

The After House

Michael Phillip Cash

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This reimagining of the classic haunted house story is filled with complicated characters, both living and dead.

Set in a salty New England village, *The After House* brings history to life through the hauntings of a nineteenth-century whaling boat captain. Michael Phillip Cash uses detailed and compelling characters, rich scenes, and complementary time lines to weave a tale of love, regret, and regrowth.

After her husband is found to be living a double life with another woman, Remy Galway is forced to start over. She moves with her young daughter, Olivia, to the quaint seaside town of Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, and rents a charming 300-year-old house. After setting up a budding yoga business in the old whaling town, Remy is introduced to the handsome and polite Hugh, who happens to be both the town's charismatic mayor and the operator of the local museum.

Remy's life is finally starting to get back on track, but not everyone is pleased. The ghost of Eli Gaspar, a whaling ship captain from the 1800s, isn't happy with the changes she's made to the house he haunts and considers to be his own. Through a campaign of bumps in the night and pointed destruction, he makes his displeasure increasingly clear as Remy struggles to come to grips with the house's history.

The main story is interspersed with chapters set in the nineteenth century, which extend the backstory of Captain Eli and his family. Back in the present, the ghost seems weighed down by the past; despite his conscious existence in the present day, he's hopelessly out of touch with current conventions and language, which creates humorous scenarios.

The author has a captivating writing style that grabs the most pertinent details for use in painting a scene, like the enigmatic expression of the sea captain in the painting in Remy's cottage. He uses a clear, crisp voice that is easy to read.

The main characters are lively and complicated: Remy is tentative and full of doubts after her recent divorce, while her parents are the picture of love and overbearing support. It's easy to find Hugh as charming as Remy does, with his quirky sense of humor and rugged, protective manner.

The supernatural characters are less convincing, in part because their role in the story isn't always clear. Eli the ghost seems to alternate between protecting Remy and acting like a contemptuous child, and the memories of his past as a sailor are sometimes conflicting. Most confusing are the sentinels, Marum and Sten, who watch over Eli as he haunts Remy and her cottage. They sometimes act like a chorus, offering an overview of the situation from outside or criticizing his actions and intentions from above.

Overall, *The After House* is an enjoyable story that draws equally from a rich sense of history and the author's ability to create engaging, lifelike characters. It is recommended for anyone interested in a reimagining of the classic haunted house.

ERIC ANDERSON (November 14, 2014)

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