



# The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls

*Claire Legrand , Sarah Watts (Illustrator)*

Download now

Read Online ➔

# The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls

Claire Legrand , Sarah Watts (Illustrator)

**The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls** Claire Legrand , Sarah Watts (Illustrator)

At the Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls, you will definitely learn your lesson. An atmospheric, heartfelt, and delightfully spooky novel for fans of *Coraline*, *Splendors and Glooms*, and *The Mysterious Benedict Society*.

Victoria hates nonsense. There is no need for it when your life is perfect. The only smudge on her pristine life is her best friend Lawrence. He is a disaster, lazy and dreamy, shirt always untucked, obsessed with his silly piano. Victoria often wonders why she ever bothered being his friend. (Lawrence does, too.)

But then Lawrence goes missing. And he is not the only one. Victoria soon discovers that The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls is not what it appears to be. Kids go in but come out different. Or they don't come out at all.

If anyone can sort this out, it's Victoria, even if it means getting a little messy.

## The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls Details

Date : Published August 28th 2012 by Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers

ISBN : 9781442442917

Author : Claire Legrand , Sarah Watts (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery, Young Adult, Fiction

 [Download The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls Claire Legrand , Sarah Watts (Illustrator)**

---

## From Reader Review The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls for online ebook

### Elesia says

\*4.5 stars\*

SO fabulously creepy! Loved it! Perfect read for October/Halloween time!

---

### Kathy says

Lovely, creepy book. It doesn't really start out that way. 12 year old Victoria is one of those perfect children who are always neat and well behaved. She gets straight A's and even has curly blond hair and blue eyes. Her only friend is a musically talented boy that she befriended in order to improve him. Even the town they live in is picture postcard perfect. Then, children begin to disappear. Victoria doesn't notice it much until her friend Lawrence is one of them. Then, she decides that SHE will fix the problem, because Victoria has never failed at anything she has set out to do.

This problem is a bit harder than those she has dealt with at school, however, and it takes her a while to begin to understand what is going on, and what she will have to do to fix it. In the process, Victoria learns some home truths about her own attitudes.

I don't want to give anything away, but, of course, it DOES involve the Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls. And you have never met a creepier setting. Part of the time it seems to be sunny and welcoming. Other times it is a sinister place with moving walls; infested with bugs.

The illustrations are perfect, especially the bugs that randomly appear on the pages. I kept wanting to brush them off, or slam a book shut on them. Eww.

And the ending is great. I can only imagine it was inspired by too much reading of Shirley Jackson, or too many episodes of Hitchcock or the Twilight Zone, by it was perfect for this creepy, enjoyable book.

---

### Patty says

One night while I was at Chapters I came across this book in the bargain/YA section, and the only reason I picked it up was because of the cover design; it's beautiful and intriguing!! I read the flap (yes I call it that) and decided it was coming home with me, little did I know that this is actually classified as a children's book, but hey, so is Harry Potter!

I don't even think I can capture in words my level of excitement and love for this book!! But I will do my best! After reading the first chapter I was hooked, Claire is extremely talented and has such a way with words! There wasn't a single point where I sat there thinking "Why yes, I am most definitely reading a children's book!" She keeps you on your toes, intrigued, and twitchy! While reading this in bed I found myself to be somewhat (okay very) jumpy, if the sheet slightly moved I jumped, the worst I would say was when my cat came crawling into my room.

I'll admit that while reading the first couple of chapters I was highly annoyed with Victoria and the way she treated others, especially Lawrence. But Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls had an enjoyable and strong character development and a solid plot! You might think that you can predict what will happen next, but you can't. There were so many things that I just didn't see coming!

I recommend this book to **everyone!!** There is no age limit!

---

### Stefan Bachmann says

Actually more like a 100 stars. It's creepy and funny and Victoria is one of the best MG characters in aaaages. Also, I loved the writing, especially the descriptions of the insides of the House and the not-quite-perfect, Stepford-ish town. You MUST read it. Like, now. Really. :)

---

### Wendy Darling says

**Are you in the mood to spooked?** Here is a delightfully dreadful tale that will give you the creepy-crawlies.

12-year-old Victoria's best friend Lawrence has gone missing. Not only is she confused and lonely after his disappearance, but no one in town seems to remember who he was. Prickly, persnickety Victoria is determined to find out what happened to him, and gradually her questions lead her straight to the tall, gray-brick Home at the end of her street where the bright-eyed Mrs. Cavendish lives.

Written in brisk prose reminiscent of Roald Dahl's, *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* showcases a gratifyingly smart debut by author Claire Legrand. The clever writing assumes that its readers are intelligent thinkers, with vibrant verbs and grim humor marching the story purposefully along with its spirited heroine and her quest.

