



The Grip of It

Jac Jemc

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Finalist for the *Chicago Review of Books* Fiction Award, Dan Chaon's Best of 2017 pick in *Publishers Weekly*, one of *Vol. 1 Brooklyn's* Best Books of 2017, a *BOMB Magazine* "Looking Back on 2017: Literature" Pick, and one of *Vulture's* 10 Best Thriller Books of 2017.

Jac Jemc's *The Grip of It* is a chilling literary horror novel about a young couple haunted by their newly purchased home

Touring their prospective suburban home, Julie and James are stopped by a noise. Deep and vibrating, like throat singing. Ancient, husky, and rasping, but underwater. “That’s just the house settling,” the real estate agent assures them with a smile. He is wrong.

The move—prompted by James’s penchant for gambling and his general inability to keep his impulses in check—is quick and seamless; both Julie and James are happy to start afresh. But this house, which sits between a lake and a forest, has its own plans for the unsuspecting couple. As Julie and James try to establish a sense of normalcy, the home and its surrounding terrain become the locus of increasingly strange happenings. The framework— claustrophobic, riddled with hidden rooms within rooms—becomes unrecognizable, decaying before their eyes. Stains are animated on the wall—contracting, expanding—and map themselves onto Julie’s body in the form of painful, grisly bruises.

Like the house that torments the troubled married couple living within its walls, *The Grip of It* oozes with palpable terror and skin-prickling dread. Its architect, Jac Jemc, meticulously traces Julie and James’s unsettling journey through the depths of their new home as they fight to free themselves from its crushing grip.

The Grip of It Details

Date : Published August 1st 2017 by FSG Originals

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Author : Jac Jemc

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Genre : Horror, Fiction, Adult, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review The Grip of It for online ebook

Ashley Daviau says

I was really unsure what to expect when I started this and I honestly think that's the best way to go in to reading this book. It allowed me to be drawn into the story in a way that made me feel like I was PART of the story.

It takes a lot for me to be creeped out enough to want to sleep with the lights on. This book had me not just contemplating sleeping with the lights on but also just foregoing sleep altogether. It raised the hairs on the back of my neck in the most delightful way and I couldn't have enjoyed it more!

I really enjoyed the way it was written as well. I'm always a fan of short chapters and dual perspectives and this book has both down to absolute perfection! It's written in a way that makes it almost impossible to put down and it's easy to justify reading just ONE more chapter when they're so short!

I really could not have enjoyed this book more! It captured my attention from the start and got under my skin in a way that a horror novel hasn't managed to do in a long time. You know it's a keeper when you want to put it down because you know you'll have trouble sleeping if you don't, but it's just so damn good that you CAN'T put it down!

Char says

I loved the premise of this book and borrowed the audio from library because it sounded so good. **The Grip of it** delivered!

This audio follows Julie and James as they buy a new home to begin their fresh start. Almost immediately, creepy things begin to occur. Their new neighbor only adds to the uncomfortable atmosphere, not to mention the stories of the townspeople. When mysterious bruises begin to appear on Julie's body, they both have to admit there is some kind of problem, but how are they going to deal with it? You'll have to read this book to find out.

I loved how the chapters alternated between the viewpoints of James and Julie. This worked very well on audio with two narrators. I also enjoyed the slow burn of the stories and how the characters reacted to each occurrence, though at one point, I will admit to just yelling at my phone, "it's time for you to move out!!" Surprisingly, I liked the ending too, which is where almost all haunted house stories fall apart for me. I thought it believable and reasonable. What more could I ask? Oh, I know! More Jac Jemc, please!

Highly recommended, but beware, this is quiet, creeping, chilling horror. Not in your face, blood everywhere type of horror and to that I say, Bravo!

Abby (Crime by the Book) says

Read my full review here: <http://crimebythebook.com/blog/2017/8...>

I couldn't put this read down! It's a smart and surreal literary horror novel that incorporates themes readers might expect to find in a domestic thriller. This won't be the right choice if you're looking for bloody/gory horror, but it'll perfectly suit literary fiction readers looking for something chilling.

