



Wakening the Crow

Stephen Gregory

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With the looming shadow of Edgar Allan Poe falling over one family, Gregory takes the reader into a world of uncertainty and fear.

Oliver Gooch comes across a tooth, in a velvet box, with a handwritten note from 1888 to say it's a tooth from the boy Edgar Allan Poe. He displays it in his new bookshop, and names the store Poe's Tooth Books.

Oliver took the money from his small daughter Chloe's accident insurance and bought a converted church to live in with his altered child and wife. Rosie hopes Chloe will come back to herself but Oliver is secretly relieved to have this new easy-to-manage child, and holds at bay the guilt that the accident was a result of his negligence. On a freezing night he and Chloe come across the crow, a raggedy skeletal wretch of a bird, and it refuses to leave. It infiltrates their lives, it alters Oliver's relationship with Rosie, it changes Chloe. It's a dangerous presence in the firelit, shadowy old vestry, in Poe's Tooth Books.

Inexorably the family, the tooth, the crow, the church and their story will draw to a terrifying climax.

Wakening the Crow Details

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From Reader Review Wakening the Crow for online ebook

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: WAKENING THE CROW

I loved this book. The setting, the plotting, the horror so subtle it only creeps, not pounces, the lyricism such that I often slowed to savour...lovely, all! I think of Susan Hill's Simon Serrailleur, who resides in a cathedral close--this family, since the settlement from the accident, live in a renovated church tower and vestry. It's all lovely, it is....until we get to the protagonists.

No joy here. The first-person narrative is delivered by one Oliver Gooch, a character I've tried very diligently to like, or even admire--but no, that's not happening. By rights I should: reader, incipient bookseller, newly writer, devoted father and husband. oh, stop right there.. Devoted he is not. His daughter is a profane, spoiled piece of nonsense, so he allows her to be concussed during a hit-and-run. His wife is infected by a very strange crow. So Oliver turns guilt to joy, and happily enjoys the freedom of the senses. I just want the crow to carry Oliver somewhere far, far away. Meanwhile, the prose is special, and the wide cast of secondary characters are sheer delight. 12 stars for WAKENING THE CROW, and I'm anticipating further reading of author Stephen Gregory.

I reviewed a digital ARC generously provided by the publisher via NetGalley for the sole purpose of my fair and honest review. No fees were exchanged.

Luke Walker says

A very well-written and atmospheric tale, but one that loses points for me because it does drag, feels a little repetitive and it's a hard slog to spend the entire book with a main character who isn't particularly likeable or interesting. 3.5 stars.

Tressa says

I wasn't expecting such an absorbing, well written story! Wakening the Crow is just more proof that British writers can really spin a spooky, ghostly yarn with a kind of slow, dreadful build up that's missing in a lot of American horror (although I can and do appreciate both kind). It's also proof that I can like a book even though I DON'T like the characters.

Oliver is not likable at all. He's the kind of self-centered, non-empathetic tool I despise. This man is actually satisfied at the result of his daughter Chloe being smacked in the back of the skull in an accident that turns her into a complacent simpleton who lives in her own head. However, after some examples become known of what a foul-mouthed brat she was pre-accident, I can't say that I blame him. I never did really understand how Oliver and Rosie bred such a hateful child. Maybe she's just a bad seed?

The book is filled with little chills that I find so satisfying, such as the time when Chloe includes among some keyboard gibberish a sentence that lets Oliver know his real daughter is still in there and won't forget everything he's said and done since the accident. The grudge that the crow seems to have for Rosie is unsettling, and Oliver's refusal to get rid of it leads to a nasty disfiguring face wound for his beloved wife.

But the crow is a prop of his Poe's Tooth Bookstore, so fuck her.

A sense of sadness and misfortune blankets the lives of Oliver, Rosie, and Chloe in this small English village and makes this a tale that I won't soon forget. The doomed atmosphere puts me in the mind of the excellent book *The Godsend*. I look forward to reading Stephen Gregory's other books.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

From the beginning, the way Oliver Gooch describes his own daughter Chloe leaves a bitter aftertaste in the reader's mouth. We know straight away that Oliver is creepy, and that is the story's bite in my mind.

Chole has had a terrible accident while in her Daddy's care, that has changed her into a shadow of her former self, and loathe as he is to admit this, Oliver prefers this new, sweet angel to the challenging brat she was before. On one hand he feels guilt, that he was the cause of it all, of course most readers aren't buying it, there is just something smarmy about him. The accident is the key to his dream, for now he has the money to make his dream bookstore a reality.