**There is much wickedness afoot in this story**, with the dastardly deeds ranging from abusive behavior to murder to...eating things that one really oughtn't. (Truly, I will never look at butterscotch candy the same way again.) One of the things that makes it especially deliciously creepy is that Victoria partakes in some of these activities without even knowing it, so the gradual realization of what's really going on in this dark carnival house is a shudder-inducing experience.

I loved the scenes in which Victoria is overcome by nightmarish swarms of insects and when the dark walls move and breathe and when she realizes exactly what the beautiful but ghoulish Mrs. Cavendish has been up to. There were moments in the ending chapters that were absolutely magnificent in their gleeful fiendishness, and they made me do happy creepy dances in my seat. This is a story that may not appeal to those with more delicate sensibilities and probably isn't suitable for very young children, but Legrand's deft hand certainly makes it palatable for middle grade readers.

I think some of the scenes would have had more impact if they'd been lengthened, however, as the horror is so brilliant that holding that tension just a bit longer would have allowed us to relish them more. Conversely, the build-up of the mystery also felt a little long for my personal taste. I would also like to have seen some deeper emotion, as the story skims on some sadness and fear, but doesn't quite leave the sort of lingering feeling that a reader like me yearns for. I still loved reading the story, however, and I'm very much looking forward to the author's future work.

If you're in need of handsome presents this holiday season, by the way, this one fits the bill in more ways than one! The book itself is absolutely beautiful, with a textured book jacket, lovely end papers, and wonderful illustrations by Sarah Watts. As you turn the pages, there are also surprises in the form of smudgy little cockroaches sprinkled here and there throughout the text. \*shudder\* The design is perfect for this book, and makes it an even more pleasurable reading experience. (More photographs of the hardcover can be found [here](#).)

***The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* is an elegant nightmare** that will appeal to imaginative children with a sense of humor, and to those of us who have longed for stories that aren't afraid to scare us--but also puts a reassuring arm around us in the end. The next time you're in the mood for a shivery read, *Cavendish* the perfect thing to curl up with on a blustery night.

**Recommended for:** fans of Lemony Snicket, Roald Dahl, and Coraline. But expect a lot more creepiness.

*This review also appears in The Midnight Garden. An advance copy was provided by the publisher.*

---

## Carina Olsen says

This book is still so precious to me. It's been five years now since it came out and I read it for the first time. This is now the fourth time I have read it, though it had already been three years since my last read. How rude. Finally had the chance to read it again now, though. And I'm so happy that I did. Because it is perfect.

I'm thrilled that I still love this book just as much as I did all those years ago. I simply adore Claire and all her books. This first one of hers is still my favorite of them all, I think. The writing is simply amazing. Yess. And I adore the characters more than I can say. Gosh, that epilogue is still the worst. I need a sequel so so badly.

I'm not going to share too much about this stunning book. But I must write down some of the parts that I loved. If you still haven't read this very precious middle grade book, then shame on you. Because it is one of the best there is. It's so creepy and evil and heartbreaking and so perfect. This book is told from the point of view of twelve year old Victoria. Whom was all kinds of amazing to read about. She was a bit mean at times, yet she has a huge heart inside of her, and she got kinder as the book went on. She's obsessed with being the very best at school. Which she is. She wants everything to be perfect. I did love that about her. She was awesome. Okay, she was a bit rude at times, but I didn't mind. Because she's sweet too. And kind. And very brave.

Victoria doesn't have many friends, only one. And oh, how I adored Lawrence. Eee. They only have each other. And they are so cute together, though Victoria could be a bit rude at times. Yet it's obvious that she cares about him a lot and they are best friends. This book is about Lawrence going missing. And though Victoria is a bit distracted with something about her grades, she's still realizing that something isn't right with Lawrence being gone. The grownups are all acting weird. And she's noticing other kids missing too.

There is so much that I love about this book. The friendship between Victoria and Lawrence was my favorite thing. I loved how there are small hints that they are to become more than friends. It's the cutest thing. Mostly I just adored how they were together. I so wish there had been even more scenes between them. Aw. Because these two characters were the best. I adored how they cared for each other. I loved how Victoria started trying her best to find him, to save him. Some parts were so heartbreaking, though.

I'm not sure how to describe the plot of this book. It reminds me a lot of Coraline, the movie. Which I adore. But this book is even better, just so you know. Kids are going missing in this town. And no one is doing anything about it. No one even seems to notice it, except for Victoria. So she starts to investigate. And she notices The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls in her neighborhood. Which has always been there, but she's never really thought about it before or heard anyone talk about it. Which was very weird.

