



The 'Geisters

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When Ann LeSage was a little girl, she had an invisible friend - a poltergeist, that spoke to her with flying knives and howling winds. She called it the Insect. And with a little professional help, she contained it. And the nightmare was over, at least for a time. But the nightmare never truly ended. As Ann grew from girl into young woman, the Insect grew with her. It became more than terrifying. It became a thing of murder. Now, as she embarks on a new life married to Michael Voors, a successful young lawyer, Ann believes that she finally has the Insect under control. But there are others vying to take that control away from her. They may not know exactly what they're dealing with, but they know they want it. They are the 'Geisters. And in pursuing their own perverse dream, they risk spawning the most terrible nightmare of all.

The 'Geisters Details

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Author : David Nickle

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From Reader Review The 'Geisters for online ebook

Will says

Was it terror, or was it love? It would be a long time before Ann LeSage could decide. For most of her life, the two feelings were so similar as to be indistinguishable. It was easy to mix them up.

That's the thesis of *The Geisters*, and for most of the book, it slides a razor's edge between the two. On one side, there's Ann -- alone, confused and racked with guilt after an accident that resulted in her brother's crippling and her parents death. About to get married to a man, for love. And then there's the Insect, an invisible force that has followed and tormented Ann for as long as she can remember.

The 'Geisters is a conventional book in some ways -- it doesn't use fancy language, it doesn't confuse. At the same time, it's an alien experience. David Nickle is very good at framing her experience in the form of available options, and the options that Ann thinks she has are... well, Ann tries very hard to control her thoughts and how she thinks about things.

The larger issue for me is the Insect. (view spoiler)

But in spite of that -- it doesn't have to make sense. It's a great book, and a good horror story, and worth reading.

karen says

Was it terror, or was it love? It would be a long time before Ann LeSage could decide. For most of her life, the two feelings were so similar as to be indistinguishable. It was easy to mix them up.

now that is how you open a book. those are the kind of lines my beloved jonathan carroll tends to open with, and while the opening chapter reminded me of carroll, with its date night whimsically impinged-upon by the supernatural, at some point this changes and becomes a much darker tale than he would write, full of psychosexual violence, control, and intimidation.

ann's ideas of love and terror are all awry because of her experiences as a young girl, when a poltergeist she named "the insect" was seemingly attached to her, and was responsible for horrific acts of violence affecting her family. she eventually learned to develop the mental strength to contain it in a prison of her own imagining, but now, as she is about to marry a man she thinks she loves, the insect is starting to reassert its presence, and terror-love is about to erupt into her life once more.

the story is told through events in ann's present-day situation interspersed with her childhood memories of the insect and her family life: a carefully-teetering collage of betrayal, misperception, vulnerability, and greed.

i don't know how much to say about this book, which always seems like a cop-out when i say it in a review,

but i really mean it. i will say it involves a shadowy group of men with sexual desires well beyond the norm looking for the ultimate transgressive sexual high, and the ends they will go to to satisfy their dark erotic urges.

it's kind of like monsterporn all grown up. BUT WAIT! before you dismiss it on those grounds - i just mean it shows what literary monsterporn would look like if it weren't about detailing the act itself, but exploring the impulse behind it. and if it were horrible and terrifying instead of silly.

that's all.

it's really very good - it is a slow building tale with many small reveals along the way which culminates into a final scene of "yes.":

you'll never look at *dungeons and dragons* the same way again, i can tell you that much.

Bibliophile says

The other day somebody told me about a woman with a kink for fences. It wasn't clear whether this included any old fence, or if she had a predilection for wooden fences, or barbed-wire ones, or perhaps it was chain-link fences. Anyway, this prompted me to do some research (by which I mean Googling) and apparently there are some 500 paraphilias listed, love of fences not included. (Oh, and paraphilia, for those of you not knowledgeable about sexual deviations, means getting off on weird stuff.) Another bad Googling decision as it turns out. Due to my bad cold, I now see mucophiles and emetophiles lurking behind every tree (seriously, don't google that).

In comparison, I suppose Nickle's 'Geisters aren't that much weirder as far as perverts go. They are, however, vicious and abusive. I'll avoid spoilers and just say that this is a novel about sex and terror (terror as defined by Stephen King) in a very unpleasant combination. I've no idea what else to say that might be helpful to anyone considering reading this. The writing is great, the concept original, the characters interesting. It's good enough for me. The perversions and sexual abuse were a little hard to digest, but that could be due to my reading environment (in the countryside, by a lake, with puppy dogs swimming in it). It would be an understatement to say I'm curious to see what Nickle writes next.

Bruce says

This is a well written book that kept the final explanation of what was actually happening hidden until the end of the book, building towards it all the way through. It did not have the ancient horror like Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* but had a lurking hint of fear all the way through, almost a shadow moving at the edge of your sight, a barely heard sound, a rustling, a turned page. VERY effective.

The Kindle edition that I read had MANY formatting issues always at the end of a paragraph like a line break two or three words from the end. This was a bit distracting.

