

Meredith Debonnaire

book reviews, writing, and observations from fantasyland.

Book review: Thirteenth by C.M. Rosens

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by Meredith in Book Review Tags: Book review, Book review: Thirteenth by C.M. Rosens, Eldritch beasts, gothic horror, Lovecraftian, meredith debonnaire, The Chosen One But Make It Screwed Up, Thirteenth



(<https://meredithdebonnaire.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/thirteenth-cover.jpg>) Gran's house was the oasis of calm Katy Porter craved.

*note: *Thirteenth* is the sequel to *The Crows* (<https://meredithdebonnaire.wordpress.com/2020/05/26/book-review-the-crows-by-c-m-rosens/>), so you should read that first. Also this review may have spoilers for *The Crows*, so be aware.*

C.M. Rosens is in a league of her own, something I say with both love and enthusiasm. In *The Crows*, she grabbed every gothic horror trope she could find, put them through the blender, and somehow made me hate Carrie's painfully mundane ex-boyfriend more than the literally-a-murderous-cannibal neighbour. In *Thirteenth*, she takes the idea of the Chosen One by the horns and then covers it in eldritch tentacles and teenage rage. It was an absolute joy to read.

Our protagonist is Katy Porter (she's a cousin of Ricky Porter, a main character in *The Crows* who eats people and tells the future, yet I still want to just wrap him in blankets and check he's okay). She's the family's chosen one. The problem with this is that, when your family are the descendants of a

nameless dimension-bending tentacled eldritch god who kill and/or curse each other over things as petty as flower shows, you're not going to be chosen for anything good. So like any sensible seventeen-year-old labouring under an ominous prophecy, Katy decides to run away.

This does not go to plan.

And so, Katy Porter finds herself stuck living with Ricky, considered creepy even by her family's standards, and Fairwood House, which is alive and has sort-of absorbed Carrie Rickards. Her elder brother Wes is also involved, although he is in turns terrified and incoherent (in no small part due to one of the uncles blackmailing him into testing drugs). This story is, in many ways, a story about family expectations: it's just that in this family, three generations back some sisters decided that summoning an eldritch god and having its babies was an excellent plan. Katy would *really* like to be focusing on college and not the fact that her dad is a serial killer and she has some kind of horrible destiny, Ricky would like to make friends but doesn't know how, Carrie/Fairwood is a little tired of trying to explain ethics to Ricky, and Wes would like it if anyone could remember his face and also could his family members stop threatening to eat his partners please? And somehow between the four of them they need to figure out if there's any way for Katy to be *in control* of her powers, rather than controlled by them.

It's a brilliant story. Somehow, in the midst of some very gory transformation sequences and a lot of murder, it is incredibly emotionally touching. There's an unexpected gentleness at times: the characters are trying to be friends, however clumsily (Ricky and Carrie/Fairwood is one of my favourite examples of this). C.M. Rosens also has a delightful sense of humour that had me cackling in public. As in *The Crows*, the mundane is mixed in with the magical with stunning results, and the characters are complicated and messy and weirdly loveable. Pagham-On-Sea continues to have strangely accurate small town vibes, and the ending was so satisfying that I nearly screamed (I was, yet again, reading this in public so I tried to restrain myself).

Rating: read this, don't ask whose heart is up the chimney

Enjoyed this review? You can buy me a drink if you feel so moved! Also if you've read this book please please come talk to me, I need to yell about the ending and I'm trying to avoid spoilers in the review. ALSO C.M. Rosens has a trigger list for this book on her website, so if you think this sounds good but you aren't sure if you'll be able to handle horror, you can go and check that out. I found it very helpful.



(<https://ko-fi.com/A2162Z9K>)

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1. cmrosens

Oct 18, 2021 @ 12:19:47

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