And oh, the plot in this book. It's just all kinds of perfect. I'm not going to mention all of it, just that this home is all kinds of creepy and horrible and it still kills me how sad some parts of it were. Like the gofers. I still can't get over that. So heartbreaking. Yet so perfectly written. Mrs. Cavendish was the very worst person there is. And her sort of partner, Mr. Alice. He was horrible too. And just, ugh. This book was so good. But so so creepy and this big house was pretty scary to read about and I loved it so. But so evil.

I'm not going to say more about this book this time. Just that you have to read it if you haven't already. I love it so, so much. Victoria and Lawrence are the very best. And this story was incredible. I love that I have read it four times now, and love it even more for each time I read it. Such a huge fan of Claire, and cannot wait to read more books by her. And re-read all her other books as well. So excited. But yeah, this one is my favorite. Stunning artwork inside too. And that cover is just gorgeous. Love this book so much.

---

I first read this book on August 29th 2012.  
My first review can be found here: <http://carinabooks.blogspot.no/2012/0...>

I read this book for the second time on February 10th 2013.  
My book recommendation can be found here: <http://carinabooks.blogspot.no/2013/0...>

And then I read it for the third time from May 21st to May 22nd 2014.  
New blog post can be found here: <http://carinabooks.blogspot.no/2014/0...>

I read this book for the fourth time from August 30th to 31st 2017. See my new review here:  
<http://carinabooks.blogspot.no/2017/0...>

---

## Monica says

I can't wait to read more by this author! This is a perfect autumn read when you want something spooky along the lines of Coraline.

---

## Claire Legrand says

I was not, dear readers, going to rate my own book, but its main character, Victoria, thought it was extremely, unnecessarily silly for me not to. In fact, she would not have it any other way.

"It isn't bragging or disingenuous or anything like that," she sniffed. "It's simply taking pride in your own work." She stared at me, an eyebrow raised. "*Don't* you have any pride?"

"Well . . . a healthy amount, I guess . . . It was an incredibly fun book to write."

Victoria nodded briskly. "Well of course it was. Besides, I like seeing those five stars all in a row. I have lots of stars in my AWARDS box, didn't you know? I receive a tremendous amount of awards -- stars and medals and plaques . . . "

I sighed. "Yes, Victoria. I am quite aware."

---

### **Michelle (FabBookReviews) says**

The book is described as a combination of Neil Gaiman and Trenton Lee Stewarts' *Mysterious Benedict Society*. And it is, but it is also its own wonderfully sinister creation. This is not a writer nor story that sugarcoats disturbing events! Part fable, part fairy tale, and all horror story, *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* is a veritably frightening, gruesome, and beautifully written story.

Victoria Wright likes everything to be just so. She is a perfect student, an overachiever, and top of her class (well, in everything but music). Lawrence, a disheveled classmate and brilliant piano player, is taken on by Victoria as a project. She hopes that Lawrence will learn from her perfection or, at the very least, that she may make him over as a more put-together, presentable boy. But as their peculiar friendship grows, strange and malevolent things are happening in their picturesque town of Belleville. Cold, forceful winds; strange whisperings; scuttling, noisy pinching roaches; and a frightening talk with a teacher prick Victoria's interest and annoyance. It seems that only Victoria notices that adults and classmates around her are acting very strange, very robotic, and unlike themselves...and she seems to be the only one who dares question things when children and adults alike start disappearing at monstrous rates. When Lawrence disappears, Victoria takes it upon herself to uncover and discover the Cavendish home- and bring Lawrence back.

I think Legrand really excels in making her descriptions of the supernatural and terrifying occurrences inspire intense emotion. There is something to be said for a children's novel which can invite emotional and visceral reactions. There are more than a few passages where I felt uncomfortable, blanched more than a little bit, and more than a few passages where I felt such a venomous hatred for the villains of the story that I had to close my eyes! I would recommend this read to anyone who enjoys macabre fairy-tales, and/or writing along the lines of J.K. Rowling, Jane Yolen, Jackson Pearce, Neil Gaiman, Gail Carson Levine, and the Brothers Grimm. I thought the ending of the novel was so very ominous (and devious) that it left me wondering if we may ever hear about Victoria or *The Cavendish Home* again.

---

### **TheBookSmugglers says**

Originally reviewed on The Book Smugglers

#### **REVIEW**

##### **First Impressions:**

**Thea:** Awe. Horror. Utter, depraved delight. All of these are emotions I experienced while reading *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls*, the debut novel from Claire Legrand. *Cavendish* has a little bit of everything - a dash of *Matilda*, a heaping dose of *Coraline*, a touch of Tim Burton, topped off with a whole lotta original awesomeness, too, naturally. This is one fantastic book, and I loved it from cover to cover.

