



# Unholy Ghosts

*Stacia Kane*

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**Unholy Ghosts** Stacia Kane

THE DEPARTED HAVE ARRIVED.

The world is not the way it was. The dead have risen, and the living are under attack. The powerful Church of Real Truth, in charge since the government fell, has sworn to reimburse citizens being harassed by the deceased. Enter Chess Putnam, a fully tattooed witch and freewheeling ghost hunter. She's got a real talent for banishing the wicked dead. But Chess is keeping a dark secret: She owes a lot of money to a murderous drug lord named Bump, who wants immediate payback in the form of a dangerous job that involves black magic, human sacrifice, a nefarious demonic creature, and enough wicked energy to wipe out a city of souls. Toss in lust for a rival gang leader and a dangerous attraction to Bump's ruthless enforcer, and Chess begins to wonder if the rush is really worth it. Hell, yeah.

## Unholy Ghosts Details

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Author : Stacia Kane

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# From Reader Review *Unholy Ghosts* for online ebook

## Anzu The Great Destroyer says

The most relevant things you need to know about *Unholy Ghosts*

A bunch of self-loathing funny talking drug addicts being chased by evil red eyed ghosts in a dirty religionless futuristic city. Nicotine, drugs, ghosts and a freakin' love triangle. Hip hip hurrah!

This book was very difficult for me to read because of my lack of interest in all of these things. It's just weird. I actually like weird things, there's nothing more entertaining than watching a bunch of crazy people wearing their underwear over their heads and acting like The Avengers. *Downside Ghosts* is weird in an omg wtf kind of way. But people like it so good for them. Me? Meh. Not my kind of series.

Yes that means that I won't give it a second chance.

No, I won't change my mind.

Yes, it does suck that much.

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## Desperado says

### My Thoughts:

I received a ARC copy of this novel from GR a few months ago but just recently found the time to read it. Ok, I lied. I was too chickenshit until now to read it after I found out the heroine is a drug addict. You already know the synopsis but I'll give a short recap: Chess is a witch working for the Church helping to banish ghosts. When she racks up a huge debt with her drug dealer, he gives her a job to complete & her debt will be erased & so the story begins.

I enjoyed the world-building in this story of a sort of post-apocalyptic world where God & religion has been proven a myth & the only certainty is power/magic. About 20 something years ago, ghosts came aboveground & started killing people & the Church saved them & banished the ghosts. There are many supporting characters with totally wacked out names & almost all of them are either in gangs or are drug addicts, though a few only do drugs recreationally. There's Bump, Chess's drug dealer whose described as "Frosty the Snowpimp". Terrible, Bump's mega muscle, beating up & killing anyone who gets in Bump's way. Lex, 2nd-in-charge of a rival drug dealer(Slobag) who comes off like a broke-down Jet Li wannabe. Doyle, a rich & spoiled colleague of Chess's at the Church. I didn't like most of the supporting characters but I found Terrible wiggling his way into my heart. First impression is that he's a stupid, ugly enforcer with no mind of his own. But not only is he smarter than anyone thinks, he's also compassionate, caring, loyal & willing to do just about anything to protect those he cares about(some who don't deserve it). I honestly found myself hoping for him to step back onto the scene in some of the passages where he was absent.

As for Chess, I'm unsure what to think about her. On one hand, she does have a moral code & there are lines she just won't cross. She cares about other people & everything she does (including almost getting herself killed a few times) isn't just about looking out for number one. On the other hand, I just couldn't get into the whole drug thing. I don't mind druggie heroes/heroines but I personally need there to be a reason for them to turn to narcotics in the first place & for them to at least want to get clean, even if they feel they can't. Chess gives no reason whatsoever for why she turned to drugs & even stated that she'd never stop doing it. One chapter she even thought about blowing the cash she'd get from a job on drugs or going to the "pipes"-kind of like an opium den. And don't get me started on how she feels the need to pop a pill right in the beginning or middle of a few action scenes. You'd think she'd want to have a clear head when going after the big baddie, right? I couldn't relate to her as much I would've liked to with a main character.

Overall, I enjoyed this novel. I thought the plot was really original & the world Kane has created has me in awe. The action was great, the supernatural crap these characters had to deal with had me creeped out in a good way & there were even a few sexy scenes. I am hoping that Chess will wise the hell up & give up the pill-popping in future novels because I don't think I can root for a heroine who allows herself to be controlled by addiction. I thought this was a great but flawed first-in-series novel by Stacia Kane.

BTW, I'd consider this a little more Dark Fantasy then Urban Fantasy although it definitely has a few of the requirements for the latter genre.

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## Felicia says

GUYS...I dunno. I liked this book despite myself. It's super gritty, has an interesting worldbuilding, and I gave it 4 stars just for avoiding a lot of cliches I'm really tired of lately. But I gotta say, I am really on the fence about the lead character.

### SPOILER:

Basically she is a drug addict, and all the trouble in the book stems from that fact. I think it's REALLY cool and bold choice to have a character like this, (and have two kinda low-class, nebulously shaded love interests), and I enjoyed this because it wasn't cliched like most. My problem is that if you have a character who's obviously making bad choices, like be a drug addict, then you'd want SOMEONE in her life to be like, "Hey, you shouldn't be a drug addict", and maybe have a few moments where the character is like, "Hmm, maybe I should stop this drug thing." I mean, that would be more tense, but basically she unrepentantly pops pills the whole book, and has no one in her life telling her it's not cool. Now, i THINK that the overall arc of

the whole SERIES might be aiming to clean her up, but for a novel, I really felt like she needed some growth in this area, if this is the major conflict.

THAT SAID, I really enjoyed this book. I also think guys would enjoy it as well, it's not so dominated by romance to make it strictly lady-appealing. I thought the Church and the world history was really fascinating too, so basically I'm reading the next book now, but it's hard to love this main character, NOT because of the drug addiction, but because of her repentance about it. We'll see where it goes!

