



The Secret of Greylands

Annie Haynes

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“There’s no dirty trick he wouldn’t play—it’s my belief that he wouldn’t even stop at murder!”

Her husband unmasked as a scoundrel, Lady Cynthia Letchingham seeks refuge at her cousin Hannah’s north-country home Greylands. But on Cynthia’s arrival, she finds Hannah an invalid, having recently suffered a mysterious paralysis; the house is devoid of servants, and Hannah’s husband, charming and sinister by turns, keeps watch over everything and everyone. Only the presence of charming Sybil Hammond and a darkly handsome neighbour relieve the atmosphere for Cynthia - but then a dark red stain appears mysteriously on the sleeve of her coat...

What has really happened to Hannah, and the other entangled mysteries along the way, make *The Secret of Greylands* (1924) an absorbing golden age crime novel matching Wilkie Collins’ high Victorian gothic to the agility of early jazz age fiction. This new edition, the first in over eighty years, features an introduction by crime fiction historian Curtis Evans.

“Not only a crime story of merit, but also a novel which will interest readers to whom mystery for its own sake has little appeal.” *Nation*

“Full of thrills and unexpected developments.” *Star*

“A most skilfully written detective story and the mystery is carried through quite brilliantly.” *Clarion*

“A capital story— highly ingenious.” *Truth*

The Secret of Greylands Details

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From Reader Review The Secret of Greylands for online ebook

Francis says

This is the second book I have read by this, 'time has forgotten' golden age writer. I enjoyed the first one but this one, not so much. It's got that neglected and forlorn house in the moors which contains a dark mystery plot, to which, I have been drawn to since my days as a child, when I would sneak out of my bedroom late at night to watch movies, hoping my parents wouldn't catch me. However, as another reviewer has pointed out, things are a little too obvious and our heroine is incredibly naive. So maybe she doesn't know what's going on but you certainly will.

Unfortunately, this plot line is a well trodden path and this time there was not enough unexpected turns to make it work. I liked the other book I read well enough and I will read more by this author, but this one, I have to rate as a bit of a let down.

Diane says

This was a very quick read, fortunately. I can't believe someone actually compared this to Wilkie Collins' work. Uhm, no. Collins is always entertaining. I can't say the same for Annie Haynes. I can see why it's been 80 years since this book was in print. There's something very Victorian about this book, which surprises me since it was originally published in 1924.

Cynthia makes the mistake of marrying someone she really doesn't know all that well, an older man with a title and apparently something of a past with the ladies. Soon after her marriage, she receives a letter from an old friend, who accuses Cynthia's new husband of "ruining" the friend and then abandoning her. Cynthia quarrels with her husband over this and then promptly leaves him to go live with Lady Hannah Gillman, an older relative she has not seen in many years.

Cynthia finds the house shut up with Henry Gillman, Hannah's husband, guarding the entrance. He reminded me of the Doorman in "The Wizard of Oz," popping his head out the door and peremptorily refusing entry to Cynthia, but eventually renegeing and acting like it was his idea the whole time.

The Gillman household is an odd one. There are no servants, despite the fact that they should be able to afford them. Hannah isolates herself in her bedroom and seldom sees anyone, though she grants visitations to Cynthia and her cousin Sybil. Hannah's dog and parrot are distraught and acting strangely. Henry Gillman cannot make up his mind whether to be charming or menacing.

There were many, many times when I wanted to just shake Cynthia and tell her, "You idiot, get out of that house!" There's not really a mystery. In fact, there is no suspense at all. The villain is obvious and so is the truth behind what is going on. However, Cynthia is so incredibly stupid that she doesn't realize any of this. Whenever things get tough, she faints. That's how she deals with stress - she passes out and lets other people handle the problem.

I kept thinking that maybe this was a parody of the gothic genre. However, I am inclined to think that Ms Haynes was serious, as depressing as that sounds. I'm going to try another of her books, but if it's anything

like this one, I am going to give up on her entirely.

Betty says

No doubt who the murderer is but wondering how the heroine can escape keeps you reading til the end.

Mary Claire says

I agree with the reviewers that said this book is more like Victorian gothic than a golden age mystery. I didn't hate it but it was hard to believe anyone could be as unaware and oblivious as these characters were. The main character could not deal with any kind of stress and ran away from her husband because of something he did before they were married. The safe space she ran to was not safe at all and she faints and her bottom lip trembles and eventually she gets rescued. It could have been a fun read if there were at least some surprises. I kept hoping the girl would show some gumption and smarts. I may try another book by this author in the future but probably not.

Fiona says

Hilariously gothic, terrifyingly byronic and huge fun - with more rugged moreland than a Bronte novel! Its downside was I didn't like any of the characters, especially the heroine who is wet and judgmental in equal measure. Also, Haynes ducks out of writing a decent denouement to the plot with a convenient death. Definitely worth a read though - but not with the light off, especially if you live in a rambling pile of a house that's seen better days!
