

CLAIRE NORTH



The Gameshouse

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From Claire North comes an audio exclusive. For the first time, all three novellas have been released as one edition, set in the ingenious and thrilling world of the Gameshouse.

Novella one: The Serpent. In 17th-century Venice exists a mysterious establishment known only as the Gameshouse. There, fortunes are made and fortunes are broken over games of chess, backgammon and every other game under the sun. But those whom fortune favours may be invited to compete in the higher league...a league where the games played are of politics and empires, of economics and kings. It is a league where Capture the Castle involves real castles, where hide-and-seek takes place on a scale as big as the British Isles. Not everyone proves worthy of competing in the higher league. But one woman who is about to play may just exceed everyone's expectations. Though she must always remember: the higher the stakes, the more deadly the rules....

Novella two: The Thief. In 1930s Bangkok, one higher league player has just been challenged to a game of hide and seek. The board is all of Thailand - and the seeker will use any means possible to hunt down his quarry - be it police, government, strangers or even spies....

Novella three: The Master. The Gameshouse is an unusual institution. Many know it as the place where fortunes can be made and lost through games of chess, backgammon - every game under the sun. But a select few who are picked to compete in the higher league know that some games are played for higher stakes - those of politics and empires, of economics and kings...And now, the ultimate player is about to step forward.

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The Gameshouse Details

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From Reader Review The Gameshouse for online ebook

Bradley says

I had to waffle between 3 and 4 stars, so call this 3.5.

But WHY? It's Claire North! You've never read anything of hers that you've disliked!

Well, I didn't exactly dislike this one. The first of the three novellas was pretty raveworthy, like a Machiavellian back-stabby game of thrones for people in Venice a couple hundred years ago, making and breaking kings in the Great Game they play.

It's smart, it's almost over-the-top, and it's quite delicious for an alternate-history high-stakes secret society story.

The second, by contrast, was good for its cool setting of 30's Thailand with rather deep descriptions... But, it just didn't have the same impact OR importance that developed in the first. For, after all, the winner of THAT game became the head of the order. (The rewards were somewhat unspecified except that it's so much better than kingships, etc.) This one was okay. The rewards for playing the game are getting fantastical, now. A real fantasy story mixed with a huge number of pieces (read human resources) being used up.

I honestly didn't care that much about this one.

The third novella had its ups and downs in a modern setting with an even bigger location. Note, we go from ONLY Venice to ALL of Thailand, and now, the world.

It was *okay* until it neared the end, with resources dwindling and piling up in a truly topsy-turvy game between order and chaos, and THEN I was like.... "Okay, this is pretty damn cool."

In fact, if any of you folks have been following the author's North-Only titles, you'll see a pretty big and awesome trend that includes immortality in one sense or another. This, in my honest opinion, is probably the very best feature of her novels. Identity, immortality, and often enough, a lot of fantastic locations.

This one was in line with the rest. It just didn't have the same punch for me as any of her other novels.

Still, it's decent. Not bad, taken all together. BUT I'd say just read the first novella if I was really recommending this to anyone except the Northian Die-Hards like me. :)

Ed says

North is disgustingly talented for someone just a tick over 30. Three linked novellas about those who play games with the stuff of life and the fate of nations as their poker chips, and people as their cards.

My go-to writer for high concept thrillers done right, in really striking prose (an area where many thriller writers fall down).

Maša says

Three novellas set in a demimonde: a gameshouse, where people are pieces, and the whole world is the board. We meet many near-immortal beings, who question what is to be human.

The first novella was the best, in my opinion: the plot was pretty straightforward, especially for a Claire North book (usually, there is no plot at all), and it was a real page-turner. The second novella is the weakest for me: hide-and-seek with little to show in the way of "why" and "why should I bother"? Really, it added nothing: you could skip it and go straight for the third book. Also, the antagonist was quite over-the-top unlikeable, and I like my villains more on the grey side. The last novella finished with a bang, although the first half resembles the second novella and dragged a bit as a result.

Overall, this is a very satisfying omnibus, although it suffers from the "claire north syndrome", as I call it: too much ideas randomly and thoughtlessly thrown on a page. Delicious, delicious ideas, but alas, I would have liked a bit more structure.

Lee Penney says

This was one of those fortunate finds. It was on an offer and I wanted to find three books to take advantage of it. The blurb for this one sounded interesting.

Actually this is three shorter books rolled into one. It consists of *The Serpent*, *The Thief* and *The Master*.

The first follows a woman in seventeenth century Venice as she plays a game to elect a ruler. The second is about a Frenchman playing hide and seek across 1930s Thailand. The last concerns an old player challenging the owner of *The Gameshouse*.

It's a very novel idea, and tickled the part of me that suspects there's a game behind the game — one that only a few people know is being played yet encompasses the planet. An idea I think appeals to many.

All of the stories have great characters, wonderfully rendered by Peter Kenny. Some appear so briefly they are stereotypes but lovable ones. The backgrounds are wonderful in their detail as well, especially well drawn was Thailand (to someone who hasn't been).

