



# Jackaby

*William Ritter*

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*“Miss Rook, I am not an occultist,” Jackaby said. “I have a gift that allows me to see truth where others see the illusion--and there are many illusions. All the world’s a stage, as they say, and I seem to have the only seat in the house with a view behind the curtain.”*

Newly arrived in New Fiddleham, New England, 1892, and in need of a job, Abigail Rook meets R. F. Jackaby, an investigator of the unexplained with a keen eye for the extraordinary--including the ability to see supernatural beings. Abigail has a gift for noticing ordinary but important details, which makes her perfect for the position of Jackaby’s assistant. On her first day, Abigail finds herself in the midst of a thrilling case: A serial killer is on the loose. The police are convinced it’s an ordinary villain, but Jackaby is certain it’s a nonhuman creature, whose existence the police--with the exception of a handsome young detective named Charlie Cane--deny.

*Doctor Who* meets *Sherlock* in William Ritter’s debut novel, which features a detective of the paranormal as seen through the eyes of his adventurous and intelligent assistant in a tale brimming with cheeky humor and a dose of the macabre.

## Jackaby Details

Date : Published September 16th 2014 by Algonquin Young Readers

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Author : William Ritter

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## From Reader Review Jackaby for online ebook

### Emily May says

Genre-defying historical paranormal mystery with a touch of humour, anyone?

*"What is it?" My question came as a whisper, my eyes straining to see the invisible. Jackaby's voice was softer still: "Death."*

I said in a status update that this book is basically BBC Sherlock with a paranormal twist and now, having finished the book, I stand by that description entirely. This book is so many things and all of them are good. It has all the atmosphere of a creepy Victorian mystery, all the humourous banter of BBC Sherlock; it has complex characters and wonderful writing. And most of all: it is just so damn *charming*.

This book has charisma. The protagonist and narrator - Abigail Rook - is a delightful heroine who is both a "strong woman" and a multilayered and extremely lovable individual, brimming with personality. She is that likable balance somewhere between totally badass and endearingly klutzy. The story begins where a failed attempt to do her own thing against her parents wishes leaves her too ashamed to return home, so she instead jumps aboard a ship bound for New England and unwittingly triggers an adventure she never bargained for.

*"All the world's a stage, as they say, and I seem to have the only seat in the house with a view behind the curtain."*

**Enter Mr Jackaby.** Oh wow, how could I not love him? Jackaby is a clever, astute and eccentric detective of the paranormal. He's entirely odd, presented as lanky with unruly hair, never portrayed as a potential love interest. But damn if I don't have a giant crush on him. Like a Benedict Cumberbatch kind of crush that you kind of have to watch Sherlock to understand.

When this book wasn't busy leading me around a spooky paranormal mystery, it was instead busy making me laugh. It's the charm of the characters and the chemistry between Jackaby and Abigail that makes this novel work so well. The dialogue between them had me giggling to myself so many times.

*"That reminds me," he said, pausing. "There's a jar in my office marked 'Bail.' If you don't hear from me by tonight, just bring it down to the Mason street Station, would you? I'm usually in the first or second cell."*

And I'm sorry to you lovely Belgians out there (I have visited and very much enjoyed Belgium) but this was funny:

*It wasn't that I did not believe in ghosts; it was that I believed in them in the same noncommittal way that I believed in giant squids or lucky coins or Belgium. They were things that probably existed, but I had never had any occasion to really care one way or another.*

I honestly LOVED it. Even though I don't think the mystery is too difficult to work out, it has multiple layers so there's enough twists and excitement to make the ride enjoyable in itself - which, for me, is what makes a good mystery anyway. And it's funny. And the paranormal mythology was compelling and used in ways I haven't read about before. I only hope this is the start of a series and not a one-off; the mystery is tied up neatly at the end of this book - which I like - but it's definitely been left open for potential future stories. I can't wait!

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## Nastassja says

“This world is full of dragon-slayers. What we need are a few more people who aren't too proud to listen to a few fish.”

“He's quite mad, you know. But adventure can be very appealing.”

There's **something special about this book**: it's well-written; has nice, reliable characters; touches the topic of women's position in late 19th century society; has an intriguing addition of supernatural element, and, of course, let's not forget about the fact that it's a *Sherlock Holmes* retelling!

