



The Dead House

Dawn Kurtagich

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Three students: dead.

Carly Johnson: vanished without a trace.

Two decades have passed since an inferno swept through Elmbridge High, claiming the lives of three teenagers and causing one student, Carly Johnson, to disappear. The main suspect: Kaitlyn, "the girl of nowhere."

Kaitlyn's diary, discovered in the ruins of Elmbridge High, reveals the thoughts of a disturbed mind. Its charred pages tell a sinister version of events that took place that tragic night, and the girl of nowhere is caught in the center of it all. But many claim Kaitlyn doesn't exist, and in a way, she doesn't - because she is the alter ego of Carly Johnson.

Carly gets the day. Kaitlyn has the night. It's during the night that a mystery surrounding the Dead House unravels and a dark, twisted magic ruins the lives of each student that dares touch it.

Debut author Dawn Kurtagich masterfully weaves together a thrilling and terrifying story using psychiatric reports, witness testimonials, video footage, and the discovered diary - and as the mystery grows, the horrifying truth about what happened that night unfolds.

The Dead House Details

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Author : Dawn Kurtagich

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From Reader Review The Dead House for online ebook

Cece (ProblemsOfaBookNerd) says

Consider me spooked

Sadie Hartmann Mother Horror says

'I am lucky to be here. The Dead House descended like music curdling into time, and as it did I grew wet and cold, and it was dark and I was so alone... It had devoured me.'

3.5 stars! I liked it--(just outside my usual go-to genre)

For a book that would most likely get shelved in the "Young Adult" section in a bookstore or library, I'd have to recommend this to *anyone* of any age that enjoys certain storytelling devices. Let me elaborate:

Dawn Kurtagich is on to something. I'm quite convinced that she took to heart the idea that an author should write what they want to read. I'm sure that Dawn is a fan of all of the best aspects of this book. The first thing is just the design and formatting of the story--told in a very ephemeral style with journal entries (torn, taped and sometimes burnt edges), sticky notes, handwritten letters, legal documents (complete with paper clips) and even some found footage video snippets.

I loved all this, actually. I didn't think I would because I typically *hate* gimmicky or fancy (razzle-dazzly) elements in books (like House of Leaves *eye roll*) but this actually worked for me. It didn't detract from the storytelling in any way.

The second notable thing is Dawn's ability to write compelling , female protagonists. She writes fluid, natural dialog in a believable way. Nothing bothers me more than consistently 'spot-on' witty banter between teenagers or rather, people in general. Nobody is always so 'on' if you know what I mean and I get tired of characters with clever monologues that seem unlikely. So Dawn's characters were quite natural even if what they were experiencing was supernatural or extreme.

Lastly, I thought this story checked quite a bit of the horror boxes for me--the suspense and mystery had good build and great surprises, I trust in Kurtagich's ability, there was plenty of investment on my part so my heart was engaged. I guess my only real problem would be with the teeth. The book lacked bite. It toyed with horror elements but it wasn't quite enough for me and I was itching for it by the last half of the book. The ending was also a bit rushed; abrupt & ambiguous.

I will say that this is a big YES recommendation for my 15 year old niece who is always asking me for book recs. She would LOVE this book and buy everything else Dawn Kurtagich has to offer. Speaking of which, the author also sent me her book And The Trees Crept In, which I'm eager to read for an honest review.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Hachette Children's Group and NetGalley.)

"My doctor is convinced that I'm not really here. She keeps trying to convince me of it, too."

This book was just not for me.

The characters in this were slightly strange as they had one body and 2 personalities, and these personalities could only speak to each other by leaving post-it notes for the other to find.

The storyline in this was just all over the place. We had notebook entries, discussions with doctors, post-it notes, and other weird communications and recordings, and the story was just really hard to pick out. The pace dragged, nothing seemed to be happening, and I got really frustrated.

The ending was also a bit unclear, and it still wasn't obvious what exactly had happened.

4 out of 10

Steysha Kravits says

This. Book. Is. Pure. MADNESS!!!

It messed with my brain and left me speechless! I mean, if you`d asked me to retell the story, I wouldn't have been able to. Just because I don't know myself what really happened there. This book is a trickster, and we have a very unreliable main character.

Seriously, people, it blew my mind. I don't even know what to think. This is so messed up. I have no idea what is true and what's not. If you're a fan of mysteries, then this story is for you.

Okay, let's start.

Firstly, the story is told in a very unusual way. We are provided by footages, interviews and diary entries. Don't know about you guys, but this made it interesting for me. It also annoyed me a bit that the timeline of the book was very chaotic. You could read the records from one year, and then they were abruptly interrupted by records from the past years or the future. It can mess with your head and it confused me even more. Pictures at the beginning of each footage were awesome and atmospheric - **I looooooved it**, keep it up! It's interesting and unconventional.