Oliver finds a treasure within a velvet box, a tooth that the seller claims is from the mouth of one young Edgar Allan Poe. This is just what he has been looking for, something to inspire him to open his bookshop. Soon, with his malleable sweet Chole at his side, the two find a scrappy bird that haunts them, wreaking havoc in their lives. Wife Rosie isn't spared either, and the marriage that already stinks of blame and mistrust over the Chole incident unravels. The bird effects his daughter in eerie ways, and all the while as Oliver wants his daughter to 'keep her secrets and truths buried in her damaged mind' some stalking terror is sure to reveal all.

The creep factor in this novel isn't the horror in my mind, it's the taint of Oliver. It's an uncomfortable feeling the reader carries along the dark tale. I really enjoyed this more than I imagined I would. Yes read it!

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Oliver Gooch is given a tooth from an old man and with the tooth comes a handwritten note from 1888 that says that the tooth is from the boy Edgar Allan Poe. Oliver displays the tooth in his new bookshop and names the bookshop Poe's Tooth Books. The bookshop is located in an old converted church where Oliver lives with his wife Rosie and daughter Cloe. Cloe hasn't been herself since she was hit by a car 9 month's earlier and it's thanks to the insurance money that they could buy the old church. Cloe hasn't said a word since the day she was hit by the car and Rosie hopes that she will snap out of it, but Oliver, who's neglect of Cloe feels guilty about the accident, likes the new Cloe who is so much easier to handle.

Then one cold night he and Cloe finds a crow, and the crow refuses to leave the old church and slowly its presence in the old church starts to affect the family...

How can you not be drawn into a book that starts with: "*Cloe had her tongue stuck on Robin Hood's thigh*". I mean WTF? This book managed to draw me into the story from the first page. This was not a, oh perhaps I will get into the story after a while, and I was immensely grateful for that since the last two fiction books I read was pretty hard to get through.

Stephen Gregory writes fantastically great. You wonder, is the tooth cursed, or is everything that happens just coincidence? Is Oliver drinking too much (well yes) and hallucinating? What the hell is wrong with the crow? Is the tooth really Poe's and is it connected to the crow? Is the crow Poe? Will Cloe get better? What the hell is going on? Perhaps Oliver is going mad...

Towards the end the story lost a bit of speed, I really felt that this is Oliver drinking himself mad and everything is in his head, and I had no idea how the hell Gregory would be able to finish this off well. But he did it, he manages to write an ending that made me question everything I thought during Oliver's drunken nights.

It's a great book and I'm looking forward to reading more from Stephen Gregory!

Disclaimer: *The quote I used from the book may not end up in the finished version of the book!*

Thank you Netgalley for providing me with a free copy for an honest review!

Matthew says

After reading Stephen Gregory's excellent novel, *The Cormorant*, I was happy to see him coming out with *Wakening the Crow*. After reading only a few pages, I was thrilled to see Gregory using the same beautiful prose that I fell in love with before!

Aside from the wonderful prose, the plot has several things going on, ranging from a little girl left with head trauma from a car accident, a piece of physical history from Edgar Allan Poe in the form of a tooth and a Carrion Crow.

Normally not something to give a second thought to, the Crow in here gives off a creepy feeling throughout the entire story. Combined with the rest of the story, Gregory turned out an excellent psychological horror tale that is sure to stick in your mind for some time. Highly recommended!

Marvin says

Stephen Gregory's *Wakening the Crow* invokes not only the spirit of Edgar Allen Poe but also some of the psychological and supernatural aspects of the master's writings that has had readers mesmerized since the 19th century. In Gregory's haunting and puzzling novel, Oliver Gooch is a marginally working librarian until his 7 year old daughter Chloe is in a car accident. She suffers brain damage and Oliver is only slightly uncomfortable that he prefers this version of Chloe, mute and pliable, to pre-accident Chloe who he describes as "a horrid child" and "rude, petulant, and defiantly uncooperative." He is also minimally guilty that the large settlement allows him to open up his own book store which he names "Poe's Tooth" due to a gift he is given by an elderly bookseller. The reason the gift is given to Oliver is unknown but the bookseller has a connection to the Gooch family that Oliver is yet aware of. The gift comes with a letter stating it to be Edgar Allen Poe's actual tooth that was pulled from his mouth when Poe was a small boy.