When I started this book, I had almost zero doubts this book will catch my attention and keep it till the last page (and there's only 299 pages!). All the ingredients above guaranteed an easy, funny read to me. Alas, I **can't say I was 100% satisfied**.

Yes, there was *humor*:

“Well, if we didn't sail together, how did you ever—ah, you must have snuck a peek at my luggage labels.” I tried to remain casual, but leaned away as the man drew closer still, inspecting me. The oak countertop dug into my back uncomfortably. He smelled faintly of cloves and cinnamon.

“I did nothing of the sort. That would be an impolite invasion of privacy,” the man stated flatly as he picked a bit of lint from my sleeve, tasted it, and tucked it somewhere inside his baggy coat.

Yes, *women's topic* was quite developed:

“I prefer to look after myself, ma'am, but thank you. I appreciate your concern for my well-being, but some of us have more pressing matters to attend to than practicing our curtsies and turning foolishly sized bonnets into topiaries.”

Yes, *the narrator* was easy to connect with:

“A young woman across the dock pulled her winter coat tightly around herself and ducked her chin down as the crowd of sailors passed. Her shoulders might have shaken, just a little, but she kept to her path without letting the men's boisterous laughter keep her from her course. In her I saw myself, a fellow lost girl, headstrong and headed anywhere but home.”

Yes, *Jackaby*, in whose honor this book is named, was a great believable prototype of Sherlock Holmes:

“Miss Rook, I am not an occultist.” Jackaby turned on the landing and faced me. “I am a man of reason and science. I believe what I can see or prove, and what I can see is often difficult for others to grasp. I have a gift that is, as far as I have found, unique to me. It allows me to see truth where others see the illusion—and there are many illusions, so many masks and facades. All the world's a stage, as they say, and I seem to have the only seat in the house with a view behind the curtain.

Yes, *the supernatural aspect* was great and managed to surprise me more than once:

“Monsters are easy, Miss Rook. They're monsters. But a monster in a suit? That's basically just a wicked man, and a wicked man is a more dangerous thing by far.”

But, all in all, **this book lacked depth**, in my opinion. The story, indeed, touches all the topics above, but they seem superficial. We don't have enough pages to develop deep thoughts: we only briefly underlined issues and let them be, and, maybe, some of them will make its way into our minds and expand the topic. But what I really wanted is for that book itself to expand them, to make me think there's more to the story than a light funny read. I wanted more darkness, too. It seemed like the whole story took place in one day: everything happened too quickly. And, mind you, I've been reading this book for almost 15 days (!) and still I had that impression of urgency and lack of thoughtfulness. I still **would highly recommend this book** to everyone, especially to Sherlock Holmes's fans, but I am not sure I'll be picking the sequel any time soon.

*Simply put: it was nice to meet you, Mr. Jackaby, but I expected more from you.*

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## Elizabeth says

Pretty dang solid book, y'all. The character of Jackaby is definitely inspired by Benedict Cumberbatch's portrayal of Sherlock, but has an Eleventh Doctor childlike quality to him. I don't know how realistic Abigail's character is... I mean, going to a different country by herself in those days? With parents who seem pretty fancy pants? Hmm... But I did like her stance on how she chose to work with Jackaby and her choices henceforth. The paranormal and fantasy aspects were pretty good. I was glad to see a newer piece of media (aside from Teen Wolf) talking about banshees. The lore surrounding the paranormal creatures was well explained without being info-dump-y.

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## Ben Alderson says

Average read.

I think the story is super interesting, may give the sequels a go.  
But I just found the pacing really really fast!  
The book is based over 48 hours mainly and it was sooooooo jam packed!

Still good though!

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## **TL says**

My personal vision of Jackaby and Abigail:

My pick for Jackaby is probly predictable but oh well haha. We can agree to disagree ;-).

On to the review:

It's easy to compare this to Sherlock and Jackaby/Abigail to Sherlock/John... there are some similarities in character but for me, Jackaby was a magical/fun adventure with interesting characters all around.

Abigail is thrown into the strange of Jackaby purely by chance. She doesn't know fully what she's getting into but she's keen for adventure.

Jackaby, Abigail, Marlowe and the others all play well off each other... the side characters such as Hatun, Jenny, Mr. Henderson, Charlie, Etc. each have a place/role in the story, though you may not know exactly what at the time.

