



The Babysitter Murders

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Everyone has disturbing thoughts sometimes. But for seventeen-year-old Dani Solomon, strange thoughts have taken over her life. She loves Alex, the little boy she babysits, more than anything. Then one day she envisions harming him. The images are so gruesome, she can't get them out of her mind. In fact, Dani's worried that she might actually kill Alex. So she confesses her thoughts to keep him safe—and consequently sets off a media frenzy that makes "Dani Death" the target of an extremist vigilante group. Through the help of a daring psychiatrist, Dani begins to heal her broken mind. But will it be too late? The people of her community want justice...and Dani's learning that some thoughts are better left unsaid.

Janet Ruth Young writes convincingly about mental illness. Dani's disorder is based on a real form of OCD and her treatment incorporates actual psychiatric methods, making *The Babysitter Murders* an authentic read that teens won't be able to put down.

The Babysitter Murders Details

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From Reader Review The Babysitter Murders for online ebook

Kelly Hager says

Like many teenage girls, Dani earns her money by babysitting. Unlike many teens, though, Dani has started having disturbing thoughts. She thinks of saying really mean things to her best friend and mom and she sometimes pictures hurting people. Worst (and most often) of all, she pictures killing Alex, the little boy she babysits for.

When I say this, I don't mean she thinks of punishing Alex. She imagines taking a knife and stabbing him to death.

She tries to tell people (her mom and best friend, for example) but she can't express the severity of the thoughts and no one takes her seriously. Finally, she tells the boy's mom...and then all hell breaks loose.

I know that I have had mean thoughts (primarily during arguments or aimed at drivers who cut me off and then drive slowly), but Dani's are unprovoked. It's not that she wants to call her mom names or hit her during an argument. They'll be having a normal conversation and Dani will picture saying hideous things to her mom or hurting her. She sees herself doing it and imagines the grisly aftermath. The pictures in her mind are so vivid that she has to actually doublecheck to make sure that she hasn't actually done or said what she imagines herself saying.

This is an incredibly interesting book, one that I couldn't stop reading. The word I keep coming back to, though, is "unsettling." The only other book I've read that has been this creepy is probably *We Need to Talk About Kevin* by Lionel Shriver. In fact, this book is almost like that one, only told from Kevin's perspective.

(The difference, obviously, is that Kevin actually does the awful things he thinks about; Dani is completely horrified by them.)

This book is not for everyone. It's completely horrifying in places, and it's not an easy book to read. But it's well worth the effort. Highly recommended.

Donna says

For the first seventy pages or so the story actually ambled along a bit slowly for my taste. After my first sitting I was wondering when the story would get to the point. For that first chunk that I read, it was just set-up for Dani but it was really schizophrenic. Not in a character sense but in a story sense. The plot was just all over the place and I was left wondering when it would all come together and I'd get to see something that resembled the blurb.

But not long after that the plot rolled over the hill and just kept tumbling down. The second Dani opened her mouth about her thoughts everything just catapulted. I was so engrossed in the plot to the point that I wanted to write an editorial to the paper in the book stating how horrible and sheep-like the townsfolk were for treating Dani the way they did.

I don't think this is a book just about OCD but I think it's about the greater lynch-mob-mentality that people have a tendency of getting. Instead of listening to reason, and seeing sense, people just hop on the bandwagon and convict of their own accord. I was truly frightened for Dani. I honestly didn't know how the story was going to end up with all of the crazy vigilante action going on.

OCD is a disabling disease and it's not always about the germs. I'm glad Young tackled the issue from a different perspective instead of going to a failsafe standard route for OCD. I don't think the kinds of thoughts that Dani has are all that abnormal. I really don't. I don't think we're all latent serial killers or anything but I do think things like murder poke at our deepest morbid curiosity. When we have these thoughts, we tend to just file them away because they are so horrifying. But what if you don't have that kind of control? What if those thoughts take up your day? Starting changing the way you act and your routine? Convince you that you're actually dangerous?

I'm not sure I understand why Dani took the approach she did and told the person she did. It didn't seem like a wise move from any vantage point. I would have liked to have seen a little more of the why behind Dani choosing the person she did to unload upon. It definitely would have cleared up some of my confusion but it definitely exacerbated her problem instead of fixing it. Gotta love those plot bunnies!