Anyone faintly familiar with the supernatural psychological novel knows that this is not going to go well. Along with the spectra of the tooth, Oliver, Chloe, and his wife Rosie are also visited by a ragged and somewhat sinister looking crow who is reluctant to leave the confines of the bookstore, formerly used as a church. The crow seems to have a strange connection with the mute child. The reader as well as our narrator

wonders if the tooth may be some kind of curse and, in many ways, this novel is just as much a homage to W. W. Jacob and his classic short work, "The Monkey's Paw" as it is to Poe. Yet Gregory is not just writing a homage to the old horror writers and their talent at creating a work of atmospheric terror. He is also creating his own tapestry of a dysfunctional family caught in an inexplicable horror and he does it with the minimum of gore and the maximum of dread and angst. Oliver is not very likable. His relationship with his daughter is creepy at best. And at worst? That is a question the author leaves out there. Rosie seems to be the grounding for the family yet we suspect that grounding is tenuous. Chloe is the question mark. In her post-accident cherubness, she seems to be a tabula rasa for the interpretation that Oliver places on the events. Eventually the entire family become unhinged by the presence of the crow or is it just the secrets, guilt and consequences of the behaviors of this family catching up to them due to the catalyst of supernatural forces?

Gregory doesn't let you know too much too soon. His hoarding of details and doling out of information only until you need it is quite masterful. It is also why some may feel this book moves a little too slowly. Yet the slow psychological reveal is fast becoming a lost art in storytelling especially in the horror genre. This is why I recommend Wakening the Crow so highly. It is a nice example of introspective storytelling yet when it is necessary, and especially at the end, Gregory can scare the pants off you. The average reader may also feel uncomfortable with the relationships in the Gooch family yet this adds to the eeriness and developing horror of the tale. Overall, Wakening the Crow is an above average work of horror that will stay with you quite a while after you read the last page.

Char says

Stephen Gregory is a genius! Let me tell you why.

First, here is the set up for this story:

"Oliver took the money from his small daughter Chloe's accident insurance and bought a converted church to live in with his altered child and wife. Rosie hopes Chloe will come back to herself but Oliver is secretly relieved to have this new easy-to-manage child, and holds at bay the guilt that the accident was a result of his negligence. On a freezing night he and Chloe come across the crow, a raggedy skeletal wretch of a bird, and it refuses to leave. It infiltrates their lives, it alters Oliver's relationship with Rosie, it changes Chloe. It's a dangerous presence in the firelit, shadowy old vestry, in Poe's Tooth Books. Inexorably the family, the tooth, the crow, the church and their story will draw to a terrifying climax."

This tale is a lot more complicated than the synopsis makes it out to be. There is a sense of creeping, building dread that, at times, becomes intense. You know *something* is coming but you can't get a handle on what it will be.

There are several-I'll just call them "uncomfortable moments" sprinkled throughout this book. The reader ends up off balance, questioning, confused. Wait, is that normal? What's he doing? Is that a European thing? I would love to say more about this, but I can't without spoilers. Suffice it to say this book has a lot of WTF moments, and my opinion is that the author masterfully placed them there just to mess with us. (So yeah, **genius** !)

This story also seems to be an homage to Edgar Allan Poe himself, so much so that...well I can't say. It all becomes mixed up: Poe, the tooth, the crow, heavy drinking and guilt. What's real? What's not? You're going to have to read it to find out.

I am now a full fledged Stephen Gregory fan. The Cormorant blew me away and this novel is right up there on that same level. Mr. Gregory produces beautifully written, literary, atmospheric stories that resonate with the reader. I will be thinking about Poe's Tooth Bookshop and that crow for a long, long time.

Highly recommended for not only fans of horror, but also for fans of literary fiction and psychological tales. This book is not easily categorized, but it's worth reading, if only to watch a genius at work.

I received this eARC from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review and this is it.

J.K. Grice says

WAKENING THE CROW is a very creepy, deliciously unsettling tale from Gregory. I love his brand of horror!

Matt Stevens says

While you may find many people lauding the author and this book, I am not one of them. There is no connection with the narrator nor at any time do I feel semblance of empathy for him. This story truly seems like he second book in the author's book deal. No true point to the story. The book just meanders through to the end. If you like descriptions of glorious miraculous cold mornings, this is the book for you. Otherwise, read a collection by Poe as opposed to a poorly executed story about (possibly) his tooth

Jon Recluse says

This was an eARC from NetGalley.

A masterpiece of dark fiction that weaves psychological horror with hints of the supernatural in a tale of a flawed family, fractured by tragedy, only to have their lives and sanity shattered by the presence of a carrion crow.

Just a crow. Simply that, and nothing more.

Or is it? There lies the rub.

Gregory invokes the unquiet ghost of Poe, in the figure of a small boy whose shadow looms large, yet deftly manages to surpass the power of Edgar's darkest imaginings in this fine example of literary horror.

Highly recommended.

Kimberly says

WAKENING THE CROW is the second book I've read by author Stephen Gregory, and once again I'm giving his outstanding writing and imagination a solid five stars. His words flow with such poise and precision that I was immediately drawn into the world of Oliver Gooch, and "Poe's Tooth Books".

