



The Dyke and the Dybbuk

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Dybbuk Kokos, a feisty soul-stealing demon of medieval Jewish folklore, has been trapped in a tree for two hundred years. When lightning strikes and Kokos is released, she finds herself in the world of the 20th century -- as the disgruntled employee of the multinational corporation, Mephistco. In order to keep her job and fulfill an ancient curse, Kokos must hunt down the descendant of the woman she was instructed to haunt centuries ago. No easy task, as that descendant happens to be Rainbow Rosenbloom -- London taxi-driver, film critic, lesbian, and niece to a pack of formidable aunts.

As the hilarious tale unfolds, both Rainbow and her dybbuk discover that History still holds a few tricks up her sleeve.

The Dyke and the Dybbuk Details

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From Reader Review The Dyke and the Dybbuk for online ebook

Kathy says

One of my all-time favorite books -- I re-read it once a year or so. Whimsical weaving together of Judaism and lesbian culture. Always makes me laugh out loud as the Dybbuk increasingly takes over the main character's life. I think it's out of print now -- wish it weren't!

Karen says

A story of a dyke and a dybbuk, from the dybbuk's point of view. Funny and sweet.

Shiri says

I found this book interesting. The relationship between sexuality and mysticism was one I had never conceived of. I also hadn't heard of the dybbuk before, and this was an introduction that stuck with me. A fun book.

I. says

I understand why the ending was what it was but it didn't quite work for me. There was something lacking about anya. But otherwise, a delight.

Karen says

I originally read this book in the mid-90's and loved it, but had a somewhat condescending attitude toward it, thinking of it almost as "fluff" and even "outdated" shortly after it was written. After re-reading it now, I'm surprised by my reaction. I think the only real problem with this book is its title, which probably has limited its readership. Although I can't come up with a great title, some possibilities might be "The dybbuk's dilemma" or "The troublesome legacy of Gittel and Anya."

This book is not only hilarious and tender, but is well-written and learned. The plot and characters are extremely well-developed, and the concept of an ambivalent, flawed dybbuk who loves the cinema is priceless. This book is a treasure which I will hopefully not wait another twenty years to re-read.

Ellen says

It's been ages since I read this book, but I remember enjoying it very much. It's a very quirky account of a gay woman's encounter with the dybbuk of Yiddish mythology, told in a matching quirky style. A fun little read.

Marty says

I loved this book. It was a funny twist on the traditional-beliefs-clashes-with-contemporary-culture comedy of errors. Kokos, the dybbuk in question, is released from captivity after several generations to find that the distant relative of her last victim is gay and that the diabolical organization she works for has become a supernatural global conglomerate, Mephistco. Determined, despite new corporate red tape and shifting values, to make good on the curse that she was 'hired' to carry out, Kokos begins to take over the life of Rainbow Rosenbloom, part-time gay film critic and London taxi driver. Rainbow's life is further complicated by her hilarious group of more traditional aunts and a crush on a young, beautiful Hasidic wife and mother. Kokos has her own challenges to face as Mephistco tries to recall her from the original contract for 'retraining and reassignment.'

Shira Glassman says

Review originally appeared in The Lesbary. Ellen Galford's *The Dyke and the Dybbuk* is, for only being eighteen years old, fairly iconic and hallowed in the tiny subgenre in which I spend most of my writing time. In other words, it may very well be the first great piece of sapphic Jewish fantasy. If I'm wrong, I'd love to know about more! In any case, it was a pleasure to read—sarcastic, sardonic, hopeful, enthusiastic, both a love story to our culture and a sharp criticism of some of its more tiresome features.

The initial premise stems from a trope some people may find painful, but is all too realistic thanks to the way society overwhelmingly pressures cis women to marry cis men. Namely, two young women in historical Jewish Eastern Europe are in love, until one of them leaves to marry a man. The jilted woman (herself somewhat of an outcast for her mixed parentage) responds by cursing the bride with demon possession. Thus enter our “what if Loki was a lesbian” demon, the hilarious—and also sapphic—dybbuk of the title. But she winds up imprisoned in a tree instead of being able to haunt the married woman and her daughters and granddaughters per the curse's instructions, so it isn't until the ninth generation of offspring that she gets a chance to escape and begin her assignment.

And this ninth generation is a British lesbian film critic who drives a taxi for her day job.