Janelle says

It took me one day to read *THE GRIP OF IT* by Jac Jemc. The chapters alternate between the point of views of husband and wife, James and Julie, as they describe their experience moving into a new house, in a new town. There are some trust issues between the couple because of James' gambling problem which adds to the paranoia in this story. I was captivated throughout the book up until the ending. I am not a huge fan of neatly wrapped endings - I prefer books that make you think. And although this ending makes you think, it may or may not be for all of the right reasons. It was vague and a little all over the place. Don't get me wrong I enjoyed reading it, but I couldn't make any of my theories stick. Maybe that means there is a sequel? I highly recommend this to anyone looking for a creepy, fun read!

Kevin Kelsey says

Posted at Heradas Review

This short novel thoroughly creeped me the hell out. It's been a few years since I've read anything that maintains this level of unease throughout. It's not intended to be outright scary, instead it maintains an eerie tone (think VanderMeer's *Annihilation*) and punctuates it with some genuine goosebump moments that snuck up on me. The narrative plays the POV characters' relationship woes (something we can relate to) against a supernatural backdrop (something we cannot). Juxtaposing the relatable with the unrelatable works so well here, and serves to pull the unrelatable closer until it feels solid, foundational, and within the realm of possibility.

This narrative tactic also got me heavily invested in the characters and their troubled relationship; rooting for them to find a way out of their situation together; to come out the other side a more entwined, singular team. They're two people who in a misguided attempt to navigate up out of a downwardly spiraling situation, inadvertently ensnare themselves into another, accelerated, more deadly one. I love the way that these events escalated, and built on one another. The way that they dealt with that escalation also felt incredibly like actual human behavior.

The story found its way to a terrific resolution. I imagine it's difficult to end a haunted house novel in a way that is satisfying to the reader, but doesn't undercut the creepy tone -- that built it in the first place -- with too much clarity. Do you completely explain the haunting and lose all the mystery, or do you leave it entirely unknown by ending in an ambiguous manner? The finale of *The Grip of It* finds that perfect middle point between these two extremes, balancing resolution/irresolution to both fulfill my deeply rooted desire for closure as a reader, and keep the eeriness fully at play.

We've all got that old lizard brain resting below our rational one, nearly all that it understands is fear, and it love a good poking. Logically, I know none of these supernatural events are real or even remotely possible, but my lizard brain doesn't care about logic, it likes being afraid. It wallows in the macabre, and thrives in the unknown terrors that might lurk in the shadows residing just at the periphery of my vision. I mostly read

this right before going to bed, and I found myself double checking silhouettes in my bedroom as I lay there, imagining how the strange sensation of seeing my wife's face, but not recognizing her, would feel; finding patterns where none exist, and missing patterns previously obvious. The whole affair put me on edge.

The prose is clean, the chapters short, and the pacing tight. You could even read it in a single sitting if you wanted, and it's engaging enough that the decision to do so might end up outside your control. It might just happen, you looking at the clock afterward and wondering where the time disappeared to.

Johann (jobis89) says

"We can lose ourselves behind a trapdoor, whether in our mind or in the house."

A couple, Julie and James, move into a new home as a means of getting away from James' gambling problems. Pretty quickly, the couple are tormented by strange occurrences - stains appear on the walls, bruises form on Julie's body and they keep finding hidden spaces within the walls of their home. Together they try to investigate what is happening as more and more strain is placed on their relationship.

If I had to use one word to describe this book, it would be: MEH. I was pretty excited for a haunted house tale, and at no point did I feel anything other than ambivalence. It wasn't creepy, it wasn't scary... it was just monotonous. The characters themselves didn't help - boring, bland, unlikeable.

Short chapters are a great way of flying through a book, but in this instance, the short chapters were just too short? The narration went back and forth, with the story being told from both Julie and James' perspective - and usually, I dig this, but combine it with the extremely short chapters and I just felt like I was constantly being taken out of the story. I couldn't get absorbed and therefore could not care less about what was going on or what happened to these characters.

I often give off about how I don't like ambiguity when I read a book - and that's an unfair generalisation, because in some cases it can be done right. In this book... it is not. There's TOO MUCH ambiguity and too many questions left unanswered and it just left me extremely frustrated.

