



The Flip

Michael Phillip Cash

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This fast-paced ghost story masterfully toggles between present and past in a cross-genre blend of horror and historical romance.

The Flip, by Michael Phillip Cash, is a captivating paranormal thriller about a couple struggling financially but determined to stick with their house-flipping side jobs, believing it will eventually pay off with a windfall that could change their lives forever.

The narrative is both eerie and endearing as it follows Brad, an Afghanistan War vet, and Julie, who works a nine-to-five job in a collections department, as they flip houses. Making enough to sustain the next flip but not profiting enough to flip full time, Brad has become disillusioned with the venture. He has a particularly uneasy feeling about the latest flip house on Bedlam Street, built in the 1850s on Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, New York. But Julie has fallen in love with the home and wants to turn it into a bed and breakfast—until she receives a frightening visit from Tessa, a ghost inhabiting the house.

Tessa has been “stuck” in the house for decades with Gerald, whom she has known since she was a young adult. Gerald has been madly in love with Tessa from the time they first met, but even after death, he never sees that love returned. Yet he hasn’t given up on Tessa. As in life, in the afterlife Tessa continues to toy with Gerald’s emotions; when she acts on her attraction to Brad, Gerald is once again frustrated, as he had been many years earlier when Tessa ignored his advances for other suitors: “Tessa was attracted to this human, and he could see why...he knew this man was vital and alive. Gerald was tired of being stuck here in this sort of limbo, waiting for Tessa.” This becomes an overarching theme in the book.

The narrative masterfully toggles between present-day events—Brad and Julie’s house flip as well as their interactions with the ghosts—and 1862, when Tessa lived in the Bedlam Street home owned by her father. Bits of each couple’s story are revealed slowly, maintaining a constant level of intrigue. The flashbacks to 1862 are action packed; part thriller, part historical fiction, these segments include descriptions of Underground Railroad activities in the region.

While some of the scenes are dark and disturbing, the overall tone is upbeat. The writing style is fast paced, with short sentences that create a conversational tone. Developed characters and well-defined scenes provide a vivid picture of the dramatic events without allowing the story to get bogged down by irrelevant details. Just enough is revealed about the four main characters to depict their personalities and desires. Several punctuation errors in the story summary on the back cover do not reflect the high quality of the writing in the book.

A focus on the emotions of the ghosts and the mortals results in characters that are easily relatable. *The Flip* will appeal to paranormal thriller fans, but it crosses genres, adding elements of both traditional romance and historical fiction that offer much to grab readers.

MARIA SIANO (June 9, 2014)

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