**Ana:** When I finished reading *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* I decided I needed to tell my colleagues all about it. It was just after lunch break and I was decidedly giddy about it. This is how I presented it: a fabulous horror book for children featuring cockroaches, cannibalism, a perfect little girl who she sets out to save her best friend. As I grew more and more enthusiastic about my recounting of the book, I stood up and I might have re-enacted a scene or two of the book – one of them, to the horror of those around me, involved an army of roaches. This is going to be our book club read for Halloween. Long story short: I loved this so much, I subjected myself to ridicule by re-enacting a scene with cockroaches.

### **On the Plot:**

**Thea:** Victoria Wright is twelve years old and the top of her class at Impetus Academy. The pride of her stylish mother and well-connected father, Victoria makes sure that everything in her life is orderly and perfect, from her gleaming curls to her impeccable grades. In fact, the only thing that is not just so for Victoria is her one and only friend Lawrence Prewitt. Lawrence, also twelve years old, is a quiet boy with gray hairs that make him look a bit like a skunk, who doesn't care about his grades or what others think of him. What Lawrence cares about is *music* - he's a prodigy on the piano, but not much good at anything else. One day, after witnessing some particularly rude and disorderly taunting of Lawrence, Victoria decides to take him on as her own special project and befriends the strange musical boy (even when he resists and rejects her). Victoria and Lawrence grow to be close friends, until the day that Lawrence disappears.

Although the Prewitts insist that Lawrence is simply off visiting his ill Grandmother, Victoria notices that something is *wrong* - and this wrongness is not just with Lawrence's parents, but with so many others in the pristine town of Belleville. Peoples' smiles are garishly tight, their teeth too gleamingly white, and something else scuttles around the dark corners that Victoria can't quite see.

At the heart of all this *wrongness* is the orphanage on Nine Silldie Place - The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls. Children, like Lawrence, are disappearing from Belleville, and no one seems to care - no one but a few quickly silenced adults (like Professor Alban) and Victoria, that is. Victoria is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, to find her friend, and to restore sanity to the world.

From a pure plotting and storytelling perspective, *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* is a delightfully terrifying, deliciously creepy read - one that effectively plays with familiar tropes and images, like scuttling bugs in dark corners, *mystery* meat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, a house with voices and shifting halls, and a terrifying puppetmaster under a sheen of glamour in the form of Mrs. Cavendish at the center of it all. In Claire Legrand's blog post today, she cites a few MG titles that influenced her work (in particular her heroine Victoria), and the homage she pays to these fabulous books are strewn throughout *Cavendish*. There's Roald Dahl's *Matilda* - from the terrifying Home's "hangar" (where children are...hanged), which feels very much like Dahl's Chokey, to the horrific *coaching* Mrs. Cavendish gives to a boy who cannot resist eating sweets, which feels very much like Miss Trunchbull's abusive cake-punishment inflicted on a sweet-toothed student. There's also glimmers of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* in *Cavendish*, too - the shimmering facade of the Other Mother in Mrs. Cavendish's tight, sunny smiles hiding a monster beneath, the oddness of the Other Mother's realm in the other dimension that the Cavendish Home embodies.

But, most importantly, while some of the elements are familiar and the hat-tips to influential works are unmistakable, *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* has no shortage of its very own original magic. At heart, *Cavendish* tells the story of a prickly heroine that learns her own worth and the value of friendship - that *different* and disorderly does not always mean *worse*. To make this point, Claire Legrand is as gleefully sadistic as her titular Mrs. Cavendish - inflicting all kinds of deranged punishment on her characters, including (but not limited to) physical, emotional, and psychological torture; swarming, stinging beetle-roaches; and stinking food with mysterious chunks of rubbery meat for every meal. Even better - Legrand's writing is even-handed and never gratuitous or pandering, as she manages to keep the voice consistent with

its middle grade heroine, but still make the story appealing (and properly horrific) for older readers alike. The story is brisk, the tension high, and as Victoria learns the true nature of the Cavendish Home and the secret of her perfect town, I was utterly, wholly under *Cavendish's* spell.

**Ana:** Unfortunately I am not schooled in Horror stories and more to the point, I am most definitely not well-read in *children's* Horror stories. This means that even though I do understand some of the references and recognise some of the influences that Thea noted above, to me the sense of the familiar that the book engenders stems from archetypal fears rather than specific works. As such, *Cavendish* plays really well into those familiar fears: the fear of the dark and of confined spaces; of losing one's parents; of loneliness and being at the mercy of enemies; of the monsters under the bed (or behind a wall) and of the creepy crawly insects. And then it goes beyond by combining those archetypal fears with the book's own thematic elements: self-acceptance and the value of friendship and the importance of memory – of remembering people that are gone and the things have gone wrong in the past so that they are not repeated again.

