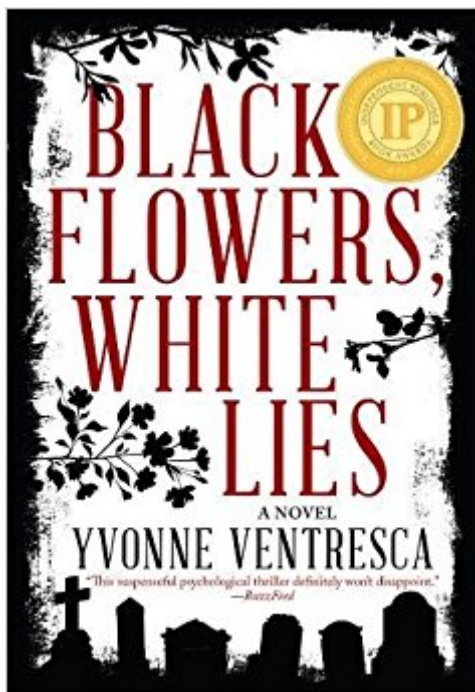


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# Black Flowers, White Lies



## Synopsis

A 2017 Independent Publisher Book Award Gold Medal Winner! Her father died before she was born, but Ella Benton knows they have a supernatural connection. Since her mother discourages these beliefs, Ella keeps her cemetery visits secret. But she may not be the only one with secrets. Ella's mother might be lying about how Dad died sixteen years ago. Newfound evidence points to his death in a psychiatric hospital, not as a result of a tragic car accident as her mother always claimed. After a lifetime of just the two of them, Mom suddenly feels like a stranger. When a handprint much like the one Ella left on her father's tombstone mysteriously appears on the bathroom mirror, at first she wonders if Dad is warning her of danger as he did once before. If it's not a warning, could her new too-good-to-be-true boyfriend be responsible for the strange occurrences? Or maybe it's the grieving building superintendent whose dead daughter strongly resembles Ella? As the unexplained events become more frequent and more sinister, Ella becomes terrified about who—or what—might harm her. Soon the evidence points to someone else entirely: Ella herself. What if, like her father, she's suffering from a breakdown? In this second novel from award-winning author Yvonne Ventresca, Ella desperately needs to find answers, no matter how disturbing the truth might be. Sky Pony Press, with our Good Books, Racehorse and Arcade imprints, is proud to publish a broad range of books for young readers—picture books for small children, chapter books, books for middle grade readers, and novels for young adults. Our list includes bestsellers for children who love to play Minecraft; stories told with LEGO bricks; books that teach lessons about tolerance, patience, and the environment, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 6 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up **•** In times of trouble, Ella's deep, almost supernatural connection to her deceased father (he died in a car accident before she was born) has brought her great comfort. When her mother remarries and her mysterious new stepbrother divulges that her father died in a mental hospital instead of on the road after heroically saving a sick animal, like she was told, she starts to spin out. Spooky things begin happening to and around Ella, leaving her and readers to wonder whether her father's restless spirit is trying to tell her something, or if his mental illness was passed down to his daughter. There are scary moments, and even readers who figure out early on that Ella's stepbrother might not be the most reliable source of information will be curious about how all of the "haunts" came to be. The plot seems drawn out, though, and there isn't a great deal of chemistry between any of the characters. Ella's despair that her father died in a mental hospital is understandable, but it's laid on thick, and by the final reveal, her intense relief strays into mental illness-stigmatizing territory. Ella's stepfather's reaction to the truth is upsetting but adds a shot of realism to the ending. **VERDICT** An additional purchase for larger collections. **•** Beth McIntyre, Madison Public Library, WI

Praise for *Black Flowers, White Lies*: A 2017 Independent Publisher Book Award Gold Medal Winner; This suspenseful psychological thriller definitely won't disappoint. **•** Buzzfeed; Prepare your fingernails, because tension mounts quickly as Ella's reality is chipped away piece by piece . . . This one will keep you guessing. **•** Justine "Ventresca has carefully plotted a variety of twists and turns in this engrossing mystery that doesn't let up until the final pages. It's tense, scary, and, at times, upsetting, everything a supernatural thriller ought to be." **•** Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE, "ALAN Picks October 2016"; I raced through *Black Flowers, White Lies* in a single sitting. What a twisty thrill-ride! **•** April Henry, New York

Times-bestselling author of *Girl, Stolen*; With a compelling cast of characters and a mystery that'll have you turning pages, *Black Flowers, White Lies* is a book you don't want to miss!

