

The House on Tyner

Matthew O'Connell

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The House on Tyner is an engaging supernatural mystery novel about family secrets, the price of vengeance, and learning to move on after loss.

In Matthew O'Connell's mystery novel *The House on Tyner*, a widower investigates a deadly cold case that occurred in his own home.

Even before he moved in, Jackson was well aware that his new home on Lake Tahoe had a terrible history, but he didn't let it bother him. But then he heard odd noises, saw mysterious symbols, witnessed lights turning off by themselves, and had visions of a little girl in a flowered dress. With help from Lara, a beautiful librarian, Jackson works to figure out if his visions are born of job stress and too much alcohol, or if his supernatural visitor is all too real—and demanding more of him than he's willing to give.

An intriguing beginning leads into a slow-burning, dialogue-propelled mystery as Jackson and Lara dig into his house's sordid past: the builder and original owner killed himself and his entire family for no known reason. Though the crime seems straightforward, if horrifying, the ghost girl's presence and the cryptic clues she leaves behind indicate a more insidious tale. With time and patient detective work, the duo traces the crime's origins all the way back to a terrorist attack on another continent.

Jackson jumps to the conclusion that his house is haunted with speed, despite having claimed that he doesn't believe in ghosts. His frequent dinners with friends, at which he reviews clues and plots next steps, are an excellent opportunity for Jackson, a pitcher-turned-chef-turned-restaurateur, to display his knowledge of food and wine. The picturesque, isolated setting—Incline Village, a mountainous town surrounded by forests and, as winter sets in, endless snow—is perfect for this tragic ghost story.

The story drops enough hints along the way that it is possible to guess at parts of its solution, making for a more satisfying mystery. An attempt to introduce an additional suspect is brief and unconvincing, but Jackson remains dogged in his pursuit of the truth, for both the ghost's sake and his own. The killer, once revealed, proves to be articulate, intelligent, sinister, and ruthless. Part of what makes the killer so compelling is their similarity to Jackson: both suffered a grievous loss years ago. But while the killer's grief led them down a path of destruction, Jackson chose reinvention and creation. He needs the skills that he acquired during all phases of his life to survive the tense, heartbreaking climax.

Set in the late 1980s, *The House on Tyner* is an engaging supernatural mystery novel about family secrets, the price of vengeance, and learning to move on after loss.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (February 24, 2023)

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