



## The Devil Crept In

*Ania Ahlborn*

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An unforgettable horror novel from bestselling sensation Ania Ahlborn—hailed as a writer of “some of the most promising horror I’ve encountered in years” (*New York Times* bestselling author Seanan McGuire)—in which a small-town boy investigates the mysterious disappearance of his cousin and uncovers a terrifying secret kept hidden for years.

Young Jude Brighton has been missing for three days, and while the search for him is in full swing in the small town of Deer Valley, Oregon, the locals are starting to lose hope. They’re well aware that the first forty-eight hours are critical and after that, the odds usually point to a worst-case scenario. And despite Stevie Clark’s youth, he knows that, too; he’s seen the cop shows. He knows what each ticking moment may mean for Jude, his cousin and best friend.

That, and there was that boy, Max Larsen...the one from years ago, found dead after also disappearing under mysterious circumstances. And then there were the animals: pets gone missing out of yards. For years, the residents of Deer Valley have murmured about these unsolved crimes...and that a killer may still be lurking around their quiet town. Now, fear is reborn—and for Stevie, who is determined to find out what really happened to Jude, the awful truth may be too horrifying to imagine.

## The Devil Crept In Details

Date : Published February 7th 2017 by Gallery Books

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Author : Ania Ahlborn

Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages

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## From Reader Review The Devil Crept In for online ebook

### Jaidee says

So frustrated.

It appears my ebook has two versions of this novel and I read the one that was unpolished.

I am not going to re-read it.

Aaaaaargh. so frustrated and annoyed.

This will remain unrated.

That devil certainly crept in !!

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### Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum [https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/02/28/...](https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/02/28/)

Don't you just love it whenever a horror novel lives up to its promise? No joke, I actually had to stop reading this book at night because it was getting too disturbing and creepy for me, and you know I'm not one to scare easily. If this is what I've been missing out on for so many years, I wish to hell I'd started reading Ania Ahlborn much sooner.

In the small town of Deer Valley, Oregon lives a ten-year-old boy named Stevie Clark. Ostracized by the other kids at school because of his speech impediment and the missing fingers on one of his hands, Stevie has no friends except for his neighbor and cousin Jude Brighton. Whether it's watching true crime shows on TV or building a secret fort out in the woods, the two of them do everything together and have been inseparable for years.

Then one day, Jude goes missing. The entire town mobilizes to try to find the boy, but after his bloody sweatshirt is found, the whole mood of Deer Valley seems to shift. To Stevie's frustration, no one seems to think they'll find his cousin alive anymore. After all, the search has already been going on for three days with no luck, and the locals all know the story about Max Larsen, another boy who met a gruesome end in these woods years ago, after disappearing under similar circumstances. That story doesn't get talked about much though, not unlike the reports going back for years about the dogs and cats that go missing from their owners' yards. There's a good reason why there are no veterinarians in Deer Valley.

Last year I read and was a little disappointed by the book Disappearance at Devil's Rock by Paul Tremblay, another horror novel with "a boy goes missing in the woods" main plot. Somehow I can't help but think The Devil Crept In is what that story should have been. Ahlborn's take on the premise is the real deal, the way a true horror of psychological thrills and supernatural suspense should have played out. It is a creepy tale worthy of the campfire, containing all the right ingredients: a small town with a big secret, a terrifying local legend that holds more truth than meets the eye, and a young innocent boy that no one takes seriously

because of his disability.

Of course, it wasn't all smooth sailing from the start; like any good scary story, this one required a bit of setup. I would describe *The Devil Crept In* as a novel of three parts. Ahlborn uses the first to establish our main character, a boy who lives a troubled life. Stevie's father walked out on his family when he was younger, and his mom remarried an abusive man who beats him while she looks the other way. Stevie also often feels frustration at his own speech disorder, unable to get his thoughts across without losing control of his words. He is the target of the worst bullying because of it, not only by the other kids but by his own older brother and some adults as well. So you can imagine how horrible it is for a someone like Stevie to lose his only friend, which means too that the entire first part of this book is taken up by his obsession with finding Jude, with the dogged determination you would expect from a ten-year-old. In my opinion, the introduction was a little too drawn out, with Stevie's chapters becoming repetitive after a while.

