



The Rose Demon

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Matthias Fitzosbert is the illegitimate son of the parish priest of the village of Sutton Courteny. Despite the recent spate of murders, each day he braves the dark woods to visit his friend, a mysterious hermit who shows him many strange and beautiful things. Though enthralled, the boy is always puzzled by his lessons with the hermit - never more so than the night the villagers hunt the hermit down, and burn him, believing him to be responsible for the many deaths.

THE ROSE DEMON explores Matthias's unique relationship with a spirit he strives to placate but ultimately flees from. His story is played out against the vivid panorama of medieval life: the fall and sack of Constantinople; the turbulent Wars of the Roses; the terror of witchcraft; the battlefields of Spain and finally the lush jungles of the Caribbean where the Rose Demon and Matthias have one final, dramatic confrontation.

The Rose Demon Details

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Author : Paul Doherty

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From Reader Review The Rose Demon for online ebook

Joy says

This quickly turned into one of my favourite books, and after reading a few more novels by Paul Doherty, he turned into one of my favourite authors as well. The writing is superb. The characters are well done, likeable, and I could relate well to them, especially the main character. The storyline is interesting, I found that I didn't want to put this book down! I highly recommend it!

Kate says

I'm really not sure about this book. It was strange and sprawling.

Cheri Edwards says

pretty incredible book. I enjoyed this to the very last period of the very last sentence. An Amazing & Epic novel. The book never stalls, never lets up. I haven't read a book this powerful in a long time. Top 10 books in my collection, but most likely top 5.....3?.....Best 1! ...well it's up there.

Kai says

Very good medieval suspense-supernatural tale. Well written, woven into actual historical events, accurate to period.

Recommend to those who liked Mary Stewart's Crystal Cave series.

Kelly says

I am 150 pages into this 500 page book but have decided not to finish it (which is not something I do very often). It is definitely interesting, but so dark that it just makes me feel gross. Demonic possession, murder, the black arts...just a little too much for me. I read a review online in which the reviewer stated that even though he really liked this book, he would not recommend it to anyone that is depressed. Well, I'm not depressed, but I can see why he wrote that. I am curious about how it ends, though, so maybe I'll read the last few pages.

Lara says

Two-thirds medieval historical fiction, one-third dark fantasy. The medieval setting is note-perfect, churches

and nobles and devils around every corner, with God up there watching and waiting for you to slip up so He can turn His face from you. I feel kind of sorry for Matthias--all of Rosifer's powers are well and good, but he's a *demon*, and nothing good is ever going to come of a demon, even one who ostensibly loves you, following you around.

RockStar PH says

One of my absolute favourite books of all time! Amazing story line and characters. Doherty paints a journey for his characters.

It has a very dark side to it, but it is also an incredible story and Matthias goes through many transformations throughout.

Winnie says

One of Mr. Doherty's stand alone novels. This is a beautifully written story well worth the read.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in June 1998.

It is rare to find a modern novel which takes medieval religious ideas and supernatural fears seriously. The Rose Demon is really a horror story set in a medieval world stalked by the demon-possessed, witches and the spirits of the dead.

The myth of the Rose Demon, or Rosifer, is (I think) Doherty's own addition to the complicated medieval system of demonology. Inspired by the knowledge that one day God would become incarnate in the human race, and enraptured by the beauty of Eve, the angel Rosifer tried to seduce her before the Fall, bringing her roses in the garden of Eden. Now one of Lucifer's chief servants, he is still looking for a human being to love him of their own free will. The closest he can come is to act as an incubus or succubus (demonic lovers usually associated with witchcraft) or through possession.

The novel itself concerns his relationship with Matthias Fitzosbert, the illegitimate child of a village priest, who as a child showed some affection to a hermit possessed by Rosifer. But as Matthias grows up, the demon's continued relationship with him causes all sorts of problems (such as accusations of witchcraft) and involves him in the great events of his time: the end of the Wars of the Roses, the imposture of Lambert Simnel, the Spanish conquest of Granada and the discovery of America. Everywhere he goes, the demonic presence nearby involves him with the supernatural: ghosts, Strigoi (vampires) and witches, all portrayed as they are in medieval chronicles. His realisation of what possession means - Rosifer always possesses those near him, not Matthias himself - as he grows older leads to a horror of those things which bring the demon near, despite his solicitude for Matthias.