This is a *Horror* story and it is meant to be *horrific*. I love that the author does not pander to her audience - although at times I admit found myself clutching my imaginary pearls in extreme horror and going "I can't believe she went there". I loved the book *because* it was a proper horror story and it doesn't shy away from it. Interestingly, it is hinted that the parents of those children actually would have wanted them to go to the Cavendish Home to become perfect, well-behaved little children. As such, this makes the book all the more impacting because then the Cavendish Home might as well be a mirror to the world outside: a world that strives for a certain type of perfection that is fake and unnatural.

Of course, it also helps that the prose itself is pretty awesome and that the story is developed beautifully as a Quest to save a Best Friend (and in the process of doing so, also save the town).

### **On the Characters:**

**Ana:** Victoria, the main character is an *incredible* MG heroine. Assertive, intelligent, self-sufficient. Incredibly self-aware about certain things: about her sense of self-worth and about her integrity, sense of honour and extreme dedication to her own education with a love for knowledge and a desire for victory. But she was also completely oblivious to others: like her potential for cruelty, the sense of superiority that effectively distanced her from the other kids and her real feelings for Lawrence (whom I loved from basically page 1).

I loved that the majority of those characteristics are not presented as negative aspects in themselves – they only become negative when Victoria thinks of herself as superior (and therefore better) to everybody else when they don't show the same features. Her character arc is great - as per the thematic core of the novel, she learns to accept others for who they are (e.g. completely different from her) without changing her own personality. In fact it is her very own non-nonsense way to look at the world that saves her life.

As for Mrs Cavendish: Mrs Cavendish is that sort of unrepentant, black-and-white villain that is so easy to loathe. She reminded me of Professor Umbridge with her potential for unparalleled cruelty, the kind that entwines both physical and emotional torture.

**Thea:** Allow me to break out of serious reviewer mode and commence gushing: OH MY GOSH PEOPLE I FREAKING LOVE LOVE LOVE VICTORIA SO MUCH. Just as the author says in her guest post about heroines, Victoria is a prickly, snobbish, perfectionist of a heroine. The mere thought of earning a B is horrific to her, and she goes about her pristine, ordered life with nary a thought for what she might be missing or whom she is hurting in her quest for Utter Victory (Academic or otherwise). And yet, despite her frosty princess qualities, Victoria is an incredibly compelling and *likable* heroine, because underneath that hardened shell of self-importance, she actually *is* a loyal, true friend (though she's oblivious to this fact).

Heck, the only reason why she stands a chance against Mrs. Cavendish and her cohorts is because she has such a hard head and a stubborn streak a mile wide.

On the other side of the coin, however, there is Mrs. Cavendish - our villain, who also quests for and demands utter perfection of everyone in the town of Belleville. At different parts of the book, comparisons are drawn between Victoria and Mrs. Cavendish, showing the similarities between the two characters - both Victoria and Mrs. Cavendish demand others conform to their standards and beliefs. And through the horrors inflicted on children and the townspeople by Mrs. Cavendish, Victoria gradually learns that sometimes *perfect* is not perfect at all. In particular, I love one scene where Mrs. Cavendish forces one of the girls to paint the same bland, pretty picture over and over again, and Victoria reflects on Jacqueline's art before - how it was shocking and disturbing and made people *feel* things, in stark contrast to the perfect, soulless pictures Mrs. Cavendish forces Jacqueline to create. Mrs. Cavendish perhaps was once like Victoria, gone down a different, dark path - I love the contrast painted between these two characters, and how Victoria breaks free from Mrs. Cavendish's cruel grip.

Although, I should mention that what I love most of all about Victoria is the fact that while she does change over the course of the novel, she does not emerge from *Cavendish* as some benevolent, repentant child. No, she is still prickly, still overachieving, still hyperorganized to a fault - but she realizes that she wants and needs more than distant approval from her parents and wants their love, just as she knows she yearns for Lawrence's friendship just as much as he yearns for hers. And that is all kinds of awesome.

### **Final Thoughts, Observations & Rating:**

**Ana:** *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* is an amazingly fun and creepy read. The author develops its thematic core of self-worth without being preachy and without pandering to readers – this is Horror, yes. But Horror with a Heart.

