



## Jane Steele

*Lyndsay Faye*

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“Reader, I murdered him.”

A sensitive orphan, Jane Steele suffers first at the hands of her spiteful aunt and predatory cousin, then at a grim school where she fights for her very life until escaping to London, leaving the corpses of her tormentors behind her. After years of hiding from the law while penning macabre “last confessions” of the recently hanged, Jane thrills at discovering an advertisement. Her aunt has died and her childhood home has a new master: Mr. Charles Thornfield, who seeks a governess.

Burning to know whether she is in fact the rightful heir, Jane takes the position incognito, and learns that Highgate House is full of marvelously strange new residents—the fascinating but caustic Mr. Thornfield, an army doctor returned from the Sikh Wars, and the gracious Sikh butler Mr. Sardar Singh, whose history with Mr. Thornfield appears far deeper and darker than they pretend. As Jane catches ominous glimpses of the pair’s violent history and falls in love with the gruffly tragic Mr. Thornfield, she faces a terrible dilemma: can she possess him—body, soul, and secrets—without revealing her own murderous past?

A satirical romance about identity, guilt, goodness, and the nature of lies, by a writer who Matthew Pearl calls “superstar-caliber” and whose previous works Gillian Flynn declared “spectacular,” *Jane Steele* is a brilliant and deeply absorbing book inspired by Charlotte Brontë’s classic *Jane Eyre*.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Jane Steele Details**

Date : Published March 22nd 2016 by G.P. Putnam's Sons

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Author : Lyndsay Faye

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Mystery, Retellings, Romance, Gothic

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## From Reader Review Jane Steele for online ebook

### Liz Barnsley says

LOVED this book. Loved the concept, loved the execution, the characters and every other little bit. A whole lot of fun and a real rip roaring read.

Jane Steele – what an incredible character. Unforgettable she stalks the streets of old London, Lyndsay Faye building a supreme sense of atmosphere and making you walk those paths too, alongside this enigmatic, ironically funny and intriguing creation, who surprises and delights at every turn of the page.

If you are a fan of Jane Eyre, then you'll thoroughly enjoy this, it is like a love letter to that age of writing but given a modern and violent twist, Jane Steele takes no crap from anyone and is the very definition of girl power. With murder and mayhem perhaps but girl power none the less.

When you have a central character that is as gloriously imagined as Jane is, the actual plot narrative takes on a new spark. With lots of nods to the original “Jane” Lyndsay Faye takes us on an adventure that has mystery, some real edge of seat moments, romance and intrigue, some beautifully descriptive language kept me utterly enthralled throughout. I practically inhaled this novel in one sitting one afternoon and I was completely delighted.

One for everyone. Possibly the best fun you'll have with a story this year.

Highly Recommended

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### April (Aprilius Maximus) says

I'm going to have to apologise in advance because I will be FOREVER fangirling over Charles Thornfield.

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### K. says

6/2/2017

This may actually have knocked Persuasion off its pedestal for my favourite book of all time.

When I read this book last year, I did so on a flight from Melbourne to LA. I was completely sucked into the story and I sped through it in no time at all. And while I loved the story, I was so excited to find out what happens next that I didn't take the time to SAVOUR the story.

That was my intention this time. But once again, I failed miserably and devoured this in 24 hours. The characters are glorious. The writing is incredibly reminiscent of Jane Eyre, while also acknowledging the seedy underbelly of Victorian society in a way that feels very Dickensian.

Jane and Mr Thornfield? I SHIP IT SO EFFING HARD. Like, words cannot describe how much I ship it.

And the fact that they both feel this enormous guilt over their past actions and are punishing themselves as a result? FABULOUS. I ship it so hard that I honestly don't give a shit that the pace gets a lot slower in the middle section of the book.

So yeah. I think that after fifteen years at the top of the list, Persuasion has finally been bumped into second place.

19/6/2016

This book was sold to me as being a retelling of Jane Eyre in which Jane is a murderer. Which, uh, YES OH MY GOD GIVE IT TO ME.

