



# Mormama

*Kit Reed*

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## **Mormama** Kit Reed

*MORMAMA* is a riveting supernatural, southern gothic tale from Kit Reed. Readers of Joyce Carol Oates and James M. Cain will enjoy this unnerving tale.

Dell Duval has been living on the street since his accident. He can't remember who he was or where he came from. All he has is a tattered note in his pocket with an address for the Ellis house, a sprawling, ancient residence in Jacksonville. He takes up residence under the house in the basement unknown to the residents upstairs. He just needs time to figure out why he's been sent here.

In the house, Lane and her son Theo have returned to the family home—their last resort after Lane's husband cleans out her bank account and leaves. The old house is ruled by an equally ancient trio of tyrannical aunts, who want to preserve everything. Nothing should leave the house, including Lane.

Something about the house isn't right. Things happen to the men and boys living there. There are forces at work one of which visits Theo each night—Mormama, one mama too many.

## **Mormama Details**

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Author : Kit Reed

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# From Reader Review *Mormama* for online ebook

## Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

A man with no memories. A creepy house. Family secrets. Haunting spirits. All of it set in a crumbling section of the southern city of Jacksonville, Florida. And if this sounds like Southern Gothic to you, then you are absolutely right, because Kit Reed has perfectly set up just that type of haunting story, one which will make you huddle down deeper under the covers and desperately try not to jump at every shadow in your own bedroom.

It all starts with Dell. This drifter having no memory of who he is, where he comes from, or even his own name. Dell merely a moniker he picked for himself. But when he gets his clothes from the hospital, he finds an index card with an unfamiliar address upon it, as well as a flash drive.

Certain the address will somehow spark his memories Dell shows up at a crumbling mansion in a section of Jacksonville which was once an affluent area, but is now well on its way to oblivion. Sneaking in, Dell is quickly discovered by one of the residents: teenager Theo. This young man making friends with our lost drifter and helping him set up camp in the home.

As he quickly gets acclimated to his new home, Dell finds out that a trio of evil Aunts run this household. Ivy, Iris, and Rosemary the matriarchs of the family with Theo and his mother Lane mere temporary visitors, who have taken refuge here after being abandoned by Theo's father. But no matter the length of their residence, all of these people are caught up in the evil which has befallen generations of their family. The signs pointing to the house (or some evil within it) being the cause!

Told through multiple points of view (Dell, Theo, Ivy, and Lane to name the main ones), *Mormama* is a short book which actually takes a while to fully develop. The narrative spending a great deal of time creating the mood, developing the environment, and introducing characters. This allows Kit Reed to fully flesh out everyone (Each person endowed with their own unique personality, quirks, and desires.), but it certainly slows down the pacing of the narrative and did result in a bit of information repetition. However, for me personally, I felt the negatives of the multiple POVs was more than made up for with the well developed characters, because, as I always say, characters are what make or break a book, and with *Mormama* I found several to keep me turning the pages.

Even with characters I could empathize with and care about, this novel did misstep a bit with the plot itself. The premise of this creepy tale was wonderful, captured my imagination, and made me want to see where it all led, but along the way from beginning to end, the true horrific potential of *Mormama* never really materialized. Sure, it had its moments, but I was left wishing it had been better. Better resolution of plots. Better ultimate explanations. Better conclusion. None of these things were bad. Rather I just wished they had lived up to their full potential.

All in all, *Mormama* was an entertaining read that did an amazing job capturing the true atmosphere of Southern Gothic, gifted readers with fully developed and compelling characters, and kept the haunting chills coming until the end. No, it didn't fully realize my lofty expectations, but then again, few books ever do. So I'd encourage others to take a long look this novel by Kit Reed, because it might be exactly the story you need to read.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

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### **Nadia says**

A Southern Gothic tale thoroughly convincing. It's a Fantasy that kicks off with intensity and fires off one cannon after the other. It's haunting, captivating, harrowing and predatory.

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

DNF at 62%!

