



Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow

Daniel Nayeri

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Written entirely on an iPhone, this quartet of YA novellas by Another Pan and Another Faust author Daniel Nayeri showcases four different genres.

This bold collection of novellas by Another series author Daniel Nayeri features four riveting tales. These modern riffs on classic genres will introduce young adult readers to a broad range of writing styles that explore universally compelling themes such as identity and belonging, betrayal and friendship, love and mortality.

Straw House: A Western sizzling with suspense, set in a land where a rancher grows soulless humans and a farmer grows living toys.

Wood House: This science-fiction tale plunges the reader into a future where reality and technology blend imperceptibly, and a teenage girl must race to save the world from a nano-revolution that a corporation calls "ReCreation Day."

Brick House: This detective story set in modern NYC features a squad of "wish police" and a team of unlikely detectives.

Blow: A comedic love story told by none other than Death himself, portrayed here as a handsome and charismatic hero who may steal your heart in more ways than one. With humor, suspense, and relatable prose, this hip and cutting-edge collection dazzles.

Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow Details

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Author : Daniel Nayeri

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From Reader Review Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow for online ebook

TheBookSmugglers says

Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow¹ is a collection of four novellas, each written in a different genre, although ALL of them have a fantastical element, placing this collection firmly into Speculative Fiction territory.

Toy Farm opens the collection and is a Western. Set in a farm, where Toys grow from the earth and are tended by the farmer's daughter and by the Scarecrow who acts as the Sheriff. The toys' gentle life is shaken by the attack of a group homunculus who may look like humans but have no soul – unlike the toys. The battle for their lives is fought by their Sheriff, a boy who needs to become a man. This story is a bit convoluted (it takes some time to realise what the hell is going on) but raises interesting questions about what it means to be human.

Our Lady of Villains is a Sci-fi story. The story is set in the near future in a dystopian world where a Corporation runs the world, nanotechnology runs amok and everybody lives in a virtual Second Life. Although there are some cool things about this story (for example, villains are the new heroes and vice-versa), it felt too artificially constructed for my tastes and by the time the identity of the Lady of Villains (a new Goddess, to be worshiped) was revealed I was already uninterested.

Wish Police comes next, and is probably my favourite story of the bunch (I would not be averse to reading more stories about this Wish Police, in fact). It is a detective story with an interesting premise: this branch of the police prevents certain types of wishes from coming true. The detectives – including a talking fish and a former Djinn – go around trying to catch a Wish turned human before he causes any real trouble.

The final story is a romance called Doom With a View and is narrated by Death himself, a cool narrator to a sweeping love story between star-crossed lovers. This story is light and funny but left me...cold.

And ultimately, this is the feeling I have towards this collection: reserved indifference. I feel like I should have enjoyed it more because the stories are not bad at all. They are well written and some of them have really interesting premises (although those interesting concepts needed more space to develop). But they are perhaps too...safe? Each story follows their "genre" to the letter with little to no room for true originality. I understand that this collection is meant to be an introduction to these types of stories to Young Adults and I guess I could say it is indeed a competent introduction. I just feel readers deserve more than mere competence or paint-by-numbers introductions. I feel that Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow lacked true heart.

A final note: as the official blurb and many reviewers will make sure to tell you, this book was written on an iphone. I am perplexed as to why this seems to be so important as to be included in the official blurb: WHY does it matter to a reader at all WHERE or HOW the book was written? What difference does it make if it was written on an iphone, a typewriter or...whatever?

Lia Marcoux says

I was feeling guilty about not finishing this until I came here to post about my feelings of guilt and saw the summary beginning "written entirely on an iPhone". Get a pen, dummy. Pass.

Carlyn Greenwald says

This set of novellas is truly something unique to the YA market, perhaps even the entire book world. The best way I could describe the feeling of these novellas would be a child-like lens that manages to still speak to issues that worry older people. The premise of each novella is so creative, and the writing is top notch. The worlds each novella resides in are impossible to forget. Some may see the plot descriptions and get turned off by the premises (I originally was), but I'm so glad I read it. It was an experience I'll never be able to repeat with a book.

Straw House was the most confusing for me, but it would appeal heavily to lovers of Alice in Wonderland or any Pixar films. But, even with the mystical world of a farmer who raises toys, the story has its dark side. For me, the parts that stuck out the strongest in the story were scenes where the antagonist kills toys, and the descriptions read with talk of oil dribbling out of the bodies, gaping holes torn, and springs sticking out. If one read it literally as toys, it would seem much tamer than one who gets fully immersed in the book. It suddenly becomes brutal descriptions of deaths. The author does an excellent job of pulling readers into this world, and by the end, I was nearly crying during the lows of the Sunny (the straw man) and his toy dog sidekick.