The way the story is structured it makes for a really quick read but at the same time the story will suck you in so thoroughly that you'll plow through it anyway. Young wrote it in such a way that Dani was truly sympathetic and despite everything going on around her you were rooting for her. Did she have murderous thoughts? Yes. But nothing is what it seems and you can never listen to rumors.

I loved how the most unexpected people stuck by Dani's side and those that you thought should wavered a bit. It was shocking to see people's real personalities come out in the face of something like this. It's really telling. But it made the story all the richer and realistic. It could happen. Why not? How many people are suffering from OCD on a daily basis? You don't know what anyone's thinking until they tell you. And then what would you do?

Up there in line with *A BLUE SO DARK*, *THE BABYSITTER MURDERS* is a poignant look into a mind sick with OCD and a girl's struggle to fix it. You'll get sucked in and go on Dani's bumpy, and frightening, ride with her. You'll want to root for her and hope to whatever god you believe in that she'll turn out okay. You'll probably be disgusted with the way the majority of the townsfolk reacted and maybe you'll feel like me and want to write an editorial to tell them just how crappy they are. It's a book about help and hope and it showcases that if you have the right support system, regardless of what's going on around you, you can make it through. I loved it.

Rebecca says

What do you do when you have horrible, inappropriate thoughts? Should you tell someone? Should these thoughts be treated as done deeds?

Dani is a very believable character. You know/knew her at your own high school. You knew her friends. You knew her classmates. You've read about rumors on the internet spiralling fast out of control(You may have been wrapped up in such a story.) My only quibble was that after the long build up to the "confession," I think the aftermath went a little too fast. I understand the quick ratcheting up of the community hysteria, I read a lot of news and community blogs online, I see it in real life. However, things came to kind of an

abrupt stop. The bittersweet, melancholy of the ending was fitting. The story wouldn't have rang so true if the ending had been wrapped up neatly.

I will say that it was well-written and I pretty much read it straight through. That doesn't happen often these days. It would label this book a pretty quick read, easily digestable. The subject matter is a little disturbing, it's supposed to be, but there is very little actual violence in the book and no small children are harmed. There was very little questionable language in the book.

I got this from a S&S egalley posting. It was easily readable on my Kobo.

Lauren (Luna) says

3?

So I picked this book up a few years ago at a discount bookshop in a deal "3 books for £5" and the subject intrigued me so I thought it would be worth a go. I decided to finally get around to reading it this year with the challenge marker "A book I own but have never read."

The story focuses on a teenage girl named Dani who babysits for a little boy called Alex. Alex loves Dani, and Dani loves him. (Alex is quite possibly a neglected child).

Dani starts having dark, disturbing thoughts about killing Alex with the big knife in the kitchen, as well as hurting other key players in her life.

Fast becoming overwhelmed, and believing the best way to protect Alex is to tell the truth, Dani confesses her disturbing thoughts to Alex's mom.

Turns out this maybe wasn't the best move to make because Dani soon becomes the centre of a media storm and people are going out of their way to be isolating, or cruel, or try to physically harm Dani.

The book focuses on what it is like to live with OCD, and not the type of OCD that nearly everyone is familiar with (washing hands constantly).

As someone who lives with mental health disorders I found it kind of comforting to know that other people do similar things that I do. I also deal with intrusive thoughts, I also have a compulsion with my hands to try and distract myself.

This is the first book I've read that has a character like this that isn't also a super evil villain.

However, I found the writing quite dull in places, and I really disliked the "chapters". I know it was done to show viewpoints changing and to show the pace of thoughts, but a string of chapters that last half a page each just bugged me.

I wish this book had been just a little bit more.

Danya says

This review was for my blog event Psychtember, so it's formatted a little differently than usual, to reflect the mental health theme. I've structured things as though the book is the patient and I'm giving them an assessment. Each axis is an aspect of the book that I'll give my thoughts on (characters, plot, etc.), and the

validity score refers to how psychologically accurate I think the book is, with the final diagnosis being my shooting star rating. The rating still reflects my overall view of the book, using my standard rating system.

Patient: *The Babysitter Murders* by Janet Ruth Young

Assessment:

Axis 1. Characters

Dani's a character you definitely have to sympathize with. She has a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) that not many people understand, and it alienates her from others when she shares the kinds of thoughts she's having. But she herself is scared of and confused about these thoughts, and so it only makes matters worse that almost everyone else reacts with horror and disgust.