This is it. I tried, I really, really tried to like the book, but in hindsight, I should have stopped earlier. The book just doesn't work for me, the characters are annoying, all the changing of POV is just a pain in the ass, and this is the first time EVER that the profanity in a book has bothered me. Seriously, that something that has never ever been an issue for me, but this book, it just got too much for me. Could be because as was already annoyed with the characters and everything thing they said and did just made me irritated.

This is a book that I thought would be just my kind of thing, but it wasn't.

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### **Lauren says**

Sometimes the past doesn't like to let go. The Ellis house has been standing for three generations, a rotting shrine to fabulous wealth and festering greed. The house keeps its own, drawing them back when they try to escape. Lane escaped once, until her husband walked out on her and her son. She had to go back to the house that nearly devoured her as a child. Memory less, Dell can only hope that the card in his pocket will take him home to the Ellis house and a family that could be his. Theo, Theo wants out, away from the elderly Aunts who haunt the house like a trio of ghosts, away from his mom being stuck unable to care for either of them, and away from the thing that whispers to him at night. Away from the Mormama who tells him about the house's tragedies and the darkness that presses in on its residents. Sometimes the past doesn't like to let go. Sometimes it refuses to.

Southern gothic isn't a genre I've done much with before. Based on Kit Reed's Mormama, it's not quite horror, and it's not quite genre literature, but somewhere between the two. There's a lot of almost character versus atmosphere going on and, more than that, a character versus past thing. I really dug both of those aspects. The downside to how atmospheric and into how trapped the characters feel by their situations is that the book can be very easy to put down.

So, what do I mean by that? Part of the atmosphere for the book was this sort of floating hopelessness. It seeped into little corners of the characters lives and pulled them more tightly to the house. Lane wants out as soon as possible, but she can't find a job to allow that. Dell wants his past back, wants to know where he came from, but he's so desperate for it to be this one version of him that he can't accept anything else. He also can't bring himself to use the one source he has that might tell him everything. Even the Aunts are

trapped in their past and the bitterness they have over merely being caretakers of the house rather than the belles they had been in their youth. It's both something that slows down the book and cuts its readability and also, ultimately, really cool.

That's kind of my feeling on a lot of the book ultimately. It's a slow read with a lot of bits that don't feel super important to the story but that absolutely build the characters and atmosphere. Which makes for an interesting read. I do feel like some of the supernatural bits could have been tied in better, but that's a little thing for the most part. The fairly slow pace over can make the ending feel a little too fast, but that's not a huge deal, that little too fast can also make it feel cataclysmic. It's a scale thing I guess. I actually don't have a ton to say about this one so on to the score I guess?

Like I said earlier, southern gothic isn't a genre that I have a ton of experience with. That's part of why I don't have a ton to say about it. There's also a lot of almost fiddly bits that would probably count as spoilers, so I'm not talking a ton about those. That said, I did quite enjoy this book. While it can get slow at points that works for the overall feel of it. I'm giving Mormama a four out of five and would read Kit Reed again.

I was sent a copy of this book by Tor for honest review.

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### **Ian Mathers says**

I'm fine with shifting POVs and frames of reference, I'm fine with a horror story that's mostly subtle/without overt violence, I'm fine with leaving things unsaid. Actually, the promise of those things are what drew me to this one, but it turns out there just isn't much there there. Which doesn't mean there are no good aspects to this one; there's an effective sense of dread that builds up here, and the history of the Ellis family is nicely parcelled out (maybe the most gothic fiction thing about this definitely gothic fiction is that the ghost doesn't really do anything beyond tell people family secrets). But the ending seems to kind of come out of nowhere in a few respects and somehow feels both abruptly unsatisfying and overly drawn out. The strong sense of mood throughout will be worth it for some, but it feels like with some rethinking and restructuring this could have been a lot better.

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### **Barb (Boxermommyreads) says**

So basically I don't think this book is getting many good reviews but I really enjoyed it and am glad I picked it up. There are numerous characters in "Mormama" and the story often flashes back so the reader can learn more about the historic Ellis house and its inhabitants, past and present. Years ago the home was built for Minette, who married into the Ellis family, but was basically spoiled rotten (and extremely ungrateful) since birth by her maternal grandmother. Minette abandoned her own mother who eventually moves in with Minette, her husband, and their numerous children when she becomes financially destitute. When she arrives, Minette's husband tells his children she is "One more mama than the house needed." Thus the name of the book (and was I glad that was cleared up early).

