

EXAMPLE of Big, Messy Synopsis for A Death Displaced

(MAJOR SPOILERS AHEAD)

Nicolas Crystan is a young man who feels like he has little meaning to his life, after the disappearance of his mother eight years ago led him into depression, which he's only just coming out of now. His family- and friend -relationships have mostly fallen apart, he only works part time and can barely afford to get by, and he's always yearning for something more—something to give meaning to his life. Then, while he's at work, he has a daydream of a woman's death, but he dismisses it as nothing more than the unpleasant wanderings of his mind. He gets back to work and his dull life. We find out from his boss that things are going missing from the store, being stolen. At some point, his boss also mentions a sad story in the newspaper about a kid who's gone missing. She says that she recalls quite a few cases of missing children on the island across the years. Also, one of Nick's younger brothers (he has two younger brothers, who are twins) says he has a secret that he will only tell Nick.

The story is set on Lansin Island, an island with a dark past of witch burnings. Because of its past, the island commercialises on Pagan and Wicca holidays, hosting events for every Sabbat/Festival to attract people to the island. It's become a bit of a haven for followers of earth-based religion, and has a generally witchy vibe about it. It should make the reader feel like: Who knows if any of the residents really have magical powers or not?

A few days after Nick has the daydream, real-life events mimic his daydream and Nick realises it was a vision of the future. He saves the woman's life, unintentionally 'displacing' her.

The woman, Juliet, is a similar age to Nick, but is his opposite in most ways. She's outwardly confident, wealthy, and runs her own business. She's mostly happy with her life as it is, and doesn't want change, except from positive changes in the areas of self-development and improving her business. She does, however, live a rather lonely life. Her rich parents moved away when she was 18, and her gran, who she was closest to when she was younger, died when Juliet was young.

When Juliet is saved from death, she becomes displaced. Because she was fated to die but was physically saved, her soul still moves on to the Otherworld, but her body remains alive on this side. Being displaced like this, partly anchored in both worlds, gives her the ability to sense spirits from the realm that lies between the two worlds: The Spiritworld.

After being saved, she runs off without even thanking Nick, because she feels disoriented and just needs to get away. She begins seeing strange things that she doesn't understand. She doesn't believe in the paranormal, though, and tries to deny the strange things happening to her. Eventually, though, she decides to seek help from a local, famous medium, who confirms that she is seeing ghosts. The local medium is the last living descendant of the Lansin Island Witches, who were burnt on the island in the 16th century.

Soon after, Juliet is visited by the ghost of Nick's mother who tells her she must tell Nicolas to go to Grendel Manor to find out the truth (about what happened to her.) She also says that Nick must take ... but then she vanishes without finishing her sentences. (She was trying to say he has to take his brothers with him.)

She seeks out Nicolas, and after everything she's been through, she decides she wants to go with Nicolas to the manor.

They can't go straight away, because they've both got commitments, but they plan to go within the next few days. Juliet sees her best friend, Kim, and when she's with her, a ghost who claims to be Kim's ex visits Juliet and tells her not to trust Kim's current boyfriend. Juliet asks Kim about her ex (the ghost), and finds out that he dumped Kim in a really nasty way. Juliet isn't sure whether to trust the ghost or Kim's new boyfriend. She wonders if ghosts can be as malicious in the afterlife as they were when they were alive. She decides to keep quiet for now and to just keep an eye on Kim and her boyfriend.

Nick and Juliet go to Grendel Manor together. On the way, a car follows them. Eventually, Nick pulls over, and discovers it's one of his colleagues and two thugs Nick recognises from coming into the shop he works at. Nick had been looking into why items were going missing

and had come close to the truth that it was one of his colleagues purposely not security tagging certain items so that his two thuggish friends could come in and steal them. Now Nick's colleague beats him up to make him keep quiet, because he doesn't want to lose his job, and he was only stealing and personally selling the stock because he needed the money so badly, after getting in gambling debt.

Juliet manages to stop the beating when a ghost related to the colleague appears. The ghost says things to Juliet which she repeats, and it spooks and guilt-trips him into leaving.

Nicolas is embarrassed and in pain, and Juliet wonders what the hell she has gotten herself into. After Nick reassures Juliet, they go on their way to Grendel Manor.

When they reach Grendel Manor, the owner, Aldrich Grendel opens the door and is very rude to them. He tries to get them to go away, but asks for their valuables first. Juliet obeys, handing over her phone.

Nick is confused, and then realises that Aldrich had put Juliet into some kind of trance. He's controlling her with his mind. For some reason, it doesn't work on Nick. Nick shouts at Aldrich for him to stop.

