



The Secrets She Carried

Barbara Davis

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When a young woman returns to North Carolina after a thirty-year absence, she finds that the once grand tobacco plantation she called home holds more secrets than she ever imagined.

Though Peak Plantation has been in her family for generations, Leslie Nichols can't wait to rid herself of the farm left to her by her estranged grandmother Maggie—and with it the disturbing memories of her mother's death, her father's disgrace, and her unhappy childhood. But Leslie isn't the only one with a claim to Peak.

Jay Davenport, Peak's reclusive caretaker, has his own reasons for holding onto the land bequeathed to him by Leslie's grandmother. Before she died, Maggie hinted at a terrible secret surrounding Adele Laveau, a lady's maid who came to Peak during the 1930s and died under mysterious circumstances. Jay is haunted by Maggie's story, yet the truth eludes him—until Leslie uncovers a cryptically marked grave on the property.

As they delve into the mystery of Adele's death, Leslie and Jay discover shocking secrets that extend deep into the roots of Leslie's family tree—secrets that have the power to alter her life forever.

The Secrets She Carried Details

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From Reader Review The Secrets She Carried for online ebook

Diana Donnelly says

The five stars tells you how I felt about this book, a story that fluctuates between two generations. It's hard to believe this was her first novel. It's part historical as well as contemporary and is a family saga at the same time it's a mystery. As far as I'm concerned it had it all and I loved it.

Sandi *~The Pirate Wench~* says

4 1/2 stars

Recommended by Jill

Leslie Nichols cant wait to finally be rid of Peak Plantation, the stately family home left to her by her estranged grandmother Maggie. the Plantation doesn't hold good memories for Leslie, and she wants nothing to do with it. But her estrangement from her grandmother came at a price as she now is not the only one with a claim to Peak Plantation. Jay Davenport the caretaker of the property, still wants to hold onto the land bequeathed to him. Before her death Maggie hinted at a secret involving Adele Laveau, a lady's maid who came to Peak Plantation during the Great Depression and died under mysterious circumstances. While at Peak, Leslie uncovers a cryptically marked grave on the property prompting her and Jay to team up and try to solve the mystery surrounding Adele's death. And as they delve deeper into the mystery, they uncover shocking secrets that go so far back into Leslie's family tree that they have the power to forever alter her life. What a beautifully written novel that tells a tale of epic romance, that lasts through the decades and centuries. The story centers on a Plantation home in small town North Carolina and many love stories unfold as the story progresses through past and present. The author did a wonderful job with this and I never once felt lost in either time period. It's a beautiful story of hidden secrets, once thought long buried and they are slowly revealed to the reader. Nicely done and thanks for the recommend from Goodreads friend Jill. And I highly recommend to those who love a past/present theme.

Dale Harcombe says

Three and a half stars

Out of a job and with bills piling up, Leslie decides maybe she does need to go and investigate the inheritance of Peak Plantation, the lawyer notified her about almost twelve months ago. She is running out of time. If she does nothing before the twelve months is up the Planation will go to another. Despite not wanting to return after 30 years away, Leslie feels she has no choice. Especially when her father Jimmy has located her and been pestering her again. She cannot forgive him for what he did to her mother. The memories of that day are too painful and that is why she has stayed away so long from Peak Plantation. But, now it is time to go back, even if only to dispose of the property. But when she returns she is in for a couple of shocks. One is the presence of Jay Davenport, the caretaker. But it seems he is more than that now. And the tobacco plantation has been ripped out and it is now a vineyard. Leslie also finds herself drawn into uncovering the secret regarding Adele Laveau, who came to Peak many years earlier as a lady's maid to Susanne. The secrets she uncovers have a huge impact on what Leslie believes about her family and events from the past.

The story is told from the present day with Leslie but also from the 1930s and 1940s with Adele, the lady's maid. The novel deals with race issues in the South and the attitudes of those times. I found this to be quite an enjoyable read and liked the way both stories emerged. The setting and the characters were well drawn. However, I was never fully convinced about the love interest. And Henry, owner along with Susanne, of Peak Plantation in that early time was in many ways spineless. He allowed himself to be manipulated too easily.

This is a debut novel and the way it was written was engaging, if a bit predictable. It was an entertaining, easy read and it will be interesting to see what this author writes next.

PacaLipstick Gramma says

I felt like the author had too many story lines going on. It felt like she couldn't decide whether it should be a mystery or a romance. Not that that is a bad thing! But the mystery just fell a little flat, and the romance sappy and predictable.

The mystery wasn't too difficult to figure out. Jumping back and forth between past and present flowed smoothly, but then when it came to the present it felt as if just didn't gel. It was just too fragmented, as if the main character, Leslie, had absorbed what we as the reader had just read.

