



Grey Dog

Elliott Gish

ECW Press (Apr 9, 2024)

Softcover \$18.95 (404pp)

978-1-77041-732-8

In Elliott Gish's gothic horror novel *Grey Dog*, an unmarried teacher is pitted against a forest-dwelling monster.

In 1901, Ada is thirty years old and a reluctant teacher. She takes up a new posting in small-town Lowry Bridge. The locals appear friendly at the outset—bar Mrs. Kinsley, a purported witch, and a woodsy student's reclusive father. And even as she befriends Agatha, the preacher's wife, Ada avoids revealing too much about her troubled past.

As she gets to know the locals, Ada recognizes that there is plenty of history to mine in the tension between them. Her hosts are generous but shy, and they are at odds with Mrs. Kinsley. Her investigation into their lives leads her to identify more with people's darker tendencies than their kinder ones, though. And the deeper Ada integrates into the community, the more she hears a voice from the forest calling her name.

Ada's story is relayed through her journal entries, beginning with her arrival in Lowry Bridge and ending with her haunting departure a year later. The long early period in which Ada navigates teaching in a new town gives way to creepy, mysterious elements in the book's second half, wherein crickets and dead birds fall from the sky, though only Ada sees them. The trauma of her removal from her last posting begins to hijack her thoughts and behaviors. The feminine ideals that she adores in others falter in her, and her visions grow more grotesque and personal. Her odd behavior is isolating. Twisted visions and forbidden longings leach into Ada's mind until she can no longer resist the urge to follow the voice into the unknown.

Grey Dog is a slow-burn feminist horror novel with a lush setting and an explosive payoff.

AIMEE JODOIN (March / April 2024)

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