But this is really a story in its own right. Yes, a lot of the events parallel what happens in Jane Eyre - evil aunt, creepy cousin, oppressive boarding school led by a hypocrite, ends up as governess to a young foreign girl, falls for her slightly mysterious boss, ends up with an unexpected inheritance. But so much of this story is utterly its own entity. For starters, Jane Eyre exists in this world. The protagonist considers it one of her favourite books, and each chapter starts with a quote from Jane Eyre.

All of which is a really long winded way of saying that this is a retelling without being a retelling. Or something.

Faye did a BRILLIANT job of nailing the voice and the atmosphere of Jane Eyre. It gave the story a sense of familiarity while also being something completely new. Jane's character is so great - she's full of guilt over her first murder, but in a "my actions caused him to do this, which forced me to defend myself" way. She harbours this guilt for years, and is convinced that she's a terrible person, even when all the murders she commits are to protect herself or others from violent/sexual assault-y men.

Once she becomes a governess, the violence slows down a lot and the story instead becomes wrapped up in her slow burning romance with Mr. Thornfield. And while the pace definitely slows down, this part of the story features a lot of character development and a hell of a lot of diversity. Mr. Thornfield was an army doctor in the Punjab during the Sikh Wars. His entire household staff are Sikhs (as is he), and his ward's mother was a Sikh warrior while her father was a representative of the British East India Company.

So the diversity and the complexity of the story at Highgate and how Jane comes to realise that she and Thornfield both punish themselves for their past actions are simply wonderful. I also loved that the story features a Victorian era female protagonist who's not ashamed of liking sex. She's intrigued by it, so she goes out and finds partners to help her understand what she likes. She's not ashamed and she's not afraid to be all "You know what? This dude isn't cutting it. Let's ditch him and find a new one".

Essentially, I went into this expecting a retelling. And what I got was absolutely wonderful and very much its own book. 10/10 would recommend.

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### **Julie says**

Jane Steel by Lyndsay Faye is a 2016 G. P. Putnam's Sons publication.

There are only a few times in my life when I've honestly felt as though an author sat down and penned a book just for me. This is one of those times...

While marketed as a ‘retelling’ of Jane Eyre, in truth, our protagonist, Jane Steele, sees a dark parallel between her life and that of Jane Eyre, and is inspired to write her own memoir, so technically it’s not really a ‘retelling’ in the way we commonly refer to it.

But, as a huge fan of classic Gothic stories, Jane Eyre, in particular, this book literally rocked my world!!

Right away I recognized the writing style. The languorous phrases and the slow, tantalizing pace, the deliciously dark characterizations, all of which drew me right into the familiar, well loved, adored, and cherished atmosphere of the Gothic novel.

Jane Steele is vulnerable, but also has criminal, murderous tendencies. However, she never does anything out of pure malice. She loves and cares for people deeply, but literally has no qualms about taking matters into her own hands, vigilante style, not once, but multiple times.

**“Though I no longer presumed to have a conscience, I have never once lacked feelings.”**

Jane Steele often compares her own circumstances to those of Jane Eyre, but points out various ways Eyre lacked the chops to do what needed doing and 'wasn't all that great of a detective'.

Moments and insights like that had me looking at the classic novel in a whole new light, all while falling hopelessly in love with this darker version of events. It was almost as if Steele was trying to right some of the Eyre’s wrongs in her parallel universe, strengthening her weaknesses, and giving her a distorted boost of girl power.

The second half of the book is where things really get interesting, as Steele quite expertly works undercover, while trying to figure out all the burning mysteries of Highgate House. I loved all the overwrought drama as an obvious ode to Gothic hysteria, written with a wry, satirical tone that expressed a deep affection for the classic genre, despite the obvious exaggerations.

But, as always, once the suspense has been built, all the secrets are unveiled, and the mysteries solved, all of which are revealed with great flourish and embellishment, at the end of the day, it’s the love story that leaves me enthralled. Will Jane get her man? Will Charles still love her once he knows her dark history?