The first two stories really chimed with me and I was drawn back to them, but the third — by far the most ambitious in scope — didn't work as well; in part because so much is squeezed into something of short story length. The plot runs as if on fast-forward, with ever-more over-the-top set pieces and sacrifices. The humanity of it was lost.

As I say, narrator Peter Kenny does a great job of breathing life into the characters. One of the better readers I have listened to.

There's a great concept underlying all of the stories, and plenty of room to explore innumerable paths within the universe, so I would be interested to see what else could be done.

Sandra8811 says

Unpersönliche Charaktere und langatmige Story – Potential wurde leider nicht ausgeschöpft

Warum habe ich mich für das Buch entschieden?

Ich fand den Klappentext super und das Cover zog mich magisch an.

Cover:

Die mysteriöse Tür auf dem Cover zog mich magisch an. Was befindet sich dahinter? Auch der Titel und die verschnörkelte Schrift machten das Buch allein schon zu einem Must-Read für mich. Ich musste einfach herausfinden, was es mit dem Spielhaus auf sich hat!

Inhalt:

Immer wieder in der Geschichte taucht mitten in der Stadt ein altmodisches Häuschen auf. Dahinter findet man zwei Etagen, in welchen man nicht nur einfache Spiele um Geld spielt. Wer es schafft, in den Oberen Gemächern eingeladen zu werden, spielt auch um Königreiche, ewiges Leben oder ähnliches. Enthalten sind 3 Geschichten. Zuerst begleitet man Thene, die ihren Ehemann in das Spielhaus begleitet und selbst zur Spielerin in Venedig wird. In Geschichte zwei begleitet man Remy Birke auf einem Fangen und Verstecken-Spiel durch ganz Siam. Die letzte Geschichte nennt sich Das Duell der Spielemeister, da ich zu viel verraten würde, erwähne ich nicht um wen es genau geht.

Handlung und Thematik:

Die Handlung beginnt sehr vielversprechend – ein Spiel, das es ermöglicht, ewiges Leben zu erlangen klingt super verführerisch. Auch das Konzept, wie man Mitglied des Spielhauses wird, ist super. Leider erweisen sich die Spiele als sehr langatmig und überraschungslos. Ich musste mich sehr durch manche Passagen quälen, weil es klar war wie sie enden und auch die Ausschmückung nicht wirklich toll waren. Toll fand ich, dass die Überwachungsmethoden der NSA thematisiert wurden, das war aber nur ein kurzer Abschnitt und leider nicht arg tiefgründig.

Charaktere:

Leider konnten mich die handelnden Charaktere nicht überzeugen. Einzig und allein mit Birke habe ich ein bisschen mitgefiebert. Thene mochte ich am Anfang, aber dann wurde sie irgendwie für mich uninteressant.

Schreibstil:

Der Schreibstil von Claire North ist leider absolut nicht mein Fall. Die erste Story enthielt stellenweise elendig lange Sätze und war hochgestochen geschrieben. Das führte dazu, dass das Lesen echt anstrengend war. Mir fehlten hier auch oft Gegendbeschreibungen, ich konnte mich nicht wirklich in Thene hineinversetzen. Bei der Handlung um Birke fiel es mir ein bisschen leichter, aber auch hier hätte man mehr draus machen können. Ich hätte mehr über Charaktere erfahren wollen, auch fehlte irgendwie die notwendige Spannung. Auch die letzte Geschichte konnte mich nicht überzeugen. Das Ende war irgendwie komisch und die Regeln waren mir irgendwie nicht ganz klar. Die Kapitellängen waren durchgehend kurz und super, dafür war der Inhalt langatmig und anstrengend.

Persönliche Gesamtbewertung:

Ich bin sehr enttäuscht von diesem Buch, von welchem ich so viel erwartet hatte. Die ersten Seiten waren – trotz des hochgestochenen Schreibstils in der ersten Geschichte – super mitreißend und toll aufgebaut. Leider

ebbte dies schnell ab. Die Charaktere waren unpersönlich und bezüglich der Spiele waren mir die Hintergründe und Regeln nicht klar genug. Ich kann das Buch daher nicht empfehlen.

Rachel says

The second book was the most interesting; the last the least.

Sarah says

The world of the Gameshouse, where the Gamehouse is the world. Usually when I read a series of novellas I rate them separately to get the "credit" for reading three books. But this is best read together, and rated together. Recommended.

Stevie Kincade says

Book 1 The Serpent was a **5 star** novella. I love my intrigue books and this one drew me into its world and had me on the edge of my seat throughout. I loved the concept of the gameshouse, the setting and was actively cheering for our main character Thenie. I could not wait to read the other novellas.

Book 2 The Thief I give **1 star**. It is quite literally a step by step recount of a game of "hide and seek". "I hid in a village then I hid in the jungle. Then I caught a boat and hid in another jungle". We have no reason to care about our protagonist. Hard to believe this is from the same author as "The Serpent". The only redeeming feature was Peter Kenny performing a series of authentic sounding and humorous Thai accents.