Few writers take the supernatural seriously in historical novels; the best horror writers always do, from Edgar Allan Poe and Bram Stoker to Stephen King. (Note that I did not say that they have to believe in it.) You

cannot frighten with your tongue in your cheek, with the little concessions to twentieth century materialism made when neither writer nor reader takes these things seriously. The horror that can be evoked by ideas of demon possession (in believers) is worse even than the similar, twentieth century, horror of mental illness, because demons are known to be evil while an illness has to be seen as morally neutral. That is what Doherty is seeking to convey, and he really manages to do so.

Jack Lourens says

There are not many books you read twice. I read this many years ago while enduring the daily commute into London. I thought it was good then and it still is. I will start its counterpart Soul Slayer next. Thinking about it the only books I have ever read twice are Shogun by James Clavell and The Year they Freed the Slaves by Jack Lourens.

Robert says

Very well written book and a wonderful story. I almost gave this 5 stars and was at the last few pages and decided on a 4 star review because the end was rather anti climatic. Great story. A page turner. 4.5.

Phil Syphe says

“The Rose Demon” is about a fallen angel, known as the Rosifer, and his association with a human named Matthias.

The story weaves in and out of true historical facts that transpired during the 1400s. It is set in four parts, preceded by several prologues. Part One features Matthias as a seven-year-old, unaware that his only real friend – an old hermit – is in fact possessed by the rose demon.

The Rosifer is able to possess most people, depending on their soul’s strength and will power. Throughout the novel he reappears in numerous guises, though on most occasions Matthias seldom guesses that his latest friend – or enemy – is possessed until the demon decides to make himself known.

The Rosifer appears mainly in this first part and is featured less and less as the narrative progresses. As a result, I became less and less engaged with the book.

Part One is a hard act to follow. The relationship between the demon – in the guise of the hermit – and the young Matthias is a key factor that makes this so good. None of the demon’s other possessions are as entertaining as the hermit, while Matthias the boy is more interesting than Matthias the man.

That said, the Rosifer is such a strong character that whoever he pops up as, he immediately spices up whatever situation Matthias is faced with.

But as the demon’s interventions becomes fewer and far between, the storyline becomes too repetitive for my tastes. Matthias gets hit over the head and wakes up somewhere new. Matthias is captured with death hovering above him. Matthias keeps dreaming about certain past events. And on the whole his life seems too

full and varied to be believed.

Had more events been structured around the village setting in Part One, perhaps it would've proved a much more engaging read. Many other reviewers feel otherwise, but for me it seems like the author has been determined to include too many historical events for one story.

Speaking of true events, Richard III did not kill his brother, George Duke of Clarence, as is stated here by one of the characters; Edward IV had him executed, which didn't go down well with Richard.

Richard does briefly appear in the story when he was the Duke of Gloucester and is described as having red hair – unless I'm colour blind, it's brown in every portrait I've seen of him.

My main criticism, though, is that when it comes to writing dialogue, Mr Doherty is one of those authors who are determined to substitute the word "said" with as many alternatives as possible:

Matthias declared, he asked, she demanded, Matthias snapped, he purred, she murmured, etc.

This sort of thing is distracting. Most historical novelists do this. It's as though they spend so much time researching historical facts that they have no time to study English style. It is, of course, best not to use "said" wherever possible, but when it's important to indicate who's speaking, "said" goes by with little notice. Start using "retorted", "demanded", "purred" – please don't ever use "purred" – it sticks out.

In addition, I may read a character's speech, for example, as though he/she is happy, so if by the end of the line I'm told "Matthias murmured", I have to pause and adjust how I imagined his tone.

This in my opinion is the worst line in the book:

'Matthias is my guest,' Abbot Benedict declared sharply and glared determinedly at the Prior.

Overall, Paul Doherty is a good writer, but lines like the above should be greeted with the backspace key. Authors who study English style would be able to "show" the reader Abbot Benedict's emotions without resorting to adverbs and overlong dialogue attribution.

Had this work been 100 pages fewer, devoid of excess adverbs and adjectives, free from every known substitute for "said", featured the Rosifer in more scenes, wasn't so repetitive, and used the "less is more" approach regarding the amount of true historical events covered, then this may well have been a classic. Many reviewers think it is anyway, so the author need not worry about any negative remarks made here, or poor reviews elsewhere.

I feel that there is potential here that hasn't been tapped into. But as the good does outweigh the bad I rate this 3 stars, not 2.

Ashif says

I really enjoyed this book. It's based on a boy who grows into a man and is followed by 'the rose demon' throughout. It incorporates true historical events nicely. A book I could not put down.

Jenny says

After finishing, it's really hard to know what to make of this book. There is just SO much in it. It's like a trip through every major event in history at the time. It's very different from Doherty's more well known novels.