Generally speaking, this is a story about a girl. Or two. The story is told from Kaitlyn`s behalf. Or from Carly`s. Honestly, I have no idea :D But the bottom line is this:

In one terrible day Carly Johnson's parents die. She does not remember what happened, and that brings her in a mental facility, where she is diagnosed with DID - Dissociative identity disorder – because she claims that she has a sister Kaitlyn and they share one body. Doctors say it is all because of stress after the death of her parents. But they do not know that Kaitlyn has always been with Carly...

«Carly and I pretend to be recovering from a sickness we don't have. But when no one will believe you, you become the liar they think you are.»

Carly gets the day, Kaitlyn has the night. They see each other as sisters and communicate via notes. The girls are completely different: Carly is good, demure and friendly, Kaitlyn is cheeky, fidget and paranoid. Her behavior often can be called inadequate, and she loves to harm herself. Both girls are willing to get out of Claydon and flee to London, where they will finally be free.

«Carly and I are closer than sisters. Closer than twins. We might as well be the same person, because we share the same body. But we are different. You might say she's my better half. We share one life, each getting part.

Carly gets the day.

I get the night.»

But the girls are sent to school, and everything would have been fine, if not for Kaitlyn's mental state. She hears the Voice - Aka Manah. She does not know where it came from, and to be honest, it wasn't like she was really worried about it. Well, phew, some mysterious Voice, that shouldn't be here, whispers some terrible things to you at night. Who cares?

And then... **Kaitlyn wakes up in the morning. And Carly is gone.** Without a trace. To regain her "sister," Kaitlyn must resort to voodoo-magic and go to the Dead House. Will she be able to maintain sanity when faced with such horrors?

Nuh-uh. In my opinion, there is nothing to maintain. The girl is *sick*. Sometimes you read a passage of the book, and she is quite normal, and for the next 50 pages you find yourself in the mind of a schizophrenic person. I admit, I like it, she is completely unpredictable, because she defies logic.

«I've looked at my arms.

So... maybe...

Maybe I am crazy broken. Maybe I do need help fixing.»

I will omit some details, but Kaitlyn always sees different hallucinations, like dead girls aka *The Ring*, and, of course, the Dead House (or Madhouse, as I prefer it). Doctors say that she is sick, her friends – that it's all voodoo-magic, and that there is a dark magician among the students. Who is right? Does Kaitlyn suffer from the pills? Or because of magic? Or because of her own folly? Here are the questions you ask yourself throughout the book. You are entangled in this story, and at the end you just swim with the current, not even trying to understand the plot. **As it's said in the summery, this story raises a whole lot more questions than it answers, and it really haunts you long after you've finished reading.**

I could guess who was "the bad guy", but that wasn't the most interesting storyline. I was way more interested in Kaitlyn and Carly's story. Unfortunately, I can't say that the author revealed their history. We know almost nothing about them before the death of their parents, as it left me with a couple of questions that have not received any responses. It's like the author decided to keep some intrigue and says: *come on, readers, use your own heads and think as you prefer!*

I don't want to talk too much about the plot and the characters, since this information is interconnected and can be spoilery, so you will not find any detailed specifications in this review. It's all about admiration and bewildered cries :)

But if you're looking for a book that will drive you crazy - **bingo, here it is!** And yet, if you are going to read it before sleep - make sure you won't have to get up out of bed, because you might start to look for monsters in the dark corners :)

Fans of *Mara Dyer* – you'll love *The Dead House*! Only this one is way more creepy and crazy, and the romance is almost nonexistent. I was scared of dark after this shit! Also, I think fans of psychological thrillers like *Gone Girl* or *Dangerous Girls* will find this story fascinating.

I highly recommend you to read this book. I've never read anything like that before. Also, if you have any questions after the end of the book (**and believe me, you WILL**), feel free to write to me, because I'd love to chat about it :)

Hey Guys! Check out my interview with the amazing Dawn Kurtagich about her Debut Novel *The Dead House*!

Beth says

Despite the fantastic premise, this book is a complete and utter cluster-fuck. It's not just that there's a lot going on - there isn't, really - but it seems like the goalposts are shifting every five seconds. It's a story about two girls who share a body, which may be a product of a paranormal incident or dissociative identity disorder. There's their parents' mysterious death in a car crash several years earlier. There's the haunted school they attend. There's a shadowy figure which may be the girl's diary brought to life. (No, I'm not kidding. It comes across very cheesily. Also, this is apparently the second horror novel this year with this plot point! Why? It never feels plausible when written down.) There's the mysterious fire that occurs there, in which she/they disappear. There's their best friend, who is from a cult that lives on the Outer Hebrides and practices the most nonsensical, under-explained magic that I've ever read. There's something suspicious going on at the mental institution where they live(d). There's a mysterious boy who I think is one girl's boyfriend, but I couldn't really tell if he was their brother. There's a forbidden "romance" - with another boy - that was written solely in lines that seem like they were rescued from a garbage bin marked **WITTY BANTER**. There are demons--

Yes. That really is some of the stuff that goes on in *The Dead House*.