Fortunately, that was probably the only point where I felt this book faltered. Ahlborn follows up with a second part that brings about the full-on creeps. The transition was a little jarring at first, as the narrative veers off into a completely different direction, starting over with a seemingly unrelated tale about a woman named Rosie. I'm not going to talk too much about her, as that would spoil the story; all I'll say is that I quickly became riveted by the horrifying details of her tragic, disturbing life—like witnessing a bloody car wreck where you just can't tear your eyes away. It might take some time for this part to make sense with the rest of the novel, but once it clicks into place, you'll see how it all the pieces fit the big picture. The third and final part of *The Devil Crept In* is where all this magic happens, as elements from Jude's disappearance and Rosie's tale begin to gradually come together.

The results are eerily satisfying and really hit the spot. Note to self: no trips out to the woods anytime soon. For a straight-up entertaining and chill-you-to-your-bones good read, I really can't recommend this book enough. Mark my words, *The Devil Crept In* might be my first novel by Ania Ahlborn, but it certainly won't be my last.

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### **Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says**

2.5 Stars

I'm not going to lie, this book threw me, it was so very...weird. But of course, in the best most messed up way possible.

Just when you think you know what is going on, the author would throw in another twist or another hint at something totally "else" and I would have to start all over again in wondering what the heck was really going on.

This was disturbing and gritty, and twisted and completely perfect for the fall season when I read it. It was creepy and raw, and even a bit vulgar but it was so realistically done and told through the point of view of a ten year old boy that was anything but normal, and therefore, so very fitting to the whole story.

This was my first experience with this author and while I just might not every be the same because of it, I liked what I read and how it messed with me and made me question and think, and cringe and gasp. It truly was a story unlike any other I have read and because of that, I would definitely try this author again.

\*ARC copy was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.\*

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### **Sadie Hartmann Mother Horror says**

I've said it before in a previous review but I'll say it again, Ania Ahlborn has closed that gap between male and female writers of horror. She is right up there with the best of the best.

I buddy read this book with three other ladies. Jo @jobis89 Mindi @gowsy33 and Ashley @bookishmommy all of us got this book in our Nocturnal Readers Box.

I think this was Ashley's first attempt at reading horror. This is not our first trip to the circus for the rest of us, we're old hats at horror. \*wink\* And this is my third Alhborn book.

Part one of this has a similar vibe as Stranger Things and Paul Tremblay's The Disappearance at Devil's Rock--we have an unreliable narrator, 10 year old Stevie, who is going through the disappearance of his best friend and cousin, Jude.

Part Two is CRAZY! You find yourself being drawn in to a completely new story with a different narrator. The stories are connected but you don't know how or why, immediately. I LOVED the second story. I could not stop reading it. But I won't divulge any plot details for that.

Part Three brings the two stories together in a binge-worthy climax to the conclusion and epilogue.

Ahlborn is an amazing storyteller. Her writing style is very fluid, natural and interesting. She expertly switched narratives with a deft hand--in the mind of a ten year old boy and then a grown woman in the next. Both narratives believable. I have an 11 year old boy so I appreciated the specific details and nuances that made Stevie so realistic.

This story runs the full scope of emotions you want from horror: Unsettled, curious, shocked, scared, that sense of panic and urgency. I loved every minute of it! I highly recommend it for fans of horror and I'll be collecting all of this author's books! Going back and getting her older books and then insta-buying all of her new ones.

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### **Kendall says**

I REALLY wanted to like this book. AND this fell so flat for me and a huge disappointment. I would give this 2 stars. And I am a little shocked to see all the 4 and 5 stars for this one.

I'm a HUGE horror fan and have watched almost every horror movie out there. SO, I guess my standards for horror are a little high? But, no they aren't haha.

But, damn was I bored in this book. The beginning I was thinking.. ok hopefully this will pick up. It started to get good in the middle and then I just got super confused with what was going on. I felt like this was a Stephen King wannabe and it just wasn't there for me.

The substance/meat of the excellent horror villain was definitely not there at all. I caught myself rolling my eyes multiple times and thinking really? Are we in second grade and reading Goosebumps?

But, again this type of "horror" may be really scary for some readers. I almost couldn't finish the book because I was thinking ok... can this end already? (Yikes... that sounds bad). And finally, after all that... that's

it? Whomp whomp :(.

This was my first read by Ania Ahlborn and I was disappointed. I'm not sure I would read another by this author again.

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### **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

***“I’d stay out of those woods if I were you. There’s something out there, and I can tell you it’s not a cougar or any of the nonsense the police keep trying to sell.”***

A wise man once said . . . .

Such is the case when Jude goes missing after exploring the woods behind his house in Oregon only to show up several days later without being able to provide many answers as to where he’s been. As Jude’s behavior becomes more odd, only his cousin Stevie questions what *really* happened to him while he was gone . . . .