Leslie, for being almost 40, was quite immature in her behavior. I get so sick of so-called "adult" women acting like middle-schoolers. *"I don't want to listen.".* *"You looked at another woman."* *"I'm going to stomp off now and pout.* GROW UP.

I think with some serious editing it could have been a good story.

Stacy Sabala says

Book Review- The Secrets She Carried by Barbara Davis

This was a fascinating story that combined the past with the present. The author takes the story of Adele and Henry and intertwined the story of Jay and Leslie. It all takes place on the Peak plantation in Gavin, North Carolina. Gavin is the family name of Henry as his family was the founders of the town. Leslie grew up in Gavin at the Peak plantation living with her grandmother Maggie, Henry's daughter. Leslie left the plantation when she was eight after her mother's death. She witnessed her mother's death and believes that her father killed her. She is running from the ghosts that live there. She hasn't been back in thirty years. Her grandmother has recently died, about a year ago, and Leslie has inherited the plantation. She has very little time left to claim it. When her father is paroled from jail and comes looking for her again, she decides to head to North Carolina and away from him.

When she arrives she is confronted by Jay Davenport who was Maggie's handyman and companion for the last parts of her life. He is disgusted with Leslie and isn't afraid to express it. He doesn't understand why she never came back, not even for her grandmother's funeral. He doesn't think she deserves anything that Maggie left her. He doesn't realize the ghosts that chase her. Plus he has his own plans for the plantation and worries that Leslie will ruin everything that he and Maggie had had planned.

Once Leslie decides she will stay for awhile and help Jay with his plan for the plantation, she discovers the

unnamed grave that lies on Henry's ridge. When she finds other things which form more questions in her mind, the search is on to figure out who is buried in the grave. As she investigates, she gets closer to some major family secrets that Maggie wants to be known. She tried to tell Jay at one time but was unable to complete the story. Leslie begins to unravel the mystery and they learn the story of her great grandfather Henry and his love for Adele. The story is heart breaking, but needs to be known. Jay and Leslie work together. Their feelings for each other grow as they unearth the truth.

The ride is bumpy and full of turmoil. Leslie has to deal with her father and the ghost of her mother and Jay has to deal with his own issues of his ex-wife and his writing career. They found their way to each other, but will they be able to survive the secrets and the betrayals that occur in the present and the past.

I really liked this story. The author did a great job of revealing the past and twisting the story around the main characters present story. I found the journey from past to present and back an interesting way in which the author presented the story. Adele was my favorite character. She made mistakes but loved deeply and the author revealed her tremendous strength in the end. I had a suspicion as to what Adele really gave up for her love of Henry and I was right. It was sad that it occurred but knowing the times and the secret Adele had herself explained why she had to do what she did.

Leslie's obsession to discover the truth ignited the reader's same obsession. I wanted to know what happened and if a happy ending was possible for those involved. Parts of the story I could guess before it happened, but others were a surprise. This story fascinated me and it was a fabulous read. I give it a 5 out of 5.

Anne says

2/5 for characters; 2/5 for originality; 2/5 for writing style; 3/5 for plotting and maintaining interest (hey, usually I start books like this and skip to the last chapter and decide it wouldn't have been worth it); 1/5 for making sense and/or having a point; 1/5 for the inclusion of a character writing a novel about the story in the story; but bonus points for including a novelist character and for producing feel-good fuzzies.

The main disappointment is that the romance at the center of the book isn't palpable. When falling in love just suddenly happens for no other reason than the characters being lonely and attractive, it doesn't seem like the grand passion that the back of the book makes you expect.

Also, the appearance of Leslie's dad into the storyline drags the latter down and the book became a lot less tolerable with him in it.

Am I going to look for other novels like this one? No.

Tamara Burford says

Very well written. The past is interwoven with the present.. And Adele comes to life in these pages . This is a must read

Barbara White says

I was fortunate enough to receive an advanced reader copy of THE SECRETS SHE CARRIED from Ms. Davis' publisher. A beautifully crafted page-turner with many twists, this stunning novel has a simple theme: no matter how far you run, you can't escape your past (or your family). Part contemporary women's fiction, part historical novel, the plot moves seamlessly back and forth in time to unlock family secrets that bind four

generations of women. Add a mysterious death, love that defies the grave, and the legacy of redemption, and this novel has it all. A stunning read from the first page to the last sentence.

norcalgal says

Subtle, very subtle. That was my overriding feeling about "The Secrets She Carried." I always had a sense something was "off" about Adele [the early chapter with Adele's mother sending her away hinted of mystery and portent] and that did turn out to be so. However, it was subtly done, so good on Barbara Davis.