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## **XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

· A MacHalo Freaks buddy read! Yay and stuff! ·

### **DNF at 60%**

**I'm in a pretty foul mood these days** so I'm afraid this is not going to go well. Actually I don't even feel like reviewing this, I've wasted enough time with this book as it is. **BUT** I need to get it all out of my system **so here goes.**

**If you love this book** you might want to either take a few steps back or not read this review at all. If you do read it, don't even think of giving me hell about it afterwards, **I've had it with trolls.**

### **What this book isn't:**

- ✓ Original
- ✓ Weird
- ✓ Dark
- ✓ Creepy
- ✓ Gritty
- ✓ Horrific
- ✓ Gripping

**I'm pretty sure** the author wanted the book to be all these things but guess what? **EPIC FAIL.**

### **What this book is:**

- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring
- ✓ Boring

**X No** I didn't think the story had **potential.**

**X No** I didn't think the world building was mind-blowingly **creative.**

✗ No I didn't think the book was uber cool because drug use is a character in itself (**someone please kill me**).  
✗ No I didn't think the characters were either interesting or **well-developed**.  
✗ No I didn't think Chess was a badass (you're kidding right? **Please tell me you're kidding**).  
✗ No I didn't like Terrible the "bad boy with a heart" (**can I scream here?**).  
✗ No I didn't think the supposed "action" scenes were either exciting or **well-written**.

✓ Yes I thought that the author was trying too hard to be original and **failed miserably**.  
✓ Yes I thought that this was one of the flattest, most unemotional, **lacklustre stories** I've ever read.  
✓ Yes I thought that the characters had zero depth and **less personality than barnacles**.  
✓ Yes I thought that Chess was the weakest, **most pathetic heroine ever**.  
✓ Yes I thought that Terrible was the **most clichéd character ever**. Then again I've probably seen too many noir movies from the 1940s.  
✓ Yes I thought that Terrible was the **lamest character name ever**.  
✓ Yes I thought that I would eventually OD from all **the drugs Chess was doing**.

**Anything else? Let me think.** Oh yes, I know. Please don't even think of selling me a UF series by telling me there will eventually be romance or a love story of sorts between some of the characters. This is **not what I'm looking for** when I read UF. If I want to read a freaking love story I'll get myself some PNR. **Get it? Good.**

**One last piece of advice for Chess:**

**Are you still here?** I have to say writing this was one of the most cathartic experiences ever and I feel much better now. **Thanks for staying with me through it all.**

**Now time for me to go and read an actual book.**

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**Maya says**

I was really looking forward to liking this book but I have a huge trigger (or two) and that is drug abuse. The heroine is what seems always getting high and is also indebted to her dealer who is also a pimp. I really disliked that, so I sadly had to drop the story. Also, what's with all the Church thing. It's like the whole world is enslaved by it and it's, at least to me, not a normal church but more of a sect that rulls the world. The whole plot thus just wasn't for me. If you can overlook all that, then go for it. Maybe you'll enjoy the story more than me. :)

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## David - proud Gleeman in Branwen's adventuring party says

*This book benefits from a compelling story, as well as a unique and fascinating mythology...it's just too bad that the **Unholy Ghosts** that haunt the city of Downside are far more interesting than the people who are trying to stop them!*

Chess Putnam is an ordained Debunker for the all-powerful Church of Real Truth. On a good day, she receives a generous bonus for proving someone is faking a haunting in order to extort money from the Church. On a bad day, the haunting turns out to be real, and Chess is charged with exorcising the ghost. Now Chess is facing her worst day ever. Her secret drug habit has gotten so out of control, she now owes \$15,000 to a ruthless supplier. The only way out of her debt is to clean up a haunted airport for her dealer...which would land her in trouble with yet another dangerous drug lord. Add to that the supernatural entity that is stalking her at every turn...something more powerful than anything she has ever encountered. If Chess isn't careful, she just may wind up being the next ghost to haunt Downside...

For me, the two most important elements of any book are the story and the characters, and the story within *Unholy Ghosts* deserves five stars easily! I absolutely loved the rich history of Downside and the Church of Real Truth. In this alternate history, everyone became disillusioned with all forms of government and religion after they were unable to prevent a ghostly invasion from wiping out one-third of the world's population. Only the Church of Real Truth was able to vanquish the evil ghosts, and as a result, the Church is now firmly in control. This is already an intriguing concept, and Stacia Kane capitalizes on it by throwing in so many extra details. I loved how every chapter started with a quote from the Church of Truth's various propaganda. I was fascinated by some of the more bizarre elements of the Church, like how the elders all dressed like modern-day pilgrims.

In addition to an enthralling backstory, Chess Putnam's quest to learn who has been practicing forbidden black magic rituals is exciting as well. The story moves at a very fast pace, and while the book may be found on the fantasy shelves, Stacia Kane proves she can stand toe to toe with just about any horror writer as well. The supernatural elements in this book are nothing short of thrilling, where every type of ghost has their own nuances, and Kane expertly blends traditional ghost lore with her own unique ideas. I would love to go into more detail about some of the more original ideas that blew me away, but these things are better left to the imagination, and Kane's imagination is much more fun to experience firsthand!

So...does it seem strange that I'm lavishing so much praise on a book when I only gave it three stars? Well, now we come to the other all-important element, and while Kane succeeds brilliantly in giving us a compelling story, she fails miserably in making the characters compelling as well. It's no exaggeration when I say I pretty much hated every single main character in the book! Granted, some characters were supposed to be annoying, like Chess's creepy drug-dealer Bump and her whiny fellow Debunker Doyle. But even the characters we were supposed to be rooting for are unpleasant to read about, especially Chess herself! In truth, I was intrigued when I first heard that the lead character was a drug addict, as it was a rather untraditional approach, but the biggest problem with Chess is that her vices are used as a substitute for any type of depth. She doesn't display much compassion, personality, or wit, just about anything Chess says or does comes back to drugs somehow! It's like the little kid who discovers the F-word for the first time and thinks all he has to do is keep saying it to make people laugh...when the author feels the need to reference Chess's drug habit on just about every page, it loses its shock value and just becomes dull and repetitive after a while.