Trying to keep up with Jackaby was fruitless, I just sat back and enjoyed the ride. (Side note: I wonder Sherlock would've thought of this fellow?)

What was going on with Charlie, my antennae picked up in one particular scene... the one time I got the same answer as Jackaby haha, even though I got there slower.

Jackaby as a 'seer' was interesting, and his house is labyrinth of unusual and sometimes dangerous things... Can I live there'? :) The third floor was probably my favorite... and a certain... frog ;-)

The villain I did not expect to be who it was, Abigail and I put it together at the same time. Well done twist in my opinion.

I got the 'feel' of the town in this... it felt like I was plopped right in New Fiddleham. Gritty, dark, ordinary, supernatural... all fit together :).

The writing in this book = <3 ! Don't know how else to put it, the pages fly by without you realizing it.

Loved the humor in this book, some of these quotes I would love to frame:

""And so you shall," Jackaby called over his shoulder. "Expertly, I imagine, and to the letter of the

instruction. However, I don't recall Marlowe giving any specific directions about time, nor about the route we take, so let's have a quick chat with someone odd, first, shall we? I do love odd. Ah, here we are!"  
!!!!

"I hate when you spend the night," grumbled the clerk.

"I only barely got finished cataloguing this stuff. Always takes me forever just to find all the damn pockets."

~~~~~

"Don't feel bad," I offered. "I met him face-to-face, and I missed it too."

"Yes, but no one expected you to be clever, Miss Rook."

"Thanks for that," I said.

"We got him in the end, at least. That's something. "

"Jenny! Have you seen that saucepan? The one from that set your grandmother left you? "

~~~~~

"You mean the one you riddled with buckshot dents last month?" came the spirit's muffled reply. "Or the one you melted last summer with that alchemy nonsense? "