It just wasn't for me, I guess! And in this situation I was actually thankful for those ridiculously short chapters so that I could just get it over and done with!! 2.5 stars out of 5! Rounded down for goodreads because it doesn't deserve a 3 from me... SAVAGE.

Amalia Gavea says

"But what if those buried, fetid stories are the ones that have bubbled to the surface? What if they're right there, balanced on the edge of our teeth, ready to trip into the world without even our permission?"

And what if you have practically no idea what the bloody Hell you're actually reading, curled up in your sofa, and yet you cannot help being hypnotized chapter after chapter? Because this is what happened with "The Grip Of It". This book does grip you and leave you wondering and when you reach the last page, you're still uncertain but you know you've enjoyed the journey. This is how I felt about the novel that kicked off my Halloween reads.

James and Julie are our protagonists. A young couple that decides to leave the big city and start a new life in a small town and a new house. They want to mend certain unhappy choices of the past and look to a cleaner, more innocent future. Their house, however, is anything but innocent. It seems alive, inhospitable. So far, there is nothing groundbreaking in the plot, the virtue of this novel isn't its originality but its powerful writing. This book is like a good ghost film that we watch again and again, always closing our eyes, hiding behind a pillow in the same jumpscars.

After a striking Prologue, we enter the heart of the action right away. The narration is told in both James' and Julie's point of view, in Present tense, like a voice -over. The chapters are like snippets from the couple's life in the house. The foreboding images are plenty. There is the constant presence of woods and waves, the earth and the water elements, both risky, symbolic and powerful. Voices of happy children can be heard, but they're not seen. Ever. In fact, the town seems almost deserted and the few residents seem to know there is something amiss but are unwilling to get involved. The forest surrounding the house seems to move closer, somehow. There is a constant humming noise, there are cracks, drawings on the walls appearing out of nowhere and an old, weird neighbour who may be an intruder.

James and Julie are very sympathetic characters, flawed and realistic. The phenomena largely affect Julie, as is often the case in supernatural occurrences. I can't begin to tell you how sorry I felt for her and I believe James was a fine equivalent to her strength, no matter his flaws. And there were many. Connie, on the other hand, is insufferable. A nosy hysterical who pretends to be interested in Julie's welfare. Why does every mystery seem to need an irritating busybody? I think we'd be much better without their ghastly presence.

I can't say more and I fear I've already said too much. What is so engaging, even frightening if you like, is the psychological effect of the haunting. The book passes beyond the supernatural thriller and becomes a psychological observation. Yes, at certain times, it becomes a bit repetitive and unnecessarily wordy, but overall it is a very satisfying effort. In my opinion, this is everything "The Upstairs Room" wasn't....

My reviews can also be found on <https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com>

Chelsea Humphrey says

If you are thinking about picking up this book, please do yourself the favor of listening to the audio version! The narrators are beyond excellent, and I feel they played a huge part in the success I felt while reading this story.

Readers looking for violent, graphic, and disturbing horror won't be the right target audience for this book, but THE GRIP OF IT will be a huge hit to those looking for a dark and chilling form of literary horror and slow building suspense. What really put this in 4 star territory for me was the interest the author extracted from me within the main couple's everyday drama and exchanges. It takes a bit for the unsettling bits to pop in, so this was a nice touch while waiting for the horror to build.

I'm not even 100% sure what I read and exactly what the ending implied, but I got the gist and I know I liked it. This ambiguous sense of horror worked well for me, and the idea that the strange happenings were mirroring the destruction of James and Julie's relationship was pretty genius. It does take awhile to get there, and it was slow going for the first 30%, but once I hit that point I could hardly put this down! Even though this is being pushed as horror, I really feel it was more of a psychological suspense that featured a haunting. Again, fans of hard core horror likely won't appreciate this unless looking for a change of pace, but I think

fans of domestic thrillers wanting a unique approach will really love this!

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

3 Stars

Trin says

[I liked the mold (hide spoiler)]

mark monday says

try-hard

A person who puts a large amount of effort into achieving a certain image, or counter-image, to the point where it is obviously contrived. Rather than achieving an image through genuine personality, the try-hard consciously attempts to fit a certain style through deliberate imitation, forced style, or scripted behavior. That is to say, he/she is trying hard to create an image.