There was another reason Chess didn't work for me, and that's because she doesn't really do a whole lot in the book. I like my urban-fantasy heroines to be strong, formidable and charismatic. Unfortunately, Chess

often feels like a supporting player in her own book! She very rarely solves anything herself, instead her answer to everything is either to pop a pill or let some man (usually Bump's brutal enforcer Trouble) come to her rescue. Silly me, when I heard the book starred a ghost hunter with magical abilities, I just assumed she would be a force to be reckoned with, but Chess only has two moments in the entire book where she seems capable of handling something herself, and she manages to botch even one of those up! Honestly, Chess is such a cliched damsel-in-distress at times, I half-expected to see Snidely Whiplash tying her to train tracks at some point!

So, *Unholy Ghosts* features a story worth reading, but no one worth reading about. Still, Stacia Kane did impress me with her brilliant imagination and her ability to write spine-tingling horror, so I would still be willing to give the Downside Ghosts series another chance.

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## **Penny says**

I'm going to start this review off on a tangent--when do I not? As far as I'm concerned 2011 has been the Year of Meh. Television has been practically unwatchable. Movies released this year: heinous. The books were, at best, mediocre. Admittedly, there were a few notable exceptions but, for the most part, I'm disappointed.

Over the past six months I've grown weary; struggled to finish most of what I've started, and, by the way, failing more often than not--you should see my pile of abandoned books. Because of this I've been feeling the need to take a step back, maybe not read so much. Maybe spend my money more wisely--it is ridiculous how much I spend on books and audiobooks. You know, take a break.

2011 killed my love of books (and movies and television).

That said, over the past couple of days I've fallen in love with books (and reading) all over again. I'm in love. Love I tell ya. Can't-get-enough-make-everyone-sick-can't-eat-or-sleep-head-over-heels in love. Me and reading? It's like we're on a second honeymoon. I have Stacia Kane and her Downside Ghost series to thank because of it.

I know, I know--none of the books in the Downside Ghost series were published this year. It doesn't matter. What does matter is I love reading. Again.

Funny thing, it's not like Downside Ghosts is The Best Series, Ever. And it has to be said: it's definitely not for everyone. However, as far as I'm concerned, it is compelling and addictive. It's good.

So. *Unholy Ghosts*. Where to start? Twenty-five year old Cesaria "Chess" Putnum is a hot mess, and not in that chick-flick cliché can't-get-my-life-together-because-I'm-so-adorably-clumsy-and-I-wear-glasses-that-make-me-look-unfortunate-until-I-finally-remove-them-during-the-makeover-montage-and-that's-when-everyone-discovers-I'm-super-hot sort of way. I mean the sort of hot mess that's boozy and pops pills all the live-long day.

I'm not going to lie to you. I avoided this series for that exact reason. Boozy pill-poppers just aren't my thing, or so I thought.

Then, other day, I was looking through my Kindle bookshelf and I noticed that I had the sample of Unholy Ghosts--for the life of me, I can't remember when I downloaded it. Curious, figuring I had nothing to lose, I decided to give it a chance before I went ahead and removed it. Imagine my surprise when I realized I couldn't go the rest of my life without reading more. So I purchased it (FYI, the Kindle edition of Unholy Ghosts is just 99 cents).

The thing I like about Chess is, well, I pretty much like everything. Honestly, I don't even mind that she's a drug addict. Of course, most of her problems wouldn't happen if she wasn't addicted to pills, but if that were the case Unholy Ghosts wouldn't be so good.

One of my favorite aspects of Chess's life her employment. She works for the Church of Real Truth as a Debunker, a person who goes around trying to debunk claims of hauntings. If she's able to then she gets a bonus and if she isn't, if the haunting is authentic, the homeowner is compensated by the church and the debunker will rid the home of the ghost.

Sidenote: Did I mention this is a dystopian urban fantasy? Because it is. Basically way back in the year 1997 ghosts escaped wherever it is ghosts go (or actually The City, as it's called in this series) and got all murderous, killing one-third of the world's population. At the time The Church of Truth was just a small organization but they succeeded in capturing all the ghosts. 25 years later The Church of Truth is the only religion. They pretty much run the government too. Worldwide.

The church has vowed to keep people safe from ghosts, which is why homeowners are compensated if their haunting is real. /sidenote

Chess is good at being a Debunker and it's something she's proud of. She also loves the Church of Truth, despite the fact that it reigns supreme. I can't fault her for it because everything else in her life is crap--growing up being passed from abusive foster home to abusive foster home will mess you up, you know? And anyway the Church is the only place she's ever felt safe, the only thing that's ever given her life value.

Anyway, things get really interesting when Chess's drug dealer blackmails her into working for him. <--and I'm stopping right there because I don't want to ruin it for you. Plus, this review is entirely too long.

This isn't my favorite book in the series, there are a few things that didn't exactly work for me, but I still like it. (Just so you know Unholy Magic, the second book in the Downside Ghost series is...um...*intense*. I'll be reviewing it soon). Three stars.

P.S. This review is also posted at my blog.

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## AH says

I never expected to like this book.

I had read all sorts of reviews and most of them were fairly positive but to read a story about a heroine with a drug addiction problem (no pun intended) – I wasn't sure if this book would be for me.

*Unholy Ghosts* is a dark, dirty, gritty, read. The world building is imaginative. Set in a world where ghosts need to be controlled by debunkers, drug lords roam freely, and magic exists, *Unholy Ghosts* is a compelling read.

The main character Chess (Cesaria) Putman is a debunker for the church. In this world, the church is akin to the government. Chess is a kind of a witch. She wears special magical tattoos and carries all sorts of magical paraphernalia.

Chess is very good at her job. Chess is also a drug addict, high as a kite most of the time. I found that Chess' obsession with drugs was a little disconcerting for me. Sure, she functions well, but how effective can she be when she owes the local drug lord a lot of money. Her addictions make her a pawn of anyone that can feed her addiction. She feels no remorse; she makes no attempt to reduce her usage or detoxify. Her view of the world through the drug induced haze is very egocentric.

