



One by One

D. W. Gillespie

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In D. W. Gillespie's unsettling novel *One by One*, a family falls prey to a house's malevolence as they struggle to stay together.

The Eastons thought they found the perfect fixer-upper when they bought an isolated, strange old house. When their youngest daughter Alice explores their new home, though, she uncovers an unusual painting hidden beneath the wallpaper. It depicts a family strikingly like her own. One by one, dark Xs appear over each family member. A heavy snowstorm rolls in, isolating the family more, and the nightmare deepens when Alice finds a diary by a young girl, Mary, who lived in the house before her.

Its prologue both ominous and vague, the novel layers elements of paranoia and tension. Alice describes seeing the house for the first time and being "filled with a sense of bubbling anticipation mingled with dark revulsion." She likens the house to discovering a dead body and declares that she's smitten. The creep factor grows heavier as strange occurrences stack up, and the story adopts a psychological thriller feel. Coupled with Alice's unreliable narration, it's unsettling reading.

In this dark, character-driven horror story, the central family is constructed with painful realism. Alice, her brother, and her parents' worst qualities come out more and more the longer they remain in the house. Questions regarding mental health arise. Mary's story unfolds across the pages of her diary—a dark and twisting tale as she experiences the house herself. Questions regarding whether the creepiness Alice experiences can be attributed to the house's tragic backstory, the house itself, or some supernatural entity are unresolved as the book lurches toward an unexpected but rewarding conclusion.

JOHN M. MURRAY (September / October 2019)

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