

*The Poisoned House*

Michael Ford

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This novel is a ghost story set in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. The main character, Abigail Tamper, is a fifteen year old servant working in a mansion called the Greave Hall. She started working in the mansion because her mother used to be a servant as well, but she died because of a mysterious illness. Abi's father is rumored to be a criminal who abandoned his wife and daughter. The owner of the mansion is referred to as "His Lordship". This man is very sick because his son left for war, and never leaves his room, so Mrs. Cotton, his sister-in-law makes sure that the servants are working properly. Since Mrs. Cotton is extremely strict, Abi tries to escape from the house, but is caught. As Mrs. Cotton's attitude becomes more and more cruel towards her, Abi begins to see strange marks in the house, such as footprints and handprints left by no one. At first she blames these marks on another servant playing a joke, but after a strange and scary incident one night, she realizes that a ghost is trying to communicate with her. To communicate with this spirit, Abi tries ways of communicating with the ghost to find out who it is and what it wants. In discovering the identity of this ghost, Abi also finds out about her past and hidden secrets about the people around her.

I feel that this book is not really a ghost story because it is more like a suspense novel. However, the author uses vivid words to describe gruesome images, so this book is a little bit scary. This book is a very well-written suspense novel, with the twists in the book much unexpected. The book is full of action and violence in the end. The only part that I did not like about this book is that the names get mixed up because there are so many people, and the characters are sometimes referred to by their first name, sometimes by their last names.

This book would be appropriate for middle-school students, because anyone younger would be too afraid by the descriptions. Anyone older than in middle school would be bored by the book, because the only action is towards the end of the book. I would recommend this book to borrow from the library because this book is in a specific genre that not all people may like.

I really like the words that the author uses to describe objects and the dialogue is clever.

In addition to this book, I would recommend other books of the similar mix of genres, such as *Coraline*, *Shutter Island*, and other books with mystery-suspense-horror.