Gregory uses a creeping sense of dread--so subtle--that you don't even realize how completely engrossed you are as you're being sucked into the storyline. As Oliver puts together the events in his life over the course of the last year, a seemingly simple thought crosses his mind; "Everything is connected." In reality, this statement is so much deeper with its implications. It puts into words all of the sorrow, horrors, misfortune, coincidences, and changes that have been occurring around him.

At the beginning of the tale, an elderly bookseller gifts to Oliver a tooth--rumored to be that of the boy Edgar Allan Poe. To Gooch, this tooth "...was an essential link in the chain of events which had brought us all to this place, at this time."

Oliver is not without ghosts of his own. His daughter Chloe had suffered a bump on the head that--while leaving her a smiling husk, devoid of her former overbearing personality--leads to the monetary means of pursuing his own dreams. In Oliver's own words, "...the guilt I felt when that shameful, recurring thought came cringing and fawning and wheedling into my brain, like a craven cur skulking in the shadows...that I liked Chloe more as a simpering angel than I had when she'd been herself."

His own attitude towards their daughter was constantly at odds with his wife, Rosie's. "I pondered the paradox that Rosie prayed every waking moment for Chloe to come back, and yet I was dreading her return."

The relentless, yet subtle build up leads to a dramatic conclusion that I never saw coming--I was so caught up in the storytelling.

I will be hunting down all of the works I can find by this author!

Highest recommendation!

Kate says

4.5*

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Oliver Gooch is finding himself fulfilling some of his lifelong dreams, all due to compensation money given to him and his family after his daughter Chloe's accident. He opens up a book shop after buying a renovated church and is given a tooth claimed to be from Edgar Allan Poe when he was a boy. Oliver displays the tooth as the centre piece of the shop but is the gifted tooth a good luck charm or is it cursed. As Oliver gets ready to open up his shop he comes across a bedraggled looking crow that becomes a permanent fixture in his shop and home, it's presence soon begins to change the dynamics of the family causing their lives to slowly unravel.

I don't know where to start with this book, the sense of dread and impending doom was intense and there were so many moments in the book where I cringed at what might happen next. This read was so uncomfortable at times, the author managing to keep everything just off kilter enough to stop me feeling at ease with what I was reading.

There is so much beautiful imagery used that it made the disturbing scenes all the more effective, lulling me into a false sense of security before pulling the rug out from under me completely. I like to think it takes a lot to shock me as a reader and I was caught out on several occasions with the author setting up a beautiful scene only to do something so unexpected with it that it would stop me dead in my tracks, stunned at the outcome.

I'm only going to talk about one character, Oliver, I've never felt so conflicted with a character before. The author does an incredible job of setting him up as a believable, decent human being but then starts to pull at the threads of this, causing doubt, confusion and disbelief when he acts contrary to how he was first presented. I ended up hating him, his selfishness and acts as a father and husband were at times disgusting. A lot of my uncomfortable moments in this book came from his actions or thoughts. I'm not sure what to make of the ending, as everything is told through Oliver's POV, I don't really trust that he's a reliable narrator.

An absolutely cracking read, it's a slow burn and it took me until about 1/3 in before it started picking up but this is well worth reading especially for those that love quiet, psychological horror.

Highly recommended.

Steve says

An interesting premise with some good thematic elements. That's the main reason this earns three stars from me. At times, it was a good old fashion horror story along the Poe/Lovecraft lines. At other times, it slipped into something bordering on pedophilia. This was a hard book for me to finish. I'll focus on the positives as I've already mentioned all I care to about the negatives.

This story has the perfect setting, and excellent plot lines that swirl together to create an old time creepy tale. One that doesn't need blood and gore to frighten. If it would have stayed true to those elements, this would be a very fine suspense story. Other parts just made it very uncomfortable to read and completely detached me from the story. In a tale of this ilk, the reader needs to be in the head of the main character. It's just not possible with the actions that are taken at times.

Andi Rawson says

Wakening The Crow is one of the most beautiful, thoughtful, and unsettling novels that I have ever read. A slight deviation from my normal penchant for horror, it did not leave me wanting. Stephen Gregory writes as if he created language; his words are poetry without pretense

The story revolves around a brain-damaged 7-year-old, her guilt-wracked father, a carrion crow, and a tooth. It is the story of how a few lost moments can set into motion a dream (nightmare?)-like chain reaction of coincidences. Is it the curse of Poe or simply the result of a feckless alcoholic who is losing touch with reality?

This is a novel that deserves a fire place, a cup of tea, and preferably some rain pelleting off the roof.

Stephen Gregory speaks to the demons within and the melancholy that lies within every human soul.

This book was provided to me as an ARC in exchange for an honest review.