The drug usage acts as an entry ticket to the underworld of her city. She gains access to places that would not be open to her otherwise.

I loved the characters in this book. They were well fleshed out, with a lot of depth. I loved Terrible – an enforcer with a sense of honor.

The action scenes were spectacular. I sat at the edge of my seat and experienced the darkness, the fear, and the panic of the main character. The scene at the airport was absolutely breathtaking and scary at the same time.

I can't wait to read the next book in the series.

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## **Laurie Garrison says**

For a Urban Fantasy this book was OK for me. The New world is ruled by a church called Church of Real Truth, Stacia explains the world really good and it doesn't take up the whole storyline. There is lots of hard core action and one somewhat hot scene between Chess and Lex.

Chess has to have her drugs, if not she ends up with the itch. Bump is her supplier. She is in head over heels in debt with him. Bump gives her a ghost hunting job to help pay for what she owes him. From what I read I didn't get the whole thing that she was so attraction to Bump's enforcer there was a little tension there but that's all I found. But when Lex kidnaps her, so he can get her to do something for him, then you'll see the attraction kick in.

I had a few problems with this book. One is Chess is to much a pill popper for my taste. The other is the dialogue with the drug lords and their people. Here is a few lines "Ain't you got no people be worried?" or this passage "Bump got the pull. Bump already got that place wide up, see, wide up. But Bump gotta problem. Bump planes-planes carrying them sweet pills you ladybirds like bumps plains crash. Something attacking the planes, dig? Make the go all silent." Turns they off. This is though the whole book so make sure you can stand this kind of talk between the characters. Even if they talk like this, I found it annoying to

read.

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## Brenna says

### 4.5 stars. Great start to a series I know I am going to love!

*Unholy Ghosts* had a little bit of everything that I love in a good book. The writing was great, the mood was dark and intriguing, the characters were flawed, lovable, and complex. There's action, suspense, romance, some steam, and a fabulously built world.

It is told by Chess, our heroine, in third person POV. She is a Debunker for the Church. The Church isn't religious in this world; it's like their form of government that is ruled through magic, Truth, and Fact. They took over after Haunted Week (which happened twenty something years prior)- the week when all ghosts surfaced and were actively attacking humans. So, Chess's job as a Debunker is to investigate claims made by people about hauntings.

Before Haunted Week—before the Church showed the world what Truth was—they'd been a tiny group, devoted to the theory and study of magic. Now they ran the world. And she was part of it. It was the one thing in her life of which she was proud.

Chess is also a junkie. I knew this prior to starting this book and I have to say, it only made me want to read it more. Her addiction has put her in a tough spot. She owes her dealer, Bump A LOT of money. To settle her debt, he asks her to use her powers as a witch to do him a favor. This leads to her working closely with Bump's right hand man, Terrible. As the story progresses, more characters enter the mix. Chess has to balance her job with the Church, paying Bump back, a rival gang member, Lex, offering her another out, and a potential conspiracy.

This book is pretty dark and it's done so well. It's set in Downside, which is a very rundown area, pretty much just a ghetto. There's poverty, drugs, prostitution, you name it. The descriptive writing really allows you to imagine exactly what this area is like and feel the underlying malevolence. The characters of this area also have a certain dialect. I think it's called "Bump speak?" but I think it should be called "Down speak." It's really hard to explain, but it's very slang based and pretty much every grammar rule in English is thrown out the window. Lots of ayes, nays, ain'ts, missing words, and my favorite, "dig?" While it took some getting used to, I found it fascinating and thought it only helped me to picture this world and get into the setting more. Chess does not speak this way though; it's mostly the men – Bump, Terrible, Lex.

What I loved most about this book was just the potential. I wasn't immediately sucked in, but the latter half of the book really got my blood pumping. The whole book is actually quite intense because there is this dark, dangerous feel to everything. So many smaller things happen along the way then BOOM this huge LONG finale of sorts. And I think it has this HUGE potential to completely steal my heart and that's because of Terrible.

This guy is no average hero. He's a bad guy. He's supposedly ugly. He's the most feared guy in downside, doing all Bump's dirty work. Killing, beating, doing whatever is needed.

Terrible was coming, his gait easy and steady, but the way his gaze fixed on (view spoiler) and the tire iron dangling loosely from his hand were more eloquent than anything else could have been.

Then he starts working with Chess and has to help her with her favor for Bump. The whole way through he is always there for her and protecting her. There is so much more to him, he's not this big oaf that he appears to be and I love that he is so damaged and different from the perfect, model like guys in a lot of books. The fact that he's described as ugly at times, and I still find myself falling for him and thinking he's sexy is a testament to how awesome this guy is. The romance is very understated, it's sexual tension at its finest. There are multiple "love interests" I guess you would call them, but they are all interesting in their own ways – good/bad qualities and beautifully flawed. You do even get a bit of sexy time.

"Terrible," she managed. "You know how to use this thing?"

He pulled away to meet her gaze, and for a minute he was transformed. Still the same features, the lumpy nose and the jutting brow and the hard, dark eyes, but not ugly anymore. Full of character. Full of strength. She looked at his face but she didn't see it, not the way she had before. The smile spreading across his features was intimate, sexy. The darkness of his eyes concealed so much more than she'd ever imagined.

"Oh, aye," he said. "You gonna let me show you?"

I loved Chess as a character too, she's a very unconventional heroine. I have such a soft spot for those; it just makes me love her more. She's fucked up, but she knows it. She's still a good person and she's strong. Her rough past has made it so she's never felt safe, she's a bit paranoid but she's kind of *had to be*.

If her life had taught her anything, it was that you never really knew what people had going on beneath the surface. People were shit. The only difference between them and animals was people felt the need to hide it.