I didn't connect with most of the other characters in the same way. Shelley was, for a large part of the book, the kind of "best friend" who leaves you high and dry when you most need her. She has her own personal sub-plot going on, but it wasn't as compelling to me as Dani's. There are two guys, Gordy and Nathan, who are friendly to Dani, but they're pretty flat characters, never really becoming more than just "nice guys."

I did like Dani's mom, since it was obvious that she wanted to help her daughter but didn't know how. Malcolm and his dad were well-sketched, creepy but believable, and Alex's mom — while infuriating — was also, for the most part, realistic in her behaviour.

Axis 2. Premise/plot

I have to give Janet Ruth Young major points for writing about a type of OCD that is quite common, and yet not well-known or understood by the general public. There need to be more books like *The Babysitter Murders* out there, to support individuals struggling with these issues, and to better educate their friends/family/acquaintances.

Plot-wise, you will need to take *The Babysitter Murders* with a grain or two of salt as the reaction to Dani's OCD escalates and becomes a media story. However, the emotion behind the public response rings true. I can certainly see how a confession like Dani's — "*I keep having these thoughts about killing Alex*" — could stir up a frenzy among ignorant parents in the neighbourhood, who are frightened that Dani is actually dangerous. I also got the impression that Hawthorne is a small town, which gave the "sensational" aspect of the story a bit more believability. And the excerpts from various media — newspapers, a blog, etc. — really added something to the story, making it feel more real.

There was one event I found kind of pointless in terms of building tension and momentum for the storyline. In fact, it just served to delay the rest of the plot. (view spoiler)

The ending seemed somewhat anti-climactic to me, although it's probably a good deal more plausible than the more extreme one I was anticipating. However, I really appreciated the symbolism in the climactic scene; not to give anything away, but there's an interesting kind of mirroring/role reversal going on that really works. I was a bit concerned, though, with how Dani's relationship with Alex wraps up, since it could have ramifications for her progress in getting better.

Axis 3. Writing Style

I had a difficult time getting into the writing style of this book. It's third-person present omniscient POV from what I can tell, which is rather unusual. I'm not a fan of present-tense generally, so this is more just a personal preference, but I did find the perspective was a stumbling block to becoming completely absorbed in the story. It may just be the nature of this POV, but I felt like I was being told a fair bit rather than shown it. That said, the third-person omniscient aspect shed some light on other characters in the novel, while still allowing the reader to understand the protagonist Dani. In particular, it was interesting to see how some of the adults were portrayed — there is no illusion of perfection for many of them, including Dani's mother.

I also thought that some of the OCD elements could have been woven in more smoothly; it sometimes felt like they were mentioned to get the facts across rather than because they were crucial to the storyline or Dani's character.

The dialogue gave me some trouble in terms of authenticity. The teens — Dani and Gordy in particular — often said lines that seemed too mature for their age, resulting in dialogue that came off as stilted and unnatural.

Axis 4. Psychological Accuracy

The Babysitter Murders does an excellent job of sticking to the facts about this kind of OCD. The unnerving thoughts that Dani has fall into some of the common categories — for instance, harming others or engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour. The compulsions Dani performs to lessen her anxiety make sense with her obsessive thoughts. For instance, Dani will clutch her hands together to reassure herself that she is not going to harm someone else, and touch her lips to check that she has not blurted out anything inappropriate.

I appreciated that *The Babysitter Murders* demonstrates how people who are well-intentioned may attempt to help an individual with OCD, but end up only enabling them to continue with their obsessions and compulsions. Her mom does this when she locks her door at Dani's request, since in Dani's mind it gives strength to the fear that she will actually hurt her mother.

But what I really loved was seeing the cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) that Dani undergoes. I've noticed that of the YA books dealing with mental health issues, not that many of them actually go into detail about treatment. It was such a pleasant surprise to see Dr. Mandel acting very much like a therapist trained in CBT would. She was professional and down-to-earth, not falling prey to stereotypes. Moreover, although the technique Dr. Mandel uses with Dani is unnamed in the book, it's quite obvious that she's getting Dani to practice "exposure and response prevention" — which is *exactly* what should be done for OCD. (Medication is another possibility, or a combination of the two, but it is not brought up as a potential treatment for Dani. I wondered a bit at this — perhaps it's because she's still quite young, or perhaps her clinical psychologist wanted to try CBT first before referring her to a psychiatrist for medication...but I thought it a little strange the option was never discussed.)