This book is a rousing tribute to Gothic classics, cleverly constructed, exposing the dark underbelly of Victorian days, chalk full of satire and dark humor. Jane Steele walked away with my heart in her pocket. This is one of those books that, as I regretfully turned the last page, I was tempted to start it all over again from the beginning. I can’t believe it took me so long to discover this book!! It’s one of those stories that makes me want to hug the book hold it close to my heart, because it’s stories like this one that reminds me of how I feel in love with reading and why.

**“I hope that the epitaph of the human race when the world ends will be: here perished a species which loved to tell stories.”**

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This book now holds a treasured spot on my ‘favorite books of all time’ list. Five big fat stars!!

## **karen says**

*Oh, I knew who I was - a scarlet-toothed tigress, one forever burdened by the iron weight of her own black stripes.*

many thanks to the great anmiryam for passing this arc my way, because it was so *exactly* what i wanted to read, i don't even feel bad about letting it cut the line of book-suitors already vying for my attentions.

i read a lot of reviews here on goodreads.com. and while i have a pretty good memory for *books* i have read, i frequently forget the specific content of *reviews* after i read them. if the book interests me based on a review, i add it to my to-read list, "like" the review, and move along. so in my head, i misremembered this book as being a retelling of Jane Eyre in which jane herself was a serial killer. but that's not it at all - it's much cheekier and more interesting than that.

this follows the life and bloody trail of jane steele, whose experiences mirror Jane Eyre in some ways, but is a much easier character for a modern reader to applaud. don't get me wrong, Jane Eyre is a great book, but i personally get a little impatient with the way she sabotages her own happiness based on her notions of propriety or morality and the conventions of her time. it's all perfectly reasonable behavior when you're reading with your scholar-glasses on, but it's not always easy to shelve those modern sensibilities that would prefer jane push up her sleeves and call rochester out on his bullshit instead of quietly absconding to suffer alone on that moral high ground.

*this* jane is always pushing up her sleeves, but mostly to avoid getting blood all over them.

it's a fantastically funny and winky companion book. jane steele, after being orphaned and suffering at the hands of a bitter aunt and an amorous cousin, commits her first murder at the age of nine:

*I don't know the term for a child who falls asleep **after** her first murder and **before** confessing her sins, but I suspect it is not an intensely complimentary one.*

before being shipped off to a boarding school worse than the one ms. eyre endures, but *this* jane knows how to handle herself in a much more proactive way.

*I cocked my head and gauged his condition: dead.*

she has all the qualities that make jane eyre so formidable and likable; she's protective of those who are more vulnerable than she is, she's resourceful and brave and determined, but she's ... amplified from her literary predecessor, and she takes care of business when business needs taking care of.

the novel is presented as an autobiography, with a twist: *I have been reading over and over again the most riveting book titled Jane Eyre, and the work inspires me to imitative acts.* the language, locations, and details are all in keeping with a traditional victorian novel, but jane frequently addresses and deflates their conventions in her own story -

*There is no practice more vexing than that of authors describing coach travel for the edification of people who have already travelled in coaches. As I must adhere to form, however, I will simply list a series of*

*phrases for the unlikely reader who has never gone anywhere: thin eggshell dawn-soaked curtains stained with materials unknown to science; rattling fit to grind bones to powder; the ripe stench of horse and driver and bog. Now I have fulfilled my literary duties...*

and more succinctly:

*Some memoirs explain social hierarchies by means of illustrative anecdotes, but mine is about homicide, not ladies' schools.*

she continues to reference Jane Eyre both directly and indirectly, as Jane at twenty-four becomes governess to the ward of Mr. Thornfield, an enigmatic man who himself has outsider qualities from having lived so long abroad in Punjab, adopting "foreign" ways less restrictive than those typical in England at the time, allowing Jane's less demure female characteristics room to unfurl in all their glory, to his great delight.

it's all-around fantastic and it reads like a funnier Sarah Waters. Faye has that facility for historical description that's so impressive in Waters:

Some cities bustle, some meander, I have read; London blazes, and it incinerates. London is the wolf's maw. From the instant I arrived there, I loved every smouldering inch of it.