Mary-Jean Harris says

I actually finished this book a few days ago, and have been pondering over it before making a review. This was an amazing book, just WOW, though it was so sad too. I've never read any of these sort of Medieval mystery books about demons and such (it wasn't really a mystery, but it was sorted that way). It was such a beautiful story, and a story that seems so epic, but it is really only about the life of Matthias, the protagonist, and all the hardships he goes through. Of course, the Rose Demon (the Rosifer) is involved, and has a connection with Matthias that protects him even though it might cause the deaths of everyone else around him. So Matthias really is cursed by the Rosifer, and lives a dangerous and usually depressing life because of it. I really liked Matthias as a character, though as time went on, he became more and more depressed and just didn't care if he lived or died, which is understandable, given what keeps happening to him and the unavoidability of it all. But despite this, he is always curious to know: to know about the Rosifer and about himself--who he is and what his purpose is.

I had thought that this book might be too creepy or explicit for me, but it wasn't, though it was still deep and creepy (though not too creepy). It wasn't like one of those books (I'm talking to you, Game of Thrones) that had parts that I just had to gloss over because I didn't want to be scarred for life by reading them. So the creepiness here was mostly the demonic possession and the people dying, which I could put up with.

The history was also fascinating, and it is quite detailed and comprehensive: we see a battle involved in the War of the Roses, James III's court in Edinburgh, Scotland, Isabella and Ferdinand recapturing Granada from the Moors, and even Christopher Columbus is one of the characters. It didn't seem overdone though, which was in part because the historical characters were not just faceless "icons" but fully-fledged characters that seemed just as real as the others in the story.

Another thing I liked was the four different prologues, each a different point of view, showing the effects of the Rose Demon in different places. I especially liked how the two Knights Hospitalliers were involved, and how it becomes their mission to find the Rose Demon and kill him, though the main story does not focus on this.

Rosamund was also an interesting character. I wasn't too fussy about her at first, but she and Matthias were perfect together (*weep*), but I knew it couldn't last. All the bad things that happen to Matthias are inevitable, because sooner or later, the Rose Demon will make his appearance, and people will start dying (death by blood sucking--sounds like a vampire, but supposedly this is how demons get their nourishment as well), and usually, Matthias is accused of sorcery. I do wonder if he had other sorts of powers above what the Rose Demon helped him do directly: he had a good intuition, but I would have liked to see if there were more powerful things he could have done too.

The loving, but morbid, words of the Rose Demon keep that keep returning in the story, "Oh, creatura bona atque parva!" ("you are my little and good creature"), can come as a surprise if you don't know who he's possessed, but often I could predict it, so I could cry out "Yes!" since I got it right, but also "No!" because most of the time Matthias is in the process of being tortured or imprisoned and the Rose Demon only confirms his connection to "the dark arts". Before we figure out just how the Rose Demon is related to Matthias (not giving this away), I found the Rosifer's attachment to Matthias both creepy and eerily sweet.

He is a fallen spirit (fallen with Lucifer from Heaven and refused God's pardon to return) and seems to have fallen in love with Matthias's soul, and wants more than anything for Matthias to love him. This is a continuation of his love for Eve (as in, Garden of Eden Eve) to whom he gave a rose (hence the name) to tempt her with. In a way, I wanted Matthias to accept and love the Rosifer back, but I also saw (as Matthias did, of course) how despicable the Rose Demon was, and how he kills people without a thought and kills the people Matthias loves as well.

One thing (I'm just writing these things as I think of them, so the order is arbitrary) I found confusing was Morgana and the other "witches" who seem to be in league with the Rose Demon. It doesn't really make sense how they could be working with him though, given who the Rose Demon is and that he continually possesses different people and appears to act alone. Why does he need Morgana and co.? I never really figured it out even at the end. Oh, and the ending! I won't give it away, but I wished it could have been longer (Matthias's final "confrontation" with the Rose Demon on a Caribbean island--he gets there via Christopher Columbus). From the beginning of the book, I had been expecting this confrontation, but it never came until the rather short last chapter. So when it did come, I was expecting too much, so wished there was more to it.

The other one thing I didn't like was that as the book progressed, things started to seem repetitive: the places and characters were new and intriguing, but the whole, "Matthias goes to another place, lives relatively well off, people start dying, he is blamed, Rose Demon appears, he has to flee, he's aided by the Rose Demon..." was a bit too predictable. Quite a lot like Dawn Wind, which I had also recently read, but I liked this book better. And the very ending!--I won't say anything more about this, but I entreat you to read the book and find out! You won't be disappointed by this book, at least, once you've gotten over the sadness and somewhat creepiness of it :)