Wood House was a bit easier to read, but had an eerie feeling throughout it, and it didn't take long to realize that the story's technological aspect was overwhelming, yet completely plausible. The main character struggles to write basic English instead of the Internet acronyms, everyone spends every waking moment in front of a screen, and anyone who doesn't do so is seen as the enemy. It made me truly sit back and appreciate the fact that our world now isn't completely virtual, and I was on the edge of my seat hoping that this technological nightmare didn't swallow the "villains" whole. A thought provoking novella.

Brick House was my favorite out of the novellas, perhaps because it was closest to my preferred genre of realistic/mystery. But, the author gave it a unique twist. Yes, the story is a detective story. Yes, the story is about preventing a murder. So, it lays out all the classic partner banter and suspense that a great mystery needs. But, it builds on that. The partners are a mild-mannered immortal and a hilariously snarky talking goldfish. The murder that must be stopped is a thirteen-year-old boy's wish that his parents were dead. So, they have to stop a projection of the boy, or the boy's "wish," in order to prevent the crime. Despite all the oddities of this work, it read like a great mystery, and the duo of Saul and Ari are unforgettable. There were times when the strange twists of the story disappeared, and other times it added to a greater story.

Blow's best feature was definitely the narrator, otherwise known as Death. But, Death is not the sullen but wise creature of *The Book Thief*, nor the skeleton in the black cape. No, this Death is a little awkward, always with humorous commentary, and a character that ultimately grows on you. The story is a cliché, the story's glowing point being the point of view it is told through. Even so, the star crossed lovers tale reads a bit satirically, and therefore a fun story for Death to tell. For the first time in my reading, Death's story made me laugh, and it was a pleasant surprise.

In conclusion, if you want a reading experience that truly cannot be repeated and are not starkly void of imagination, Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow will lead you on a reading journey that will not soon be repeated.

Aiyana says

This may not have been one of my favorite books to read, but I can't deny its sheer genius. Four novellas, linked only by the disquieting feeling they evoke. This stuff is weird, in a way that keeps the reader cleverly off balance, unable to reconcile the deeply familiar and deeply unfamiliar elements of the stories. If Philip K. Dick belonged to the millennial generation, I suspect he'd have written a book like this one.

Meghan Davis strader says

This collection of books was very fun to read. Some of referred to this book as a modern-day "Alice in Wonderland", and I can see the connection. Things aren't quite as they seem to be but while Alice falls into a world of nonsense, Nayeri takes you into a world of depth. All four stories were compelling and thought-provoking. I highly recommend reading!

Ctazelaar says

Rating is for the wood house story, which blew my mind.

Elissa says

Ok, it gets very slow at points.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: I really enjoyed both books in the author's "Another" series and was intrigued by this collection of novellas.

A collection of four novellas written by the author, each featuring a different sub-genre, yet all of them fit under either fantasy or science-fiction on the surface. These stories are for the older teen and quite suited to adult reading as well, though they do feature teen main characters. Of the four stories I really enjoyed three of them with two being quite outstanding. The fourth fell flat and didn't entertain me. These stories show what a great creative, inventive, dark mind Nayeri has and what he may have in store for readers in the future is simply delicious to think about. Highly recommended!

1. Toy Farm - A western, this is a weird, quirky tale set on a toy farm, where the inhabitants are toys and the farm grows new toys to populate itself. The main character is Sonny, an 18yo straw man who patrols and

protects the farm and its inhabitants. A stranger comes to the farm, perhaps to cause danger but before his real purpose is known a truly evil man arrives who wishes to find out the secret of the toys' ability to live and have feelings. He and his slave plant people start to take over the farm while Sonny, the farmer's daughter and the stranger do what they can to fight against him. A very strange story indeed and while I didn't really understand its meaning, I enjoyed it nonetheless. It had a creepy vibe to it that I just can't describe. Strange but interesting. 4/5

2. Our Lady of Villains - Fantastic little dystopian novella set in 2062 where nano-technology has taken over the world. People live on the web and in virtual reality. A corporation basically rules the world and plans to turn the earth into one virtual reality on the upcoming ReCreation Day. A girl, who belongs to the group of dissenters, the Villains, races against time to perhaps save the world. Compelling story, much longer than the first one but had me racing through the pages and read in one sitting. Loved it! 5/5