A lad hunched against a shoddy dressmaker's dummy slumbered in, cradled by his faceless companion. The atmosphere was redolent - meat sat piled up to a shop door's limit of some six feet, the butcher sharpening massive knives before his quarry. Yesterday's cabbage was crushed underfoot, and tomorrow's cackling geese were arriving in great crates, ready to kill. So early, the square we passed through ought to have been populated only by spectres. Instead, sounds reverberated from all directions - treble notes from a bamboo flute; the breathy scream of a sardine costermonger; the bass rumble of a carrot vendor, his cart piled with knobby red digits, shouting as his donkey staggered in the slick.

It was not welcoming, but it was galvanising. Arguing with London was useless; she was inexorable, sure as the feral dawn.

and she writes every character to full-color perfection.

i howl for Clarke. 'Nuff said.

It's just great stuff; a more feminist version of a story that was already scandalously feminist for its time, but it's not agenda-laden, it's just a sly, calm dissection and reconstruction of something familiar given a fierce new makeover.

Reader, I recommend it.

Come to my blog!

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## Simona Bartolotta says

**“I hope that the epitaph of the human race when the world ends will be: *Here perished a species which lived to tell stories.*”**

•Well, I was certainly not expecting this. This ultimately, absorbingly, fiercely, lusciously **phenomenal reimaging** of one of the greatest and most influential classics of my life (and, incidentally, of English literature too, of course). The strength of *Jane Steele* is that it **styles itself not as the story of an alternative Jane Eyre, but of a parallel one**. In the book, Jane Steele actually reads *Jane Eyre*, creating a delicious meta-literary situation which only enhanced my literature freak enthusiasm and allowed me to notice the **myriad of links, references and parallelisms, all handled so intelligently and sophisticatedly**, that **connect the two works**. For this reason, I think you can very likely enjoy and even love *Jane Steele* even though you haven't read *Jane Eyre*, but reading it in the light of its hypotext must be, I believe, a completely different and more thorough experience.

•Many of **these read threads** are almost too **exquisitely subtle and refined** for me to be able to nail them down with precision: they are in the characterization, in the plot, in the care and attention and loving admiration the author put in describing **a foreign culture** –the Sikh culture– to which she then proceeded to assign such a pivotal role in the story.

I was particularly moved by Faye's decision to make of the conflicts between the British and the Sikh a key element in the storyline; it seemed to me as a willingness on the author's part to make some adjustments to the centre of gravity of *Jane Eyre*, where Bertha's Jamaican (and therefore, foreign) upbringing could be grounds for even a brief discussion about **the relationship between motherland and colony**, but isn't, resulting in the reader completely forgetting that another part of the British Empire has even be mentioned. Now, in *Jane Eyre* I didn't perceive that as a shortcoming at all (basically, because that novel is my life), but kudos to *Jane Steele* for the astonishing results of its masterful **indirect approach** to righting this wrong.

•**Jane's character** gets into your heart and head so quickly, and then it just won't leave. I loved her, this "no bird" who is as soft as she is unbreakable.

**“Shadows are curious entities; they are lightless and yet cast a shape into the world, just as I do.”**

And of course, Charles Thornfield—

**“There have already been multiple moments which cause me to suspect your true self a giant deliberately casting a small shadow.”**

Did you hear that? That *plop* sound? My heart melting, ladies and gentlemen. But also all the others, Sahjara, Sardar, even Clarke –**I loved them all**. And Sam Quillfeather! Heavens, I *adore* that man. And the way his character emerges and changes, that is to say through Jane's point of view as she grows up, is so fascinating to watch and very, very clever.

•**Lyndsay Faye's writing** is the umpteenth surprise this book has in store for its readers. Let's see, how should I describe it—stunning, maybe? Absolutely unbelievable? It was like *actually* reading another version of *Jane Eyre*, it made the whole story sound so true and **authentic**. Just remembering it makes me indescribably happy.

► What else can I say, if not that **I recommend *Jane Steele* with my whole heart?** After all, you know how

picky and generally difficult I am when it comes to retellings and fanfictions and reimaginings, so I think my love for this one should speak volumes. Provided that, as I said, those who already know *Jane Eyre* have more chances of appreciating it, I know it can appeal to and make fall in love just everyone. And if you choose to read this one first, maybe then you can read *Jane Eyre* as an anachronistic reimagining of *Jane Steele*...