This book also makes very clear the level of ignorance in the general public about this kind of OCD. When the town finds out about Dani's problem, they don't realize it's OCD — some even believe she's a psychopath. Its portrayal of how people react to something they don't understand and don't trust is spot-on.

Validity Score: How psychologically accurate was *The Babysitter Murders*?

Axis 5. Miscellaneous

The one thing I really wish *The Babysitter Murders* had done was note the improbability of Dani actually acting on her thoughts. These are unwanted thoughts that are reprehensible to the individual with OCD — hence the need for their compulsions. I understand why this is not mentioned in the therapy, since a key part of the CBT is getting the individual with OCD to accept uncertainty. However, I thought it would have been helpful to have had someone point out to the people of Hawthorne that Dani's OCD does not mean that she poses any more of a threat than the average person (the police do affirm that there is no case there, but that's not quite the same thing.)

Since this kind of OCD in particular is not something the general public is very aware of, it also would have been helpful to have included some basic facts about it at the back of the book, along with resources for seeking help or learning more.

Diagnosis: 3.5 shooting stars. As a portrayal of this type of OCD and the necessary treatment, I'd probably give it much closer to 5 stars, but this is my rating for the story overall.

For more information about OCD generally, see [here](#).

Disclaimer: I received this book for review from the author, for Psychtember.

For the full original version of this review, see my blog, [A Tapestry of Words](#).

Melissa (YA Book Shelf) says

I love books that make me think about real life situations, and *The Babysitter Murders* is definitely one such book. When people hear information on the news or through their neighbors and friends about someone who committed a crime or possibly even just thought of it, as in the case of Dani Solomon - the main character in this book - we're often quick to judge. We take out the word "alleged" when we speak about it, convicting them before they have a chance to have their day in court. Sometimes police officers share sensitive information with their family members, who tell someone else, who tells someone else, and before we know it, we have people calling for vigilante justice.

In this compelling novel, Janet Ruth Young paints a portrait of a girl with an unusual type of mental illness that is sure to make you think, too.

Rebecca McNutt says

The Babysitter Murders isn't actually a murder mystery or anything. Actually its plot focuses more on a young girl with OCD and her obsessive, disturbing thoughts that make a group of adults question her state of mind. I thought it was a very creative and eye-opening story and I really recommend it.

Kerstyn says

I'm torn. On the one hand, I think the subject is fascinating. As someone with anxiety and, often, mild intrusive thoughts, there were things in the book I could relate to. What I couldn't relate to was the awful

dialogue. The characters didn't sound like real people most of the time, and that took me out of the story too often. It also just didn't feel very realistic after a while. Girlfriend lived in the woods for three days, for pete's sake. She was being stalked and threatened and the police provided no protection. I don't know. I was just constantly having to suspend my disbelief to stay in the story.

TL;DR - good idea, poor execution.

Grace Lee says

More like The Babysitter's Homicidal Thoughts. The title and summary were incredibly intriguing and the book could of had so much potential! I picked this up at the library on an impulse. I know now to come prepared. The novel felt like it was written my a thirteen year old. I couldn't connect with any characters and it was hard to imagine the book's settings. The ending made me wanted go Fahrenheit 451 on the book. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a common mental illness that people should be open about. If I was having obsessing thoughts I wouldn't want to discuss it after seeing the dramatic conclusion that happened to Dani after discussing her problems. It's just setting a bad rap for people with OCD.

Rachel Star says

The Babysitter Murders is one of the best accounts of mental illness in teenagers that I have read this year, so credit must go to the author for working so hard to accurately present the experiences of Dani; Dani's unusual (or perhaps more accurately, under-publicized) form of OCD was brilliantly captured, in my opinion, and never over-dramatised. She may be one of my favourite protagonists of the year; brave, misunderstood and honest. One of the reasons this novel works so well and I scored it so highly is because of the characters; not because they're all perfect, nice people (which they certainly aren't) but because they felt very genuine, and their voices realistic, making The Babysitter Murders feel more and more real and sucking me further into the pages the more I read.