"The first one! "

~~~~~

In closing with this from the book:

"The man had no portraits or photographs, but he had slowly surrounded himself with mementos of a fantastic past. Each little item, by the sheer nature of its being, told a story. Looking around was a little like being back on the dig, or like deciphering an ancient text, and I wondered what stories they would tell me if I only knew how to read them."

I agree, I can't wait to find out what's next in store for these two :) Maybe Mr. Ritter will write about some of Jackaby's past cases as well? \*hint hint\*

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## Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I would probably have given this book a solid five-star review if the mystery had been better. But I figured out the bad guy very early on and then I just waited for everyone to catch on. But, despite that I really, really enjoyed this book.

**William Ritter** has created a superb paranormal world with wonderful characters. Is the mix of ordinarily and paranormal that makes the book so good to read. Most of the people don't know that there are banshees and werewolves, troll and goblins around them and that makes **Jackaby** such a great and eccentric character because he sees the "other world".

Besides the wonderful **Jackaby** we also **Abigail Rook**; an ordinary girl that happens to be looking for a job and find the one job perfect suited for someone looking for adventures. As an assistant to investigator **Jackaby**.

This is probably the first YA I have read in a long time that I have enjoyed really much!

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### shady boots | #WatchPOSE says

I still stand by my opinion that the book's synopsis being called *Doctor Who* meets *Sherlock* seems like such an obvious way of the publisher wanting to make this book sound like a fangirl's wet dream. I still don't understand the obsession of YA publishers these days and always pinning every book *Something* meets *Some Other Thing*, but oh well. Guess it puts food on the table.

Regardless, I really enjoyed this! It wasn't at all what I expected. I expected for the main character to have some kind of romance with Jackaby, and the supernatural aspect would probably just be ghosts or spirits or whatever, but man was I wrong. *Dead* wrong. (Hurr durr. See what I did there? Cuz it's a murder mystery? No? Yeah, okay.) The fact that it caught me by surprise made it even better.

Since I never watched *Doctor Who* or *Sherlock* myself, (easy with the pitchforks, ladies) I can't really say if the book really did have elements of those shows, but I was definitely happy with what I got. If you're looking for something magical, thrilling but also fun and cheeky, this is the book for you.

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### Lola says

What a let down this book was.

**I was so bored.** And it had to do with the story, not the writing or Jackaby himself. He was great. Strange and not always understandable, but different and fascinating. Not the sort of character we encounter in every read.

***His eyes looked like they could be a hundred lifetimes old, but he bore an otherwise young countenance and had a fervent energy about him.***

That's my ~~Sherlock~~ Jackaby! I wonder if I was the only one calling him Jackabbey or Jackbaby here and there. Especially when reading fast. My mind just processed those names instead of his real one and that...pretty often.

So, really, he wasn't the problem. It's the dull mystery case that literally put me to sleep. I was alternating my read of this book with *Scarlet* because I really didn't want to leave Jackaby half unread due to boredom. Who knows, maybe the sequel's mystery will blow me away and, by DNFing, I would lose my chance to be impressed. Plus, I loved that detective!

***"I think you must be a bit confused," he said. "But don't feel bad—it's a common state. Most people are."***

I've included in this review some Jackaby quotes because he was wonderfully showing a great sense of humour (often without meaning to) and was a character worth knowing about. And I understand the author's choice of not making him a main one – I absolutely do – but, sincerely, our Abigail was just so...dull and insipid. She did “participate” in the story and have her place in it and a certain mild role during scenes, but I barely noticed her and often forgot that she was even there. Usually, characters such as Abigail can be interesting because some can allow you to simply push them aside and (mentally) take their own place in the book, like it happened to me with Ana from Fifty Shades of Grey and Kelsey from Tiger's Curse. But not Abigail. I couldn't do that with her, but that may be because it didn't interest me at all to help solve that boring case. It might all have been more intriguing – and I can't believe I'm saying this – if there were no paranormal elements. There, I said it. I think they confused me more than anything else, since the world-building was barely explained. I usually can't get enough of “paranormal” as theme, but, in this context, the story was better without it, in my opinion.

***“Monsters are easy, Miss Rook. They're monsters. But a monster in a suit? That's basically just a wicked man, and a wicked man is a more dangerous thing by far.”***

Another problem I had with this book is that we didn't know much about any of the characters. I mean, I adored Jackaby's personality and the way he interacted with others and spoke, but I did wish to also know some personal information about him. In the next book, perhaps?

So, for that – for Jackaby – I'll keep on reading this series, disappointment or not.

PS. There was no romance! Another thing that the sequel might include...Let's hope.

Gif source!

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## Shwey says

### Update 1:

I'm getting this book next week! So excited to start reading this!