And now I want to cry because **I never thought I would see the day when a retelling would make me say that.** Thank you, Lyndsay Faye.

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### **Book Riot Community says**

This Victorian novel follows Jane Steele, an orphan whose life mirrors that of her favorite literary heroine, Jane Eyre. Their paths diverge at this one fine point, however: Jane Steele is a serial killer. She uses her wit, nerves, and slight sociopathy to off abusive men, all the while wondering what would Jane Eyre think? This book scratched all my favorite itches: Victoriana, feminist rage, and excellent, gut-punch sentences. You'll love this Jane just as much as you love the original. —Amanda Nelson

from The Best Books We Read In February: <http://bookriot.com/2016/03/01/riot-r...>

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

What fun!

Mel ???

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### **Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says**

What a wild ride! While I enjoyed the first half of this far more than the second, I still really liked this as a whole and am v happy to have read it. Honestly this would have been a 5 star if I hadn't been bored and a little confused by all the war elements that were introduced in the second half lol but I loved all the characters and will happily read more from Lyndsay Faye in the future!

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

JANE STEELE is not a typical retelling; sure it bares similarities with Jane Eyre; Jane Steele is an orphan, she ends up in a boarding school with a cruel schoolmaster and she works as a governess later on in life. What I like is that Jane Steele likes and identifies herself with Jane Eyre. She feels like they are kindred spirits. But unlike Jane Eyre who was called wicked, Jane Steele is fearful that she really is wicked. Because she has after all done wicked things...

**READ THE REST OF THE REVIEW OVER AT FRESH FICTION!**

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### **Emily May says**

**The first 1/3-1/2 of this book was really great.**

Jane Steele is being called a retelling of Jane Eyre, but it isn't. The narrator presents the story as an autobiography and claims to have read Bronte's most famous novel and "*the work inspires me to imitative acts*". And Jane Steele's life does indeed resemble that of Jane Eyre.

But with a huge twist - **a lot more blood, murder and vengeance.**

Regardless of whether you like Jane Eyre or not (and I do), it's hard to not be pulled in by Jane Steele's narrative voice. Her mother dies, leaving her orphaned and at the mercy of her constantly-disapproving aunt, who later sends her to a strict, miserable boarding school. But that's not before she commits her first murder.

Steele is fuelled by fire and vengeance. She is not afraid to get her hands dirty. And even though she seems increasingly nuts and lacking in human empathy, the author somehow manages to convince the reader that her crimes were warranted. From attempted rapists to sanctimonious religious hypocrites, Steele is a serial killer with strong - and often understandable - motivations.

Her time at boarding school is my favourite part of the story because **that place is horrid**. Nothing drags you into a story like a nice serving of despair and unfairness to really piss you off. And the boarding school is full of it. As well as the angst, there's also some great (but complex and not always loyal) female friendships. The section ends with blood and drama, and it was sad to see the novel never quite reach that level again.

Truth be told, once Jane Steele becomes a governess for Mr Thornfield, the story kind of loses its momentum. Every bit of excitement and bloodthirsty drama is gradually drained away as the romance is introduced (though gradually; no instalove in sight) and Jane finds a place for herself in Thornfield's life.

The pacing slowed and it became far less compelling. A disappointing and anticlimactic, if not unexpected, end to a novel that started so well.

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### **Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says**

*It was the boarding school that taught me to act as a wolf in girl's clothing should: skulking, a greyer shadow within a grey landscape. It was London which formed me into a pale, wide-eyed creature with an errant laugh, a lust for life and for dirty vocabulary, and a knife in her pocket.*

*I hereby commence my account with the unembellished truth:*

*Reader, I murdered him.*

This is a very, very loose retelling of *Jane Eyre* in which Jane is **a serial killer. And reader, it was awesome!** If you're very, very canon about your *Jane Eyre*, stay far away. If you want to be entertained, if you have a secret (or not so secret \*preens\*) dark and twisted side, come and dive right in.

This is not a book for middle schoolers. It is seriously dark, with sexual violence and child abuse, some of it happening to Jane as a very young child.

