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Young Adult Fiction

Twilight Tales: A Collection of Chilling Poems
J. T. Holden
Kuro Books
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Ranging from the ghostly to the gruesome, the poems in J.T. Holden's chilling new collection, *Twilight Tales*, are filled with atmospheric rhymes and eerie images.

The twenty-two poems are roughly organized into four main sections, with a fifth section, "Two for the Road", containing two additional poems. Holden draws material from classic horror elements, like mysterious murders, bloody corpses, the undead and vampires, and evil scarecrows, but some of the most interesting works are inspired by unique figures like La Llorana, of Mexican legends, and The Dullahan, a headless fairy from Irish myths. Subjects even extend to Shakespeare's plays and a young Edgar Allan Poe, and a number of poems stem entirely from Holden's imagination.

The mix of inspirations makes for a rather eclectic group of poems, with each one being entirely different from another. But whether depicting a bloody war from medieval times or the deadly Bloody Mary, Holden's overall collection is wholly creepy rather than melancholy.

Holden's previous work, *Alice in Verse: The Lost Rhymes of Wonderland*, was praised for its clever rhymes and fluidity, and the same can be said for this volume. His rhymes don't typically feel forced, but rather easily blend into a seamless rhythm and flow. Descriptions of whispered "bewitching sighs" and coffins "soaked with steaming gore" conjure vivid images and palpable tension.

Though the easy cadence of the works can be appreciated by anyone, the appeal of this book is entirely dependent on a reader's level of interest. Some poems contain such grisly elements that it is clearly not appropriate for younger people. Other pieces may not have the depth for adult readers or older teens, a detriment that could be outweighed by the unique subject matter and creativity.

Johnson's illustrations appear at the beginning of each section, while all but one of Kelly's are located in an additional section entitled "The Lost Illustrations of Twilight Tales," as

they were initially intended to accompany individual poems. Johnson's work in particular seems slightly more sophisticated than the poems themselves. Unfortunately, much of the detail in the work is lost in an overly-blackened printing. The decision to not integrate Kelly's illustrations into the text is appropriate given how different the two artists' styles are.

Though not entirely cohesive or consistent, this book is a unique option for Halloween, particularly for those looking for physical chills.

Alicia Sondhi