Catastrophe strikes the Ellis family members through the years and one believes Minette may have actually been taken over by an evil spirit who then made everyone else miserable. Men in the Ellis house REALLY don't fare well. A man names Dell wakes up in the hospital one day with no memory of who he is and the address to the Ellis house in his pocket. He begins living in the basement while trying to find out his

connection to the family and meets up with Lane and her son Theo, who have moved in with Lane's great aunts after her husband left her high and dry. So are you getting the impression at this point in the review that there is a lot going on in this book? Well, truer words have rarely been spoken. The horror and the mystery continue to unravel as the book progresses and Theo is tormented by Mormama. But is she an evil presence or a helpful entity?

This Southern Gothic tale is probably not for everyone. Reed's writing style does take some getting used to and the book jumps from POV to POV. Funny story which proves this point. At one point my Kindle somehow jumped ahead to a chapter and I read it and then realized it said 96% done when I had just been at 48%. I went back, picked up where I left off, and was no worse for wear. I'm not sure what that says about the book in general but many will argue it isn't good. There is also a lot of foul language in the book but that doesn't really bother me much - especially in a horror tale. However, I was really engrossed in finding out Mormama's purpose, learning all about the Ellis family, and discovering how this book could ever present me with a satisfying ending.

About the ending, I do feel it was sort of rushed and I wasn't happy about one main element of it but overall, I'm glad I gave "Mormama" a chance. This isn't a book that has me rushing out to read everything else ever written by this author, but I definitely recommend it to readers who don't mind a slow burn horror.

I received this book from Netgalley and the published in exchange for an honest review.

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### **David Agranoff says**

I went back and forth on this one. Mormamma is a strange gothorn gothic that is kinda sorta a haunted house story. Told through multiple points of view, the closest thing to a main character is essentially Dell Duval a homeless man who decides to squat in the Ellis house a huge mansion with a an intense history in Jacksonville. The the many flashbacks and POV shifts we are given the horrid history of the house. Maybe it is better to say the house is the center of the story.

Kit Reed is certainly a talented writer but there is a reason why several of the reviews on Good reads are marked this book as the dreaded DNF. I have to admit there were a few times when I considered not finishing the book. It is not the author's fault but I came off reading one of the best books of the year - the extremely breezy read of Rio Youers The Forgotten Girl. Yes I felt Mormama was a slog at times but there was enough interesting characters and moments that I stuck it out. Every time I ready to give up a interesting moment hooked me.

I came to the conclusion that it is a smart inventive novel that is just not a easy read. I thought it was good but not exactly for me. I don't mind southern voice infact I like Many southern writers. in fact those elements were some of my favorite moments. I think many readers found the changing voice of the POV's to be disjointed. It was but after awhile I got into a rhythm with them.but if I had to put a finger on it would be that the book asks too much of it's readers.

You are going to have to remember various characters, who you have not heard from in a few chapters, if you put the book down for a night and return to it you often are picking up the story at a totally left field plot turn. Deel's story was always more interesting to me than say Theo's chapters. I felt a urge to skip his chapters. It is hard to keep track of what is flashback and what is living, dead or long dead voices from memory.

Loaded with a powerhouse of blurbs from Brian Evenson, Peter Straub, Tim Powers and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro it is hard to imagine that a book is garbage. There are moments of genius in this book the concept should have been five stars but it just barely got a three from me. With as many awesome books out this year I just can't tell you this needs to be on the top of the list.

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## **Mel (Epic Reading) says**

DNF at 50%

This book is written from the perspective of many different voices. Something which I usually enjoy. It's also written in a disjointed way as it's characters random thoughts that aren't even always complete sentences. Generally I don't mind this type of writing, in some cases I love it (see Wink. Poppy. Midnight.). However in the case of Mormama there's not enough immediate character development (if any) to make me feel like I know the people talking. Especially from Mormama.

I totally get what Kid Reed was going for here and I'm not 100% sure I can even pinpoint the problem except to say that it just doesn't work.