*On the last occasion we had shared a drive in the trap, the candied aroma of clover in our noses, Edwin had parted his trouser front and shown me the flesh resting like a grubworm within the cotton, asking whether I knew what it was used for*

Jane is an unwanted orphan in her relatives' home. That is nearly where the similarity ends. Despised and unwelcome, Jane is destined for a miserable future, foisted onto her cruel aunt...but she is unlike the fictional Jane Eyre (a heroine upon our own intrepid Jane often compares herself).

*My aunt Patience thought girls ought to be decorative. Indeed, Jane Eyre tucks herself away in a curtained alcove at the beginning of her saga, and thus at least attempts docility.*

*I was not a fictional orphan but a real one.*

Like Jane, she attends a boarding school, one even more horrid than the original. And again, she escaped, the only way she knows how.

*Reader, would you prefer me to have felt remorse in the aftermath of my second slaughter?*

*Though the brutality of the act sent fearsome tremors through my small frame for days and weeks afterwards, never have I regretted ending the life of my headmaster.*

Jane kills, yes, but her tale is presented in a way that her acts are almost...justified. I don't advocate victim blaming and vigilantism, but I was sympathetic to Jane and what she did. I know this sounds strange, given that we're talking about a serial killer, but **Jane is a good person.** She is capable of love, she kills to protect the ones she love.

This book may feel one-dimensional because of all the deaths and the way Jane kills, but it's not. There are complex relationships in this book, particularly among the girls at the boarding school. They are sisters, bound together by misery, although loyalty is not always ensured.

This book warranted a 3 and not a 4 because the story dragged after Jane started working for Mr. Thornfield as his ward's governess. The book went from a wicked adventure of survival to boring in no time flat. Thornfield didn't hold as much interest for me. I mean, Rochester himself wasn't much to sniff at, but Thornfield was rather dull. First half = 4 stars, 2nd half = 2.

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### **Linda says**

I received a copy of *Jane Steele* by Lyndsay Faye through NetGalley. Thank you to both NetGalley and to Lyndsay Faye for the opportunity.

"Truth be told.....nay, never here."

If you easily get your petticoat in a bundle, then this book is certainly not for you. 'Nuff said, dear reader.

And then in walks a dark, slight figure of a young girl who traipses across these pages on silent tiptoe like the vermin in the underbelly of old London. Although innocence is her Victorian calling card, bold reality states otherwise. Who, exactly, is this slip of a girl that would make Charlotte Bronte shudder at the pure thought of her?

Jane Steele lives with her mother, Anne Laure, in a small cottage on the distant grounds of Highgate House. Anne Laure is frail both in mind and body. The two are not welcomed in the main house of Jane's Aunt Patience Barbary. Ol' Patience has no patience with Jane and she is subjected to cruelty and ridicule. Moreover, Jane's cousin, Edwin, is a beast of a boy and you will be the audience for his dastardly antics.

After the untimely death of her mother, Jane is sent post haste to a children's home. Jane is perplexed as she has been told repeatedly that she is the rightful heiress to Highgate House by her mother. A mysterious letter exists.....

While at this children's home, Jane makes her presence known and drops her eery Victorian calling card as she flees in the middle of the night with a young companion, Becky Clarke. Jane and Becky arrive in London and scratch out an existence by hawking, stealing, swindling, and pickpocketing for starters. (Charles Dickens would smirk with delight.)

Upon seeing an advertisement for the need of a governess at Highgate House, Jane writes false letters of reference and secures the position. Her aunt and cousin no longer reside there and she is determined to take back what is rightfully hers in due time.

The storyline follows an arc of adventure now with the backdrop of the British East India Company in 1845. The new owner of the Highgate House is Charles Thornfield who had been wounded in the fighting. In addition, there is the heavy emphasis on the Sikh Empire and the Khalsa army.

Jane becomes embroiled in her own troubles as well as Thornfield's. What transpires will leave you breathless. To what length will Jane go to in order to win back what she believes is hers? Is there a Pujabi leopard stalking here in the tall grass of Highgate House?

