



Later

Stephen King

Hard Case Crime (Mar 2, 2021)

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In Stephen King's entertaining new crime novel *Later*, an adolescent can see dead people.

After witnessing a bicycle crash and meeting the dead cyclist, Jamie's life turns into a self-described horror story. His mother Tia, the owner of a literary agency that has fallen on hard times, is the only one who knows what Jamie can do. She implores him to keep it to himself. But when her best client dies before finishing the book that will bail them out, she brings her lover Liz, a detective, in on the secret so that they can use Jamie's abilities to save the agency.

Liz and Tia's relationship degrades once Liz uses Jamie for her own purposes—to find out where Thumper, a now-dead serial killer, left his last bomb. After finding out Thumper has a dark force unlike any other ghost he's met, Jamie needs to extricate himself from the spirit, all while continuing to navigate his anything-but-ordinary childhood.

Later is a touching story about a boy growing up without a father, and with talents that set him apart from everyone else. It's also thriller about the darkness that lies under the surface of everyday life. Its characters, from Jamie's hard-drinking, curse-prone, yet affectionate mother Tia to wise-cracking, innocent, and good-hearted Jamie, brim with life, while mentions of television shows and other pop culture from the mid-2000s set a colorful atmosphere.

The plot progresses from Jamie's harmless yet disturbing encounters with ghosts to darker situations wherein Jamie is in peril. Tia and Liz's relationship turns from supportive and loving to brutal and life-threatening, culminating in a climax that is frightening yet tinged with heroism.

Later is a satisfying tale about facing demons—both those we can see and those that lurk in the darkness.

ANGELA MCQUAY (March / April 2021)

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