I'm really looking forward to learning more about her and seeing her relationships grow. By only gripe is that it's all told from Chess's POV, but in third person. I wish this had been in first person, I think I would have connected even more to her. I did love her sarcastic, snarky attitude and the dashes of humor in this though. Can't wait to dive into the next one! ♥

***Things weren't so terrible, after all. She was alive. Alive, and just high enough to feel good about it.***

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**Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says**

A good narrator can always make or break a book for me. In this case, I think my eventual affection for this story was due in a large part to Bahni Turpin, who managed to flawlessly execute both the male and female voices. She made these characters come alive, and I went from not feeling the book to really loving it. This book has some difficult speech patterns in it, and I think hearing a narrator read it aloud made it feel urban and authentic.

I tend to like my urban fantasy books to be just that: Urban fantasy. I like the focus to be on the plot and the action with any romance playing a small role. This book delivered on that in spades. It was dark, scary at times, and with some real gritty action. I think the world-building was great. I totally grasped the concept of the Church of Truth and the role of the debunkers. Stacia Kane did a great job in that department.

My real issue with this book is with Chess, the main character. I found her to be extremely difficult to like. I never thought myself to be prudish about drugs, but I didn't like her junkie persona and her cavalier treatment of those around her. I had a hard time relating to her and it took until around the 60% mark for me to warm to Chess.

I loved all of the secondary characters, especially Terrible. It was a breath of fresh air to read about a possible love interest who is not conventionally attractive. He was *interesting* and unexpected. Also, Bahni Turpin managed to make his voice freaking sexy.

All in all, I'm determined to read this series through, but only in the audible version. I loved the listening experience and am excited to hear what happens next to my ambivalent junkie.

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## Tom says

I'm going 4.5 and if I had to pay for stars it would probably be 4 but this book was just perfect timing for me and the ending put it over the top. The only thing stopping me from a straight 5 is that the character and world development really took a long time.

The writing was incredible to me. It is the kind of stuff I look for in a book. I'm not talking about the unique language either(I could have done with or without it) although the language really spoke to how true she was to the world she built. Of course the people scraping by aren't going to speak the language properly. There is nothing sugar coated in this book. The actions of the people are as dark as the world that was created for them. As dark and nasty as everything was it all felt like it belonged there.

Chess is a seriously drug addicted Debunker (a kind of witch) for the Church who's job it is to look into claims of people having ghosts. She gathers evidence to prove them wrong or she has to banish the ghosts back to the "City" if they turn out to be real. Of course her life would be much easier if she were just dealing with liars but her life becomes complicated when she has to deal with some serious Ghosts. If that weren't enough her drug addiction has her juggling a lot of other balls in the air dealing with her drug dealers and has her paired with Terrible an unlikely ally who is her drug dealers/enforcer.

Chess's sarcasm works so well with her character. Where many characters lately have been characters that have things going for them and they are all sarcastic. With Chess's character you can really feel the anger and it really belongs in her character.

"If Mrs. Morton would stop verbally jacking off her husband and son, this would all be done so much more

quickly”

It is exactly the kind of thing some struggling addict might say to herself when dealing with a rich snob in her suburban neighborhood.

The descriptions of the rooms, and neighborhoods and even the people were so detailed it really drew a picture of where she was but not so much that it was rambling. I was so into her character I was pretty anxious most of the time while reading this book. When exploring Downside I felt strung out from Chess's lack of sleep, felt like I needed a shower after exploring tunnels and wanted to light a scented candle after exploring some of the places she went. It was meant to be dark and there is no warm and fuzzy going on here.

Bottom line Chess is a complicated character. I don't even know what I feel for her. Terrible was awesome and I'm looking forward to these two interacting in the future. ( I hope. ) Throwing that 5th star at it was tough because the meat of the story doesn't really get good till almost 70% of the book. I knew towards the end it was going to be a 4.5 book and I didn't know which way I was going to go. I actually enjoyed the descriptive ride of Downside and the end of the book was the tipping point for me. To be so anxious through the whole book and then make me physically laugh at the end ( and I'm smiling while writing this) was so unexpected it still surprises me. At no point did I expect to walk away from this book with a smile on my face from laughing. (satisfied yeah laughing no)(view spoiler)

I will definitely be moving on with the series.

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### **Liz\* Fashionably Late says**

GR Blurb:

*"If you liked the compelling characters in 50 Shades of Grey, you'll love the Downside Ghosts series."*

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### **Tatiana says**

**Updated 1/7/2015**

Love how Chess/Terrible relationship is written. I might bump up this series into my faves. It surely stands the test of time.

As seen on The Readventurer

How do *you* decide which urban fantasy series you should read?

Let's be honest, there is like million and a half books in this genre, all with the same basic premise, assemblage of characters, mythology structure and story arcs. I, personally, do not even bother to read synopses of UF books any more, because, well, they are all the same anyway. Only some trusty reader-

friend's recommendation will do the trick. And, apparently, mentioning some hottie can be enough to perk up my interest. In the case of Unholy Ghosts, Catie talked so poetically about this one Terrible, that I just had to check him out. ASAP, naturally.

So, Terrible. I am not terribly into Terrible yet, but, boy, do I see promise. You see, I do like when an author writes a man who is not particularly attractive, and then manages to make him sexy. If I strain my brain, I can think of only one guy in UF who is no Adonis, but whose personality and actions make him the hottest guy on the block. I kinda enjoy to be surprised and wooed like that. (Sadly, this other guy is a teenager, Derek in Kelley Armstrong's Darkest Powers trilogy). Like Catie said in her review, Terrible is not handsome, at least not in a traditional way and not to the main character at first, the dialect he talks in makes him sound a tad... dumb, and yet, and yet, Stacia Kane manages to slowly make him VERY appealing, by writing things like this:

*A couple made out against the gritty stucco wall on the side of the club. Chess watched them for a second, embarrassed to do so but unable to turn away, something quiet and small twisting in her chest.*

*The girl was a little thing, platinum blond, in a miniskirt and a pair of platform heels that looked like they weighed more than her entire body. Her thin legs crossed at the ankle behind the guy's waist, while her tiny, pale hands dug into his back. Chess couldn't see her face; it was almost entirely hidden by the guy's hands, cupping her cheeks like he thought the bones might break. Chess didn't think she'd ever been touched like that. A pang of pure envy ran through her.*

*The girl caressed the back of his neck and lifted her hands to twine her fingers in his hair. His hips pressed forward, pinning her against the wall, and he dipped his head to kiss her throat. The light caught the prominent ridge of his brow and the crooked bump of his nose.*

*It was Terrible.*

*Heat rushed to her face. Yes, definitely Terrible. No wonder he'd blushed when she teased him about his sideburns. She'd never even thought of him as actually being interested in women. He seemed totally asexual to her, like instead of fucking he preferred beating people up. A silly assumption. He was a man, after all.*

I know exactly what you are doing here, Ms. Kane, and it's working.