"A person"... or in this case, a book.

Carol (Bookaria) says

This book is so spooky!

Perfect pick for these days. Julie and James are married and looking to start fresh in a new home. In the past they've had some marital woes because of James' gambling problems.

They find what seems like the perfect house close to the ocean and cannot believe their luck when their offer goes through very quickly. Once they start settling in **strange things start to happen**, they also start getting lost in the hidden rooms within the house.

The novel is narrated from the alternating points of view of Julie and James. It is set in a small town and fast-paced. The novel has **beautiful writing** and is **dark, engaging and haunting**.

Overall **I enjoyed the novel** and recommend it to all thrill and chill seekers.

Thanks to the author, and the publisher for providing me with a copy of this publication in exchange for an honest review.

Jac says

hehehe

Edward Lorn says

As an atheist and a horror fan, I find myself liking haunted house and ghost stories that do not really on a God Solution. Like religion, most haunted house stories stem from madness, a willingness to believe in the unbelievable simply because you don't have another explanation, or completely ignore facts that do not fit your beliefs. For all of these reasons do I love this book. The characters disbelieve up to the very end. They constantly question because what they are faced with simply cannot be. So what do you do when faced with the unanswerable? Jac Jemc does a fantastic job of asking just that question.

The writing in this novel is awe-inspiring. This is easily the best literary ghost story I've read. Nothing even comes remotely close to it. The prose is machine-gun quick and deeper than some philosophy books I've read. Even the weird bits where the characters are speaking in what the reader might first perceive as gibberish are layered and meaningful. You just have to actually read the words on the page and absorb them. Which brings me to my next point.

This is not a book you skim. It is not a generic haunted house story. It is not a mindless thriller. And if you treat this work of art as such, you're gonna have a bad time. This novel is richly textured and perfectly written. I respect the economy of words the author managed, and the brief chapters, which I normally dislike, but here, they work, because this book is heavylifting and you're gonna wanna pace yourself. But, even with my pacing, I still managed to read the book in two days. It's a short one, trust me. Now I have to buy everything else Jac Jemc has ever written.

In summation: If you're looking for a richly textured haunted house story that works its way inside of you and takes root, you're unlikely to find better than **THE GRIP OF IT**.

Final Judgment: Where has Jac Jemc been all my life?

Many thanks to my good friend Thomas Strömquist for reading this one with me.

Dennis says

5/5 stars!!

Just a quick FYI before we get started... I started Jac Jemc's *The Grip of It* yesterday morning before work, continued reading it on my lunch break, on my commute home on the subway, before getting ready to meet up with friends for a pre-Halloween night out, left my friends early so I could come home and read this, and then stayed up until 2:30 am to finish this. If that doesn't mean that this book deserves 5 stars, then I don't know what else to tell you, but I digress. Let's get started on this review, shall we?

Jac Jemc's *The Grip of It* is intoxicating and enchanting from the very beginning. The story revolves around a couple from the city, James and Julie, moving to the countryside to escape the drama surrounding

them and to get a fresh start. James suffers from an addiction to gambling and the couple relocates to try and rid themselves of this horrible dilemma. Insert typical introduction to all haunted house stories: couple finds a cheap house that is way too big for them but provides them rustic charm and latches onto their egos and dreams, couple purchases the house and decides to not do any research into why the massive house is so cheap, couple moves in immediately. Once they move in, they realize that things aren't quite what it seems - shadows lurking around the house, random **horrific** growls coming from who knows where, little hidden rooms leading to areas of the house that have no value for the typical person, and a neighbor who won't keep his eyes off of them. This is just the start for the naive couple, but what is wrong here and what has James and Julie done to invoke these nightmarish plagues against them?

If you haven't read the first part of my review, I just wanted to reiterate how epic and awesome this story was for me. ***The Grip of It*** is not your typical horror story that has in-your-face gore and fright at every page. This story is a psychological thriller, mixed with suspense and a domestic thriller component all blended together with minor horror features. The slow build-up to the story is engaging and left me begging for more. I love this story - and now time for a nap because I'm exhausted. :)