Unfortunately, the third person narration didn't work that well for me at the start, but a couple of chapters in and I managed to get involved in the story enough not to notice it anymore. Similarly, the start is a little slow. But it gets much better, and soon I was so hooked I couldn't stop reading.

The Babysitter Murders is definitely a different read, something that stands out for being brilliantly characterized and really original.

Disclaimer: Many thanks go to S&S for providing this as a free review copy. This has in no way affected my review.

Marisa says

I wish I liked this book more. I was fairly fascinated by the premise. Dani is an overachieving junior in high school. She's in line to be named as co-captain of the tennis team with her best friend, she's a prominent member of the school's a Capella group, and she babysits four nights a week for a Alex, a five year old boy. Alex's mom is disorganized and Dani often has to buy Alex's dinner with her own money, but she loves him.

And Mrs. Alex, a single working mom, really depends on her. Dani's greatest fear is disappointing the people she cares about -- she'd rather be disappointed herself than disappoint someone else.

Which is why it catches Dani completely off guard when she starts having thoughts of killing Alex. She'd never hurt him, she loves him. But when Dani starts to have more and more disturbing thoughts -- about pushing her mom off a ladder, outing her best friend, yelling inappropriate things at the nice old couple across the street, grabbing her choir teacher's testicles, slaughtering the boy she has a crush on -- she starts to worry about her sanity. She tells Alex' mom that she can no longer babysit. When Mrs. Alex presses Dani to reveal her reasons, Dani confesses her thoughts about harming Alex. Alex's mom calls the police, and although Dani is not arrested and has no charges brought against her, word gets out. She's christened "Dani Death," receives death threats, and is literally hunted by a vigilante group.

Like I said, I really like this premise. The story is rife with opportunities for discussion -- mental disorders, personal rights vs. needs (desires/safety/etc.) of the community, the unscrupulous media, unscrupulous law enforcers -- but it's very poorly written. It's on the verge of being preachy, it's clearly written "at" teens by an adult, and the dialogue is terrible.

Take the following quote from a boy who's got a crush on Dani: "This is the worst day of my life and the best. The worst because I've discovered that you care for someone else, and the best because I'm saving your life." This is supposed to be a 17 year old boy, and he says "I've discovered that you care for someone else," instead of "I found out you like Gordy," or "I found out you're seeing Gordy," or any number of more conversational, more 17 year old boy-like things. It would be one thing if this character were just a very well-spoken, composed character, but almost all the characters talk like this. It just doesn't ring true.

Savannah (Books With Bite) says

For me, as I started this book, it was real easy to fall into the story line. We have a teenage girl, who is overwhelmed by a lot of things. So much so, that she starts to over think things and her thoughts. Dani, has bad thought just like everyone. But these thoughts scare her so much that she just freaked herself out.

It is hard for me to write this review cause I am not sure how to get the right words to describe this book. The story line of this book is simple yet filling. The reader sees Dani the main character deal with her thoughts. I like that Dani took the steps necessary to help her in whatever way possible. She knew her thoughts were wrong, so did she what she thought best.

The best part about this book are the towns people. They overreacted way tooo much! I'm all for being protective of your kids but if there was no harm done, why react that way. They acted like a mobbed just waiting to get their chance at Dani. Even her friends I was shocked with that they acted. We've all have dirty thoughts we can't control. So I was angry that the people reacted so harshly instead of helping they made it worse.

I like this book cause of the great psychological thrillers. It really give a great descriptions of what goes on inside of ones mind and how it explodes once let out.

Ashley says

Originally reviewed on my blog, Books from Bleh to Basically Amazing.

The Babysitter Murders by Janet Ruth Young is a tough book to read. It's the story of Dani, a young girl who babysits a little boy named Alex, and he is just the cutest thing ever. Alex is such a sweet kid and Dani genuinely loves him and enjoys being a part of his life, even though his mom (who Dani calls Mrs. Alex) takes advantage of Dani and is someone who bothered me from the very beginning of the book. But then some stuff starts to change for Dani and her mind begins to betray her. She finds herself having violent thoughts, vivid imaginings where she will stab Alex with a large kitchen knife.