What did not work as well for me is Chess' characterization. Would it be too awful to say that I didn't feel like she was junky enough? Hear me out. Chess, the ghost banisher, is an addict, she takes pills, she snorts speed, always waiting for her next fix, etc, etc. But, reading Unholy Ghosts, I never felt that this addiction was a vital part of her, her driving force, rather, it was something that she did, that she could easily put away, something that did not affect her work or her mental abilities much. I did not feel like I was in a head of a serious addict. Maybe my impression has something to do with the fact that the book is written in 3rd person and therefore there is a bit of a distance between the reader and the narrator. Or maybe reading Trainspotting left me with a skewed view of what severe addiction is like for an addict. Trainspotting, I felt, put me at the center of an addict's mind, but Unholy Ghosts did not.

I will not be wasting time on summarizing the details of this story or its mythology. This post-ghostapocalyptic setting worked for me, so did the mystery and the characters. Whatever I say I liked about Unholy Ghosts will not work for everyone, like it happens with most genre fiction. I also think that the two main points of contention in this series will be the main character's addiction and the local dialect.

The book was a good fit for me though. I look forward to reading more about Chess and Terrible. Terrible has more of his 6 ft 4 in (*everything* in proportion) glory and prowess to demonstrate. I am along for that ride.

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## **Emily May says**

I don't seem capable of finding a healthy medium when it comes to urban fantasy books - they either do nothing for me, or I develop a slight addiction. I can feel my love for this series forming already, this book was just so gory, nasty, fun and very very readable. It's been a long while since I've finished a book in just one day but I've been unable to put Unholy Ghosts down.

Once more, I owe thanks to Tatiana for bringing this book to my attention, I've been struggling with the urban fantasy genre for a while now and, despite reading countless books about all kinds of supernatural creatures and mysteries, I've come away feeling disappointed and bored. I can't pinpoint exactly what it was that I loved about this book and that made it stand out from all the same old blandness I've come to expect, but I can tell you a few points that I'm sure contributed to winning me over, and hopefully this will help others decide whether the Downside Ghosts series is right for them.

Firstly, I liked that Chess was a faulty human being with problems - like a drug addiction - and regular fears. It's so hard to find that perfect balance: creating the kickass heroine we all want, but still allowing her to be human enough to relate to. I think Stacia Kane did it superbly. Chess is not yet a favourite heroine of mine but I have faith in the character and am anxious to hear more about her paranormal escapades.

And Terrible. I saw immediately why he would not appeal to everyone... his disjointed speech and his less than pretty appearance. And yet I think this is exactly why I loved him. I've read so many novels, so so many where the possible love interest is supposedly all kinds of hot - perfect body, perfect facial features, great hair, dazzling smile... just a red hot pile of shiny perfection. But perfection is just so... dull. I want me an interesting, complicated guy who holds my attention at the times he's wearing clothes, as well as the times he isn't. Plus, no Chess/Terrible sexy times in this book, but this is a positive because sexual tension really makes me want to read on. Hehe.

I am very excited about this series. If I were to say anything negative, I would just like Chess to get herself a decent girlfriend to balance out the testosterone overload in the novel. Other than that, a great start to a series that I hear continues to get better.

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## **Jo ★The Book Sloth★ says**

### **4.5 Totally Surprised Stars**

**BR with my awesome MacHalo girls.**

### **10 things I hate about Unholy Ghosts...**

- 1) **Lex.** I don't like this guy. There is something really off about him. I don't trust him at all.
- 2) **The drugs.** Huge pet-pieve of mine. I think that doing drugs shows weakness which the heroine proved right since everyone was using her drug addiction to push her around.
- 3) **The Church.** They are fanatical and tyrannical.
- 4) **The slang.** Too much... Too freakin much.
- 5) **The love triangle.** No need for elaboration there. I hate love triangles and why that idiot(Chess) would ever choose Lex over Terrible is beyond me.
- 6) **Chess.** Because she is pathetic. I can't believe she actually crawled at Lexe's feet to get the pill.
- 7) **Chess.** Because she is a whiny mess whose only constant thought is her next high.
- 8) **Chess.** Because she was a coward. All she did was whine about how scared she was and get high to get through her day.
- 9) **Chess.** Because she was jumping to conclusions without any evidence and made a huge fuss based on nothing.
- 10) **Chess.** Because she was mean and hurt Terrible and she was too blind to even notice. (view spoiler)

### **Things I loved about the book...**

- 1) **Terrible.** I loved Terrible. He was like a vicious puppy, all snarly and bity but only because it had been hurt and kicked one too many times. I wanted to hug him and tell him everything would be all right.
- 2) **The plot line.** The plotline wasn't bad at all. I liked the twists and turns and I kept on guessing who the bad guy would be.(My bets were on lex but that didn't work out...)
- 3) ?
- 4) ?
- 5) ?
- 6) ?
- 7) ?
- 8) ?
- 9) ?
- 10) ? I really have no idea why I liked this book so much. It pressed soooo many of my negative buttons that I should have DNFed it, but I just couldn't put it down. Despite the fact that I like none of the characters, except Terrible, despite the fact that I found the heroine as annoying as they come, despite my annoyance with the slang and the drugs, I freakin' loved this book. Maybe Stacia Kane has done magic to it??

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### **Erica Ravenclaw says**

?????

