



Dead Girls

Abigail Tarttelin

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Abigail Tarttelin's *Dead Girls* is an ultra creepy, occult-tinged horror story. Focused on a missing girl, it shows that the wild places of childhood are not all magical and good.

Billie—who likes Slater from *Saved by the Bell*, “angel pudding, Australian accents, [and] the tiniest orange in the bowl”—has vanished. Her best friend Thera is the last person to have seen her.

A self-described expert on Billie, Thera is very different from her friend. She's haunted by images of a cold, dead girl; she has prophetic dreams about wicked black dogs; and when she touches a Ouija board, terrible things transpire. When Billie is found murdered, Thera becomes obsessed with finding the killer, but her search unlocks dark forces within herself.

Set in a small English village, the story is packed with 90s cultural references that capture the characters' specific experiences of childhood. From curfews to secret diaries and dreadful lunches, Thera's world is conveyed in clear, complete detail. Her rising interest in the occult, and her access to her grandfather's library of witchy books, adds another layer of creepiness. The games and tools Thera used to spy on her family or divine the future take on new significance as she hunts for the person who killed her best friend.

Thera's boldness defines her, but there is softness in her too. Her astute observations of other people, nature, and herself hint at the adult she will become. Her obsession with Billie's murder drives the story, and her response to the tragedy feels natural and real. Suspense heightens as Thera carries out her plan to seek revenge. Her confidence in herself makes her forget that she's only a little girl—and just as vulnerable as her best friend was.

Dead Girls is a heartstopping horror novel and a frightening coming-of-age story.

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