I loved this book when I opened it up. So creepy, so innovative, so intriguing. The structure was super cool, too. However, it's 440 pages and I would say it felt much longer, partly because there seems to be little in the way of a coherent story. The structure is very novel and fun, but a fun structure can only take one novel so far without a plot to support it; also, a lot of the atmosphere seemed to dry up over that many pages, compounded by how they were overloaded by a murky and obscure plot. Every single 'twist' seemed to take us deeper in a dark, dark world - one that was mostly dark because, no matter how far she took me, neither I nor Dawn Kurtagich could find the light switch.

I will admit that I was seriously tempted to give this 3 stars, due to the absolutely amazing plot twist in the middle. I loved the writing of (view spoiler) which really surprised me, but, in truth, the plot twists pile up with such frenetic, yet underdeveloped, regularity, that it whacked the pacing off. It felt like the minute that something happened to earn my goodwill, it was gone again. This was like 6 great YA novels in one, but with no space to accommodate more than 2.

Also, there are far too many male characters. I'm not joking. Kurtagich seems to have a strong preference for female characters, as Kaitlyn, Carly, and their best friend, Naida, are all distinct, interesting and intriguing, with backstories that I was dying to get my teeth into, which never come except in the most teasingly promising snippets that tail off. Katelyn, particularly, is a superb main character - dark and deep and compelling, she seems so brimming with secrets and potential that I was just dying to know what was really going on with her. Carly and Kaitlyn have an incredibly unique relationship that I could not wait to see developed more (which it wasn't), and the possibilities of Naida and Kaitlyn relationship never feel fully realised either.

The boys are...not. The boys are frustrating, dull, cliched, and nothingless. I couldn't feel any of the supposed chemistry between Kaitlyn and Ari (put it this way: I'm not even sure that's his name), so I had to just skim over any of the sections where they were flirting because it felt painfully unrealistic and stilted. There are also a couple of supposedly plot-significant boys whose description, presence, and characteristics I could write on a postage stamp.

Even worse than all of this? There are no answers. We go through 440 pages of black magic, unstable girls, asylums, fires, mysterious accidents, disappearances, lies, secrets, possible abuse...and there are no answers! Nothing ever illuminates this convoluted plot! There are some chilling moments, some incredibly interesting characters, and some sweet, resonant, and emotional moments, but ultimately I felt like I was being led down a very long, dark staircase to reveal -- a trick door.

Cameron Chaney says

Whaaaaaat just happened? Ugh, this book tore me to SHREADS! I feel like I just lost my own sanity, but it's so good!!! Video review to come.

Hannah Greendale says

Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, *From Beginning to Bookend*.

Everyone knows about the Johnson Incident - people died, and one person went missing who was never found. Conspiracy theorists believe the culprit was Kaitlin Johnson. Only problem is, Kaitlin doesn't exist. According to Dr. Lansing, she's just a product of trauma, an alter ego created by Carly Johnson, a girl suffering from dissociative identity disorder.

The Dead House is a collection of transcribed interviews, videos, emails, witness testimonials, and journal entries cataloging the events leading up to the Johnson Incident, with special attention paid to Kaitlin's

private journal:

Lansing can't tell me I don't really exist - product of trauma and all that - when my thoughts and feelings are as real as Carly's.

I am real.

I exist.

They won't kill me send me away.

Throughout the entire book Kaitlin remains both a sympathetic and complex character. Her existence, as well as her mental state, is constantly called into question:

I'm the thing in the dark, just like the Viking used to tell me. I'm the creature coming from the basement, the thing under the bed. I have nothing to fear in the dark. I am the dark.

This book offers some moments with serious spook factor. It's thrilling, fast paced, dark and surprisingly morbid.

The author brings a delicate hand to her prose, finding a balance between simplicity and lyrical interludes:

The windows gazed across the landscape, each fringed by the crumbling slate roof like eyelids. Even the console brackets had the sunken, eroded texture of all of time. The weather vane, too, stood rusted and old, no longer a thing of pride, but a creaking slice of metal warped into no definite shape by years of long corrosion.

The book's only weakness is its formatting. While it's obvious what was intended (with its use of note papers, open journals, and stationary), some of the alignment is distracting. Overlaying straight text atop an image of crumpled paper looks demonstrably fake. The same goes for dropping straight text over a piece of paper that's significantly off-kilter; it doesn't look right, and that moment of distraction pulls the reader out of the story. Further, the stock photos used as still shots of video footage were campy and not quite believable. This is a tedious criticism - an observation about the book that will likely bother only a few select readers.

The Dead House is a gripping psychological thriller that gets darker with every page and leads the reader down a path that begins with safe speculation and ends with horrifying truths.