• Tiffany Schmidt, author of the *Once Upon a Crime Family* series; *Black Flowers, White Lies* is not your typical YA thriller. It's beautifully written and tightly plotted, telling a story that manages to keep a tight, intimate hold on the reader by digging into some universal fears that aren't often explored in novels. An unnerving reminder that darkness and even evil often hides in plain sight.

• Jessica Warman, author of *Between*; A captivating story of a girl facing unexplained events that shake her to her core, open up old wounds, and make her wonder what's real. Is it madness or haunting? You'll be turning pages until the end to find out. Highly recommended!

• Maria E. Andreu, award-winning author of *The Secret Side of Empty*; A chilling tale of faith and deception. The supernatural scares kept me hooked, and the ending absolutely blew me away!

• Joshua David Bellin, author of *Survival Colony 9* and *Scavenger of Souls*; *Black Flowers, White Lies* lures you in with charming characters and situations that seem innocuous until they become sinister. A great read from cover to cover.

• Dr. George Simon, bestselling author of *In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People* "Readers will be guessing up to the very end of this riveting page-turner . . . Young adult readers will love this story, and librarians serving teens should have it in their collection." • VOYA "[T]he elements of this tale all come together to provide the most amazing psychological thriller written in a very long time. (YA or otherwise.) This fresh tale is so well-developed, so creepy, so intelligent, and so off-the-charts that readers will be absolutely riveted to this plot until the very last spell-binding page. The author grabs everyone with both her characters and her ability to weave a mystery of quiet, yet epic proportions . . . The YA genre can rejoice. A dystopian world is not needed in this psychological suspense that literally deserves time up on the big screen.

• Feathered Quill Book Reviews; I loved this book. It's an incredibly fast read and I was so curious about what was going on and who was responsible (and there are, like, a ton of credible suspects). This book was an absolute delight and perfect for this time of year. (And if you're not good with super scary things, you'll be ok with this. It's creepy enough to give you chills while reading it but not so much that you'll have trouble sleeping. Win win!)

Recommended.

• Kelly Vision Praise for Yvonne Ventresca's *Pandemic*: "An engrossing apocalyptic story." • School Library Journal "Teen disaster fans will likely appreciate that the high-schoolers are portrayed as good, helpful, yet imperfect people....this fast read will appeal to fans of Susan Beth Pfeffer's *Life As We Knew It*." • Booklist "Ventresca's

debut novel will appeal to those who love realistic coming of age stories, romances, or disaster fiction. Bravo!" &#151;Mike Mullin, award-winning author of the Ashfall Trilogy"Yvonne Ventresca"ââs debut novel hits the ground running and never stops until the last page. This fast paced story about a teen who struggles to regain her sense of safety after an assault will have you reading well into the night. Pandemic is an exciting new addition to Young Adult books." &#151;C. Lee McKenzie, author of Sliding on the Edge and The Princess of Las Pulgas"You"ââll be rooting for Lil and Jay!" &#151;Debbie Dadey, author and coauthor of The Adventures of the Bailey School Kids series and the Mermaid Tales series"A suspenseful, authentic and emotional narrative. . . . Riveting and terrifyingly real with moments of hope that shine through when you least expect it, Pandemic is one that will stay with you long after you read the last page." &#151;Amalie Howard, author of the Aquarathi series, The Almost Girl series, and Alpha Goddess

What's true and what's a lie? Where are the rare black flowers at Ella's dad's gravesite coming from? Why now is she discovering that she's been told white lies by her loving mother and friend? In addition, there are either much darker lies being told to Ella, or her sensitivity to the spirit world may be tipping her into mental illness. What's really going on in this riveting mystery?Fifteen year-old Ella finds out from her mom that her dear cat, Oscar, is not her original pet, but a younger "replacement" after Oscar's untimely death.A small white lie, perhaps. Then she hears from her older stepbrother that her father, who died before she was born, died not from a car accident, as she's been told her entire life, but from a drug overdose in a psychiatric hospital. Suddenly, Ella's previously secure life, her family, her friends, begins to tilt. Add in the new boy friend, whom Ella has begun to care a lot for and then drops her cold with no explanation, and Ella's not sure of anything anymore. If her father had a mental illness, maybe she could too. Throw in a dash of ghostly fatherly help seven years before, which Ella believed saved her life, and I couldn't put this book down! There are so many doubts about what is the truth. So many secrets are unfurled. A thrilling read!A personal plus for me is the setting where this compelling story unfolds. I live in Hoboken, New Jersey so what a treat to have familiar places and landmarks visited in the telling of this intriguing tale. If I could, I'd give a sixth star for featuring Hoboken!

