Mr. Grin was not what I expected after the Overwhelming Urge (not nearly as bizarre, tasteless, gross, etc.) but I once again enjoyed it a great deal. While the story deals with the supernatural and is brutal at times, I don't really consider it to be Bizarro fiction, at least not from what I have seen from some of the other Bizarro authors. I would say that the story is a fairly straightforward supernatural-thriller-horror-love story, and, is reminiscent of some of Stephen King's work. Mr. Prunty already established himself as a talented writer with his short stories. Now, with Jack and Mr. Grin, he has also demonstrated the ability to craft a compelling, creepy, and intense full length novel. I understand that Prunty has several more novels in the works and look forward to seeing what he does next.

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## Kim Rox says

What a joke and utter waste of time. I know I coulda, shoulda quit while I was still ahead but hey, I'm not a quitter or rather am a glutton for punishment. I think this was written in a cut and paste fashion with the author either reading or viewing childrens programming... No, that wouldn't be fair to childrens programming. Either that or he was on a good one. I can't believe it's published work nor that anyone would find this worthy reading material, summer or otherwise.

Full of contradictions, idiotic why's, wherefore's, and maybe's. Totally lame. Shame on you Mr. Prunty. I'll give you this much, you laid it on thick, really thick.

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## Melki says

Jack returns home from procuring a greasy fast food breakfast intending to propose to his lady-love, Gina. BUT...Gina is nowhere to be found.

Jack's cell phone rings and suddenly a nasty man is saying nasty things and making nasty promises. Jack now has just 24 hours to find Gina, or Mr. Grin will make her disappear forever.

And so begins a sick, twisted, and twisty treasure hunt..

This is a taut horror/thriller with supernatural elements and nightmarish imagery. It is violent and oh yes, NASTY at times, so be forewarned.

Unlike many horror novels where the ending is rushed, phony, or a just plain cop-out - ("Let's all hold hands and sing 'Kum Ba Yah' and all the bad spirits will go away!") - this ending fits this book perfectly.

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## Jordan says

Just imagine David Lynch directing an episode of the Twilight Zone..

Considering that the only thing I have read of Andersen Prunty's work was his flash fiction collection **THE OVERWHELMING URGE**, I was a little unsure about how the author would approach a full length work. As I stated in my review of his previous book, I'm not a huge fan of flash fiction and prefer longer works. Well, Prunty answered my prayers with this bizarro cat-and-mouse suspense novel.

**JACK & MR. GRIN** really captures the pain and anguish of Jack whose girlfriend is kidnapped. He is taunted by the kidnapper (Mr. Grin) via cell phone and even though the set-up seems clichéd, Prunty puts a twist on it by making Mr. Grin realistically sleazy and disgusting. As soon as you feel like you're involved in a typical kidnapper-holding-girl-hostage plot, something happens that leaves you saying, "Oh my god, I can't believe this is happening." or "I can't believe so-and-so character just said that."

Oh, but wait... what's the book about? Jack's girlfriend disappears and he gets a phone call from a guy who claims that he has her. What follows is a weird story that follows Jack on his quest to find her. On that quest, he encounters not only bizarro situations but doubt about his girlfriend Gina as well. Some of the topics covered by Prunty are fidelity and the true past of your girlfriend/boyfriend. In this the author succeeds in showing the realistic thought processes of a young guy in a troubled relationship.

At times the plotting reminded me of a Dean Koontz novel albeit one that is less corny and contrived. Mysterious things happen that make the reader on edge, eagerly awaiting the next chapter to find out just what the hell is going on. When it all comes together, we're faced with a truly bizarre unfolding of events. I don't want to spoil it, so I'll let the reader find out for themselves. Let's just say, you probably won't see it coming. I know that while I was reading the end, I sat wide-eyed and in awe of the weirdness that Prunty put forth.

One criticism that I had when I first started reading was that we really aren't given a lot of time to get to know Jack's girlfriend so we don't really get to identify with or care about her. We really just get to see it from Jack's point of view. However, as I found out later on, Prunty did that for a reason.

Also, some of the dialogue between Jack and the other characters was a little awkward at times and didn't seem to fit with the seriousness of the situation at hand (the kidnapping). Of course, when writing about situations like that, it's difficult to really capture what someone would really do or say since most of us have never dealt with a kidnapping. Still, despite this awkwardness, I felt that Jack was a very real person, someone the reader could relate to due to us knowing the progression of his thoughts.