Aldrich is startled, then seems to recognise Nick. He orders Juliet, who is still under his control, to kill Nick. Nick manages to defend himself and then knock Aldrich unconscious, releasing Juliet from her trance.

Juliet doesn't know what's going on, but Nick convinces her that they have to leave right away.

They drive off, then discuss what just happened. They realise that if Aldrich can control people's minds, then he might have sent someone after them already to kill them. Nick always figures that Aldrich MUST definitely have something to do with his mother's death, and he wants to go back to question Aldrich, but he's afraid for Juliet's safety. After more discussion, Juliet persuades Nick to use his psychic ability. He manages to force a vision and he sees himself, his brothers, and Juliet returning to the manor. They realise what Nick's mum had been trying to say: that Nick needs to take his brothers with him to Grendel Manor, because, maybe like him, they are immune to Aldrich's mind control.

Nick picks up his brothers, persuading them to come along, stressing that it's about the disappearance of their mother, and then the four of them go to the manor.

Aldrich is no longer unconscious on the floor where they'd left him.

He has a shotgun and tries to kill them, but they somehow avoid harm and manage to restrain him. (Maybe Nick's mum appears to Juliet and warns her quickly enough to help them dodge the shotgun fire.)

Once restrained, they take him somewhere where they can question him (out the back of his manor, into the forests on his land). Aldrich can only partly control Nick's brothers, so they and Juliet have to go off somewhere else while Nick questions Aldrich alone.

Juliet is drawn away by something magical-looking in the forest and finds herself coming across a strange glowing pool in the middle of a clearing. The pool seems to communicate with her. It claims it is a portal the Otherworld, and Juliet becomes tempted to go through and get her soul back (really, there is another being on the other side, who is communicating to them through the portal).

Meanwhile, Aldrich admits that he killed Nick's mother. We discover he's not only got the ability to control people with his mind, but he's also some kind of immortal. For years, he has been sacrificing children on the island (every 5-10 years), by apparently sending them through a portal to an ancient god he believes in called Moloch. Nick doesn't know about the portal yet, so he just thinks Aldrich is mad.

The reason Aldrich killed Nick's mother is because he was targeting her twins (Nick's brothers), who were only ten at the time. He wanted to sacrifice them to his god. But, like Nick, Nick's mum was immune to Aldrich's ability and Aldrich couldn't mind-trick her into bringing her twins to his manor. When she realised he was dodgy, he had no choice but to kill her and dispose of her body.

Aldrich taunts Nick so much that Nick nearly beats him to death, but he stops himself. He doesn't want to be like Aldrich.

Juliet hears Aldrich calling for help and is drawn back to where Nick was. Nick makes sure Aldrich can't see Juliet and control her, and then he tells her what happened to his mum.

She consoles him, and then tells him about the strange thing she saw in the woods.

They blindfold Aldrich, so he can't attempt to control the twins, and then leave the twins to watch over Aldrich while they go off to the portal.

When they get there, the portal calls Nick an Oracle. The portal, or whatever is on the other side, seems able to read their thoughts to some degree. Whatever is talking to them admits that it is not Moloch, as Aldrich seems to believe it is, and that it's been manipulating Aldrich all this time. Whatever is through the portal tries really hard to persuade them to pass through to the Otherworld. Juliet is determined to go through, and Nick has to stop her. Then they are both drawn away by Aldrich crying for help again.

When they go to run this time, the portal explodes (the reader won't discover this until a later book, but the being on the other side is very powerful and is angry that Nick didn't come through. In its anger, it explodes the portal in an attempt to kill Nick).

Nick and Juliet escape the explosion relatively unscathed, then make their way back to Aldrich.

They discover that Aldrich convinced one of the twins to take off the blindfold in exchange for telling the truth about their mother. One of the twins took off the blindfold, and the two of them weren't strong enough to resist Aldrich's mind control. He used them to set himself free.

Aldrich uses his mind control to cause some chaos while they are all in the woods, and tries to kill them. Nick ends up fighting him, and is overcome, until he uses his wits to hit Aldrich where it hurts: he taunts Aldrich by telling him his god, Moloch, isn't real, and that it was portal to another world, and now even that is destroyed. Aldrich loses his strength, and Nick hits him away. Aldrich runs off, and Nick is too hurt and weak to pursue at the moment.

Juliet has become lost in the forest, but is led back to Nick by the ghost of his mother.

Just as she finds him, she hears Aldrich's wail again.

They run towards it and discover that one of Nick's brothers has killed Aldrich, now that they know the truth of how their mother was murdered.

