



Belle Ruin

Martha Grimes

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A waitress at her mother's decaying resort hotel, twelve-year-old Emma now has a second job as the youngest cub reporter in the history of La Porte's *Conservative* newspaper. But when she discovers the crumbling shell of a fabulous hotel- the once-sumptuous Belle Rouen-in the woods near her small town of Spirit Lake, Emma never imagines that the mysteries it holds will bring her one step closer to solving a forty-year-old crime-and force a new transgression to light.

Belle Ruin Details

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Author : Martha Grimes

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From Reader Review Belle Ruin for online ebook

Emily says

"People are always saying my stories have too many details..." states Grimes' character Emma Graham. This is the complaint many had about the last two books in this series, so possibly she was listening.

Unfortunately the other common complaint, that the mysteries are never really resolved, went unheeded.

Though this is the "last" book in the series, still no wrap-up or catharsis was reached. If you are a person who really needs for plots to come to a conclusion, and doesn't like ambiguous endings, this series is not for you.

However, if you like a meandering, dreamlike story which is more about the journey than the destination. you will adore this book.

Emma is a genuine 12-year-old, sometimes bratty, often childish, ultimately likable. She goes off "investigating" on her own more than I would be comfortable with, but judging by some of the context this was the early 1940's, so possibly a less dangerous time to be an unaccompanied kid showing up at the houses of people whom she's never met in order to ask them about events taking place decades before she was born. The other supporting characters are pleasantly quirky and have interesting ways of relating to Emma, either as assets to her investigation or foils for her character.

The description of the play her brother and his friend convince her to take part in were much more entertaining than the descriptions of her imaginary vacation in the last book. That was an improvement.

The series as a whole, I feel needs at least one more volume. As I am a person who likes a good conclusion and that ending was just too ambiguous for me.

Update: Grimes has written another book in this series, called Fadeaway Girl.

An Odd1 says

The titular Hotel Belle Rouen burned down after hosting rich vacationers in the early 1900s. Present-day Emma 12 wants to solve an old mystery about a kidnapped baby. I got bored with her slipping hot peppers into an cranky senior's meals at her mom's decrepit hotel, and skipped to the end where she was playing the same trick and researching the same crime.

Other reviews lead me to believe the whole series is rambling quaint characters in a crumbling vacation lakefront, like End of the Pier also 1* <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show....> Maybe author's Richard Jury mysteries are better, but I'm not intrigued enough to try.

Holly says

Still liking these characters. I will say, Martha Grimes really knows how to leave her endings open-ended.....

Patricia says

I really mostly just skimmed. I think I'm tired of this character-- Emma needs to not be 12 years-old anymore. Nothing new from the first two Hotel Paradise books, and by this third one, Emma just seems like

kind of a brat- torturing old ladies at the hotel, and not a particularly good detective.

I like the descriptions of the food at least.

Nicole says

Apparently this is part of a series which I didn't realize at first. I missed a little something by starting in the middle but I'll survive. The story was interesting, but I felt like the end just dropped off rather than being wrapped up at all. I may have to listen to the books before and after it simply so that I don't feel like I didn't miss something, not because I especially enjoyed this one.

Bobbie says

Most of this book I enjoyed as much or more than the earlier two, but I was somewhat disappointed in the ending. I was expecting more of a resolution to the mystery rather than having to wait for the next book. I do hope the next one brings an answer to the mysteries.

As other reviewers mentioned I did find one discrepancy in the story which was really annoying but I do continue to enjoy reading about Emma's life and the small town in which she lives. I would, however, like to see her begin to mature a little more.

Incandragon says

I was robbed of 12 hours of my life. STOLEN STOLEN STOLEN! I was ROBBED ROBBED ROBBED! I don't normally finish books I don't like. In fact, I hardly ever read books that weren't recommended. So how could I be saying that I read a sucky, sucky book?

There was a book giveaway at the Talking Book Library, and one of them was an unabridged Martha Grimes called "Belle Ruin." 10 CDs, a mystery. Okay, I usually have an "in-house" audio book, an "in the car" audiobook, a "by the bed" book, and a "fireside" book. My car slot was available, so I grabbed it. I've never read a Martha Grimes but she's a famous name, so hey! Free audio book!

Nowhere on the box did it say, "This is part 3 of a 4 part story, only 3 parts of which are out." That would have helped. If it had also said, "This is notably NOT the book where you learn to like the awful little twerp protagonist," that would have helped even more.

But I didn't know that, so I kept hoping that -- oh, I don't know -- something was going to happen. Nothing did.

They alluded to exciting things, which I thought were going to be explained during the investigation of the mystery, and they were setting up for finding out some interesting things ... and then the book just ends. Right in the middle of a conversation. No wrap up, no nothing. The CD doesn't even have the decency to say

"that's all folks" it just gives you a bunch of clicks like you've reached the end of a vinyl record! WTH!