3. Wish Police - Brilliant urban fantasy! My favourite story so far! Saul, a Djinn, and his partner Ari, a goldfish who happens to be prince of the sea, work for the ICU (Imaginary Crimes Unit). Their job is to go after wishes that have been sent to commit crimes and apprehend them before the crime is committed because you see all wishes comes true unless they wouldn't, shouldn't or couldn't. Randy just had a bad night and before he falls asleep he wishes his family was dead. That's when Saul and Ari are given what should be a simple case. Along for the ride is a recently demoted detective who may be Saul & Ari's new partner Mack, who claims to be a giant leprechaun. As mysterious herself as the case turns out to be this story is an exciting read and a lot of fun. An amazing amount of character development is put into the three main characters and I could see, and would very much like to see, the further adventures of this trio in novel format. 5/5

4. Doom with a View - This is a fantasy, an original fairy tale, if you will. Told from the point of view of Death; he tells us the tale of a kingdom run by a selfish young prince, two artisans who have been warring since they were first compared to each other, and their children, star-crossed lovers. This is really a farce on all these common elements of a Romeo & Juliet fairy tale since our lovers don't even meet until the story is almost over. I'm usually quite fond of stories involving Death as a character but this one fell flat with me and I'm afraid I found it rather silly and boring. 2/5

Julie says

This book is a collection of four short stories, each written in a different genre. The first (*Straw House/Toy Farm*) is a Western, the second (*Wood House/Our Lady of Villains*) is science fiction, the third (*Brick House/Wish Police*) is a detective drama, and the last story (*Blow/Doom with a View*) is a romantic comedy. The stories all seem to explore themes of identity and belonging, betrayal and friendship, love and mortality.

For a reason that I have yet to determine, the theme of *The Three Little Pigs* is carried throughout the book. I, personally, do not understand why the author chose to do this, as it does not seem to relate in any way to any of the stories.

Overall, though, I enjoyed all four of the stories. Contrary to other reviews that I have read, my favorite story was *Our Lady of Villains*, the science fiction novella. I really like science fiction books, and I thought Nayeri did a great job in creating an interesting world in which the world is on the verge of going completely virtual. My least favorite story was *Wish Police*. Although it had an interesting concept (a special police force that must deal with rogue wishes), I found the story a bit lackluster and I couldn't find anything about the story very exciting.

Ed says

Nayeri, D. (2012). *Straw house, wood house, brick house, blow*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 406 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7636-5526-6. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

I have an iPhone. I check messages on it. Text messages have become an increasingly favored tool. As much as I like my phone, however, I MUCH prefer doing longer messages on my computer with its full sized keyboard. Nayeri may well win the prize for being the very first author to write a published book on a smart phone. The fact that the book was written on a phone may give teachers a way to engage a reader, but if the details of its composition were the only reason to review the book, you would not be reading my review. The book is smart, unique, and a lot of fun to read. That said, this book will not be for everyone. Those who want more immediate connections to folklore will be disappointed. A book written on a phone is obviously a think outside the box kind of book. Nayeri has four very different novellas in this collection, all revolving around themes of the limits of friendship, love and death, how we see our own behavior, and more. In *Straw House* (Toy Farm) we have a western unlike any western we have ever read before. Toys roam the range in this novella and an Oz-like straw man, Sunny, is pushed to think of ways to protect the farm from the stranger with the jagged fingernails the color of fossils. He also hopes to gain the love of Dot, the farmer's daughter. In *Wood House* (Our Lady of Villains) we brave the horrors of Recreation Day in a science fiction thriller featuring a "nano-miracle event." The epigraph before this story is from the *Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* and it speaks of building a very safe house, a fitting quote for a big brother story espousing the benevolent protection of technology. However, even safe houses have problems, even those with the miracle of Nano technology: "No one knows which came first: the man or the virus." (p. 131). *Brick House* (Wish Police) cautions us to be careful what we wish for. In this novella Randy Bieman wishes upon a star for the multiple homicide of his family. Next thing we know, we are with detective Mack interrogating Randy Bieman: "Mack slammed the metal table again, hard enough to leave a print. The kid was about to bawl. 'Don't play with me. Randy Bieman catches the first star, wants a triple murder. You show up at the door ten minutes later. That dad opens the door, and I say you would have put your fist through his heart. Am I right?' 'But I'm not Randy,' pleaded the boy. 'I know.' said Mack, 'You're Randy's wish.'" (pp. 223-224). *Blow* (Doom with a View) features Death narrating a story about feuding artisan families and claiming it is a love story: "Fair enough. Maybe a love story should have the lovers within a hundred-mile radius of each other at the beginning. But in my experience, it's not so much the beginning as the ending that matters for most people. And endings are kinda my specialty. I mean, you can start anywhere if you think about it, but you're gonna end up like everybody else someday, listening to Dora clacking on her typewriter till you name comes up next on her clipboard." (p. 353). And the ending to this love story is such a delightful, morbid, very human surprise! Purchase this one for that lover of literary fiction who likes avant-garde reading experiences unlike anything he or she has ever read before.