***“Something was wrong with Jude. Really really wrong.”***

I was all over *The Devil Crept In* like stink on shit as soon as I saw it due to my previous Ania Ahlborn experience. However, since I’m a moron I failed to review it after I finished until 11811(Eleven)’s review jogged my memory. Do you know Eleven? You should. Mainly because he looks like he could do . . . .

But I digress. Once I finished cleaning up after peeing myself over my friend’s opening line about his potential for fathering an heir like Otto I started yakking this little bit of nothing out.

As I said, I snatched this up as quickly as my fat little fingers could pretty much knowing that . . . .

(^^^^That’s middle-aged white man speak for “DIS GUN B GUUD”)

My assumption was correct. Ahlborn spins a good yarn and I was forced to read this only when other humans were present in my house due to the fact that . . . .

The entire story delivered that goosepimply, hair-raised-on-the-back-of-your-neck uneasiness. This author has definitely earned herself a fan and I will be seeking out more of her stuff in the future . . . . but I’ll make sure to only admire her from afar as Eleven has already claimed her as his celebrity crush.

*ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you, NetGalley!*

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### **Abby (Crime by the Book) says**

5 stars for this **CRAZY** read!!! This book was utterly chilling and completely addictive. Ahlborn is **SUCH** a superb storyteller - her books have the blood & guts of a horror novel, but they're intelligently plotted and masterfully developed. Holy freaking cow, I loved this read.

This book definitely starts out a bit slower - I didn't find it scary until I got past the first 100 pages. Don't expect the book to be in-your-face scary right away. If you're okay with being patient in that way, you will be completely rewarded!! Ania knows exactly what she's doing, and readers will be thrilled to discover she's been setting them up for some seriously twisted surprises. It's hard to discuss this one without spoiling it - so I'll just say, this book is another major winner from Ania Ahlborn.

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### **Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says**

This review can also be found at [Carole's Random Life](#).

I enjoyed this book overall. It was a rather slow starting book for me and I had a hard time really getting into the story at first. The whole first part of the book just didn't do a lot for me. The second section of the book picked up a bit and I found myself really getting interested. By the time, I got to the third part of the book, I was hooked and I couldn't wait to see how everything would come together.

Stevie is a 10 year old boy living with his mom, step-dad, and brother, Dunk. He lives next door to his best friend, Jude, who is also his cousin. Jude is missing at the opening of the book and Stevie wants everyone to look for him a bit harder than they are. He decides to do his own detective work and does a little investigating of his own.

Everyone is searching the wood of Deer Creek for Jude. Jude and Stevie have always spent a lot of time in the woods, building forts and looking at that spooky house by the logging road. There always seems to be a lot of stray animals in and around the woods as well. In fact, all of the animals in Deer Creek seem to be in the woods instead of neighborhood homes and backyards.

A large portion of this book is told from Stevie's point of view. Stevie is young, scared, and confused by the things that are happening. He has echolalia which means that his speech patterns tend to have a lot of repetition. I think that the author did a fantastic job of showing how hard it was for Stevie to be taken seriously and get his thoughts out. Stevie is not a character that I ever really liked. I felt bad for him with his speech difficulties but I became tired of reading his repetitive speech.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a creepy story. This is the second book by Ania Ahlborn that I have read and while I didn't like it nearly as much as I enjoyed *Brother*, I found it to be a solid story. I can't wait to read more of this author's work soon.

*I received an advance reader edition of this book from Gallery, Threshold, Pocket Books via NetGalley.*

### **Initial Thoughts**

I definitely liked some parts of this book much more than others. The beginning was slow for me but the last 25% of the book was fantastic.

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

Stevie lives in a small town where he gets picked on in school for stuttering and 'seeing' things differently than the other kids. He also gets beat on at home by his turd of a step-father. He does have one thing that he enjoys in life though, he BFF-ship with his cousin Jude. They do the normal boy stuff, beat on each other, play Monopoly...go into the woods and find a creepy old house.

Then Jude goes missing. Everyone seems to be kinda half-heartedly looking for him. Stevie can't stand that so he decides to do the detective work himself. He has watched all those true crime TV shows after all. He misses his friend and wants him home.

He finds out that years ago there was another young boy who went missing and he was found later in pieces (totally grossed out yet? If so this gets much more gory than that..so run)

Then there is the fact that no one in town really has pets. There are animals around but they will not stay out of the woods.

