

Acceleration by Graham McNamee

Subjects: Serial murderers; Diaries

Awards: Best Books for Young Adults, Edgar Allan Poe Winner

Book Lists: Gifted, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

Props: Paper, leather book with newspaper articles



(Read from paper) “The FBI claims that increasingly destructive behavior is a demented growth pattern seen in many serial killers. This pattern is fueled by a need for power through the torture and control of others. The killer usually begins with small animals and fires. When that becomes unsatisfactory, the killer looks for bigger prey. They will eventually seek to control, torture, and kill—people. This process is called acceleration.” *(Put paper down)*

I’m Duncan and I’m telling you this because I recently learned about serial killers while doing research in the library. Why was I doing research on serial killers in the library? Good question and I’m going to answer it. But first, I need to give you a little background info on me. It’s the summer before my senior year and I am currently serving a two month sentence working at the Toronto Transit Commission’s Lost and Found, Monday to Friday, 9–5. I would have been happy just bumming around all summer, but Dad called in a favor and got me the job. I like to call it a lovely little slice of death, one day at a time. It’s a nightmare. I work in the subbasement of the Bay subway station. Lost junk comes in from buses and subways and is catalogued by my boss, Jacob. I’m the runner, the one who does the actual searching when people come to claim their stuff. But I’m going stir-crazy. It’s scary. Two months down here and I’m going to turn into, well Jacob. OK—think of a half-deflated soccer ball with two of the hairiest gray ears you’ve ever seen. Now, add wrinkles creasing into other wrinkles until you have a face that looks like it fell asleep on a screen door. Then add a wet clicking sound made by the upper plate of false teeth—that’s Jacob. Yeah, scary.

But, back to the research question. One day I was sitting in my lawn chair in the back near the shelves of lost books. I sit there when I’m tired of staring at Jacob and he’s tired of my complaining. There are old and new books, hardbacks, paperbacks, books on history, romance, basically anything and everything. I was scanning the titles and I found a small, thick hardcover. *(Show book)* It had no jacket and no title on the spine. It was just plain brown leather. I flipped through it and realized that it was some kind of journal. Near the beginning I found what looked like a science experiment. But it was hard to understand. The handwriting was difficult to

read and there were weird doodles of eyes in the margins. The eyes were bloodshot, crying, and some were falling out of their sockets. But that wasn’t even the weird part. As I studied the pages, I realized that the experiment was to find out how long it took for a mouse to drown in different types of liquids. But it got worse. I turned the pages and found a yellowed newspaper article that read, *(Read)* “On March 14, two cats were found hanging by their necks from lengths of chain, nailed to telephone poles in a back alley of Wilson Heights.” There were other similar clippings.

The book was the diary of some sick person. I dropped the book *(Drop and kick book)* and kicked it under some shelves. At first I tried to forget about it. But about a week later when the basketball I was bouncing rolled next to it, I decided I should see if it had a name in it or something. I picked the journal up. *(Pick up and leaf through book)* The feel of the soft worn leather made me cringe. It felt too much like skin. I opened the book. At the beginning there was no name. I skipped past the mouse and cat entries to some other handwritten passages. It read, *(Read)* “Climbed the fire escape of the boarded up hotel and squeezed through a broken window. This place is perfect. The cops will blame the junkies that crash here for the fire. The hotel’s a skeleton. Ripe for burning. Three ladder trucks responding. Three cop cars. Two ambulances. Big crowd. Feel the heat a block away.” There’s a folded article stapled to the next page. I open it up. It reads, *(Read)* “Suspicious Fire Destroys Regent Hotel.”

I have a tremendous urge to rip the leather-bound book of mental diarrhea into confetti—to destroy it and the warped mind it came from. But I can’t. *(Put book down)* It would still be in my head, and the psycho who wrote it would still be out there walking the streets. The creep’s already moved from mice to cats to fires. Like the FBI said, he’s accelerating. Now you know why I did the research. This book is written by a serial killer wanna-be. What’s he going to do next? Someone’s got to find him and stop him. I’m the one who found the book. Maybe I found it for a reason. Maybe I’m the only one who can stop him. *(Hold up book)* *Acceleration* by Graham McNamee.

