



# A Shadow on the Wall

*Jonathan Aycliffe*

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**A Shadow on the Wall Jonathan Aycliffe**  
**Some things are best left undisturbed . . .**

In the countryside of Victorian England, Edward Atherton, rector of Thornham St. Stephen, has taken on the arduous task of restoring the ancient church. But he should never have meddled with the tomb that lay beneath the church's crumbling walls. The moment the workman raised the tomb lid, an unspeakable horror escaped. At a loss to explain the unsettling noises and frightening visions that begin to plague the church, Atherton calls upon fellow antiquarian and Cambridge professor Richard Asquith to help investigate the strange events that began in the wake of the tomb's disturbance.

The two discover tantalizing hints of whom and what may have been laid to rest in the tomb, but the unforeseen circumstances force Asquith to give up his inquiries and leave the small village of Thornham behind. Asquith tries to put the frightening experiences behind him and focus on his new wife and family. But death and disappearances abound, and Robert Asquith soon has no choice but to confront the darkness that has followed him from that ancient church into his own home.

English novelist Jonathan Aycliffe has mastered the classic English ghost story, and *A Shadow on the Wall*, nominated in 2000 for the International Horror Guild Award, is sure to both mesmerize and haunt you.

## A Shadow on the Wall Details

Date : Published February 10th 2015 by Night Shade (first published September 3rd 2000)

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Author : Jonathan Aycliffe

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# From Reader Review *A Shadow on the Wall* for online ebook

## Bettie? says

Description; *Edward Atherton, Rector of Thornham St Stephen, should never have meddled with the tomb of the 14th century Abbot of Thornham. From the moment the workman raised the tomb lid, the horror began. Atherton is pursued by a malign shadowy presence to his untimely death a few weeks later.*

Opening: **Atherton appeared in my rooms two or three days after my accident. He had heard about it from Burridge, which meant the news must have travelled around most of Cambridge by then.**

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## Donnelle says

It's not at all a fast-paced story, but the atmosphere is rich and foreboding throughout, and there are a lot of genuinely chilling moments. It's a ghost story with ties to religion, family, possession, and a whole host of other issues. It's definitely a psychological ghost story, as opposed to the more in-your-face, blood-and-guts variety that has become so commonplace. Even even when the most obvious instances of horror in this book transpire, there isn't any gore, which was refreshing. All in all, it's frightening and creepy, and the suspense - though it builds slowly - continues until the very last page. It's a great book for people who enjoy ghost stories without an overabundance of violence.

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## Mike says

M R James brought up to date, but only just. An evil from the distant past. A crusty old academic who meets a beautiful young, (and French) widow. A family who seem to be paying a high price for something they don't understand. And a race against time to save a life.

This is effectively an extended short story. Given that it's 240 pages or so, nothing much happens - but it happens in a really interesting and engaging way.

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## Randolph says

A thrilling if not particularly unique ghost yarn set in what could be called Jamesian times. About 50 pages too long, it seemed a little padded to move it from novella to novel length.

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## Peter says

What a masterly written gothic ghost story in style of the 19th century! We have all the ingredients it needs: University life of Cambridge, the renovation of a tomb in an old abbey, Thornham St Stephen, a mysterious

abbot named William de Lindesey long dead, an absolutely eerie atmosphere. Does Prof Asquith, the main character of the short novella, succeed in getting rid of the evil relic? This is the right stuff for cold winter evenings. Spooky, grim, very 19th century. I also liked the numerous quotations from Latin in the book. I was absolutely surprised how good and compelling this book was. The author did a superb job with this sinister ghost story. Hats off! Absolutely recommended!

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### **Kate says**

Another excellent gothic story by Aycliffe.

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### **Valerie says**

I won *A Shadow on the Wall* by Jonathan Aycliffe in a GoodReads Giveaway. I received a beautiful hard-bound book designed to appeal to gothic horror books of yesterday. A full-color, embossed, satin-finished jacket features splatters of blood and a woodcut illustration of an old church.

*A Shadow on the Wall* is a horror story mixing classic elements of unsettled ghosts, evil rising up out of a church, and good old-fashion gothic storytelling. Nothing fancy, nothing presumptuous - just people trying to get on with their dismal, mundane lives and being interrupted in the most creepy of fashion by unfinished business from beyond the grave, business that is - as is so often the case in these beyond-the-grave situations - evil.