**Thea:** I completely, wholeheartedly agree. *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* is a beautifully written, gleefully horrific novel that is perfect for readers young and old. Starring a truly remarkable protagonist in Victoria (who can go toe-to-toe with the finest heroines in the middle grade canon), and featuring terrifying (but appropriate and never gratuitous) horror in the form of Mrs. Cavendish, *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* simply rocks. Easily one of my notable reads of 2012.

---

### **Karen says**

The premise here is simple, at least in its broad outlines: a boy goes missing, a girl has to go find him. It's refreshing that in this case it's the girl who rescues the boy, and that there are few overtones of obligatory-feeling romance between the two. And there are also some truly creepy descriptions that I wish had been developed into fuller scenes. But on the whole this book felt rushed to me, its characters thin and its plot confusing. (Full disclosure: I read an ARC, so some of these issues may have been resolved in the final version.)

Victoria and Lawrence live in Belleville, a pretty, perfect, wealthy small town. Victoria is always top of the class, has no time for friends, hates anything out of place or ugly, and freely dispenses criticism where it isn't asked for. She adopts Lawrence as a pet project, aiming to change him from a shy music prodigy into a more user-friendly and popular kid. They're still developing a grudging friendship when Lawrence disappears. His parents, sporting newly fixed grins and wolfish eyes, say that he's gone to visit his grandmother. Victoria isn't so sure.

Her investigations lead her (surprise surprise) to the Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls, the orphanage down the street. (Are there any good stories about orphanages? At all?) Mrs. Cavendish and Mr. Alice run the place, and it's pretty clear from the get-go that something weird is up with them. The descriptions of Mr. Alice, who serves as gardener and general dogsbody, are wonderfully horrible. He's white and puffy, and seems always about to burst out of his own skin, like a semi-rotten zombie. Mrs. Cavendish is a little harder to pin down. Legrand trades heavily on stock descriptions of evil masterminds as cloyingly, deceptively sweet--until their sadism outs. At times Cavendish seems to whipsaw so quickly between charming and monstrous that she loses cohesion.

Overall, Cavendish felt formulaic and perfunctory to me, and I never really grasped why she was so evil, or why her evilness took the particular form that it does. I wanted at least one or two scenes that would dig beneath her facade and explain her to me a bit. Why does she run the orphanage? Why is she so fixated on the children? Where did she even come from? It's all left frustratingly vague.

The book is a quick read but it could have been shorter. There are a few too many scenes spent recapping information that we already know (Lawrence is missing, adults don't seem to be acting right, Victoria is ambivalent about breaking rules to find out what's really happening.) The tension could be more artfully handled as well. Time after time, Cavendish has the opportunity to finish Victoria off but doesn't do it, for reasons unknown. I never felt that Victoria was truly in danger, because she seemed unreasonably fearless and able to avoid harm despite what should have been insurmountable odds against her.

My biggest frustration, though, was with sentence-level descriptions. Apart from a few real zingers--adults smiling artificially, as if pins had been inserted into the corners of their mouths and were pulling them back and up, ugh, wow--many of the descriptions here are vague and unclear. When things really heat up in the Home, Victoria encounters the terrors of the parlor and the hanger...but the descriptions of them are so unclear that I never really felt like I understood what was going on. Even in the book's climactic scenes, I found myself skimming because I couldn't see the scenes being described. I finished without really knowing what had happened, or caring enough to go back and parse it out.

This is a debut novel, and it's by a librarian, so it has two strokes in its favor in my book. I appreciated its strong female protagonist and the way it (mostly) edged around a heteronormative romance. I know that Legrand has another book out already, and a third in the works. I wish her all kinds of success, but I also hope she slows down a bit. I want to enjoy her scenes and sentences as much as her ideas.

ETA with spoilers: There are some pretty disturbing scenes of child abuse in this book, including corporal punishment, kidnapping, abandonment, force-feeding, and implied (but not shown) murder & cannibalism. So basically, your standard Grimm's fairy tale. Probably not for the faint of heart. Or anyone with a bug phobia.

---

## Alexa says

4.5 stars, really. I'm not one for creepy books, but I think I'm going to have to rethink that after reading this one! I loved this story. I loved the atmospheric setting, the spunky and smart main character and the whole host of secondary characters. It was so fun and so unexpected and so compelling!

---

## Gillian says

wow i read this forever ago long enough to obnoxiously comment when everyone else was reading it because i had loved it but i wanted to write a huge good review but then i couldn't. if i loved cavendish home less i could talk about it more, it is all my favorite ya tropes and tropes in general with additional good stuff like some surprisingly legit creepy atmospheric stuff.

it is like a book written just for me, thank u claire legrand, i love u

---

## Dreamerrambling says

What in THE LORD DID I...WHAT...did I...read the same book?