They all panic about how they are going to cover up the dead body, and Juliet is most revolted of all. Her more practical, selfish side kicks in and she just wants to get away from it all. She wants nothing to do with Nicolas or his brother anymore, now that she's complicit in a murder.

Nick convinces her to calm down and says if they get caught, he will say she threatened her to come along and that she's innocent in it all.

She is persuaded to stay, at least while they dispose of the body.

It's getting dark by now, so they have to head inside the manor to look for a torch. When they get there, they encounter Kim's boyfriend: Ryan. (The ghost of Kim's ex had warned Juliet not to trust Kim's boyfriend.)

We find out that Ryan has been Aldrich's house servant, more of a slave, for years. He's had to do horrible things, like cover up deaths and keep tabs on families of people Aldrich murdered, but he has also accepted some rather unsavoury perks along the way. He asked Aldrich to use his mind-trick on Kim's ex to dump Kim, and then, Juliet figured, either Aldrich or Ryan made Kim's ex disappear (killed him), and then Ryan wooed Kim while she was down about being dumped.

Juliet is horrified to know her best friend has been dating a murderer for years, but she also doesn't want Kim to find out the truth and face the grief of splitting up with Ryan. Also, if Juliet told Kim the truth, what would Ryan do? Would he come here for revenge?

Ryan is completely relieved that Aldrich is dead. Even though he accepts the perks of his job, he'd been a slave for so long and wanted out.

He suggests a deal: If Juliet doesn't tell Kim about what his secret job has been all this time and what he did to her ex, then he will cover up the death of Aldrich to make sure Nick, his brothers, and Juliet don't get found out and arrested.

With some hesitation on Juliet's side, but some coaxing from Nick and his brothers, they agree to Ryan's deal.

They go on their way. Juliet is still disgusted by it all and wants nothing to do with Nick and his family. She is dropped near her town, and walks off.

Nicolas returns home and persuades his brothers to keep quiet for now. He will figure out what to do about telling their father over the next few days.

Nick's brother tells Nick his big secret (he's gay and is dating one of Nick's colleagues, which I'll foreshadow earlier on in the novel). Nick's colleague who attacked him has quit his job, after being spooked so bad and made to feel guilty by Juliet, and so Nick is able to get a full-time job and improve his quality of life. After using his psychic ability to save a life, and also to find out the truth about his mother's disappearance, he feels like his life has more meaning now and he is able to let go of the past (because it's better to know the truth, even if it's painful, than to never know what happened to his mum) and to confidently take his final steps out of depression.

When he's thought everything through, he tells his father the truth (minus some of the paranormal details), enabling his dad to also move on and let go of the past.

Meanwhile, Juliet returns to her lonely life and is paranoid that she's going to be arrested over the next few days. She doesn't feel able to talk to her parents, who don't live on the island, and have never shown much interest in her life. Someone comes to visit her, and it turns out to be her gran, who she thought was dead.

Her gran is just as shocked to find out Juliet thought she was dead. Apparently, Juliet's mum and Juliet's gran had a serious row when Juliet was young and so Juliet's mother banished the gran from her life and told her never to seek them out again. Since then, the gran has remarried (her old partner died before Juliet was born), but her latest husband passed away a few months ago. Juliet's gran decided that all she wants from life now is to know her granddaughter, who she never got to know. Juliet gets what she hasn't had since she was a kid: a family member who really cares about her. After more days pass without any news of Aldrich's body being discovered, Juliet begins to relax about it and believe that she's not going to be arrested. She's annoyed at her mother for lying about her gran's apparent death, but more than anything she's pleased to have her gran back in her life. She let's her gran stay with her for a while and becomes less lonely. She's also visited by the ghost of Nick's mum, who thanks her, and tells her not to be so hard on Nicolas.

Twist chapter: From Ryan's POV, we discover that he's a rather twisted individual. He takes massive pleasure in defiling Aldrich's body and the manor. Over the course of a week or so, he prepares burning down Grendel Manor. But he also thinks about all the secrets he knows. We discover that he learnt, while in service to Aldrich, that Aldrich used his mind control power to have all the witches on the island burnt, all those years ago, believing he was taking orders from his god Moloch. (Really, whatever was behind the portal gave Aldrich the order to kill the witches, and this will be answered in later books in the series.)

The book ends with Ryan taking Aldrich's body to The Burning Grounds, a site on the island which is famous for being where the witches were burnt, and he burns the body there, in one of the most showy ways possible, which is sure to attract the attention of the entire island's population ...