Tom Lewis says

If you're thinking about reading this book, go do it! This is about as close to a perfect horror novel as it gets. It reads like a police investigation into a series of unsolved murders, and unfolds through journal entries, descriptions of video footage, and taped interviews with witnesses. The most interesting parts to me were the journal entries. Most of these were written by the crime suspect, Kaitlyn Johnson, who we learn is the "alter" of Carly Johnson. They're a split personality – two distinct personas occupying the same body. They're each aware of the other, and treat each other like sisters, leaving little notes for the other to read each day when they awaken.

Kaitlyn is the "darker," more mischievous and troublesome half, who only comes out at night; while Carly is the better behaved half who occupies the daytime. Kaitlyn is such a fun, compelling, and well developed character, that it keeps you turning pages to see what she'll do or say next.

Okay, so far we have a crime / murder mystery, with what appears at first to be mental health issues ... but then enters the supernatural element, and that turns everything on its head.

The title can be misleading – this isn't a haunted house tale; the “Dead House” is part of a recurring vision / nightmare Kaitlyn experiences.

This is the second novel I've read by this author, and I'm declaring myself a fan.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

One thing that can be said about this time of year, is that it is full of wonderful creepy, crazy stories and The Dead House, definitely fits in with that description.

This book was, to say the least, unique in every way imaginable. From the content, to the setting, to the unreliable narrative to the secondary characters that can't be trusted. Where everyone's sanity is questioned and the mystery itself is just that, mysterious and sometimes hard to decipher.

It has been hours since I have finished this and my thoughts and feelings are still all over the place. I'm not quite sure what to think about it all. From Kaitie to Carly, to Ari to Brett, it was all just weird, but, in a really good, crazy, messed up, kind of way.

Told from journal entries, to interviews, to video footage, this truly was an interesting read with the twisty narrative and facts that were every bit as unreliable as the two main characters. Possession, ghosts, curses, murder, and danger, are just a few of the plot twists waiting for you inside this read.

Creepy and imaginative and sometimes downright scary, this definitely kept me on my toes and flipping the pages. And even though my thoughts and feelings are still a big jumbled mess, I will say that this was a fun and entertaining read that kept me wanting more as much as it did guessing.

An ARC Copy of this was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review>

Taylor Knight says

This book is so weird but I actually really enjoyed how strange it was. It was a really original and unique read and it was also really spooky and creepy. And just completely crazy. This had to be one of the craziest books that I've ever read. I'm still dumbfounded over this book.

This book was told through diary entries, video clips, and interviews so that was interesting but I honestly don't really like that format. I find it hard to follow and I can't really get invested in the characters. I love the concept of this book but the way it was written just didn't work for me.

I still liked this book quite a bit but I would have loved it if it was written "normally".

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

You've surely heard this before, but here it is again: The Dead House is a very unusual sort of book, narrative-wise. It is a skillfully woven web of diary entries, video transcripts, police interview transcripts, e-mails and instant messages, newspaper clippings and other documents pertaining one horrible event known as the Johnson Incident. The concept itself is a brilliant one, wholly new and original. While it starts with two souls in one body, something we've certainly seen before, what Kurtagich does with it hasn't been done in YA, and for the most part, it's mind-blowingly good.

The story, admittedly, requires some suspension of disbelief, especially when it comes to health care professionals and the decisions they made for one obviously ill girl. I had a hard time believing that someone like Carly/Kaitlyn would be allowed to attend school with almost no supervision. The school itself was a bit odd in that its students had far too many liberties and not enough adults looking after them, which isn't how boarding schools usually function.

The narrative is both very clinical and very emotional, and it is that contrast that allows us to really sink into it. The format creates an illusion of objectivity, but we feel Kaitlyn's pain so strongly the entire time and we are unable to make clear-headed judgments. Kaitlyn's diary entries are fairly brief and scattered, coherent at first, but less and less so as she declines into madness. Whether it's justified or not, provoked or not, is the question we ask ourselves the entire time, but the decline itself is so skillfully and convincingly done.

Kurtagich's prose is gorgeous and clever, surprisingly vivid and even lyrical at times. Her horror scenes reminded me of Kendare Blake in that they turned my stomach and made me feel such pity at the same time. Nothing about The Dead House felt rushed or poorly composed, and evoking certain emotions at precisely the right time seems to be one of Kurtagich's strengths. Every single detail is in its place, which isn't easy with such a complex, non-linear narrative.

The revelations, however, could have been paced a lot better. There came a time when we needed something to hold onto, something more substantial than the ramblings of a disturbed girl. The book itself is fairly long, but everything we learn comes at the very last pages. While every detail was important and deliciously creepy, the book would have been better if a few truths were revealed just a bit earlier.

