**The Grip of It** by Jac Jemc

As Julie and James settle into their home and their marriage, the house and its surrounding terrain become the locus of increasingly strange happenings. Together the couple embark on a panicked search for the source of their mutual torment, a journey that mires them in the history of their peculiar neighbors and the mysterious residents who lived in the house before them.

Why you'll like it: *Psychological horror. Compelling.*

About the Author: Jac Jemc is the author of My Only Wife, a finalist for the 2013 PEN / Robert W. Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction and winner of the Paula Anderson Book Award, and the short story collection A Different Bed Every Time. She has been the recipient of two Illinois Arts Council Professional Development Grants, and in 2014 was named one of 25 Writers to Watch by the Guild Literary Complex and one of Newcity's Lit 50 in Chicago. She recently completed a stint as the writer in residence at the University of Notre Dame and currently teaches at Northeastern Illinois University and StoryStudio Chicago, as well as online at Writers & Books and the Loft Literary Center, and she is the web nonfiction editor for Hobart.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the significance of the title? Would you have given the book a different title? If yes, what is your title?
2. What did you think of the prologue? Was James an unreliable narrator? Why or why not?
3. Was the house haunted by Rolf’s family? Was someone’s body buried out back? Where is Rolf?
4. Who was sleeping in the cot James found behind the wall? How would you have responded to finding secret compartments in your (potential) house?
5. Was the haunting a physical manifestation of the mental abuse Julie had gone through and ignored when her husband was gambling (which triggered the move to begin with)?
6. Did you appreciate how Jemc switched perspectives between James and Julie with each chapter, yet made the chapters short enough to warrant that “one more chapter” feeling?
7. After the stepmother offered to help James and Julie get out, why do you think they stayed?
8. Was it the mold that caused the hallucination of the shadows and the droning noise?
9. Why was James unable to Rolf in the armchair?
10. Did James really vandalize Connie’s home but doesn’t remember doing so?
11. Did you find that the novel held everyone’s interest throughout the story, or were there times it failed to totally engross members of the group?
12. What scene was the most pivotal for the book? How do you think the story would have changed had that scene not taken place?

13. Are there any books that you would compare this one to? How does this book hold up to them?

(Questions provided by Speculative Chic and Reddit)