Additionally there is very scarce plot, and some characters that don't make any sense. Yes I know if I had kept reading I'm sure it would have all tied together and been a beautiful reveal but at the halfway point of the book I can honestly say I just don't care. None of these characters are likeable (even the twelve year old boy) and they all just natter about this, that or the other.

Mormama did remind me of a wonderful movie, and has made me want to rewatch it again, called Crimson Peak (starring Tom Hiddleston). I usually don't watch "horror" movies but my husband convinced me I'd love this one and he was right. It's not horror like you think... you have to watch it as I don't want to spoil anything

So if you want a helpful but unsure Mother Ghost story watch Crimson Peak. If you don't mind a lot of nonsense, history about people you can't keep track of, and boring points of view along with a Mother Ghost read Mormama.

For this and more reviews bookmark my blog at: [Epic Reading](#)

*Please note: I received an eARC of this book from the publisher via NetGalley. This is an honest and unbiased review.*

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## **Paul says**

So often we want to yell at the characters in a ghost or horror novel, "WHY ARE YOU IGNORING ALL THE WARNING SIGNS?" Now I wish someone, spectral or real, had yelled that at me before I downloaded this damn book. The title should have alerted me. It means nothing unless you read this novel, and even less once you're done. (If you're curious, "Mormama" is the snide sobriquet ["one more Mama than we need"] applied to one of the book's many narrators, the mother of the spoiled Southern belle who is condemned to haunt her daughter's pretentious Jacksonville mansion until the souls trapped inside are at last free.) The story of a family that fate has imprisoned in a de facto mausoleum has the possibility of being creepy or at

least atmospheric, but Ms. Reed isn't interested in telling a coherent story or creating a vivid sense of place, all she wants to do is settle scores. I know nothing about Ms. Reed's private life, but I know one thing . . . she hates someone, I'm guessing a demanding mother or a disapproving grandmother, with a passion, and this book is her revenge. You'll have to scrape the residual resentment out from under your fingernails if you read "Mormama," since every single page bristles with recriminations against the long-dead matron who jails her daughters in a monument to her vanity. Well, I hope she feels better now, she's still got some recovery ahead of her (as does anyone who read "Mormama").

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### **Mimi Jones says**

A decrepit old mansion in Jacksonville Florida holds 6 lives, and one spirit, captive. Three of the occupants are elderly sisters, children of the house's original owner, a greedy, loveless woman called "little Manette." The other three inhabitants are, more or less, drifters: Lane Hale and her son Theo, who are actually relatives of the old sisters; Lane is Little Manette's granddaughter. (The book is confusingly overpopulated and would have benefited from a chart of the characters and their relationships.) Mother and son have been left to fend for themselves after the abandonment of their husband and father.

And there's Dell Duval--an assumed name; he's amnesiac after being run down by a taxi cab, but feels a strong connection to the house that he must explore. He camps out under the lattice-enclosed space beneath the front porch, known only to the boy Theo, and sneaks into the house when everyone is asleep.

The spirit is that of Little Manette's mother, called Mormama, and she appears repeatedly to 12-year-old Theo, frightening and angering him with her warnings that the house is not safe and he and his mother must escape. But how? They have no money, and Lane's efforts to find employment have so far been futile. They are stuck at the mercy of the old sisters.

As for Dell, he secretly befriends the kindest of the sisters, Ivy, who is in a wheelchair after a childhood accident. Visiting her stealthily at nighttime, he initially wants to discover whether he is a relative and therefore entitled to some of whatever fortune may be locked up in the old pile, but gradually he comes to care for her. Clues as to his true identity may reside on the flash drive that was one of his few possessions to survive his taxi accident, but he can't bear to open it.

We get a great deal of the backstory of the cold-hearted Manette, who loved possessions and barely tolerated her husband or children. Her neglect caused the death of her three-year-old son.

The plot slowly unfolds, told from the multiple points of view of the characters--some in third person, others--Mormama, Theo and Lane--in first. I am no prude, but I wearied of Theo and Lane's constant profanity and weird locutions like "Woah; Wuow; zibleddy; Like, zot!" And I found the pacing tryingly slow.

