



The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody

John Jughead Pierson

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What if George Bailey wasn't saved by his guardian angel, Clarence Odbody, on that snowy Christmas Eve in Bedford Falls? This reimagining of the beloved Frank Capra classic *It's a Wonderful Life* (and the Phillip Van Doren Stern story that inspired it) tells the story of Bedford Falls and its inhabitants after the death of their drama's central character.

The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody restores the dark undercurrent of the Van Doren Stern's short story "The Greatest Gift" to the uplifting plot of Capra's film, and explores how the familiar characters in it might respond to the dire circumstances created by George Bailey's disappearance from their lives. The paths of an introspective cab driver, a ruthless henchman, and a wayward daughter collide nearly twenty years later in the town that defined their reputations for better or for worse.

The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody Details

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From Reader Review The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody for online ebook

Angela says

The storytelling is ambling and comfortable. ... like hearing a tale of familiar folks from your favorite grandparent. I felt as though I've known the residents of Bedford Falls my whole life and was just getting caught up with them. The ending was surprising and thought provoking. I will take some of Clarence with me and would encourage anyone who thinks they have life planned or anyone who can't fathom having a plan to get acquainted with this version of these classic characters!

Billie says

I was a bit concerned over reading this book based on the reviews, but the premise looked too good to me to pass up.

Revisiting the Bailey family from Bedford Falls was really enjoyable for me, even if everything didn't turn out quite "wonderfully." The story is well-done, the characters are well-developed. I question the epilogue, like most everyone else, but I think I get it...there are that many different variations a story - and a life - could take.

I recommend you know at least a little about "It's a Wonderful Life" before taking this on, even if it's just seeing the movie. This was a great Christmas read for me, a bit longer than it needed to be, but still a great story that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Every time a bell rings...

Kurt says

I have always considered the movie entitled It's a Wonderful Life to be about the best movie ever made. I guess, as I grew older, that I could really relate to the protagonist, George Bailey, and his nose-to-the-grindstone existence. Regardless, I was very excited to read this novel, recommended to me by avid reader and scholar Sarah Holub. This novel takes a huge twist and explores the truly dark side of what happens in Bedford Falls one night. Instead of letting George live, his guardian angel, Angel Second Class Clarence Odbody, makes a hard choice and allows George to die in the freezing, dark waters under the bridge. This necessarily changes what happens to his family, and to other members of the community. I was spellbound, but found myself actually depressed that this extremely convoluted plot twist could so draw me in to a truly dark look at movie characters I had always found inspiring and downright awesome. I gave the book only three stars because of the ending. It ends, but offers an epilog that was very confusing and obtuse for me. I even googled solutions to interpreting this ending, and found that the author had actually responded to one of his critics--amazing! Regardless, if you do not mind an emotionally disturbing rollercoaster, this book is well-written and will rather turn your world upside down. It does contain philosophical points of view I enjoyed very much

Guy says

I despise the movie It's a Wonderful Life; it gets my vote for one of the worst films of all time. But I loved this book. It's a retelling of the story from a 180-degree twist on the original premise. It's a great story and one that I think is way more believable than the ubiquitous and nauseating holiday "classic".

Shari Larsen says

This story is the reimagining of the Frank Capra classic It's a Wonderful Life. What if George Bailey wasn't saved by Clarence, his guardian angel, on that snowy Christmas Eve in Bedford Falls?

The story follows the events leading up to, and what happens after George Bailey's disappearance, and continues about 20 years later, when the paths of a cab driver, a ruthless henchman and wayward daughter collide in the town that defined their reputations for better or for worse.

This was an interesting and well rounded story. It does not take anything away from my enjoyment of the original movie, if anything, I will look at the movie with fresh insights the next time I watch it.

The only thing I did not like about this book was the epilogue, it was confusing and it wasn't clear which characters it was talking about. The chapter before the epilogue provides a satisfying enough ending though.

Martha says

I am about a quarter into it and I am doubtful whether I will continue reading. It seems like I would like it but it is dry and nothing really happens. The chapters are very long and I am still not sure I see the point yet. I have gotten more from reading the reviews on here than I have from reading the book and that is sad.

Update: I wish I had not continued. The story picked up some, now more than half way. I will finish it now due to amount of time and effort I have invested in it. I usually abandon books when they fail to keep my interest and for some reason I did not follow my own rule. I would not recommend this book. I fail to see the point of it.

Just finished this book, disliked the entire thing. The ending is very anticlimactic. Just not my thing.

John Pierson says

It's my book! Of course I think it's great. But no really, read this. It's the best thing I've written.