Read this with your lights on. And find something cheery and uplifting to read right after, because you'll need it. But all the effort and the comfort food you'll undoubtedly eat will be worth it. The Dead House may be flawed, but it's a must-read.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

A GR friend recommended my re-read of this book on audio and holy crow!! They were right! There are a couple of different narrators and some sound effects. Nothing too major, running, crumpling paper,etc. I immediately added the audio to my Audible wishlist. Loved it!?

I can't believe this is the author's first novel! I'm in love with this book. It's set up like a crime case. The whole thing isn't like that, seeing as how you have to get to know the characters that play out in this creepy book, but it has images of video footage, diaries, police reports, you name it! The book is set up so cool looking. You just have to flip through it to see what I mean!

So you have Carly and Kaitlyn and they are in and out of the Claydon Mental Institute because of their behavior and when it's decent they are allowed to attend Elmbridge High. Now I'm not giving away any spoilers because if you buy the book it will say right on the inside that Kaitlyn is the alter ego of Carly.

But....

What happens in this book goes way beyond any kind of alter ego. Don't think you are going into another book with something like that going on. NOOOOOOO, this is creepy as hell. You see Kait and Carly believe they are really two beings, sisters. They have friends that believe the same thing. I wonder if they could be right? Read the book!

This whole world the author painted is freaky right down to the hoodoo of it all! It reminds me of one of my young adult novels that got smacked with one of my paranormal ghost shows along with some horror movie with demons!

There is really nothing left to say but read the book if you like any of the little things I have mentioned. I would love to go and see the what's left of the old burned school, if it was real that is.

Fin

Asghar Abbas says

Well, that was creepy. Checks and double checks, wow this is a first novel? How is this just the right amount of awesomeness? Work of a pure wiccan, I am telling you. No, really. Some writers are endowed with raw talent. This book was truly disturbing.

I was so eager to read this. When I got this book I didn't know it was an epistolary novel, I was a little dismayed at first. I wanted more, and oddly enough it was more. And nope, nope, no I won't be mentioning Warpaint in this review. Not this time. No Warpaint in this. See, technically I didn't mention them. Haha, I love them.

The twist at the end, if finding out who was M. Night Shamalan among them is considered to be a twist, even though I saw it coming a mile off, still worked for me. It was fair. Like chaos. I am not so sure about the

ending, though. But I cannot conceive how it could have ended any other way than that, it made sense to end like that. Like I have said many times before ; it's all about the endings. I feel so ambivalent about it though, maybe because I am still so fresh off this book, I just finished it. I didn't chew words this time, I imbibed them, and hurriedly at that. It just goes to show how a good book can make you feel, care for its character's faith and their fate as well. And some of the twists and turns, surprises actually surprised me. There were moments that were shocking for their casual brutality and total unpredictability, some of the happenings really shook me. Kinda like most of Martin's work and his nonchalance toward swift violence, but unlike Martin's work it was very subtle, the violence here was there to move the plot along and wasn't just there for shock value, sorry Martin. I realize I talk about GRRM and Song of Ice and Fire saga a lot in my reviews, but I have never really reviewed his magnum opus formally, not really, that unfinished series is one of my favorite. Weird. Kinda like how I mention Warpaint in all my things. Them and my creature from the North with her braided hair.

The Dead House, you know the way this book felt overall, and in my hands, made me quite reckless. I endeavored to read this only at night and instantly regretted it! I read it nonstop and finished it just a little before Dawn. I am glad the night left me, disrobing to let the sun in, not because I was scared or anything like that, but because I loved it so much, it was so readable. Um, why am I alone in my room right now, is it me or is the sun is not bright enough, hehe. So yeah, if you are going to read this book I would suggest to read it in nightlands for max effect. Happy trails.

This book is basically about trauma and its aftermaths, I think it handled that theme well. This was also a result of a personal experience. I like that Dawn Drew this from that. I am glad this book was bore out of a personal night. Reading it, I noticed a few backstories that were hinted here and there. Nothing obscured and again everything was subtle, few hints that were dropped but very clear albeit unresolved, like sudden insight that sexual abuse might have played a part in this and maybe affected our girl's psyche. I do believe she was split long before the accident as was implied in the novel.

However few loose ends that needed to be looped together a little bit tighter, few things could have been better explained, and cleared up a bit. Not a copious amount, just a few things. Few core questions remained unanswered.

Like....

Who was the main girl and who was the coping mechanism, that one never got resolved. K or C?

Was K responsible for a lot of things that she did? Was she even evil?

Who the heck was Dee, really?

If Nadia's brother was so powerful, then how did he get got by a novice? And a stupid one at that.

How did a first time writer managed to pull off this incredible feat? This book's layout is great. Obviously doing it her way. Bravo for that.

And will I ever get the nonfictional version of Her? I have done all that I can with her in my Words.

