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by; Shannon Yarbrough

I continue to seek thrills from authors like [Troy Taylor](#) and any other genius author exploring the supernatural. I can now add Dana E. Donovan to my list of favorites.

*Abandoned* revolves around a character named Mike Riley. Right from the start, Mike begins telling his story to the reader in a very passive voice, but Donovan does a great job of keeping the reader intrigued while they learn the back-story of Riley's life and why it is so important. Here's an intense cliff hanger right on page one...

*All right then, where do I start? Do I begin on that hot August day when I returned to the house in which I spent my summers as a child? Perhaps I should tell you about the first time I realized the house was haunted? Better yet, maybe I need to go all the way back to the day I killed my little brother, Patrick. But no, I'm not ready to talk about that. Not yet anyway.*

What follows is a detail of Mike's days growing up with his brother Patrick and being raised by his grandmother. Donovan's writing has a nice "Our Town" feel to it. He has a keen eye for detail that really paints a picture of the setting of the story, New Castle. The only problem the story suffers from at this point is maybe a bit too much detail as this story weighs in at over 600 pages.

After thirty years, Mike returns to his grandmother's farmhouse. Like many of those tortured souls horror fans love to read about and connect with, Mike has been struggling with what happened to his brother and he hopes that by reconnecting to the place he loved so much as a child, he will learn to accept his past and be able to move forward. But as Mike will soon learn, his past is not the only thing that's haunted.

There are odd noises at night in the old farmhouse. Furniture moves across the room all by itself. Mike hears voices although he's all alone. Or is he? This house would be a paranormal investigator's dream come true. Donovan's vivid details really pay off in some of these scenes where Mike begins to explore what is happening. Mike soon discovers that Grandmother's old farmhouse is actually haunted by the ghost of his brother Patrick, and Patrick is not very happy that Mike has returned.

What follows is an intense struggle between the two brothers to resolve the anger and distance between them, but that's a little hard to do when Patrick is in the afterlife and wants Mike dead as well. The author has plotted his story out very well, and as I said, it contains all the key elements that a book of this genre needs to capture an audience. Abrupt cliff hangers to keep you interested, a taste of foreshadowing, and certainly lots of eerie moments to send chills down your spine, readers who enjoy a good scare then this book is for you.

I recall a scene early on where Mike comforts Patrick as a child over a ghost story which their Grandmother told them to keep them from playing near the well. Nuances of the spirit world like this, sprinkled throughout the brother's life together on earth, create a nice balance with Mike's reactions to meeting his brother as a ghost later. The emotional reaction from Patrick (as a ghost) toward his brother Mike really help to support the overall story, again echoing the supernatural elements Donovan has presented his characters with as children. In other words, Donovan's story of this conflict between man and ghost is actually believable and not too over the top.

In the horror genre, obviously Stephen King embraced the saga-length novel early on. [IT](#) is over 1,000 pages and so is [The Stand](#). As an old King fan, books like [Misery](#) still resonate with me more today as a favorite, and [Misery](#) is actually only 352 pages. I can honestly say that 300+ pages is enough for me; 500 would certainly be pushing it and it better be a damn good book. Donovan's book at 600 pages did indeed keep me interested, but looking back at it now as I write this review, I think a professional editor would indeed probably chop 200 pages off easily. But don't let the 600 pages scare you! If you like a good fright, you will not be disappointed!