Book 3 - The Master. **2 stars**. A game in modern times for all the marbles. While the main characters of the previous 2 stories are referenced there wasn't a significant or meaningful payoff from them. Like book 2 this felt like a list as much as a story. "She sent the FBI and homeland security after me, I sent the CIA and Interpol after her. She overthrew my puppet government, I overthrew her puppet government. And on and on it went. Cool story bro!

Rolf Eberhardt says

good story, Innovative - worth the \$\$

Katrina Evans says

This trilogy is brilliant, without question or hesitation.

I loved the concept of these books - the idea of being able to play a game for the appreciation of the colour purple or hide and seek where you can hide in a country is just wonderful.

The characters are all well written and well rounded - their flaws as important as their strengths.

I will happily read these again.

James Mork says

I enjoyed all three of these novellas and would definitely recommend them, though I must say I enjoyed the first one more than the other two by a small margin.

It's not that the latter two are bad, it's just that there's so much more worldbuilding going on in the first novella where we get introduced to it all. We learn the about how the Gameshouse works in the first story, what it can bring to a person's life alongside some risks.

In the second story we see a desperate struggle to avoid some risks that was enjoyable but it doesn't add as much as the first story did.

In the third we see the height of which the gameshouse can go to and how far a certain character is willing to go, but the ending is left intentionally open and I expected more tying up of all the themes, but instead they're just kind of left there.

Those are my only problems with the novellas however, the premise is intriguing, the stories are great, and the performance on the audiobook is great. I'll probably come back to these at some point and I'll enjoy them each again when I do.

FrauMiest says

Perfectly read and story, that truly developed over the books. Wonderful worlds in wonderful words spun.

Sandy's bunte Bücherwelt says

Mystisch, kryptisch und soooo ungewöhnlich...

Ein Haus wie jedes andere, ein Spielhaus - in den unteren Gemächern wird das Spiel der Gewöhnlichen gespielt und in die oberen Gemächer wirst du gewählt. Der Einsatz ist groß, der Verlust noch größer und der Gewinn unermesslich - hier geht es um die Seele, um Lebensjahre, um Kriege, Terror und vieles mehr...

Ein so ungewöhnliches Buch habe ich lange nicht gelesen.

Der Schreibstil ist sehr ungewöhnlich, in drei Novellen werden drei Zeitsprünge getan und es geht jeweils

um ein anderes Spiel und wie Verbündete entstehen.

Ich hatte teilweise Probleme mit dem Schreibstil. In den ersten beiden Novellen wird die Sichtweise durch einen Dritten beschrieben (die Schlichterinnen) und im letzten wechseln wir in die ich bzw. wir Perspektive eines Spielers.

Im Buch geht es um Spieler, diese Spielen um Kriege, die Vorherrschaft über eine Stadt, Verstecken in einem ganzen Land und noch ganz andere...

Interessant fand ich die Gedanken die beim Lesen aufkommen, denn mag es noch so unrealistisch erscheinen, findet man sich immer wieder in unserer Welt, denn wissen wir wirklich wer Kriege entfacht, Terroranschläge ausübt oder hinter Amtserhebungen steckt?!

FAZIT

Ein Buch der Spitzenklasse, für das der Leser sich Zeit nehmen muss und sich ganz darauf einlassen. Empfehlenswert für alle die das ungewöhnliche suchen und vor einem komplizierten Schreibstil nicht zurück schrecken.

Bibliophiler Booknerd says

Die drei Novellen haben mir sehr gut gefallen, ganz besonders die erste Geschichte mochte ich am liebsten vom Setting und auch von der heimeligen und gemütlichen Atmosphäre her. Vom Schreibstil her haben sich die Geschichten immer mehr der Gegenwart angenähert und man ist den Spielern gedankentechnisch immer näher gekommen, aber die letzte Geschichte war für mich ziemlich unpersönlich. Thene, Remy und Silber mochte ich sehr gerne. Remy mochte ich am liebsten und ich hätte Bücher über ihn lesen können. Die Handlung war abwechslungsreich und kreativ gestaltet. Ganz besonders die Grundgeschichte und die Thematik fand ich sehr spannend und eindrucksvoll.

Ich würde ja gerne auf eine Fortsetzung hoffen, aber das Ende- das offene Ende!!!- lässt leider nicht darauf hoffen. Auch hätte ich mir ein anderes Ende und mehr Auflösungen gewünscht.

Insgesamt mochte ich die Novellen sehr gerne und ich hätte selber große Lust so ein Spiel mitzuspielen.

Mark says

The Gameshouse by Claire North is a combination novel of the three previously released ebook exclusive novellas. While I do enjoy her style, and the narrator, Peter Kenny, is great and makes it more enjoyable than I suspect reading would be, the stories aren't as good as I hoped. Set in three different time periods with some common characters, they follow 'games' that take place as part of the Gameshouse, real-world games with all-too real consequences. It's an interesting premise, and the first novella, The Serpent, introduces it really well with a political game. The second, The Thief, is less successful as it's simply a big game of hide-and-seek. The last one, The Master, is a combination of both previous novellas, but done on a global scale. It's the best of the three and has a great ending, but on the whole the collection wasn't quite as enjoyable as I'd have liked.