Rainbow Rosenbloom's more at odds with her Judaism than I am, but, firstly, the book was written in an earlier generation, and secondly, there are pretty much twice as many ways to be Jewish as there are actual Jews in the world. I am confident that her experiences accurately reflect many other people's relationship with their Jewishness. She's surrounded by paternal aunts and she's over-aware of the ways her preference for women—as well as her self-chosen first name, and also eating *treyf*—puts her in direct opposition to the way they want her to live.

The dybbuk decides that Rainbow's already weird enough and has already maxed out ‘acting out’, so she

can't possibly make her look any weirder by ordinary possession. Therefore, she decides as her project she's going to give Rainbow a massive crush on—Riva, a married Orthodox woman with six children! So suddenly, she's super interested in her faith in a way she never was before (the irony being that it's only because of a demon's influence.) In comes an intense crush that I totally recognized from various straight girls I've crushed on.

Now, I have a soft spot for pious women, so like the sucker I am, I did fall hook line and sinker for the Rainbow/Riva 'ship in this book. **Spoiler warning:** the author went somewhere else, but that's okay. The book does deliver happy f/f endings, and even the demon herself gets to have some fun.

As far as the issue of how the book made me feel as a bisexual woman — the line “trendy bisexual” was used at one point in dialogue, but I do feel like any criticism of bi women's choices was intended as unreliable narrator because from what I can remember it's followed up with a reminder that they don't actually know if the olden-days bride was bi or if she just married a man to appease cultural traditions *which is extremely possible*, given the circumstances. I beg of those reading this review to please be gentle with me if your experiences lead you to feel differently, because the week after I read the book my spouse ended our thirteen year relationship and so 1. I am not particularly able to hold my own in discourse at the moment and 2. I am writing this a month after reading the book and after a considerable amount of pain, so my memory isn't perfect.

Either way, if you're a Jewish woman who likes women, it's worth checking out even if you aren't a fan of spec fic. The speculative elements are lighthearted and easy to process—among themselves, the demons' society is a parody of modern corporate culture and office politics. It's out of print right now but worldcat.org has it listed in libraries all over the place, and I had no trouble getting a hold of it through interlibrary loan, so if you don't mind using the system—and plenty of librarians told me that *using* a library actually helps libraries and isn't a strain on them at all—it should be relatively easy. Besides, used copies are not hard to find.

Content warning: I have vague memories of there being the g-slur (for Rromani) in there someplace.

Ryan Mishap says

Great fun: witty, original, and about just what the title says! A dybbuk is a demon spirit and this one, newly escaped from its prison where a rabbi had placed it, finds a home in young English dyke, who wonders why her life is suddenly going screwy. We get a parallel story of the dybbuk's early days and a fun ending. Recommended.

Sabena says

Hilarious, fun read.

Korri says

The Dyke and the Dybbuk is a wonderful whimsical blend of 90s lesbian culture and Jewish lore and

tradition. I enjoyed the incorporation of folk tales and gritty depictions of London and especially loved the fact that hell was portrayed as a bureaucratic multinational corporation subject to vicious takeovers.

Margaret Heller says

A dybbuk possesses a 20th century lesbian cabdriver in London? Hell is an overly bureaucratic multinational corporation? Ok!

I thought I would love this book rather than just like it, but it got a bit sappy in places. But mostly hilarious. I had to read it really quickly because it had to go back to the library (my mom lent it to me after she'd finished it), but I probably would have anyway.

Penny says

The opening of this book is so full of humour that it is overwhelming. It gets lost for me in the middle but twists well at the end. I think I might have enjoyed or 'got it' more if I was in the know about Jewish lore. The film stuff though? I'm right there!

Jeanette says

this was such a great book! it had romance, comedy, demons, jewish culture and religion, lesbianism- just awesome! intelligently written and i learned a lot about the jewish culture.

kokos is a dybbuk (demon) who has been trapped in a tree for 200 years. she is released and sets out to finish off a curse she was called on to do.

the curse is on rainbow- a loveable jewish dyke whos parents are deceased and who now is watched over by her gaggle of jewish aunts.

the story between the two of them is hilarious!

i loved all of the characters and am looking forward to reading more by galford!

Deb says

Even demons have it rough. After being trapped in a tree by "one of those miracle rabbis", our narrator returns to Hell only to find out that, not only has Hell been taken over by another Firm, her own performance rating is rock bottom and her new job makes that tree look good. Determined to finish her previous assignment by tempting the ancestor of her last target, she possesses a lesbian film critic who suddenly finds herself yearning over a very beautiful and very Orthodox young woman...