Our main character and story's center, Richard Asquith, narrates the tale in which he is sought to consult strange occurrences after an ancient evil escapes a tomb beneath a church during renovations. Asquith reluctantly agrees and becomes intertwined in supernaturally horrific events well past the point of his own volition. Even after he abandons the work and the local altogether, the horror plagues him and follows him and forces confrontation.

*A Shadow on the Wall* has pitch-perfect narration and is reminiscent of the psychological old horror stories of Poe, Lovecraft and Jackson. There's no blatant gore here, no shock and awe, but a building suspense and looming dread serving up a right proper case of the creeps that lingers long after the story is finished. While reading I was reminded of the literary works of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Name of the Rose*, and *The Oblong Box* to name a few.

In all fairness, *A Shadow on the Wall* can be a little slow paced for modern day readers, but for lovers of literary craft it will be a true pleasure.

Recommended as a good read for lovers of gothic horror and classic literature.

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### **Deanne says**

Great supernatural horror set in Victorian Cambridge. Our hero a bachelor don is resting after spraining his ankle when he is approached by an acquaintance in need of help.

A spooky setting in the fens, when a tomb in a church is opened the evil inside is released.

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### **Andy says**

I read this book for the same reason I read Susan Hill's "The Woman in Black," they are both ghost stories written in the style of M. R. James, something far more difficult to find than stories in the style of Lovecraft for example. I would say this is far more "Jamesian" in my opinion than is Hill's novel.

Aycliffe builds atmosphere and a sense of place, the pace is rather slow and one could almost refer to this as "cozy horror." There's a few scenes which are creepy, others which are full of merely full of unsettling details, with a lot of waiting in-between. There's evil abbots with lingering supernatural influence, old haunted cathedrals, curses and characters driven to madness by the increasing dread which the novel effectively builds.

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### **R.Z. says**

The writing simulates a medieval style and seems stuffy. There is lots of description for its own sake, and it is difficult to relate to any of the characters. The pacing of the story is slow.

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### **Whitney says**

3 and a half stars -- the beginning was a bit of a slog (probably not helped by having gone straight from a relatively fast-paced true crime memoir into a gothic-style ghost story reminiscent of M.R. James), but once it got going, the second half was really good. :)

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### **Jennifer says**

Edward Atherton was the rector of a historic church. He began restoring it when strange things started happening. His brother Matthew becomes concerned and seeks help from the narrator who really doesn't want to be involved. The two men go to the church after Edward dies suddenly and they hear the strange tale of his death. It seems that the restoration of a tomb has released the soul of a possibly godless Abbot. The narrator says a brief prayer and goes on with his life but the Atherton family continues to need his assistance. Edward's mother has seen her son's ghost. Soon a shadow haunts Matthew and then strange things begin happening at the narrator's house. When his wife falls gravely ill, he knows he must risk his life to vanquish the Abbot's spirit. This book was not as good as *The Vanishment* but I will read more books by Aycliffe.

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### **robyn says**

This was recommended to me as "Jamesian" which it most emphatically is not. Even on its own merits, it's not great, just okay.

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**Jeanine says**

I really enjoy this author's writing style and imagination. Spooky stories are so much fun.

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**S. Nemo says**

Very old-school Gothic horror, with more than a passing resemblance to M. R. James' style. I must admit it was comforting to read a story in that style, as James is one of my most beloved writers.

This is an extremely slow burn book, with a main character who is.. not selfish, but not heroic. He is far more concerned for his own affairs and that of his family's, which is completely normal and commendable, but for a protagonist, that can create a little less bonding. But there's another reason why the main character did not appeal to me: this character is the only one who appears to know what's happening and what to do about it. I place all the deaths subsequent to his knowledge of the horror squarely at his feet, (view spoiler) because he was too slow to react. This can be frustrating to other readers as it was to me.

The horror is not quite explained - there are only possibilities and conjecture based on records. I found myself wishing for fewer explanations, not more, as a lot of the old masters believed in their readers' imaginations and that made the atmosphere more dreadful.

Nevertheless, this was an enjoyable book, and I recommend it to fans of M. R. James.

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