At first, she tries to just shake off the thoughts but they continue, and the longer they go on, the more vivid and violent they become. Then Dani starts having similar thoughts in other areas of her life, around other people. She imagines saying horrid things to and about her best friend, her mom, doing cruel and horrible things to her new boyfriend, doing embarrassing things to her teachers and more. The thoughts get so vivid and are so strong that she looks around in a panic, desperately trying to determine whether or not it actually happened.

Dani tries talking to both her best friend and her mom about what's happening, but neither are very receptive to Dani and neither are able, or really even willing to offer the help she needs. Awkward conversations and willful ignorance... Finally, not knowing what else to do, Dani confesses her thoughts to Alex's mom, hoping that she will finally stop nagging her to keep babysitting. Immediately, Mrs. Alex goes upstairs and calls the police.

And here is where this book really started to become the mind-changer that it is. This is a book that forced me to reevaluate some of my assumptions and the lines that I've drawn. I have a tendency to view much of my world in black and white. I understand that there is a lot of gray area in the world. I get it. I do. But, I am also willing to admit that I refuse to see a lot of that gray area. Child abuse, rape etc are things that I have a firm black and white view on. So is child endangerment and the rights of a mother to protect her child. BUT, and here is where this book starts to really hit home, the mother in this book, who thought she was doing what was best for her son, did not handle it well. What she ends up doing, by calling the police is opening up a can of worms that is going to change everything and might possibly destroy lives.

One of the police officers who comes to pick up Dani from Mrs. Alex's house is a really great guy. He's concerned about Dani and he takes the time to talk to her, to really figure out what is going on with her and he tells her mom she needs to be seeing a therapist. The other cop however, is the type with a huge chip on his shoulder, the belief that he is better than everyone else, and that the rich kids (Dani) are never actually accountable for their actions. He takes these feelings home with him, and passes them along to his son, a kid at Dani's school. This cop is one of the worst characters in the novel and every single scene with him in it made my skin crawl. He talks to his son about teenage girls in a horribly inappropriate way, discussing their bodies and physical attributes. Talking about a teen girl's bra size when you are 16 is crass but not a big deal. But being 45 and talking about a 16 year old's bra size to your 16 year old son?! Creepy, inappropriate and wrong.

His son, Malcolm takes his dad's opinions about the case (stuff he overhears, because cops are bot supposed to talk about this stuff at all) and he starts spreading news around, targeting Dani, although for a long time he doesn't use her name. This creates a lot of unrest and chaos and it becomes dangerous for Dani. People start making threats and a private vigilante group comes to town to try and 'pick up where the law left off'. This

scared me a little bit. While reading this book, you are firmly on Dani's side. It's so obvious that she doesn't want or welcome these thoughts, that she is desperate to get rid of them and beyond terrified that she is somehow going to act on them. But the members of the community don't get to hear that, and by the time anyone might say something about it, they are too far gone to want to listen anymore.

I read this book, and realized that those people might have been me. Not the vigilante group (although, it scared me to realize that in some circumstances, I might have agreed more strongly with them) but with the people in general who believed that she was a monster. Having access to Dani's thoughts changed things for me, made me realize that there are some instances where a black and white view of the world is dangerous and isn't always to be welcomed. It's part of human nature, this tendency to judge before being sure of all our facts and this is a book that makes you really stop to think.

Dani faces such challenges and it's really heartbreakingly to watch her. She is terrified. She has no idea what is going on, why her mind suddenly feels like it no longer belongs to her and she is genuinely afraid she is going to hurt someone, and she wants to do whatever it takes to prevent that.

I don't want to really spoil this part for readers, because I think it's important for the reader to discover some of this along with Dani, but as you can gather from the synopsis, Dani finds herself struggling with a mental illness. This is one of the most complete pictures of Dani's particular illness that I've ever read. I graduated with a degree in Psychology and this is a disorder I studied during my undergrad. I get really frustrated when I read a book that paints an incomplete or incorrect picture of a mental illness, but this one was marvelously written. I want to hug the therapist that Dani ends up going to see. I'm still not sure what exactly I want to do with my Psychology degree, but if I were to take it into counseling, that is the type of therapist I hope I could be.

