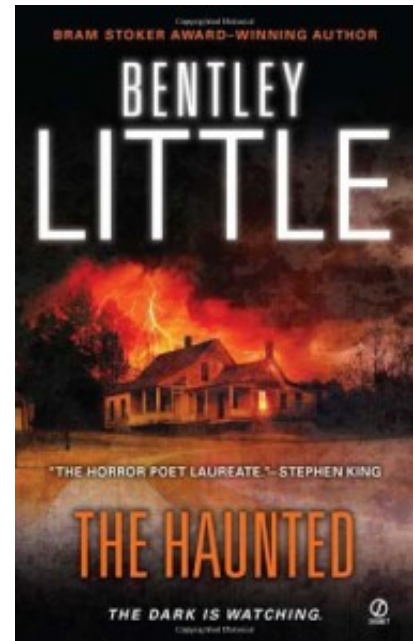


The Haunted by Bentley Little



Bentley Little's **The Haunted** begins in the ordinary world of suburbia. We meet our hero, Julian Perry, a web developer who works from home, and his wife, Claire, an attorney in private practice. Julian is devoted to his wife and children. He is particularly close to his sensitive twelve year old son, James, a boy who worries that it's not okay to dislike sports. Julian also dotes on his teenage daughter, Megan, guiding her with the warmth and wisdom of a father saddened to see his child growing up so fast.

Julian's first goal is straightforward: he wants to move his family to a better neighborhood. The Perry family finds the house on Rainey Street and deems it perfect; big back yard, shade tree in the center of a plush lawn, even a tire swing and sparrows in the tree branches above it. When the existing owners lower their asking price, the family can't say no. With that decision, the entire family is plunged into darkness. *Hey, the book's not called The Haunted for nothing...*

He didn't like the basement.

James is the first to feel the house' dark power. In fact, the house found its way into James' dreams – and his head - before they'd finished moving in. In his nightmare, he strode down the street in his pajamas because he needed to be at the house. Or, to be precise, in its basement. I won't tell you what's waiting there, but you don't want to find it in your basement - **ever**.

The house' evil power intensifies as the rest of the family experiences supernatural events. Two facts become clear. The evil in this house is no ordinary ghost and the Perry family has no escape.

The Scary Story

The Home of Horror Writer Lake Lopez
<http://www.thescarystory.com>

The Good:

Bentley Little has a reputation for writing the same book over and over. A quick look at his titles may indicate that this is true; *The Mailman*, *The Store*, *The Town*, *The Academy*... But I don't believe that having a knack for turning the ordinary world into something sinister (or exposing the sinister workings of what may be behind the curtain of the ordinary world) is writing the same book over and over.

Furthermore, *The Haunted* relies on an emotional connection to the characters, especially the father-son relationship. Mr. Little creates the kind of emphatic panic that a reader can only feel after investing in a character's survival. For that reason alone, we can ignore the perception (or dismiss it altogether) that Bentley Little writes the same book repeatedly.

While establishing the stakes of this story, we learn that Julian has a deep motivation for building unbreakable bonds with his children. The wound he carries can never fully heal. This fact makes the stakes all the more gut wrenching and the pending resolution all the more tragic. For that alone, this horror novel deserves to be on your reading list.

The Bad:

Stephen King's immense talent exists within building a creeping dread that eats at readers like a hungry cancer. King rarely goes for the gross out. Bentley Little, on the other hand, is quite adept at utilizing shock and the grotesque in his work; and he does not shy away from doing so. That said, the scenes in the basement that demonstrate the house' sickening power may turn some readers off. I'm no prude, but the actions in that sequence gave me a moment of head-scratching pause. Likewise, the house' ability to manipulate James and Megan may be too much to bear.

Finally, the ending might break your heart. Of course, the best horror stories often do; and I kind of like that in a book. You've been warned.

Thanks for reading,

Lake

Other Notes: *The Haunted* is not on the list of the [Scariest Horror Novels of All Time](#), (my quest to read or re-read the 100 most frightening books ever written). Should one that's currently in queue fall off, however, *The Haunted* is a contender for placement. *The Haunted* and Bentley Little's backlist is available on Amazon (and in fine used book stores everywhere). A previously read (sounds so much nicer than used, doesn't it?) hardcover edition is six bucks. Enjoy.