Thomas says

"Was it terror, or was it love? It would be a long time before Ann LeSage could decide. For most of her life, the two feelings were so similar as to be indistinguishable.

"It was easy to mix them up."

These are the first two paragraphs of this novel. These are also two paragraphs that are often quoted in reviews of this book. These two paragraphs sum up all that is yet to come in this strange, eerie novel of ghosts and growing up.

The novel follows Ann, a woman who is entering an odd marriage of convenience, who also harbors a secret. She has a poltergeist, which she calls the Insect, that manifests itself when she gets under a great amount of stress. The story follows this predicament not just up to and through her marriage, but also back to when she was younger and it affected her life in horrible, terrible ways. As an adult, she seems to find controlling the Insect much harder, and what starts out as a simple revealing of her history turns into something much darker and much more sinister than she ever could have expected.

The start of the novel is a bit slow-going, but once the reader manages to sort out what's happening with Ann and the rest of the cast of characters, it begins to speed along. Parts of the narrative are clunky, but not because the author doesn't know what he's doing; there's a passage where Ann is on a flight with major turbulence where I dare anyone to willfully stop and put the book down. You won't be able to do it. As the novel reaches its conclusion, though, things start to get muddy again, to the point where I had trouble simply following what was happening. I had the gist of where events were going, but sometimes I had trouble just tracking the details. I'm not sure why it broke down near the end, especially when Nickle did such a good job following the action during the flight.

The problem might be in my expectations. I had heard that this was an effectively creepy ghost story, and while it is, I was expecting it to be more like a genre ghost story, and not a literary ghost story. There's certainly a plot to follow here, but it takes a second place to the theme of the novel. I'm an adamant advocate for function over form, so when a story starts to suffer because it's trying to be more than just the story, I tend to lose focus. Books can be both — *Perfect Circle* and *Tender Morsels* were two books that managed to maintain the form and function at the same time — but here I just seemed to get lost in the lofty premise of the conclusion.

The 'Geisters does succeed in being another literary ghost story where the ghosts aren't what makes the story so horrible, and where the theme is much deeper than your average horror story, but I wish that the storytelling itself had been more up to what I was expecting. As it is, I admire it for its theme and for being genuinely creepy, but it's hard to appreciate it for the story.

Sarah Wilson says

Well that was interesting...

Rich Stoehr says

The 'Geisters takes a while to get going, but once it does the combination of an original approach and a compelling story makes for a book I couldn't put down.

It took getting about halfway into the pages of *The 'Geisters* for it to really capture my imagination. Up until that point, there's a lot of establishment - setting up the characters and the idea of a ghost haunting a person rather than a place. In ways, I found myself reminded of the recent game *Beyond: Two Souls*, with the concept of a being linked to a living person, attached to her and often following her lead. Her life is troubled as a result, but as we meet her she's getting to know the man she will soon marry and life is going pretty well for her.

That's when it starts to get really interesting. There's a wedding, and a honeymoon. And a near-miss plane crash. And everything changes. What was a decent but somewhat plodding story becomes gripping, thrilling, shocking, challenging, and a whole new way to look at a ghost story. I read the second half of the book in a rush, devouring it, and enjoying it thoroughly right through to its satisfying end.

Give *The 'Geisters* a chance - it may be a little slow to start, but an original, well-crafted horror story like this is well worth it.

Matt Butler says

What a lyrically poetic, terrifying but contemplative novel. This is a well-written romp through some pretty awful territory. If you are a fan of excellent horror, pick this one up.

Nick Vargish says

There really needs to be a way to set the start date on a book... I don't always go to Goodreads the second I open a new book.

Anyway, this was quite an enjoyable book. Not scary, though it was quite creepy in parts. And it was the characters who were creepy, more than the supernatural goings-on, which is how I like it.

Nelio Gomes says

At the beginning of a story, a good mystery can be used to pull the reader along. But a good mystery must have a good conclusion, or the reader will just be left feeling duped. That, unfortunately, is the feeling I was left with after reading *'Geisters*. A compelling story of a young woman who grew up trying to overcome the devastating effects of living with a poltergeist, the thrust of the story soon begins to wander. With the number of questions that pile up, and are seemingly left unanswered, I eventually couldn't understand what was really supposed to be happening anymore. How do you rape a poltergeist? How do you force it to do your bidding? What was the relationship between Ann, her brother Philip, and the Insect? If Philip could manifest the insect, why did they need Ann? What was with the weird building the *'Geisters* constructed? Any purpose other than to mirror all the previous D&D references with towers and stairs? If the Insect destroyed Ann's family in a car accident to get back at Philip for 'cheating' on her, why did it manifest all the other times? Like on the boat in the lake? Because playing with Barbie caused Ann to get too emotional?