Suddenly Jude does come home. The boy IS NOT the same. It's like that whole Salem's Lot thing of the dead should stay dead thing happening. But he wasn't dead. He has changed though.

Then you find out why. Good lawd.

This was the perfect day before Halloween read to scare the shit out of me. I will say that if you have some trigger stuff about animals meeting their deadly end, you probably aren't gonna love this one. Or humans meeting the end. Just hide under the covers; or do like I did and read the heck out of it.

*Booksource: Netgalley in exchange for review.*

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### **Zoeytron says**

If you are willing to risk your peace of mind, sit down with **The Devil Crept In** and begin to read. Know that the possibility is very real that it will nick and natter away at your sanity.

You come across a dilapidated house set far back in the woods. The trees around it are shivering, or perhaps it is the spiders skittering madly in the branches that make it seem so. There is something hunkered down in the shadows on the porch, something misshapen and malformed. Backtrack. Get away from there. Now.

Stevie Clark just can't seem to get a break. He has stumps for where some of his fingers should be, he stutters and stammers, speaks in rhymes that are rife with verbal ticking. He sees things that aren't really there, or at least things that can't be seen by others. Oh, and his stepfather is an absolute nightmare. Stevie has one friend, his cousin Jude. Jude goes missing for several days, and upon his return, he is Jude, but not Jude.

Another winner from Ania Ahlborn. She knows horror.

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### **Shelby says**

I love horror books and this was the best I've read in a while. I haven't read many lately though since I have a hard time finding good horror authors/books. Ahlborn's writing reminds me of Nick Cutter's horror style; creepy but not too ridiculous. Honestly this is the best horror I've read since reading Cutter's *The Troop* and *The Deep* (his newer title *Little Heaven* didn't live up to the hype for me). I can't wait to read more of Ahlborn's work!

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### **Bark says**

This story starts out a little slow but it's of the slow burn variety that builds into something terrible and terrifying so I didn't mind too much.

Stevie's best and only friend, Jude, wandered out into the woods near their home one day and never came home. No one besides Jude's mother and Stevie seem terribly upset about it. Jude was an unlikable sort, sure, but the lack of interest in finding him is a little bothersome so Stevie decides to investigate on his own. He and Jude had spent endless hours in the forest doing what boys do in the woods and came upon a creepy old house. Stevie is certain that house has something to do with Jude's disappearance.

This story is a mishmash of many horror-ish things. It's a coming of age tale mixed up with remnants of King's *Pet Sematary* and a splattering of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* but it's totally its own story. What is eventually revealed is horrifying, disturbing and very gruesome and could give you nightmares if you think about the images too much.

I enjoyed the slow unraveling of this story and watching how the origin of a nightmare begins. Stevie was an interesting kid, struggling with a disorder that makes him a target and growing up with an assholish step-dad. He's determined to find his friend and later he's unafraid to stir up a little trouble to get at the truth. There's a side story that I won't reveal that absolutely captured me where one very unlucky woman is faced with a moral dilemma like none other I've ever read and I felt for her. She only wanted love but she got something else entirely!

A word of warning, if you need one, there are deaths in here and many of them happen to innocent little beasts but it's all part of this story and felt like an awful, natural progression of one of the characters.

If you like your horror gory and creepy then this one's for you.

*I received an ARC of this book from Netgalley. Thanks, Netgalley!*

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## Navidad Thelamour says

Ania Ahlborn's *The Devil Crept In* is the new *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* for adults--a lot of you will know that reference \*wink\*. Centered around a small town in Oregon, this novel had just enough bite to be entertaining, yet, the jury is still out on whether or not anyone's going to be kept up late at night thinking about this one.

Stevie Clark is a 10-year-old loner—rather, he has no friends other than his best friend and cousin, Jude. His slight speech impediment (echolalia) and missing fingers on one hand make him an outsider, the weird kid in the eyes of other kids. Add to that his abusive father-in-law who knows his way around a belt, and you can image how distraught Stevie would be when, one day his best friend, Jude, goes missing. When Jude suddenly turns back up, he's...different: blank in the face, unresponsive to questions...his skin is peeling and itchy and...well, he's attracting all the mangy, sickly neighborhood cats like some sort of sick beacon for wildlife...