### Pre-review:

'...Doctor Who meets Sherlock...'

'...Doctor Who meets Sherlock...'

'...DOCTOR WHO MEETS SHERLOCK...'

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## Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

This was a fun read, but it was nothing more than that! If you're looking for something light and fun then I would give this a go, but if you're looking for something that will blow your mind, I wouldn't pick this up. I had a few issues with the writing, as I picked up on several repetitive pieces of dialogue, that drove me insane! I also wasn't a massive fan of Jackaby, I found him to be a bit obnoxious. For the most part though, I enjoyed this book! I'll definitely be checking out the sequel. :)

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## Amelia says

This book was so enjoyable to read!

I love Jackaby as a character, he reminds me so much of Sherlock but then he is different in his own way. Some of the things Jackaby would say would make me laugh, he definitely is such an interesting character.

On the note of characters, all the characters, not just Jackaby, are great in their own way. As you read you grow to love all of them.

I highly recommend this book if you love historical fiction, mystery, the supernatural and Sherlock Holmes.

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## Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

Re/read

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

### **BLOODY BRILLIANT**

I love Jackaby and I think Sherlock would approve of him too and find him rather funny, which he is I might add.

Okay, like I said, I love Jackaby and I love Miss Abigail Rook! They are a perfect match as you get to read about them in the book, but the first meeting was what I found rather comical or disturbing - depending on how you look at it :-)

*It was the eyes, I think, that startled me the most, opened wide and staring with intense inquisition. It was the eyes-and the fact that he stood not half a pace from my stool, leaning ever so slightly in, so that our noses nearly bumped when I turned to face him.*

there is some stuff in between all of that and then:

*"Hello?" I managed to say, when I had regained balance atop my stool. "Can I help-?"*  
*"You're recently from the Ukraine." It was not a question. His voice was calm and even, but something more...amused? He continued, his gray eyes dancing as though exploring each thought several seconds before his mouth could voice it. "You've traveled by way of Germany, and then a great distance in a sizable ship...made largely of iron, I'd wager."*

This was Miss Rook's first encounter with Jackaby when she came ashore. She had been traveling around trying to get in on any archaeological digs that she could. She wanted to be like her father but her parents wanted her off at university and to find a good husband. Um, no. So, she ran away. Now she is in America looking for any kind of work that she could get until she decided what to do next.

Miss Rook goes all around town trying to find a job, but to no avail. One person told her to go over to the post office because they need help a lot of the time. Nothing there either... but wait... there are some bulletins

put up on a board and there is one she is interested in. <--- We all know where this is headed right? The man himself, Jackaby, needs an assistant.

Not long after Miss Rook is trying to talk Jackaby into giving her a chance they are rushed out to check out a murder scene. One they shouldn't be on of course. You know, the cops hate having him around unless they ask for him.

Jackaby finds something fishy at the crime scene.. he detects something supernatural is the culprit! How totally awesome to have this type of supernatural mixed in with a Sherlock background. Once again, Brilliant I say!

There are a lot of comical parts in the book that I just loved. There is a part where they are at the crime scene investigating in another part of the building and Jackaby makes the mistake of telling a woman she is not special..... let that thought linger.....

*Jackaby turned at last. "Madam, I assure you, I meant only that you are not special."*

*I cupped a palm over my face.*

*The woman reddened several shades. Jackaby smiled at her in what I'm certain he felt was a reassuring and pleasant manner following a reasonable explanation. He seemed prepared to let the whole thing wash away as a friendly misunderstanding. What he was not prepared for, apparently, was to be socked in the face.*

*It was not a ladylike swat or symbolic gesture. The force of it actually spun the detective halfway around, and his trip to the ground was interrupted only briefly by the wall catching him on the ear on the way down.*

So Jackaby and Miss Rook are on the case to find out what this being is that has started killing in a most horrific way. We get to meet some really cool creatures in the book... well not the evil one, but I digress.

Jackaby lives in a big ole place and he has some other things that live there with him. This would be two of my other favorite characters in the book, Jenny (the ghost) and **Douglas ( the duck)** <--- there is as story there but I will leave it to you to figure out.

Jenny the ghost, decides since it's her house/or was, that she wants Miss Rook to move in and Jackaby actually feels the same way. But before all of this was mentioned to Jackaby, Jenny took it upon herself to start moving things around in the attic so Miss Rook would have somewhere to sleep. And you know with all of those noises, Jackaby and Miss Rook thought someone had broke in which made for another little comic bit.

*And with that it was settled. Jenny clapped her hands together and smiled brightly, and Jackaby turned to look at me. "What in heaven's name are you doing with my copy of Historia Lycanthropis?"*

*"I-what?" I answered eloquently.*

*"That book. What on earth are you doing with it?"*