Lyndsay Faye has outdone herself with Jane Steele. Her brilliant portrayal of the main character is a phenomenal tribute to the dark cellars of old London and to a time period when acts of survival are best kept under lock and key.

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### **Jaline says**

This book enchanted me. It reminded me of how passionate I was about learning to read when I was 5 or 6 so that I could read all the stories I wanted to whenever I wanted to and not have to wait my turn to have my parents read them to me.

It also reminded me of my first impressions of classics such as the writings of the Bronte sisters and Daphne duMaurier. Yes, there was darkness there; yet juxtaposed with light. There was romance and the struggle

away from and toward it. There was murder and mayhem and the questions of how and why these occurred.

All those are found within Jane Steele – and there is deprivation and betrayal; friendship and hope; despair and cruelty; kindness and love.

There are secrets. As Jane says, “*... I warn the tempted: secrets decay, as corpses do, growing ranker over time.*” These secrets themselves, and the healing by revealing for those hanging on to them underscore the story. Incidents happen like tentacles spreading outward, and when one tentacle is cut off, it sometimes sprouts to re-surface later in the story, enmeshed with another tentacle that was not observably connected earlier.

The story itself is riveting, and the prose was like an intoxicant for me. Metaphor and similes made me pause and see an even deeper meaning to the story. As an example, Mr. Thornfield describes the Khalsa army thus: “*... a hundred thousand strong marching in such perfect order a Geneva watch would have dashed itself to pieces forthwith.*”

In talking about the turbulent Punjab during the time of the wars, he described, “*... the area was about as stable as a rocking horse.*” And in describing the man who married his friend’s sister, “*For face furniture, the man was a palace.*”

As is often the case in wars, money is heavily involved. In this case, “*... the loot flowed down our street like rain down a gutter.*” And then this gem: “*... he added two and two together and he decided they spelt blackmail.*”

The writing is most lyrical when Jane describes her feelings about things. For example: “*... if the endearments I showered him with, all the languidly falling petals of my shaken tree, were written rather than spoken, so much the better – he could read them over whosoever he liked, shove them in a drawer if he preferred, and my love would have some permanence, the way whispers made in the dead of night do not.*”

Or this one: “*As I seemed incapable of turning myself in, however, would any harm come to the world if for the moment I thought of this newly reborn Jane ... as a creature worth treating gently? There was no one else volunteering for the task, after all.*”

And another beautiful metaphor, in speaking of her friend: “*We shared the same tastes once, Clarke and I, moved in twin orbits like binary stars.*”

Toward the closing chapters of the book, Jane Steele writes, “*I hope that the epitaph of the human race when the world ends will be: here perished a species which loved to tell stories.*”

Amen to that, and may great storytellers like Lindsay Faye continue to share their craft with all of us. For me, during the entire time I was reading this book, I was utterly transported and reluctant to leave when it was over.

So often the way with the best stories.

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**Malia says**

“I hope that the epitaph of the human race when the world ends will be: Here perished a species which lived to tell stories.”

? Lyndsay Faye, Jane Steele

My first five star read in what feels like ages! I was so hesitant to pick this up, because Jane Eyre is one of my all-time favorites and I am always wary of retellings. In this case, however, it was worth it. The story is essentially a Gothic reworking of the famous story, but with a few significant changes to give it a character of its own. We are introduced to Jane Steele, who through a series of difficult circumstances finds herself alone in the world and having to fend for herself when all forces seem directed against her. Even though she is far from perfect, I really felt for her and was rooting for her throughout the novel as she grows older. I really loved that Thornfield is not as much as a macho as Rochester (though perhaps wrongly, I have a soft spot for this fellow, too). He is an affable man, with wit and a willingness to accept Jane as his equal. The sub-story regarding a theft of jewels in India was interesting and nicely woven into the main plot, and now that the last page has been turned, I wish it were a little longer.

Faye has an excellent grip of the timely language and sketches a vivid portrait of Victorian London and the broody countryside. The characters are intriguing and multi-dimensional - even side characters - and the pace was fast with new twists around every page.

Needless to say, I will certainly be keeping an eye on this talented author in the future!

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