All the makings of an excellent novel are here. Ahlborn even did a good job of stepping into a 10-year-old's shoes and showing us Stevie's world through his eyes. Stevie was as unreliable a narrator as you would expect from an elementary schooler, seeing shadows in the night and tripping and falling all over himself every time he sensed something—a moving shadow, a twitch in his periphery—out of the ordinary. His relationship to his peers and neighbors, his possibly overactive imagination—it all bundled together to work in this package. *The Devil Crept In* featured two converging story lines, which Ahlborn did an okay job at integrating—I say “okay” because I was prepared to throw the back of my hand to my forehead with a melodramatic sigh at the cliché-ness of some of the plot angles. Rosie's story line, for example, I felt I'd read somewhere already—lots of places, actually. It read like a horror-movie cliché that'd been overdone too many times. Yet, just as I was ready to heave an annoyed sigh, Ahlborn got it together and recovered pretty nicely, definitely helped along by a few awesome turns of phrase that warranted an appreciative pause. Eventually, the creepy crept in and the story lines did, indeed, tie together.

For those of you who are fans Stephen King's child-centered scary fiction, this one may be a real treat for you! I couldn't help but think of his “Mile 81,” because of *Devil's* tone, descriptions and insight through a determined, though easily frightened, young boy's eyes. This one read authentically from the POV of a 10-year-old, while using adult language to describe the happenings surrounding these characters. Honestly, I both appreciated that and felt jarred by it. Like, hmm, would an elementary schooler really describe a demon as having “cauliflower ears like a boxer...?” (Thinking face—probably not.)

All in all, Ania Ahlborn's *The Devil Crept In* was a fun little read that could've been shortened down to 300 pages or so, to make it more streamlined and faster to the action. It had its pros and cons, as many novels do, but there were also more than a few loose ends here left flapping in the breeze, let me tell ya!

With that in mind, I would recommend this novel to anyone in need of a quick jolt of excitement. If you're not interested in looking under the hood of a read to see how it all connects together—at what every little turned screw and nuance might mean for the overall performance—but you just want to get on with the creepy, pick this one up. It'll definitely get you where you need to be. But, maybe, don't read it alone...in the woods...

3-3.5 stars \*\*\*

I received an advance-read copy of this novel from the publisher, Gallery Books, via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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#### **Laura says**

Jude goes missing, so his cousin tries to find him. The animals in this town are all disappearing. Years ago, a boy went missing only to be found dead in pieces. And now when Jude suddenly reappears, he is different.

Stevie is best friends with his cousin Jude. Jude is two years older and is really his only friend. Stevie is bullied because he has a speech impediment and missing fingers on one hand. He also has an abusive step-father. It is really sad, so by the time Jude is missing you really feel for Stevie. My heart hurt for him. I only wish the first part wasn't so slow-burn. It took a while to really pull me into the story.

The second part follows Rosie's perspective. She is a woman living in the forest who desperately wants a baby. And part three is where the two storylines come together and everything begins to make more sense.

I prefer books to have some sort of plausibility even within completely unrealistic situations. I just want things to add up. I can certainly stretch and bend my imagination, go with the flow of things. But if things don't even make sense within the terms of the plot, then I just can't.

There were loose ends, things that don't work together, and one of the characters (Stevie's mom, Nicole) seemed to change depending on the situation the author was trying to display.

If it weren't for the epilogue, this may have even been a 1 star for me. The ending was beyond excellent for a story that didn't make sense. I love an ending that makes you question everything you assume you know. You could honestly jump in at part 3 only knowing that a boy went missing and just returned and you'd still get the same effect from the ending. The only issue is you'd have to suffer through unnecessary, questionable details.

This just didn't work for me.

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#### **11811 (Eleven) says**

I never made a kid but if I did, he'd probably be something like Otto - not much of a conversationalist, loves animals... you'll get to know Otto better when you read the book...

I love Ania's writing. Different from Stephen King, but like the King, events that occur outside of the specific plot glue me to the pages as much as whatever relates directly to the story itself, and like the King, she's a great fucking storyteller.

The story of two adolescent boys written by a woman who must have been an adolescent boy in a past life

because she captures it so well. Our protagonist has an authentic ten year old understanding of real life problems. He gets it. Not always 100%, but he gets it. He knows some older people get sick with the "melon noma." He knows some soldiers come home with the "post dramatic stress." He knows these things. Imperfectly, but pretty close. That's growing up.

Ania nails growing up.

I think this is being officially released tomorrow so if you're coming across this review today, it's a great excuse to buy a copy. Top notch coming-of-age-horror. 4+ stars.

I received a free ARC from Netgalley blah blah blah, honest review, blah blah blah...

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