What was not subtle however, was the telegraphed romance between Leslie and Jay. Couldn't you just smell it coming from a mile away? On this point, Davis didn't go a good job conveying the slow building romance between the two. I never got the sense they were really falling in love with each other as people, but rather, than circumstances (proximity and working together) had them attracted to each other. Or maybe it was just too subtle for me to detect? ;-)

I marveled at how Davis was able to convey bookish prose in the Epilogue. The tone was so markedly different, it seemed obvious Jay was reading from a book (which he was). Contrast that with the rest of "The Secrets She Carried". Davis deftly uses a different "voice" as it were, and for me, this was perhaps the most brilliant thing about the novel.

The novel explores race and attitudes to race in Southern society and I felt it did that well enough. It was heavy handed or overly preachy. But, I also felt those most vulnerable (i.e. Negroes) in Great Depression America would have suffered a lot more than they did. On this point, I thought Davis shied away too much on showing how the men Henry hired to work the farm could have suffered for Henry's actions. But again...subtle. Maybe that's what the author was striving for on this point as well.

Other than praising the novel for its subtlety, there isn't much more for me to praise. I didn't connect with any of the characters. Neither Adele nor Leslie were full fledged characters to me. They seemed unreal - Adele because she basically fell in love too fast, without truly knowing Henry, and Leslie because it seemed crazy she'd stay away from a beloved grandmother just because of events with her father and mother. The background motivations of both women didn't come through as authentic.

Even Jay doesn't escape this criticism since I couldn't believe a man would let a bitter divorce essentially rule his actions so long afterwards.

Maggie was the character I most wanted to read about, and was sorry she didn't really have a voice in the book. We saw her too much through others' eyes, and what we did get wasn't an in-depth portrait.

Ultimately, this was a somewhat interesting novel, but I doubt it will stay with me for too long.

Oana says

"You've heard my story now— my sin and all its wages. I am weary from the telling but sorry for none of it. I made my choices and I have answered for them. Do I have regrets? Once perhaps... but no more. The heart wants what it wants, you see, and eternity is much too long

for regrets."

Elizabeth says

I have a new favorite author! One of many, but definitely a great one. The author delivers a slow to develop, but interesting, story caught between the present and the past. Her characters all lived for me and the storyline was beautiful!

KatLynne says

4.5 Stars

A very well written, totally absorbing tale set in the dual time lines of 2013 and the 1930's. I could hardly believe this is Barbara Davis' first book as she weaves a gripping family saga enveloping the choices and secrets buried in the past. A definite page turner as new information from the past is slowly revealed and the puzzle is finally solved.

While there is a love story, the mystery surrounding Peak Plantation's inhabitants kept me fully invested from beginning to end. An emotional, poignant tale with shocking twist and turns. I'm definitely looking forward to more from this author.

Thanks again, Jilly, for leading me to this one:!:)

Amanda says

Why am I supposed to believe that the historical romance in this book was...well, romantic? Henry made me want to run over him with his own damn pickup truck. He was a big old limp, saggy, wuss. How was I supposed to believe that he was the love of anyone's life? He wasn't nice and gentle, he was weak, weak, WEAK.

It didn't take me any time to figure out the two BIG secrets.

Jill says

4.5 stars

I shall but love thee better after death.

Upon the death of her grandmother, Leslie Nichols inherits Peak Plantation. She has little interest in keeping it as it dredges up memories of her thirty-year estrangement from her grandmother, Maggie and the death of her mother. When she returns to North Carolina, she discovers that she is to share the inheritance with Jay Davenport, the estate's caretaker and Maggie's friend.

While both Leslie and Jay have their own secrets, mysteries from the past bind Leslie to Peak. Whose unnamed grave does Leslie find on the ridge? When seventeen year-old Adele Laveau arrived at Peak Plantation in 1930 to work as maid to Susanne Gavin, Leslie's great-grandmother, a chain of events began, affecting not only Henry's family but the following generations right on down to Leslie.

Set in dual timelines, 2013 and the 1930s, this romantic fiction is a must-read for those who enjoy family sagas and family secrets. As often happens in fiction with dual timelines the historical ends up vastly more engaging than the contemporary. So it is here with *The Secrets She Carried*.

This debut is suitable for readers of contemporary women's fiction and romantic historical fiction. Fans of Sarah Jio or Susanna Kearsley should enjoy this. With beautiful prose, a mystery with some surprising twists and two romances, *The Secrets She Carried* is an impressive read and I look forward to the next title from new author, Barbara Davis.

Steam: 1.5

Roger Cole says

I received my iBooks copy of Secrets first thing Monday morning and I finished it early this morning. When I was younger I read incessantly, but have read very few novels recently that were able to hold my attention. I enjoyed this book tremendously. Ms. Davis kept my attention very easily with her debut as a novelist. I have only one word to give regarding this book: BRAVO! Thank you for the journey into your imagination. I look forward to many more.
