

## 56 Water Street

**Melissa Strangewal**

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Since the phenomenal success of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series and Stephanie Meyer's Twilight series there has been an explosion in the popularity of young adult fiction. Successful writers in the genre plant seeds in their readers' imagination that bear rich fruit. They do not condescend or insult their young readers' intelligence. Story takes priority over theme message and moral. Finally these authors must transfer to the reader a sense of wonder and the sheer pleasure of storytelling.

Melissa Strangway demonstrates these qualities in *56 Water Street* the first book in her Derek and Ravine series. The main characters Derek and Ravine appear to be average ten-year-old children who live in an average community. But appearances can be deceiving. Only these two friends can see the lights flickering on and off in the house at 56 Water Street but even stranger only they can actually see the house on 56 Water Street.

"Ravine crawled into her bed...deep under her covers" Strangway writes "...why could she see the house when her parents couldn't? She let that thought fade in and out of her mind until she fell into a restless sleep. Slowly a figure came into focus and stared at Ravine." What the children don't realize is that someone or something in the house is trying desperately to get their attention.

*56 Water Street* is not a typical supernatural story for children. The author shows readers how resilient and adaptable children can be when faced with extraordinary events. Even when faced with a ghost they can still attend to everyday life: "...Derek and Ravine couldn't discuss the invisible house with their friends" Strangway writes. "For now they would need to focus on the things the end of the year brought like packing up lockers cleaning out desks...the really important thing was getting ready for the big end-of-the term carnival."

Unfortunately the story is marred by sentence fragments and strange sentence structure. It maybe somewhat premature in Strangway's writing career for her to experiment this way with grammar and syntax.

The author designs an exclusive clothing line for girls. Because she is so immersed in the lives of children she is able to understand them and describe their priorities wonder and fears. She combines this experience with her own adult perspective presenting the reader with multi-layered prose with themes including tragedy family death mourning trust faith and love.

LEE GOODEN (May 5, 2009)

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