What I really like about this book there is no ambiguity about the supernatural elements in it. At some point all the characters more or less acknowledged that. Overcoming their skepticism and cynicism. Even the world's most incompetent shrink came around by the end. Supernatural aspects weren't alluded, they were just there. That's what makes them so effective, I really appreciate that.

How this book looks and how it scared me is just..... amazing.

The actual Dead House in the book kinda reminded me of the house in 17 & Gone, almost the same themes.

Both books captured a mentally ill girl's plight well enough. This book was definitely better than the Shining Girls, another novel featuring a prominent House symbolism. And it got me reflecting how very few books, horror ones, have actually frightened me. Even King's never disturbed me that much with the exception being the Pet Cemetery and the Shining. I think he mostly writes about Human Horror and that sometimes is hard not to see as mere comeuppance. Hard to sympathize with that.

Another interesting thing. The story is set around 2004, a time when Facebook wasn't that common or prevalent, though it was there. It was refreshing to look at a world without it and see how people still managed to leave traces of themselves in cyberspace. Tragic.

The book had an English accent, I kept forgetting that for some reason, I don't know why but it had a very American vibe to it, or maybe the universality of the settings was just too common. Nothing exemplifies this more than when our Heroine herself points out that they don't even have Halloween in the UK, or something like that.

Anyway, when they will make a movie out of this, and how can they not? I hope they won't film this in the found footage style, because seriously that would choke the life out of this even when the similar style was this book's strength.

Though I read this in Feb and not in October, this is a perfect book for a dark night and for dark gypsies or any other night for that matter. But in a moonlighted night when you are feeling a little witchy, read this.

It's hardly Sylvia Plath's poetry which I consider to be Gothic not feminist, but it will get the job done. Might even revive your interest in Edgar Allan Poe. Clearly an inspiration here. Does it have inconsistencies, sure. Most first novels are flawed. But it's effective and it makes you want to keep reading it. For a book, that's a win. And for you, too.

ADDENDUM : I also liked how despite the huge reveal, our girl's feelings didn't change. It's hard to persuade yourself you don't feel what you feel.

It's so strange, this book came out in Sep 15 and this is what I wrote around then. It's weird.

https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog...

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2015/09/13/y...>

First let me say I had no idea before I got an ARC of this novel that it would be written in the epistolary style as a collection of mostly diary entries, though it also includes interview transcripts, descriptions of video footage, emails and newspaper articles, etc. Not to mention the huge visual component! I picked up The Dead House because I love horror and I'm also always on the lookout for good creepy YA, but seriously nothing could have prepared me for the surprise I got when I opened up the book.

In a word, it's gorgeous. It's made to look like a compiled report, drawing evidence from multiple sources detailing a disturbing and mysterious "incident". The book also makes liberal use of images, different fonts, and other visual embellishments to add even great realism to the story. But before I could fall too deeply in love with the eye candy, my cynical side immediately leaped into the picture with a reality check. After all, pretty pages are certainly all well and good, but the real test of course is how well the story stands up in spite of that.

We open with a newspaper article dated February 4, 2005 describing an inferno that ravaged a prestigious boarding school, killing three teenagers and injuring twenty. Next comes an introduction to the report, revealing that two decades have passed since the fire (now referred to as the "Johnson Incident") but new information has come to light prompting a reinvestigation of the events that led up to the tragedy.

One student, an orphan named Carly Johnson, went missing during the incident but her body was not found among those recovered from the burned ruins. To this day, her whereabouts remain a mystery. No one could deny though, that Carly was a very disturbed girl, as evidenced from her writings in a scorched diary discovered at the school. By all accounts, she struggled with Dissociative Identity Disorder, writing in her diary not as Carly but as her alter "Kaitlyn", who only emerges after sunset. But who exactly was Kaitlyn Johnson? Was she really just a mental construct of Carly's mind, or was she something more?

All I have to say is, DAMN this is one creepy book. If you don't like the epistolary style however, I can't imagine this book would do anything for you, but I loved it and I thought it made this book an incredibly immersive experience. I found *The Dead House* really hard to put down, and ended up finishing it in a little more than a day, and it only took me that long because I made myself take a break a couple of times so I could savor it. The format made it a very quick read, but the story was also very addictive and fun; in spite of myself, I found myself totally sucked in.

What makes this one fascinating is also its main character, a one hell of an unreliable narrator. The book is an intimate look into the labyrinthine mind of Kaitlyn Johnson, though the difficulty of separating her words into fact versus fiction is further compounded when faced with the question of whether or not she actually exists. Kaitlyn believes she is real, and that's what matters in the end. Her diary entries reveal a desperate soul wanting nothing more to be believed that she is not just a symptom or a made-up part of Carly's mind. In her state of mind, she makes decisions that sometimes won't make sense or may seem very extreme.