Although, I did uncover something interesting. It doesn't say (that I recall) what year the story is supposed to have taken place, but it seems like the 1960s or 70s or somewhere. The girl makes a point of the 3 Musketeers candy bar as having three layers. So, okay ... maybe it DID, at some point in time, have three layers. It's called 3 Musketeers, right? Well, no, it never had anything besides nougat. So Grimes was wrong, and her editors/proofreaders flubbed it ... I can but assume because they were mired in "100 more pages to go" despair. No, 3 Musketeers is 3 Musketeers because you used to get three little bars: chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry flavored. But now you only get chocolate. Aramis stands alone.

I also didn't know that outside the US/Canada, what we call a 3 Musketeer is called a Milky Way, and what we call a Milky Way is called a Mars Bar. And what we call a Mars Bar is totally different entirely.

In other words, I could have read Wikipedia for twelve hours, and it would have been a VAST improvement on the stupid Belle Ruin book. Dagnabit.

Susan says

I think about this book with a little anger. It was written well enough, but there was absolutely no resolution of anything. When I finished, I felt as though I was still hanging from a branch waiting to see which way I would fall. Had I known that nothing was resolved, no mystery was solved, no feelings were smoothed, I never would have read the book. It just stopped. It did not end.

Anne says

Disclaimer: I thought this was the first in this series for some reason so for the whole first half I was totally confused. Instead, it is the third and is not self-contained, really relying on plot, info and characters from the first two.

I liked the writing and the plucky 12 year old protagonist (whose voice went back and forth from 15 to 60, but never really sounded 12 to me). It was interesting to read a main character that age in a book definitely for adults, mixing cocktails and wanting to take up smoking.

But there was no closure to this book, which relied on the first two as an intro and apparently the next one to resolve any of the mysteries she investigates in Belle Ruin. This was ultimately unsatisfying to me as a reader.

Lorena says

I felt like the last 50 pages were ripped out of this book. I finished the book and seriously had to check the page numbers. It was a mystery novel left unsolved which I don't mind so much but the story just seemed to stop. It's like the writer couldn't think of a proper ending. Also I think this is a book from a series and the author kept referring back to a previous incident that I had no reference to. I imagine this was what it was like for those folks skipping The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo and going straight to The Girl Who Plays With Fire. Anyways, I had to finish it cause that's how I am. I don't think I will be reading another Martha Grimes

book soon.

caitlin says

If I had to choose only one 12 year old sleuth, it would be Flavia de Luce. Luckily I don't have to limit myself. Emma, from Cold Flat Junction and Hotel Paradise, is back, now a cub reporter for La Porte's Conservative newspaper. Here she is attempting to unravel a 20 year old kidnapping. I won't give anything away, but I loved the end of this one. Grimes got it right.

Kim says

Read all the bad reviews below and you'll see why I quit this book. It is tedious, the kid is a brat and, it turns out you never get the answer to the mystery. That's the only reason that I was going to finish it. Also, like everyone else says, the book keeps referencing the prior two books. When I started Belle Ruin, I didn't realize that it was 3rd in a series, but figured that the author would catch us up. So far, she doesn't and it sounds from other's comments that it never happens. I love the Jury books, but I'm dumping this one.

Judy says

This story is told by 12 year old Emma Graham who lives in a decaying hotel--Hotel Paradise--where her mother is the owner and chef and Emma is a waitress in the dining room. She is also the bartender for 91 year old Aurora Paradise who lives on the fourth floor and her "cocktails" are made from whatever alcohol she can sneak and whatever juices are in the refrigerator. Emma discovers the remains of a former luxury hotel deep in the woods near Spirit Lake--the Belle Rouen--which burned over 20 years before. Learning that there had been a four month old baby kidnapped there 22 years ago, Emma travels through three small towns interviewing people to find out memories of the kidnapping in order to unravel the mystery. Oh, did I mention that the novel just stops? Did the author get tired? On the plus side, Emma's brother and his friend stage a wonderful production of "Medea, the Musical" in the big garage which receives rave reviews. Apparently, this is the third novel in the Emma Graham series. It might have helped to have read the other two first.

Denise says

Darn that Martha Grimes! This is the third book in the Emma Graham series (the first two being "Hotel Paradise" and "Cold Flat Junction"), and it doesn't have a real ending, just like the first two. I don't know why I keep reading them. Probably because I keep hoping to get some answers someday. And they're very well written. Grimes has a way with words, which is probably why I keep reading her other series that never resolves, the Richard Jury books. Come on Martha, help a girl out here. Give me some closure!

Kathie says

Martha Grimes is one of my favourite mystery writers. Unfortunately, this is not one of her better efforts. I generally don't like books with precocious heroes/narrators, and 12 year old Emma, the hero of this novel, is, quite frankly, a brat. The book offers up a fascinating 20 year old mystery, but then leaves it almost completely unresolved -- perhaps a sequel is planned. In addition, there are annoying plot errors that grate on the nerves. It was all very disappointing.