Watching Dani learn to live with her illness, learn to cope with the changes in her life broke my heart at the same time it was so empowering. She is such a fabulous character. I just wanted to hug her for so much of the novel because she really is lost and scared. Your mind is supposed to be the one thing that is fully yours, fully under your control. What are you supposed to do if your mind turns on you, becomes a thing you fear?

The Babysitter Murders is a book that will challenge you and your perceptions, that will help you grow as a person and as a thinker and it's one that is going to tear at your heart. It's also a book that begs discussion, the needs to be talked about. So, if you finish, and you need someone to talk to, you know where to find me.

Vinaya says

Q: How do you know when you've been reading too many YA paranormals?

Ans: When you read a blurb about a babysitter who's been having disturbing, murderous thoughts, and automatically assume a demon/fallen angel/vampire is telepathically implanting them in her brain!

Yeah, so... no. That's not what this book is about. *embarrassed grin* This is actually a YA *contemporary* novel about a seventeen year old girl who suddenly finds herself having graphic, disturbingly violent visions of insulting, hurting and even killing the people she loves best. At first, Dani tries to push them away, but as they escalate, her only desire is to get away so she can keep from hurting her loved ones.

The last straw comes when she repeatedly finds herself having visions of stabbing and killing Alex, the

sweet little boy she babysits. Having tried, and failed, to communicate her fears to her mom and best friend, Dani finds herself blurting out the truth to Alex's mother, with the result that the frightened woman calls the cops on her and starts a city-wide witch hunt.

I liked the understated, somewhat vernacular way in which the entire story is told, but I can see how this would not be to everyone's taste. Personally, though, I found Dani's plight all the more moving for having been left to my (admittedly excellent) imagination, rather than having it spoon-fed to me in excruciating detail. I really, really liked Dani's character. She's the sort of level-headed, stoic person I most strongly empathize with, and I loved that she had all these awful, awful thoughts in her head, and was so horrified and traumatised by them, but without ever descending into angst. I also loved that throughout the book, Dani's sweetness just shines through so clearly, as does her concern for the people she loves, and her distress at having to hurt them. (view spoiler)

I also thought the support characters were handled very well, with just the right amount of humanity. I like that Dani's eventual return to school wasn't smooth and easy, but that it wasn't pure misery either, since she did have people who understood her plight and supported her,

This story is not highly emotional in the telling, although it has some very complex-yet-subtle undertones. It handles serious, scary issues like mental health problems, and vigilante groups and betrayals by best friends in a factual, almost blasé, style that nevertheless manages to stir the reader's interest and break one's heart, just a little bit. To be honest, I'm not sure I have the words to accurately describe *why* I liked this book so much, but for some reason, I really, really did. The setting, the subject matter and the characters really appealed to me, and although this book has SEVERE COVER FAIL, I'm glad I read it.

This ARC was provided to me by the publishers for reviewing purposes.

PinkAmy loves books, cats and naps says

High school junior Dani Solomon has thoughts about hurting the little boy she babysits. She worries she's blurt out that her best friend is lesbian, or that she'll grab her music teacher's crotch. Dani is so worried she'll hurt Alex, when she tries to quit the job she loves, she tells his mother why. Soon the police are involved and Dani, who has never been in trouble a day in her life, becomes a source of rumor, gossip and speculation. And a target for vigilantes.

THINGS I SHOULDN'T THINK is a glimpse into the mind of a teen with OCD with intrusive thoughts as the primary symptom, lighthearted, yet also serious about how rumor and innuendo can snowball into beliefs that represent only a scintilla of the truth. For the first 25% of the book, I thought writer Janet Ruth Young had to be either the worst writer ever published or a creative genius. Written in multiple third person POVs, mostly Dani's THINGS I SHOULDN'T THINK is true to the mindset of a sufferer with OCD. Young should know, she has recovered from a similar OCD condition as Dani. Usually when YA authors write stories about problems they've overcome, they seem to be self-serving without perspective. Young has done a wonderful job making Dani both sympathetic and multidimensional. I'm a child psychologist and a very hard sell when it comes to accuracy and authenticity.

I'm off to download another Janet Ruth Young book to my kindle.

Themes: friendship, mental health, sexual orientation, group-think, gossip, mass-hysteria, OCD, treatment

If you're interested in mental health and contemporary fiction THINGS I SHOULDN'T THINK A CHANCE is a must read. Don't give up if you're confused or perplexed.