All throughout the book though is a sense of ambiguity – which isn't necessarily a negative, especially when we're talking about paranormal horror or psychological thrillers. It's eerie and unsettling precisely because you won't get all the answers tied up neatly with a bow and served on a platter. By design, we are constantly kept guessing: Are we looking at the results of an actual paranormal situation or the ravings of a mentally unstable teenager? The report is presented with all the pieces of evidence ordered by date, the whole story being gradually revealed to the reader as each page moves us closer towards the day of the incident. This a book best experienced firsthand, so I hesitate to give much more information about the plot.

Did I have my misgivings though? Well, yes. I thought the ending wrapped up way too quickly, but this is in part due to the limitations of the format. But there's no denying that all the major reveals came hard and fast, all in the last 30 pages or so. There was also one "twist" that was painfully predictable, the number of red herrings thrown at us notwithstanding. Part of the problem was a romance that felt out of place, among other relationships between Kaitlyn/Carly and other characters that just didn't add up. I am also a little tired of YA books that portray doctors and especially mental healthcare professionals as incompetent, insensitive or overbearing. In this case, poor Dr. Lansing was all three, which I felt was a rather inelegant way to paint her as a villain early on and drum up sympathy for Kaitlyn.

These flaws were very minor though, certainly not enough to take much away from the experience. All told, I had a really good time with *The Dead House*. I confess I had my doubts when I first started this novel and even resolved to keep a level head while reading so that I wouldn't be dazzled by the unique structure of the novel and the flashy visuals. All the same, I ended up devouring this book. It's undeniably entertaining and addictive, which sets it apart from being just another gimmick or run-of-the-mill YA horror.

Kaitlin says

This is the story of a girl with two halves. One personality within her is called Carly, she's around in the day time, the other is called Kaitlyn, she comes out at night. All their lives they have shared a body and left notes for one another to fill the other one in on what had happened that day, but the point where we pick up their story is when things are really going rather wrong for them. They are settled in a psychiatric hospital and being treated for multiple personality disorder. They don't believe they're crazy, but nearly everyone thinks they are, and as their parents have 'mysteriously' died and they can't remember how, it's thought that they may be damaged from the 'incident' of their parent's death...

We follow the story of what happened with Carly/Kaitlyn through post-it notes, diary entries and police reports and video recordings. Each entry has a different time stamp so we're jumping through the years and months at a quick rate and following many of the key events that lead up to the burning down of a school. We're told about the school burning when the book begins, and it's not a big surprise to find out that Carly/Kaitlyn is involved, but unravelling the mystery is all part of the fun of this book.

What I liked about this was the format and the creepy elements. I felt as though this definitely managed to keep me occupied and entertained, but also had a sinister undertone and I definitely could feel the tension in certain scenes.

I think the elements that didn't work as well for me were the magic ones and the fact that it feels a little impersonal because it's not really a solid character study and we only see glimpses of our main character's thoughts. They both talk at different points and they both feel unique, but something about the lack of being able to follow their entire story means that there are times where it doesn't feel convincing enough.

In the end I do think that this is an engaging and spooky read (if you're a wuss like me) so I would say it's worth trying, but this won't scare you silly and it does have some flaws. 3*'s in the end from me.

Giselle (Book Nerd Canada) says

Written from pieces of a journal, the story unravels in a unique way. Mostly there's journal entries, newspaper clippings and even some video camera screenshots (ones which I found to be creepy!). There is one main character but this character is also suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder, which used to be called multiple personality disorder. During the day one identity comes out and during the evening the other comes out. It was a little confusing at times, but you can tell how distinct their personalities were.

I found the details about how their identities change to be the most interesting part of the book. Everything else was just noise. Well I was expecting this huge crazy reason but after I found out about it, it fell flat. The pacing was too dragged out, and the plot took too long to tell the story and the reasoning felt too convenient.

Not exactly creepy enough for me. I wanted something paranormal to happen but it really wasn't all that scary.

Bonus points for the creepy cover which is why I wanted to read it in the first place. Also for the unique way the story was written! Flip through it if you want to see, just watch out for the screenshots.

RATING 3/5

QUOTES

Isn't it strange? How another human being can make the quiet seem less quiet, the unreal more real? (83)

You can make yourself believe anything if you lie to yourself long enough. (194)

Faye, la Patata says

Disclaimer: this wasn't a scary book. When we say 'scary', that's something I would give to the likes of *Daughters Unto Devils* by Amy Lukavics and *Girl from the Well + The Suffering* by Rin Chupeco. This wasn't even a mind-fuck of a book a la Dangerous Girls

However, that doesn't mean my mind didn't reel from it. Even though this didn't have the quiet or the jumpy horror I am well fond of, how this book delivered a kickass psychological paranormal thriller made me shiver in my boots.

