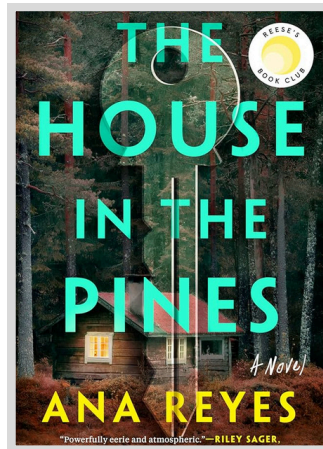


The House in the Pines by Ana Reyes



Summary

Maya was a high school senior when her best friend, Aubrey, dropped dead in front of the enigmatic man named Frank whom they'd been spending time with all summer.

Seven years later, Maya lives in Boston with a loving boyfriend and is kicking the secret addiction that has allowed her to cope with what happened years ago, the gaps in her memories, and the lost time that she can't account for. But her past comes rushing back when she comes across a recent YouTube video in which a young woman suddenly keels over and dies in a diner while sitting across from none other than Frank. Plunged into the trauma that has defined her life, Maya heads to her Berkshires hometown to relive that fateful summer—the influence Frank once had on her and the obsessive jealousy that nearly destroyed her friendship with Aubrey.

At her mother's house, she excavates fragments of her past and notices hidden messages in her deceased Guatemalan father's book that didn't stand out to her earlier. To save herself, she must understand a story written before she was born, but time keeps running out, and soon, all roads are leading back to Frank's cabin. . . .

Utterly unique and captivating, *The House in the Pines* keeps you guessing about whether we can ever fully confront the past and return home.

Provided by Publisher: Dutton

The House in the Pines by Ana Reyes



About the Author

The House in the Pines is your debut novel and a suspenseful psychological thriller about a young woman's quest to uncover the truth behind the sudden, peculiar death of her best friend and the haunting events that have followed her thereafter. What inspired you to write the story?

The inspiration was mostly subconscious. I was living alone in a new city, cut off from any place I'd call home, when I wrote the first draft. This lonely feeling inspired one of the book's major themes, which is the universal yearning to return to a place and time of belonging. That theme shaped the story and helped me build the titular house in the pines.

How did you decide to write a thriller? What about the genre was most appealing to you?

Funnily enough, it didn't start out as a thriller! The original draft was somewhat eerie and had suspenseful moments but lacked a clear genre. Luckily, I have a very talented agent who helped me see the book's thriller potential and worked with me on getting it right. Having grown up on Christopher Pike and R. L. Stine books, writing in the genre was, in retrospect, a no-brainer.

Provided by author's website:
<https://www.anareyeswriter.com/>

The House in the Pines by Ana Reyes

Discussion Questions

1. Maya shies away from true intimacy by withholding important information from Dan. How does finally telling the truth about her addiction issues, as well as Aubrey's death and her suspicions about Frank, change Maya's relationship with Dan?
2. How does Maya's dependence on various substances serve to keep her isolated in her adult life?
3. Dr. Barry, Maya's one-time therapist, says, "The unwell mind is rarely capable of recognizing its own illness"; Is Maya a reliable narrator, even to herself? How much does she trust what she perceives and remembers, and how much does she doubt her own intuition? Did you have faith in her perceptions?
4. Technology and social media play an important role in Maya's attempts to learn the truth about Frank. Do you think events would have played out differently if younger Maya had been able to research Frank online? Or would his sway still be as strong, regardless of all the information available?
5. How do stories allow these characters to open up to one another? Is this sharing of self through stories always for the best or can it have more sinister consequences?
6. How is Frank able to read Maya and prey on her vulnerability? What patterns can Maya discern in her experiences with Frank?
7. Maya is described as "half Guatemalan, a quarter Irish, and a quarter Italian"; she "looked Hispanic but had grown up with a single white mom and knew very little about her family in Guatemala." By the end of the novel, how does Maya begin to integrate her Guatemalan roots, connect with her father, and understand this part of her history?
8. Inherited trauma is woven throughout Maya's story: her father's violent death and Guatemala's tumultuous history, her aunt Lisa's mental illness, even the PCBs that poisoned the Housatonic River and Silver Lake. How does the author plant seeds of hope that it's possible to move beyond the damage of the past?
9. The author writes current scenes in the past tense, whereas past sections are in the present tense. In what ways was Maya more engaged in the past? How has Aubrey's death and her time with Frank affected her?
10. Were you surprised when you learned the truth about Frank's cabin? If not, when did you begin to suspect that something about it was wrong? 11. What did you think of the balance between the past and present sections in the novel? Did the two intersect differently for you as the read went on? Why or why not?

Questions provided by the author's website: <https://www.anareyeswriter.com/>

The House in the Pines by Ana Reyes

Professional Reviews

Publishers Weekly (11/28/2022):

The summer before Maya, the heroine of Reyes's intriguing if flawed debut, entered college, 17-year-old Aubrey West, her best friend from high school in Pittsfield, Mass., dropped dead while talking to Maya's then boyfriend, Frank Bellamy. While Aubrey's death was ruled accidental, Maya was sure that Frank killed Aubrey, but she had no way of proving it. Now, eight years later, Maya is living in Boston with a new boyfriend and is trying to kick her addiction to the medication she's been secretly taking to cope with the trauma of Aubrey's death. One sleepless night, while watching a trending YouTube video, Maya sees a young woman fatally collapse while sitting across the table from Frank in a diner. Convinced that Frank has somehow murdered another victim, Maya returns home to Pittsfield to search for answers, which may just lie in the cabin in the woods where Frank used to entertain Maya and Aubrey. Well-developed characters and a nice balance between the main narrative and the backstories draw the reader in, but the action builds to an implausible and disappointing ending. Reyes shows enough talent to suggest she can do better next time. Agent: Jenni Ferrari-Adler, Union Literary. (Jan.)

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Booklist (01/01/2023):

The traumatic past that Maya spent years determinedly burying comes roaring back as she watches an online video mysteriously labeled "Girl Dies on Camera." Maya watches a young woman enter a diner that she recognizes from her hometown--Pittsfield, Massachusetts--and sit across from Maya's ex, Frank Bellamy. While listening to Frank, the woman inexplicably slumps over, dead. Years ago, Maya watched her best friend, Aubrey, die the same way, and now she's certain that Frank somehow murdered both women. Unfortunately, Maya also knows she can't count on being believed; she's battling Klonopin withdrawal, and her memories of Frank are full of disturbing gaps. Maya drops everything to find Frank and break his hold on her, returning to Pittsfield, where she knows he's hunkered down in his well-hidden cabin. Too late, Maya realizes how Frank has kept his twisted hold on her mind, and he won't let her stop him from collecting girls. Thick psychological tension is heightened by Maya's memory lapses and reality-bending perceptions, lending the story a dark, supernatural feel. COPYRIGHT(2023) Booklist, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.