

She Is a Haunting

Trang Thanh Tran

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In Trang Thanh Tran's horror novel *She Is a Haunting*, a woman discovers that the house her father is restoring is haunted.

Jade and her sister Lily travel to Vietnam to spend the summer with their estranged father. Jade has ulterior motives: she can't afford her dream college, even with scholarships and the meager amount her hardworking mother is able to scrape up. Her father, Ba, offers her money if she stays with him at the abandoned house he's renovating as a bed and breakfast.

Despite her family drama, Jade busies herself by working on the house's website with Florence, Ba's business partner's niece. Jade finds Florence alluring. The two are close in age, though the similarities stop there.

The atmosphere is tense and creepy from the opening page, wherein the house is compared to a dying creature being rebuilt and eyeing those who crawl within it as "the first page of a menu." And as the summer progresses, Jade experiences eerie events, including the sensation of insect legs on her and the nightly appearance of an unsettling bride who warns "Do not eat." It seems the house is haunted by a hungry and patient presence. A sense of dread hangs over the tale, even in the quiet moments when Jade and Ba struggle to overcome their past traumas and build on their potential for the future. Jade also grapples with her budding ownership of her sexuality and the pain of losing her best friend to another college.

She Is a Haunting is a satisfying Gothic coming-of-age novel in which a house, a heritage, and the uncertain future threaten to consume a college-bound woman.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January / February 2023)

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