For those who are religious: please excuse me for using the Lord's name in vain.

BUT. THIS. I look at all the five-starred reviews and can do nothing except...stare in horror at my screen.

Do we....do we value originality anymore? MY GOD I SWEAR WE DON'T HAVE THE SAME BOOK. Either that, or the future of literature is in the balance, my friend.

Okay. I apologise for being so dramatic. But after finishing this book I actually groaned and buried my face in my pillow from the pain of having read it. Especially the last part. And this is being compared to Coraline and Roald Dahl's Matilda, or something? Please.

I realise that writers have very fragile egos (though I doubt Claire will even see my review, buried as it will be beneath her glowing piles of stars), but if I ever wrote something like this I would sure as hell like someone to call me out on its flaws. Because there are many of them.

(I only picked up this book because Claire was one of the authors who wrote stories for a Cabinet of Curiosities, a book I discovered through Stefan Bachmann. If you want to read good original middle-grade literature, pick up his gorgeous THE PECULIAR. Magic in abundance lies that way, my friends.)

Harrumph. Here we go.

Why don't we start with the good parts (or part) first? After all, as you can see, I did bestow it one star. And for one reason: Victoria. The main character. But not because she is nuanced or well-developed. Because she isn't. She is a caricature AKA too much of a perfectionist, overly neurotic, overly...she was like a little, prissy ambitious princess.

Sure: there are neurotic, competitive young ladies that exist in the world. But not to that extent. It's simply TOO exaggerated, to the point of being laughable. And then later on in the book when she gets scared and crumbles and cries, it's entirely unrealistic, and not at all emotional for the reader – would you cry if you saw a cardboard cut-out weeping? Right. Thought not. However, she was reasonably amusing, as caricatures often are, for the first quarter of the book, so, um, yeah that's what the one star is for. And even that's stretching it.

As for the bad bits.

You know, I think this is how this book began to stew in Claire Legrand's head.

Claire Legrand watches the movie Coraline (you should watch it – now that's art). Falls in love with it. Remembers (consciously or subconsciously) the bits she fell in love with, i.e.:

1. Oooh, icky cockroaches. (Coraline slaps them when she opens the shower curtain)
2. Oh, look! Wybie's got the corners of his mouth stretched with pins by the Other Mother. That's super duper creepy-weepy. Yoink. Mine. I shall use that in my descriptions. Except I will be original and call them wolfish smiles.
3. The Other Mother. CREEPY. Also mine now. Miss Cavendish is BASICALLY the Other Mother, except blander and less creepy and dull and boring and flat as a pubescent boy's chest.
4. Other Mother turns into a ginormous spider creature at the end. THAT'S SO ICKY I WANT IT I WANT IT.
5. The Other Father. In the book, he turns into a bulgy, shapeless doughy monster. Aha! Bulging skin. That's cool . Also, he is frightened of the Other Mother, just like the gardener is of Miss Cavendish. ALL MINEEEEEEE.
6. In Coraline the book, the creepy man upstairs dissolves into rats. MINE AGAIN. Except I will use cockroaches, because I'm such an original little bunny.
7. Garden that turns out to be creepy e.g. the flowers that snap at Coraline's legs. Interesting...I shall use it...mwahahaha...
8. The atmospheric effect of having two parents who are a bit...strange. In a freaky sort of way. (The Prewitts? Hello?)
9. Coraline and Wybie. Coraline is irritated with Wybie for most of the movie. Interesting boy-girl dynamic. I LOVE IT. Now, all it needs is just a pinch of romance...
10. The Other Mother has rats for her eyes and ears. Miss Cavendish has cockroaches. SAME THING PEOPLE. Vermin for henchmen.
11. Dolls. That Coraline doll? CREEEEEPY. Ooh, ooh I love it. I shall multiply them in my book, and string them up like marionettes so it doesn't look like I'm copying.
12. An old house that has been there for years and years? CHECK.
13. For god sakes, Mrs Prewitts even crunches on bugs just like the Other Mother.
14. Mr Alice is Miss Cavendish's 'project', just like the Other Father is a creation of the Other Mother (and, might I add, the Other Father is the one who gives Coraline a tour of the gardens. The Other Father and Mr Alice are basically the same people, except the latter is less well done).

So now that Claire Legrand has got all these bits and pieces, she needs to stitch them together into a reasonably coherent story. But she can't just use a door that leads into another house. Oh no – that wouldn't be original now, would it? No, no that won't do at all. Let me see, thinks Claire to herself. What is a good creepy setting....AHA! An orphanage. Yippee, now I have my book that is basically the Coraline movie but in orphanage form with a bland cast of boring characters!