**Feb 2015 Reread with MacHalo Girls: ABSOLUTELY FUCKING LOVED IT. Everything I said below still stands. I think I loved it more the second time around because *perspective*.**

**No Spoilers! Definitely colorful language abound!**

## 1. THIS IS NOT WHAT I WAS EXPECTING.

I didn't read the reviews on this until I finished, and truthfully it's really a difficult book to review. It's not what you think it's going to be. It's not what you want it to be. It's not familiar. It's not unfamiliar. So what is it then? It's fucking tragic. This world is a place with no meaning. Filled with a bunch of people with no hope. The class division is extremely prevalent, specifically noted in the dialect of the lower class. It's a bit startling at first, but truthfully it's something you adjust to and eventually see the fineness the author applied to it. It speaks of an uneducated and hardened group of people who have long been forgotten by a system that no longer seems to exist. There is no god, no light, no better place, no peace. You simply die, and your ghost is ushered to the underground where once a year you might be let out, for all of eternity, consumed by a murderous rage, you aren't even yourself. Let that sink in for a moment, shall we? You get this brief time of being alive where the quality of your life is nothing more than a roll of the dice. You are born with magic? Great. You are born with wealthy parents? Good. You are born poor? Well, shit. You can't change anything, you just have to manage to make it through, then for what exactly? AN ETERNITY OF NOTHING BUT RAGE IN THE CITY UNDERGROUND!

## 2. WHO ARE THESE CHARACTERS? IS THAT A LOVE TRIANGLE? I DON'T EVEN CARE.

You see, anything to do with ghosts typically freaks me the fuck out and so that means I'm in equal measure terrified and fascinated. Eventually my TBR list lacked the ability to hold my attention and I went out seeking something I couldn't articulate. Thankfully I've met some book soul sisters here on GR and was reminded yet again by Jenny of this series. Something sparked and I put all my other reads on hold to start this.

I made a note at 20% through to myself:

**Even if I were to stop right now, even if that was possible to let these characters go, I would always remember Chess. She is a character that will stay with me forever.**

She is mosaic of painful memories, self-medicating tendencies and a healthy dose of self loathing. She is powerful, deeply sensitive, and brimming with hope despite herself. She *expects* the worst in others but somehow finds herself disappointed when they let her down. She is acutely aware of herself yet slathered in denial. She is a junkie with morals. She is a powerful witch and debunker but afraid of ghosts. She is gritty, raw and articulate. She is a badass and a pussy. She is complex, she is herself, she is MY NEW FAVORITE CHARACTER.

Terrible is equally complex and manages to ooze a comfort in his own skin typically only seen in those who have been blessed with the pleasure of growing old. As all of the characters in this series his many layers are revealed in a deliciously slow manner, and almost in spite of himself. Terrible doesn't want you to get to know him but every now and again he slips and you see how clever, observant and protective he is. Not only does Terrible accept himself without hesitation despite being who he is and what he does, he also offers the same acceptance to all those around him. He truly sees people for who they are without any preconceived ideas of what they should do or be or say. This is especially visible in the way his friendship with Chess builds over the series.

Lex is the obvious charmer but carries it as his armor. You never once assume he will be anything other than what he is. I accept him, he's interesting and offers what I imagine will be a tough thing to accept in the plot. The relationship that develops with Chess is one she may have a very hard time seeing for what it really is.

*Really, all of these characters are easy to judge and disconnect from. Some are junkies, some are pushers, some are enforcers and murderers, some abusive to themselves and to others. They will reflect all the ugly humanity has to offer and it's up to the reader to look deeper and see all aspects of their story.*

### **3. THIS PLOT. WHAT IS HAPPENING. IS THIS HAPPENING?**

N-O-T-H-I-N-G about this book is something you've read before. The drug use is intense and is a character of it's own. It's the force that drives everything Chess does, from sleeping, to working, to relaxing, to functioning on a basic level. It has a sort of love triangle but so far from the YA garbage you've read that you won't even care. These ghosts are murderous and dangerous. This world is bizarre and confusing. **THIS FUCKING PLOT IS AMAZEBALLS AND CREEPS UP ON YOU.**

### **4. EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS BOOK.**

### **5. THE 2ND BOOK IS ON MY KINDLE. I HAVE TO FUCKING GO.**

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### **Kat Kennedy says**

If you've ever been one of those people lucky enough to be gifted without any specific fondness for chocolate or ice cream or sweets then you'll know what it's like to have someone look at you, horrified, and exclaim, "How? Chocolate/ice cream/lollies are so good!"

I would like to start off by saying that I'm perfectly aware that they're apparently very good. I don't mind lollies - as long as they're gummy bears I'll even eat them! I'll have chocolate occasionally but I generally avoid ice cream. So you see, it's not that I've been stuck in a jungle in Borneo for the last 24 years and am simply ignorant of how good they are. I know. Family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, sales-people, the media and the world in general has been telling me how good they are for my entire life.

It's just not my bag, baby!

[image error]

My disinterest neither adds to their goodness nor subtracts from it. I promise. Except for Gummy Bears - they are the single most awesome force on the face of the planet. Just admit it already.

[image error]

The Gummy Bear Army will take care of you if you disagree!

So the thing about Unholy Ghosts wasn't that it wasn't pretty good. In fact, there are quite a few things that I will now praise the author for.

Terrible - one of the best male romantic characters created. Fantastic. The fact that she can make him so sexy yet ultimately describe him as ugly kind of does it for me.

The language - I loved the broken down English used in this story. it added a very realistic touch!

The Dystopian world - Creativity and the ability to see a different world are two things that I really enjoy about reading stories. It was interesting to read a story about a world built around maintaining the ghost threat.

The plot - well paced and interesting. I didn't catch myself getting bored at all.

Okay, not MUCH! I only had eight rebel gummy bears tortured while reading this book.

But still there were some set backs.

The writing was sometimes choppy, sloppy and stropic. Sentences sometimes were awkwardly jarred together like this!

[image error]

The character of Chess kind of annoyed me too. Perhaps because... well... how do I put this delicately?

Okay. Well, my mummy says that everyone is born with different gifts. Some with kindness, others with empathy and others with a drive to succeed. And some people are gifted with the ability to be judgemental little bitches who get annoyed when people make stupid decisions.