How did the Insect escape from its prison tower? As far as I could discern none of that was ever really explained. The how's & why's abound, with little in the way of clues to extrapolate answers. And although a good book that leaves you asking questions is always welcome, 'Geisters devolved into a mediocre book that leaves one asking too many questions that, even if they were explained, would not likely elevate the story a great deal.

Claudia says

This had to be one of the most original stories I have read. Poltergeists are nothing new in story or film but the tale David Nickle creates from the idea of possession, desire and control is fresh out of the box. I was mesmerized. Every time I thought I knew where the story line was going, the door slammed shut and a new door opened. It is a thrilling, sensual and terrifying book. I like to be surprised and entertained and sometimes, like the 'geisters, I like to be terrified. David Nickle does that for me with every story he shares and that makes me a willing participant and eager fan.

Katy says

Book Info: Genre: Dark fantasy

Reading Level: Adult

Recommended for: Fans of dark fantasy, strange ghost stories

Trigger Warnings: killing, murder, possible child molestation, spectral rape

My Thoughts: This is a very strange book. I'm not sure how to take it, actually, but it left me profoundly unsettled. The question of who or what the Insect is remains unanswered—was Ann just a profoundly disturbed individual, or was there another entity involved in everything that happened? What truth was there in any of the story? We're left with no set answers and a lot of unsettling questions at the end of the book. Fans of dark fantasy and ghost stories should enjoy this book. I know I did, even if I have to wonder at my own mental health for doing so.

Disclosure: I received an e-book ARC from ChiZine in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Synopsis: When Ann LeSage was a little girl, she had an invisible friend—a poltergeist, that spoke to her with flying knives and howling winds. She called it the Insect. And with a little professional help, she contained it. And the nightmare was over, at least for a time. But the nightmare never truly ended. As Ann grew from girl into young woman, the Insect grew with her. It became more than terrifying. It became a thing of murder. Now, as she embarks on a new life married to Michael Voors, a successful young lawyer, Ann believes that she finally has the Insect under control. But there are others vying to take that control away from her. They may not know exactly what they're dealing with, but they know they want it. They are the 'Geisters. And in pursuing their own perverse dream, they risk spawning the most terrible nightmare of all.

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

<http://www.mybookishways.com/2014/02/...>

When *The 'Geisters* opens, Ann LeSage is on her first date with the young, handsome lawyer, Michael Voors, but something starts to go wrong. She feels *The Insect* emerge (and Michael even witnesses its handiwork) and attempts to contain it by calling a friend and mentor that has helped her through this many times before. In her mind, she visualizes the tower that should contain *The Insect*, and eventually things quiet down, but it's not over, not by a longshot. Soon, she and Michael are planning their wedding, and she's introduced to an "old" friend of Michael's, Ian Rickhardt. Ann dislikes him immediately and finds him to be boorish and intrusive, but she soon finds out that he's offered to pay for the wedding and host it at his beautiful vineyard. Since Michael seems to view him as something of a father figure, she reluctantly lets herself be swept into his vortex. And what a vortex. They can't even have a honeymoon without Ian flying in to show them the beautiful job that his people have done on their wedding video, and *The Insect* seems to emerge once again. During the flight home, tragedy strikes, and Ann finds out that things were not as they seemed. Actually, that's putting it mildly. Ann's entire world comes crashing down, and when she's approached by a man that seems to know all about *The Insect*, and in fact, has plans for it, she has no choice but to run for her life.

David Nickle managed, throughout the first half, to convey a kind of quiet menace. There were flashbacks to Ann's childhood, when *The Insect* first began to make itself known, and up until the accident that took her parents and crippled her older brother. So, except for a few friends, and Michael, Ann is fairly isolated, and there's really no one she feels that she can turn to for help. When Ann goes on the run, things ramp up fairly quickly and menace turns to downright terror. As bound as Ann is to *The Insect*, she's never really known its true motives, or its true origin, but she does learn that it's not the only one, and she's certainly not the only one with a very special, and very powerful, companion. David Nickle sets up the reveal fantastically, and if you've read anything by him, you know how good he is at imagery, especially very creepy imagery, and he's also fairly subtle about it. I love subtle horror, and *The 'Geisters* actually, at times, reads like classic Koontz (for me, this is a good thing.) But, make no mistake, David Nickle has a very unique touch and while this is a supernatural tale, it's also a story of individual empowerment. Also, *Dungeons and Dragons* aficionados will be delighted at some of the references (Ann plays the game as a young girl.) If you enjoy ghost stories with a twist, you'll really like this one.

Peter Darbyshire says

I feel Stephen King in the gut, Lovecraft in my soul and Clive Barker in my dreams. But David Nickle, I feel him in my mind. The others strike terror into me when I'm alone, at night, in a dark place. They invoke the horror of the other, of the monsters we fear may actually exist somewhere. But after reading Nickle I feel terrified in crowds, in the light of day. His horror is not the horror of monsters -- it is the horror of humanity. The monsters are us.

Laura Packer says

Outstanding horror novel that moves from the curious to the horrific. Has some minor holes, but by and large one of the better books I've read this year.