I think this may be a result of Prunty's work in weird flash fiction where the characters are all very bizarro people caught in strange situations. Still, if I had to pick one area where I'd like to see the author improve in, it'd probably be dialogue. Of course, I'm an Elmore Leonard nut and so I'm very into realistic talk between characters and therefore am overly critical when it comes to that sort of thing.

The ending. Well, like I mentioned above, the ending is very strange and I won't do the reader the disservice of revealing it. The explanation behind everything is strange yet, like novels by authors such as Dean Koontz and Stephen King, not everything is revealed. Things aren't spelt out for us and we're left with just enough mystery to make us want a sequel but not too little as to not form a satisfying ending.

There is still a feeling that Prunty probably feels at home with shorter works. Though **JACK & MR. GRIN** is close to 200 pages, there is a feeling that he padded it a little bit with more of Jack's thoughts than was necessary. I do have a feeling, however, that his next novel will probably improve upon this and therefore I'm looking forward to his next work.

Overall, this is a nail-biting bizarro novel that will keep you wondering until the very end. It's a bizarro thriller that was a (disturbing) joy to experience. I definitely prefer **JACK & MR. GRIN** over his previous

work **THE OVERWHELMING URGE** since it gave Prunty the room to explore characters and flesh out the weird world that he cracked open in his flash fiction.

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### **Christy Stewart says**

A great book for people who aren't acquainted with the bizarro genre, and for ones who are. It's has the integrity that a mainstream novel strives for with it's characters and yet still brings the mind fuck aesthetics that fans of bizarro have come to expect.

Despite the fact that the author is gorgeous, he is also very talented.

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### **Anita Dalton says**

All in all, this is a tight, well-told horror/bizarro tale. Every detail matters in the game Mr. Grin forces Jack to play. Anyone who has either tried to write a mystery/thriller/horror novel will know how hard this is to do, and more important, anyone who has read a novel that cannot pull it off knows how marvelous it is when a writer gets it right. Since I don't want to spoil the plot, I can't go into depth about all the ways that Prunty makes every word matter, but I can say that Prunty doesn't make the mistake of making words count in a calculated, stiff manner. He is far more deft than that. Casual conversations help with characterization but it is subtle – not a hammer in our foreheads announcing, “Hey, character development, pay attention!” As Jack careens from one bad scene to the next, the plot's pace never seems overwhelming or rushed. Read my entire review [here](#).

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### **Matthew Vaughn says**

My first experience with Andersen Prunty was his book *The Sorrow King*, which I thought was a fantastic read. After finishing it I immediately wanted to read more of his work. I was a little concerned that since I started out with his newest work that maybe I wouldn't enjoy his previous work as much, but that was just dumb, apparently all his books are great.

*Jack and Mr. Grin* isn't straight forward Bizarro, it has some Bizarro elements to it, but really it's more of a Bizarro thriller. One lazy Sunday Jack goes out to get his girlfriend and himself some breakfast. When he returns he finds his girlfriend is not there. After a quick search of the house he gets a strange phone call from the man who has Gina, a man who sounds like he's grinning. Jack has twenty four hours to find Gina and battle Mr. Grin to the death.

Andersen Prunty does a great job with his characters, keeping them real and making you care about them. Jack goes through a lot of emotional turmoil during his quest, mainly due to the psychological torture that Mr. Grin puts him through.

This was for me another excellent read from Mr. Prunty, and I will look forward to more.

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### **Kathryn says**

First, thanks for the loan Marvin!

I'm sure I've said this before but I'll say it again - Prunty has a wonderful talent for writing relatable bizarro fiction. His characters are not flashy, they are more along the lines of everyday folks, and they have everyday problems. I like this. I also deeply appreciate how the weirdness in his stories creep up on the reader. Prunty writes real stories not for the sake of shock. His stories have something called a plot. I dislike the trend of bizarro writers just throwing out the weirdest shit they can think of. I love, love, love weird but I need an explanation. Reading that something odd or awful happened to someone is so much scarier when you can place a face and personality with the person.

Another thing about Prunty - I'm beginning to think of him as that-author-who-writes-bizarro-romance. How wonderful. Prunty takes a young man and a young woman and challenges their love by throwing them in otherworldly situations. I quite love it.

The only reason I am rating 4 stars is I wanted more character development but you have to know that this is a short work and probably not meant to connect with the reader overly much. I don't know, maybe it's just me and I'm probably being a little unfair. But I did thoroughly enjoy this. 4 1/2 stars and onto another by the author.

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