Finally the ending brings some drama and the solution to the mystery of Dell's true identity. But by then I was more than ready to be rid of the claustrophobic company of this unhappy family and their hanger-on, Dell.

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### **Deborah Ross says**



Between the time I finished this amazing, twisted, tour-de-force haunted house story, I learned that Kit Reed had died. She was one of the luminaries of the field. I never picked up anything she'd written without being challenged, entertained, and a bit awed. To this day, I recommend her book on storytelling craft, *Beginnings, Middles, and Endings* to aspiring writers. In the poignant Acknowledgments she writes:

"I was going to begin by thanking John Silbersack and David Hartwell for everything they did to bring Mormama as far as they have, but between the beginning and now, David exited the planet without giving us a chance to say goodbye. It's been fun, David. I'm sorry it was over so soon..."

Just so, I wish she were still here so I could tell her how much I loved this book.

It's said there are no original plots, only original interpretations. There must be a million ghost/haunted house stories, but I know of none that handle both elements (an old house possessed by the evil of its former owner and a ghost doing her best to protect those who come within its walls) so skillfully.

The story unfolds like a mystery, shifting from one point of view to the next. An amnesiac drifter takes us by the hand, leading us into a decrepit edifice of a house, a relic of ostentatious wealth long past, where a mother and young son have sought temporary refuge from financial downturn with the only family they have left. At least, they hope it's temporary. Ellis House, ruled over by a trio of doddering yet tyrannical aunts, is not friendly to sons...and once it gets its claws into a daughter, it never lets go.

Slowly, as the plot spirals deeper and deeper into the mystery of Ellis House and its resident ghost, the dark and tragic history of the Ellis family and its secrets unfolds. It's masterfully done, and even in the moments early on when I could not keep names, blood relationships, and time lines straight, my confidence in Reed's storytelling never faltered and I was richly rewarded. Reed was indeed, as John Silbersack pronounced, "a national treasure."

Highly recommended.

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## **Janet says**

I rated this between a 2.5 and 3 stars out of 5.

*Mormama*, by Kit Reed, is a Southern Gothic haunting set in Jacksonville, Florida. This tale starts out with Dale, (who knows what his real name is, as he has just chosen one when he can't remember his own), a down on his luck drifter that has been in an accident that has taken his memories. When he receives his clothes from the hospital, he finds a USB drive in his jacket pocket, and an address printed on a notecard in his pocket. (How ominous, right?)

Dale shows up at the address hoping that something, or someone, will spark his memories. So he does what every person would do, and sneaks into the basement of this house he knows nothing about. (I mean, I do that kind of thing every day, don't you?) There, he is discovered by young Theo, who DOES live in this house, and Theo does what every 13-year-old boy who finds a stranger in the dark, in the basement, would do... he tells him a grizzly story of a three-year-old burning to death in the same spot Dell is setting up camp in. (And Dell decides he is going to stay here because burned up toddlers are just run of the mill these days, I guess.)

We then are introduced to the trio of evil Aunts that reside in the house, (Ivy, Iris, and Rosemary) who rule the house with tyrannical might. Iris and Rosemary are the twins, and Ivy is the “cripple” that is shunned and treated badly by “General” Aunt Iris and “Warden” Aunt Rosemary. These women have taken in Lane (Little Elena) and her son Theo (who the Aunt’s call Teddy after their burned nephew) after Lane’s husband abandons them and leaves them penniless. They have returned to the house on May Street- (and the Aunt’s)-hoping to recover Lane’s inheritance and move away from the awful house on May Street. Little does Lane know that the aunts have taken her inheritance and fed it to the all-consuming house.

We also get introduced to Mormama, the main attraction for the book. Mormama is referred to as “one more Mama than we need.” She begins whispering to Theo and telling him that evil and bad things happen to the men in the house, and to “*get out while you still can.*”

*“Some of us are trapped here blood of my blood.”*

She goes on to tell him how her daughter and her mother have brought something “evil” into the house and that she is meant to keep everyone safe.