1. Unreliable narrator? **Check.**
2. A book majorly in a dairy format, showing us the thought processes of our heroine, therefore giving us an intense sneak peek of the insanity of the situation? **Check.**
3. Notes, transcription of videos, medical reports, letting us also see other sides of the story, that may or may not be challenging the authenticity of the narrator's end of events? **Double check.**

This is what made this book amazing to me - the fact that we are seeing one side of the story from one person, and at the same time, we get to see another side of the story from other sources, and how they pretty collide in our own minds. Yes, in the grander scheme of things, the thriller aspect here was kind of predictable, but at the same time, the journey to getting there was incredible. **This is the kind of book that allows the reader to interpret the flow of events, the form their own conclusions based on what they have read and what evidences have been presented.** It never confirms or denies anything - it's simply a cast of characters talking about their own side of a particularly messy situation.

And that my friends, is its beauty. Because even though it is one, a little predictable, and two, not-so-scary in a DEMON! GHOSTS! MURDERER ON THE LOOSE! kind of way, how we were able to get the story made it exciting and thrilling. It would make you wonder who is telling the truth: is it the girl and her friends and the doctor is just blinded by her own bias? Or is the doctor and her team of specialists and our friends are simply stuck in their own out-of-this-world delusion?

How about you read this book, my friends, and tell me what you think?

Ben Alderson says

4.5

an extremely unique book. Nothing like I have read before! This will stay with me for a long time!

Dawn Kurtagich says

I wrote this!

Karima chermiti says

In the end, we must decide for ourselves what we believe.

Goosebumps and shivers. The most engaging and scary book I've read this year. I honestly don't know what was real and what was not. I don't know which side to believe. It was the definition of insanity

full review posted

The dead house is not my first book by the author, Dawn Kurtagich. I already read *And the Trees Crept* in and let me just say that it was not a memorable reading experience so I was hesitant about this one, what can I say, that's me, ever the skeptic but I didn't need to worry at because this book was an exceptional read that took me by storm and left me in doubt whether maybe I harshly judged her other book or not. I'm seriously considering rereading *And the Trees Crept* in so I could see for myself if I still feel the same or whether I just changed my tastes. *The Dead House* was that good for me.

The story centers on Carly, a seventeen years old girl who is being treated in Claydon mental hospital for dissociative identity disorder that was triggered by the death of her parents in an accident. Now Kaitlyn is Carly alter ego who shows up only at night while Carly has only the day. Carly doesn't believe she is sick, she genuinely believes that she and Cary are sisters who are sharing the same body. Things are already pretty complicated with her but everything goes to hell when she goes back to her prestigious high school and meets some mysterious students who also go there.

There are places. Abandoned places. Forgotten places. These are the places I like to be.

The book starts by stating that there was a tragic fire in the school that ended with three people dead, two

missing and many others injured and now twenty years later, the investigation is open again because a diary has been found that narrates the things that happened and that ultimately lead to that accident. So the story is basically a collection of Kaitlyn's diary entries and some video footage that was filmed by Nadia, Carly's friend and some witness testimonies from some friends and the doctor who treated Carly twenty years ago.

*Some people say that night blooms.
But night descends self-consciously.
Night cuts slowly.*

The way the story was narrated felt real and really creepy for me and it gave those chills that I don't get so easily with books. I mean those pictures that were included in the book are still haunting me now. **The story as a whole was terrifying, dark and very twisted.** It kept taking places I did not want to go and it kept changing direction. Every time I feel like I just get the handle of things, the story will do a sole bold move and I'll be left speechless.

And I loved how the story combines mental illness with that entire witchcraft thing and the demonic possessions and all that voodoo and dark magic. It was done brilliantly and made me question a lot of things. Sometimes, I couldn't tell what was real and what was not. I kept changing my mind and I kept thinking about it from different angles and right now, I don't know what I'm sure about. You see, the story is multifaceted and it asks from you to be open minded and to judge so quickly but it also never gives you a straight answer. At the end, it's up to you whether you believe or not. I love those stories where you can interpret in different ways and probably be right every single time and **dead house** is definitely one of those stories.

*Yesternight, upon the stair
I met a girl who wasn't there.
She wasn't there again today.
I wish, I wish she'd...
... Carly*

And even though the story is a horror story, it was tragic at times and it affected me so much. Of course, I was so scared all the time. I mean I couldn't sleep last night after I finished it, not even for a minute and when I have to go drink some water, I kept turning all the lights on. I was out of my mind terrified from the dark. But it was not just that, I also felt sorry for those who were just victims at the end even when all they wanted is to help a friend. Nadia sacrificed a lot of herself to try and save someone she loved and ended up losing it all. The Viking character was intriguing and fascinating and it did not deserve that ending. It was tragic like I said. I'm still thinking about it till now trying to figure out if there was ever a way for things to go in a complete different direction. I'm truly that affected by it.

Anyway, I can't recommend this book enough. If you're going to read only one horror book this year, let be the dead house, it is worth the nightmares, I'm sure.