Azaleah Mohd Anis says

My rating for this book is more like 3.7 stars, because although the latter three novellas were lovely, it was a little difficult to get through *Straw House*. Perhaps this was more a fault on my part, as I did enjoy the story and the slightly dark humour, but I think I'm just not made to read westerns.

Otherwise, I quite enjoyed my first foray into reading Daniel Nayeri's books, and look forward to reading his series of teenagers in New York, just as soon as I've read the originals.

Kimberly says

Incredibly creative stories with characters I will never forget. I enjoyed diving into these fictional worlds. Highly recommend if you're looking for something unique!

Taylor says

2.5 stars

Wandering Librarians says

Four novellas of different genres make up this collection. The first is a western taking place on a ranch made up of toys that are grown from the ground. The second is science fiction, taking place in a world that's on the verge of going completely virtual. The third is a fantasy tale about the wish police stopping the dangerous wishes people make, and the last story is a romance narrated by Death.

Loved. Totally, totally loved. Nayeri is incredibly skilled at creating a whole world and well-rounded characters in just a hundred pages. No easy trick.

The title, obviously, comes from The Three Little Pigs, but the connection in each story is not always obvious. There are no actual wolves or pigs in any of these stories. It's more about what the houses represent. Straw House deals with vulnerability. Wood House the idea that one might not be quite as safe as you think. Brick House actually makes mention of a brick House, which was the most literal interpretation, and Blow was the one I had the hardest time seeing the connection.

The first story I wasn't really feeling. It was odd and disjointed and I wasn't sure I fully understood what was going on that whole time. It also ended quite suddenly. However, I absolutely loved the other three stories. I don't think I can even say which one was my favorite.

Wood House and Brick House in particular had amazing world creation. They both left me wanting to read more stories that take place in that world. I wanted the novellas to turn into full-length novels so I could know more. I wanted to know more about what happened to the characters. Or it didn't even have to be the same characters. There were such fascinating worlds that any story that took place there I'd love read.

Wood House is a science fiction story. In this world, people do most of their living online through virtual representations of themselves, where they can be heroes. Why live in the regular world when you can be a hero online? Those who don't want to live online are therefore referred to as Villains. The Villains are trying to fight against ReCreation Day, the day when Nano-Fidelity hotspots will extend across the world and create a merging of real life with virtual life. It leaves no one with the option to opt out. Janey, a Villain, is sent to deliver a book (a real one, with paper) for her guardian and stumbles into the horrifying truth of nofi technology. It was super creepy. The story was also quite funny. It was excellent storytelling and I want

more stories in this world.

I felt the same about Brick House. In this world, wishes are real and powerful. Three agents of the Imaginary Crime Unit are called in to stop a wish of a young boy who has wished his family dead on the first star in the sky. His wish becomes entangled with another boy's wish, and Saul (a djinn), Ari (a talking fish) and Mack (not clear what she is, claims she's an over-sized leprechaun) must stop them both before it's too late. It was great, with a couple of excellent surprise twists at the end. Again, I want more! More stories in this world!

I got to hear Daniel Nayeri speak at the Boston Book Festival, and he was an engaging and fascinating speaker, much like his book. I haven't read anything else by him, but after this, I definitely want to.

Casey says

I did not like "Straw House"/"Toy Farm", but enjoyed the humor and the odd mystery of "Wood House"/"Our Lady of Villains", thought "Blow"/"Doom with a View" was appropriately funny even if the main romance seemed a little off, and loved "Brick House"/"Wish Police". The latter novella was so wonderfully detailed and had such an interesting twist and cliffhanger ending that I want there to be a regular series taking place in this world.