I'll give you a moment to guess which one I have. Okay, I don't really care about drugs. They aren't my deal. I'd take gummy bears over speed any day, but it was more the cliched part of her character that annoyed me.

Foster child, abused and spent her life going from home to home. We've seen it over and over again in UF dames except Elena from Women of the Otherworld does it soooooooooooooo much better.

The mystery is okay. Not fantabulous but not too, too easy to solve and the spooky atmosphere of the book definitely made it a better read for me as I went along.

So I won't put Chess up there with Elena, Cat, Kate, Merit or Mercy but it's not like this series is particularly bad either and if you're looking for a nice change from the devastatingly adonis-like men of the UF/PNR world then give this book a try.

If not, you're always welcome to join me with my gummy bears.

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## SubterraneanCatalyst says

I hate to do this but I'm not skilled enough yet to write a review that doesn't have mild spoilers, or even unforgivable spoilers, so forgive me my crutch:

**YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED THIS IS SPOILER LAND- THIS SHOULD ONLY BE READ IF YOU'VE ALREADY READ THE BOOK OR YOU JUST DON'T CARE ABOUT KNOWING SOME IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE BOOK UPFRONT**, because, I'm just too weak to cleanse my thoughts of them. This probably has more "mild" spoilers.

On to business::

...Chessie is (in my mind) a luscious tattooed *Churchwitch* who is trying to skate through life. I don't think she wants to be noticed. She just wants to blend in and smooth over the edges of her pain with her next fix. I would have posted a bitchin' image of her here somewhere, but lo and behold, if you do google searches of "cute brunette with tattoos" you are in man's land and it's quite pornographic.

The world of Unholy Ghosts is post apocalyptic and dystopian. Normally this would make me pass on reading a book but even though it's ultra dark and gray I found it worth it and it wasn't mind numbingly dreary. Ghosts with very real power have risen in the world and the churches of old have been abandoned for the Church of Truth. Magic is the only thing that can counter the ghost menace.

I've heard grumbles and rumors of people disliking that Chess takes drugs and perhaps that the ramifications of her drug usage aren't realistic enough given the work she has to pursue, but I disagree completely. I feel Kane gives a satisfying personal history for Chess and her drugs. Does anyone really need a reason to do drugs? Hell, the world she lives in is reason enough. I'd like to point out though that the book indicates (and I wish I had highlighted some quotes but I forgot to) that Chess grew up being beaten, molested and raped in her mother's household. Given this kind of childhood Chess's decisions and behavior toward her relationships is very realistic and consistent. The main tension regarding her drug usage is that she is in a position of some authority being a Churchwitch Debunker and as such has protocol to follow. Failing to adhere to the parameters of her position within the Church of Truth has dire if not deadly consequences.

Chess embarks on a quest because her friendly neighborhood drug provider, Bump, wants to use her services to banish ghosts at a property that will boost his business. So in comes, Terrible, [Thank you Jan for inspiring my choice of imagery for Terrible, this image is a drawing of Marv from Sin City, and other than hairstyle is how I imagine Terrible] the henchman Bump assigns to liaise with Chess during this extra curricular and highly illegal project. Problems arise, naturally, as Chess tries to balance her duties and the illicit project. I'm not going to detail all of the plot but lets just say she has plenty to keep her occupied.

Chess also has to contend with Slobag, another drug dealer and in particular his minion, \*\*Lex: . This book isn't a romance, I would classify it as more of a UF, but there are moments and relationships that will probably be more thoroughly explored in the next books of the series. Most of us that read the UF/PNR genres are jaded about love triangles but I say read this. If you want pure romance don't read this. But I believe her reaction toward Lex is so nicely realistic and her reaction to any possibility of true intimacy is very telling and for me, a fantastic experience in this book. I too am sick of seeing false obstacles that prevent heroines from getting their man when a decent conversation could fix the issue, but here we have a case where it makes complete sense how she interacts with men.

You will find a relatively interesting mystery and investigation, Chess torn between loyalties and her drug habit, mistakes of a very human nature, a spattering of interesting characters (I for one enjoyed Tyson quite a bit and hope to see more this kind of thing in the successive books), some good decently creepy/scary events, and some beautiful moments to be shared with Chess. I am going to read every book of the series, I'm invested and I'm a fan of Kane now!

\*\* The beautiful man in that photograph is Daniel Henney, he is half Korean, not Chinese which Lex is supposed to be I think.

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### **? Sh3lly - Grumpy Name-Changing Wanderer ? says**

★★★ for story + ★ for a guy named Terrible = ★★★★★ stars

I'd heard about this series before, but just now finally got around to starting it with my MacHalo girls in a buddy read.

Chess is a witch.

Not a witch like this:

A little more like this:

But she's more or less a good witch who works for the Church. It's present day, but in an alternate reality where ghosts got really pissed one day and decided to try and take over the planet, killing as many humans as they could. The Church got things under control... and eradicated religion in the process. There's no God in

this Church.

So Chess tries to find rogue ghosts and uses magic to send them back where they belong. She lives in a rough part of town, by choice. Probably mainly because it's easier to get the drugs she likes to take. So, she might not be on her toes all the time, but she gets the job done.

I liked Chess. She's not your typical heroine. She's always popping pills (she even *chews* them, none of this swallowing nonsense). Her idea of a relationship is a one-night stand. She's got issues. But it works for me.

But, what really worked for me, was TERRIBLE. He's not your average romantic type. He has scars, tattoos, a big nose... he's actually supposed to be a little ugly. But he's 6'4" with big hands, evenly proportioned all over (wink wink), he opens car doors for ladies, wears bowling shirts, is protective of children, kisses like a mo-fo, and dang, he's just sexy.

(I just found out about these people today, but James Quaintance and Pippa Holland - I guess they are models - are what I picture as Chess and Terrible.)

I think this books suffers from a few issues... it's the first in a series, some kinks are getting worked out, the pacing is slow at times, it's too early to get a real feel for the world and characters at times. But I will definitely be continuing with this. I can't wait to find out what happens next!

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