*"Well, you had a stick."*

*His eyebrows furrowed. "This is a shillelagh. It was cut from Irish blackthorn by a leprechaun craftsman, cured in the furnace of Gofannon, and imbued with supernatural powers of protection. That"-he gestured to the book-"is a book."*

*"It's heavy, though. A leprechaun? Like, the tiny fellows who keep pots of gold at the ends of rainbows?"*

*"Don't be asinine. I mean a real leprechaun. That volume is a sixteenth-century original printing. I hope very much that you didn't intend to use it as a projectile."*

I totally fell in love with this book. The characters. The monsters they met, which were some very nice ones by the way. The banter and wit. I just loved the book okay! It has an awesome cover too :-)

I think anyone that loves Sherlock, mysteries, the supernatural and snark, will love this book!

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## **Richard Denney says**

### **5 STARS!!!**

"Sherlock Holmes meets The Spiderwick Chronicles" that's what comes to mind after reading this book. I loved it. I loved how fantastical and dark and eerie this was and I'm excited to check out the rest of the books in the series. Jackaby was a my favorite character of course. He was odd, stubborn, insane at times, but fantastic as well. I really enjoyed Abigail's POV and thought she was an amazing heroine too, unlike a lot of female protagonists in YA who always feel the need to be saved or let a man do their job or make them feel small. Abigail was a boss.

This is considered YA and I think because the main characters are older is the only reason why. Make Jackaby 14 and Abigail 13 and this would be a perfect Middle-Grade book as well. There is nothing in this book that is too much or too dark or explicit for Middle-Grade readers. That is probably another reason why I liked it so much. I also liked it because there was no romance between Abigail and Jackaby and that was one of the best things about this book. Yes, there was a hint of romance with another character but not between the main characters which I enjoyed immensely. I wish more YA books did this, maybe I'd enjoy the genre more.

Being a huge fan of The Spiderwick Chronicles and supernatural folklore, I was really excited to see it blended into a Victorian era mystery. That was awesome. I knew quite a few of the creatures that Jackaby described at times and really liked the magical side to this story.

I also want to mention that this book got me! I was pleasantly surprised that I didn't deduce who the killer was until it was revealed and then I went ah!!! I should've been able to get that. haha

But this was a very good time. It was thrilling, fantastical, spooky, and pretty funny at times. Again I look forward to Jackaby and Abigail's further adventures and and I'm pretty sure I'd like to own this series now for my bookshelf and that is saying a lot. - Richard

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## **Inge says**

*Jackaby* was without a doubt my most anticipated read ever since I learned of its existence (you know, about two months ago). It sounded intriguing, especially with the way it was being marketed – “Sherlock meets Doctor Who”. I mean, that’s every fangirl’s wet dream, right?

Then the negative reviews started flowing in, and I grew wary of the book. Nevertheless, when someone

gifted it to me during the Ninja Halloween Book Swap, there was nothing for me to do but to pick up this book and form my own opinion of it.

Truth be told, I really enjoyed it. It really felt like a modern Sherlock novel, only with a supernatural twist.

Jackaby is without a doubt one of the most interesting characters I've had the pleasure of meeting this year. This consulting detective does not only solve murders, but he solves murders committed by trolls and pixies and all the other stuff that goes on in the other dimension. That's where the Doctor Who part comes in, also because he's quite eccentric. In fact, a fellow blogger who hadn't seen Doctor Who, compared Jackaby to the Mad Hatter instead, which I thought was a really accurate statement.

There is definitely a little bit of Sherlock:

*"I have ceased concerning myself with how things look to others, Abigail Rook. I suggest you do the same. In my experience, others are generally wrong."*

As well as the strangeness of the Doctor:

*"This world is full of dragon-slayers. What we need are a few more people who aren't too proud to listen to a fish."*

And, well, how can you not love it?

It was definitely the weirdness of it all that lured me in. I didn't feel as compelled by the murder mystery, but more by the fact that this was a world filled with the fantasy elements that I love so much. It had me laughing, just because it was so deliciously weird. When you enter Jackaby's home, you're told not to stare at the frog. There is indeed a frog, and if you do stare at it, the frog lets loose a most terrible stench that lasts for hours. There's a pond on the second floor with a man-sized duck, and a ghost named Jenny. Furthermore, there's a chapter missing as per Jackaby's request and they make fun of Belgium. The book is filled with small oddities like that, which made me appreciate the story so much more.

What I also appreciated was that there is no heavy emphasis on romance. There is a love interest, but it doesn't drive the book, nor is it filled with cheese. It was sweet, just that, nothing more, nothing less.

If you've been drooling over this book and that amazing cover for the last couple months but you're unsure as to whether you'll like it or not, I say – pick it up. Give it a try. Maybe not for the crime aspect, but I assure you you'll appreciate the weirdness. It sounds entirely familiar, for don't we all have a little weirdness inside of us?

*"She has saved this town and its people from countless monsters countless times. That the battles are often in her head does not lessen the bravery of it. The hardest battles always are."*