In Black Flowers, White Lies, a high schooler is dealing with her mom's wedding, a soon-to-be stepbrother who happens to be hot, and some haunting truths about her father. At the same time,

strange things are starting to happen all around her. Is her father communicating with her from the grave? I came into this story expecting suspense and got so much more. I can see why this author won the very coveted Crystal Kite Award for her previous book. She creates rich characters you grow to care about deeply, coupled with a story that will draw you in from the start. Don't miss this one!

In keeping with its cover illustration, this novel opens in a cemetery. Ella is visiting the grave of the father she's never met, and her sadness permeates the reader's introduction to her like a mist and lingers through the pages. For the almost sixteen years of Ella's life, she's had only one utterly reliable person at her side: her mother. But in a few days, their two-person team is about to be broken up. Ella's mom is less than a week away from establishing her own new team; she's getting remarried. And as much as Mom tells Ella that no matter what, her daughter will always be Number One to her, Ella knows that as soon as Mom marries Stanley, things are going to start changing. In fact, the wedding hasn't even happened yet, and things are starting to change already. Ella and Mom have always talked to each other about Dad, but now when Ella brings up the subject, Mom seems impatient, as if she just wants to move on with her life. Easy for her! She's embarking on a new chapter, but Ella has never felt more alone or more vulnerable. From her perspective, it's not the perfect time for Stanley's son Blake, the new 18-year-old stepbrother Ella's never met before, to arrive from California as a houseguest, just before Mom and Stanley get married and then fly off to Paris for their honeymoon. It's not that Ella has no plans for the week. She's going to sleep at her friend Grace's house every night, and during the day she'll be continuing with her regular summer activities: working at Mom's bookstore in town and volunteering at the local animal shelter. And Blake seems friendly and considerate; he even seems to want to hang around with her sometimes while waiting for his freshman year to start at NYU. Everything is going okay until the night before the wedding, when Blake gets Ella alone and tells her that he wants the two of them to be completely honest with each other. And to set that course, he reveals a secret that Stanley has told him. Ella's dad didn't die in a car accident, as Ella's mom has always told her he did. He died as a patient in a psychiatric hospital. Mom would never have lied to Ella about something so important - would she? Why would Ella believe a stranger over her own mother? It's ridiculous. But Blake produces proof. And once Mom and Stanley leave for Paris, inexplicable things start happening to and around Ella. She's always believed in the supernatural to some extent, but these events are terrifying, and they leave her questioning not only Mom's truthfulness, but her own sanity. After all, isn't mental illness often hereditary? Ella goes through what feel like a lifetime of changes during the

roughly two-week period that this book covers, but she never for a moment stops being a believable teen character, and the plot never bogs down. Your heart will be in your mouth as you gallop toward the conclusion, but you'll want to stay in the saddle every step of the way.

I was highly anticipating the next book by Crystal Kite award-winner Yvonne Ventresca, and I was not disappointed. I was originally drawn to her first novel, *Pandemic*, due to its... well, its pandemic. I like books about when society falls apart. So when I heard that her next book, *Black Flowers, White Lies*, was entirely different, I wondered how I'd feel about it. Well... I loved it. In some ways, there are common themes, because although society as a whole doesn't fall apart, the protagonist's world certainly starts to unravel. There's that same feeling of shifting ground and wondering where she's going to be able to turn. Really, the common theme between both is examining our fears. This is a captivating story of a girl facing unexplained events that shake her to her core, open up old wounds and make her wonder what's real. Is it madness or haunting? Ella is a regular New Jersey teenager. Her mom is about to remarry after a long time of it being just the two of them since Ella's father died when she was small. This common "every day" problem is underscored by the fact that strange things begin to happen in her world. Creepy signs begin to appear, and as the reader you start to wonder if we're dealing with an unreliable narrator. The author makes both options plausible so that you have to keep turning to find out if your guesses are correct. There is a boy, of course, and you aren't quite sure if he's friend or foe. There are some fun elements, like a tarot card reading I totally want to be in on, and Ella's love for animals.

Wow, what a gripping edge of your seat story! Ella is a very engaging character (and she loves cats!). The plot twists into the unexpected, and the supernatural, as Ella seeks the truth of her father's untimely death. All this leads to a thrilling climax. Very strongly recommended!

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