Martha says

Hmmmm

This book was different.... Interesting quick read I now need to find out what other readers thought.... :). Try it!

Brad says

Full disclosure: I know the author.

Often when a work is referred to as being personal, it means the book makes readers feel close to the author. In very special instances, the reader gets snuck up on and surprised to find themselves waiting in the pages. I was floored by how much of myself was in there. Also, the characters were rich and the whole thing was imaginative.

The book also examines a long unanswered question: What if George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart's character in *It's a Wonderful Life*) had been successful in offing himself? Indeed, the blind spot of the great and classic film is that the angel, Clarence Odbody, only chooses to show George Bailey how the world would be if he'd never been born...but Bailey's major concern was facing what lies ahead. This book presents this alternate reality, but shows the town and the angel, rather than being George-centric.

Jimmy says

This was a good twist on the story *It's a wonderful life*, a tale that included the results if George Bailey had actually died, I enjoy stories that throw a twist into classic tales but hate to admit that I struggled with this one, I have no problem with details and character development, but the amount of time spent explaining details in this book actually took away from the story for me.

❀Aimee❀ Just one more page... says

Stunning book.

I realize some may hate this one. It takes a good "what if" look at everyone's favorite Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life". What happened after George was saved by Clarence? Was this really the best thing for the family?

Admittedly, this is a somewhat dark look at what could have happened. But here's the thing: I love books that make you think. Sometimes we just don't know whether the things that happen in our life were for the best or not. We won't know until our lives are concluded and the ripples of our lives stop affecting the people in our lives. There were concepts that reminded me of the Butterfly Effect theory (not the movie). How each of our decisions have rippling effects that we can't imagine.

This will definitely leave you thinking about the movie we all know, your own life, and what makes up the big picture. Deep, profound, heartbreakin, and beautiful -- just like life.

Now someone else read it so we can talk about it already - I initially rated this in 2013 before I was really doing decent reviews, but I still think about it today.

Alex says

You probably know of Mr.Pierson through his legendary work in seminal punk band Screeching Weasel. However, Mr.Pierson is quickly on his way to becoming a legend in the literary world and his reputation as a writer is surely destined to soar; Mr. Pierson is an amazing writer and his unique style, much like his guitar playing, will have you hungry for more. This book is worthy of 4.5 stars but Goodreads doesn't let you do that. Check this book out; I was bummed on the last few pages knowing it was going to end soon, which is a sign of a true classic. Do yourself a favor and get this book. I eagerly look forward to the next work of art Mr. Pierson does.

Don says

Well thought out book. Pierson really brings these characters to life. I was particularly impressed with the imaginative plot that delves deeply into cause and effect, a true extension of the movie "It's a Wonderful Life". It left me thinking long after I was finished, which to me is the hallmark of a good book.

Well done.

I recommend this for adult teens and above. ZuZu does have an episode of some pretty vehement expletives which are totally within character.

Greg Van Vorhis says

I was more pleased with this book than I expected to be.

It's a Wonderful Life was a dark film. It touched on some taboo subjects that still are difficult to talk about in present times. However, it ended on such a terrifically high note that the upbeat message made most people forget how disturbing almost 75 percent of that film truly is. I will admit that there were times when I was revolted and horrified that Pierson took such a great movie and moved it to an even darker place than what even Pottersville allowed.

Where Pierson excelled was in his attention to detail in the movie. I found a couple of errors, but chalked it up to the fact that this is an alternate version of how the story comes out, so the details don't necessarily have to stay the same.

I was also disappointed that we didn't find out what ever happened to such a devilish character, or why he was so helpful to one character, yet so destructive to another. The motivation for both was missing.

When this book got really, really (really!!!!) dark, I almost put it down. It was taking me to a place that I, as a HUGE fan of It's a Wonderful Life, didn't want to allow the story to go. But I followed through, and as much as it hurt, it was worth it. The epilogue is full of quotable moments.

Never think your future is written. It's not. Never let anyone tell you what you can or can't or should or shouldn't do. They need to keep their mouths shut. The world is out there. Now let go of the past and go explore it, even if it is just in your own back yard.

-Greg "IAWLFAN" Van Vorhis

Les says

I found this book both fascinating and unsettling. The author has taken the story of Its a Wonderful Life and turned it on its ear.

The story starts by drastically altering the plot. The remainder of the book explores how this change of plot affects all the other characters, include some of the most minimal and obscure.

The author creates very detailed and elaborate stories for these characters, changing them from the props they were in the movie to vibrant, three dimensional characters for whom you can't help but feel something. That's the fascinating part. The unsettling part is how those characters can be so vastly different from what you would think based on their portrayal in the movie.