*“I am either subject to undercroft or fixed in place to oppose it, but there is nobody living or dead who can tell me which.”*

All of this was such a wonderful premise. It drew me in like sweet southern tea being sipped on a rocker on a slow Southern night. I was excited! Then, I was determined. Finally, I knew that my tea had gone bitter, the air was too thick and humid, and there were spiders in my rocking chair. (EEK!)

The book was told from alternating points of view and in alternating character chapters. I found that I REALLY disliked Theo and all of his use of the \*F\* word. For a thirteen-year-old boy, he dropped that word like he owed it child support. It was so overused, that I found it VERY distracting from the story line. Some of the writing was choppy and hard to read. Even Mormama’s character (who should have been the star) started to drive me crazy. There are some plot twists and some really good moments in this book, but what I thought I was getting to read, and what I did read were such different animals that it was jarring. This novel had such great potential. The characters (including using the house as a character... totally could have been incredible) had such great potential. My only thought is that the house, like everything else that came across it, must have eaten the brilliant writing.

I received an ARC for an honest and unbiased review. I would like to thank Netgalley, the publisher and Kit Reed for the opportunity to read *Mormama*.

As always, you can find my animated review here: <https://oceanviewsandbookreviews.com/...>

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## **Becky says**

Dell has no memory of who he is or where he comes from. But he thinks the note bearing the address of an aged mansion in Jacksonville could be a clue. The house is home to three old women - sisters named Ivy, Iris, and Rose - and, more recently, their niece Lane and her son Theo. Oh, and Mormama.

A ghost, or not a ghost, a spirit trapped in the house for centuries, Mormama has watched generations fall prey to the mansion and the evil within. Men and boys in particular are in danger here, and she's taken to

warning both Theo and the illicitly squatting Dell, though neither seems quite inclined to take her seriously. Even when the aunts themselves start to let things slip, none of the house's newcomers understands quite what it all means. But Mormama knows. She knows all too well.

This is a supremely weird book, which is perhaps why I was able to read it while sick as a dog. Yes, sick again. 2017 has definitely not been great in that regard.

So we have multiple narrators in this one: Dell, who is suffering from amnesia and believes the crumbling mansion is his salvation; Theo, twelve and spunky, and more than happy to keep secret the fact that Dell is hiding out in the basement; Ivy, the elderly, wheelchair-bound aunt; Lane, don't call me Elaine, who also thought she'd find her fortune in Jacksonville; Mormama, one more mama than they needed; and then the occasional early twentieth century journal outtakes. Whew, that's a lot of narrators.

Setting and characters were wins here. The crumbling mansion in Florida sitting on what was once the most affluent street in the up and coming city was perfect for a haunted house story. Theo ventures out into the neighborhood a few times, commenting on the shady figures hanging out on the street and the convenience store with nothing convenient unless you want dusty candy bars. This paired with Lane's situation give the story a heavy sense of desperation and even malaise on top of the underlying sinister feel. And there is a great atmosphere built in Mormama.

Reed does a wonderful job giving each of her characters a voice of their own too, which is kind of an accomplishment considering how many there are.

But, and maybe this is because there were so many narrators, the story became muddled quite early on. I was never clear, for example, if the repetition on the part of Mormama was due to her beginning to fade or simply error on part of the author. And there was a lot of repetition. There were also a lot of questions that remained completely unanswered!

I was drawn to this one by the promise of a creepy read but I found what kept me reading was curiosity more than anything else. Yes, I liked the characters and I was invested in the story, but ultimately I didn't think it paid off nor was there a truly satisfactory explanation about the happenings in the house. Mormama could have been fantastic and horrific, instead it was more of an entertaining oddity.

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## **Kelly Spoer says**

(Free from publisher via net galley for honest review)

Let us talk about how amazing this book is. A southern Gothic horror story that needs to be picked up by some one and made into a mini series. Cinematic and forceful. This book is a testament to all who have suffered under aunts and grandmothers and their archaic and overbearing ways.

It's tame enough for teens as well. Which, as a librarian, I always like finding books that teens can read that aren't stereotypically young adult.

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## **Kara says**

DNF at 4%. I cannot with this writing. It's choppy, unclear, and unfocused. I hate the voice. I would drive myself batty if I read this all the way through.

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