To be fair, there are some points of originality: the gofers. The people who are turned into wood. The

moving house. But they are so poorly described, so utterly random, like bits of guts lodged in a pretty-pink birthday cake, that they might as well have been written in at the last minute, and might as well not been there at all for all the impact and reasoning they had.

AND THE THING IS THESE PIECES DON'T WORK TOGETHER. It's all so utterly random. It's like a love story set in 18th century England and suddenly X-men prance onto the scene, followed by a talking pencil case.

The writing was okay when describing Victoria's exaggerated character and thought process. But once we enter the orphanage, all hell breaks loose with the language and it devolves into a disorientated mess. The description is so bad that I could barely picture ANYTHING in the orphanage. Or in Belleville. Not even the gofers, if it weren't for the pictures.

Unlike the Other Mother in Coraline, whose motive, though not clearly outlined, has a sinister realness to it (i.e. she wants something to love, to covet, or...to eat) Miss Cavendish is given absolutely no proper motive whatsoever, except that she wants things to be perfect. Now, that might seem like I motive, but if you were to read the book, you'd see that it makes no sense at all. It makes so little sense that it's impossible to make sense describing it. MISS CAVENDISH is bland and flat. There's nothing. I can barely review it, she is so empty.

Lawrence had a dash of personality. The others didn't. The meat thing was creepy, but, like I said, it didn't fit. It's a jumbled mess! And the ending? Too rushed. And when...okay I won't spoil it because I'm nice, but it MAKES NO SENSE. It's like Claire just wanted to end it on a creepy note, so she crammed another random piece of liver into her oh-so-creepy cake, and people eat the cake and spit the piece of liver out and are like, "What the hell, why is that in there?"

Why is the house "alive" and then dies? Beats me. Why does the humming do anything? Ah, who the fuck cares, we'll just put that in there! Why are those people turned into wood? Beats me. What's the point of those dolls in the shed? Just because. IT'S ALL SO DAMN RANDOM. Claire decided to scrabble lots of creepy shit together and call it a book. AND IT'S NOT SCARY. Just throwing cockroaches into scenes doesn't make it scary. Oh, and the scenes where she punishes the children? Ha ha. So original. One of them was practically the scene from Matilda when Trunchbull forcefeeds that little boy chocolate cake. The other stuff, with the whip, and drawing the pictures, would have taken half a brainwave to think up of, maximum.

Oh, I just thought of another thing it ripped off of Coraline. In the Coraline the book, she watches in the mirror as her parents return from a holiday, happy that Coraline is gone. However, Coraline doesn't believe it. But suspicious hooty-tooty little Victoria, with her oh-so-dangerous dazzle, DOES? Doesn't she realise that her parents are already being controlled by that cold wind and wolfish smile thing?

OHMYGOD even the cold wind is a rip-off. Coraline's mother conjures a wind when Coraline's trying to find the souls of the dead kids. All this was subconscious fodder for Claire.

It's a mess. It's a jumbled, jumbled mess. Like a boring dream Claire Legrand had after watching Coraline and thinking about orphanages. All of it just rubbed me the wrong way on so many levels. Can you tell I'm a fan of originality? It's like a ghost that turns out to be a blanket with two holes cut into it for eyes. Like bacon without the bacon. A tasteless lolly. Okay, I'll stop. JUST. All these five starred reviews? Come on, people. Come on. Don't waste your time. Go read Coraline or Matilda if you want some good stuff.

FIVE STARS? I've woken up in an alternate universe, haven't I?

Le sigh. LE GROAN.  
[dreamerrambling.wordpress.com](http://dreamerrambling.wordpress.com)

## Richard Denney says

### Now that was a GOOD READ!

It was creepy, spooky, scary, icky, wicked, and horrifyingly delicious. I can't believe I waited so long to take this off of my shelf and give it a go. The story was amazing and fun and a few parts gave me the creeps, which is hard for books to do to me sometimes. I applaud this book for that.

This is about a young snooty twelve-year-old girl whose peculiar best friend goes missing and of course she has to find out what happened to him and that is when the creepiness begins. I thought I knew what this book was going to be about before I opened it and even 50 pages in I thought I still knew but then it took a turn and twisted into something completely different. This felt like two amazing books in one. It started out as a contemporary spookfest and then slammed right into a fantastical and horrifying roller-coaster, I COULD NOT PUT IT DOWWWWWWN.

If you enjoyed The Spiderwick Chronicles or Coraline then I'd say to read this NOW! Also, I'd recommend keeping a can of bug spray nearby in case you start to feel like creepy little beetles are nuzzled in your sleeves or ticking around in your blankets, cause this book will do that to you, trust me.

- Richard

---