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## Debby says

**2 stars**

I start this review with a very heavy heart. No one is more upset than I am about this dismal rating. Though I would never say this book is bad or the worst, I had fully expected to absolutely adore it and be head over heels for it. I'm immensely disappointed, because this book was just average at best and a cheap knockoff at worst.

To be fair: *Jackaby* is upfront about what it is - *Sherlock* meets *Doctor Who*. That blurb is what caught my attention and the reason why I picked it up, because as my friends probably know, I am a HUGE fan of both series. Both I have watched multiple times. Both are in my top 5 TV series of all time. If this book is like THAT, it's going to be absolutely perfect for me, right? Wrong. That premise is actually the book's downfall for me.

My first annoyance that really kept me from becoming immersed in this book was the character, Jackaby, himself. He really is a mash up of Sherlock and the Doctor. But while earlier I may have thought that the characters are rather similar, when meeting Jackaby, I finally understood just how different they are. Sherlock is sullen, apathetic, and a sociopath lacking a filter, interested in the mysteries themselves and not so much the people. The Doctor is more open-minded and, in fact, is fascinated and delighted by the human race. These are character traits which do not go together. Yet, Ritter attempts to make Jackaby both Sherlock and the Doctor. One minute he'll be talking about how stupid humans are. The next moment, he'll be fascinated about something Abigail does or fiercely protective of humans. Guys. You can't really have it both ways. This odd mash up didn't work for me at all. I couldn't get used to his character - he was a clone of Sherlock one moment, and a clone of the Doctor the next. He almost seemed schizophrenic - there was no cohesion. **It felt like I was reading fanfiction.**

This fanfiction-vibe also carried over into the storytelling. Abigail just arrives in New Fiddleham, searches for work, and becomes ~~Watson~~ Clara Jackaby's assistant. I felt like she was way too accepting of the supernatural elements that Jackaby could supposedly see while no one else could. She hardly even doubts him at all and is just like, "WHEE, ADVENTURE, OH BOY." I couldn't connect with her character either. She's kind of Mary Sue-ish: when on cases she suddenly has bursts of being SUPER OBSERVANT, to a level that is absolutely not normal... and other than that her personality is rather nondescript. She's more or less just there to serve as the narrator and detail Jackaby's brilliance, letting the readers insert themselves into the story. Hmm, this kind of sidelining of female supporting characters feels a bit familiar too.

They quickly get mixed up in a case of a supernatural serial killer which really is the mystery solving of *Sherlock* combined with the strange creatures that only ~~the Doctor~~ Jackaby understands and can hunt down. But the plot failed to ever really surprise me. I mean, it held together as a whole: the paranormal killings piqued my curiosity, there were clues that led to reveals, which kept me reading, and then... mystery solved. But overall it felt like it was trying too hard to be exactly what this mash up implied, and thus failed to retain any sense of originality at all.

*In a certain scene, Jackaby even says he would call "shenanigans" if something happened. I mean really.*

I suppose the addition of fairy lore and paranormal creatures was a tiny bit cool, or entertaining at least. The trolls, redcaps, banshees, ghosts, etc... I tried to get sucked into the world, but with all the other comparisons to *Doctor Who* I just felt like they were a replacement for the various aliens. Not the best replacement either, because the fairy lore we got was basic at best. And Jackaby's house with its dangerous and cluttered rooms was just the TARDIS. And the household ghost who cares for Clara Abigail, keeps ~~the Doctor~~ Jackaby in check, and does some housekeeping is even called JENNY. I MEAN COME ON.

Overall, it all just feels a bit underdeveloped. Like, it could have been so much more. And with the story being just under 300 pages, there's just no room to make it come to life and be unique. I mean, both *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock* are masterful creations in their own rights, but what keeps me fully engaged, entertained, and impressed is the level of emotions they evoke with their brilliant plot twists and surprises. Not to mention the characters and their sparkling personalities. *Jackaby* had none of that. I figured out the killer pretty early on, and that was that. It never got me to care.

### ***Summing Up:***

I can't say they didn't warn me. If you want a book that is a carbon copy mash up of *Doctor Who* plus *Sherlock*, definitely get *Jackaby*. But if you want originality... and if the constant references would annoy you, stay away. I'm sad *Jackaby* didn't try at all to take this idea and then do something NEW with it. I mean, take a female supersleuth/paranormal wisewoman. Or give them a new kind of personality. Or really develop the paranormal side, so the world is much more of a fantasy.

I didn't expect that a book that promised (and to an extent delivered) a combination of two of my favorite things in the world would be such a failure to me. When I managed to keep my rage at the lack of originality at bay, I was mostly just bored by its all around averageness.

### ***GIF it to me straight!***

But also...

*I am so sad right now.*

### ***Recommended To:***

I'd like to see the opinion of someone who has never watched *Doctor Who* or *Sherlock* actually. I think this book would have better luck with them.

*\*An ARC was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the contents of my review.*