



A Dark Dividing

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Journalist Harry Fizglen is sceptical when his editor asks him to investigate the background of Simone Anderson, a new Bloomsbury artist. But once he's met the enigmatic Simone, Harry is intrigued.

Just what did happen to Simone's twin sister who disappeared without trace several years before? And what is the Anderson sisters' connection to another set of twin girls, Viola and Sorrel Quinton, born in London on 1st January 1900?

All Harry's lines of enquiry seem to lead to the small Shropshire village of Weston Fferna and the imposing ruin of Mortmain House, standing grim and forbidding on the Welsh borders.

As Harry delves into the violent and terrible history of Mortmain, in an attempt to uncover what happened to Simone and Sonia and, a century before them, to Viola and Sorrel Quinton, he finds himself drawn into a number of interlocking mysteries, each one more puzzling -- and sinister -- than the last.

A Dark Dividing Details

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Shelli says

I had never heard of this book, just came across it here on GR looking for something a little creepy and scary for October, that wasn't horror. Well what a great find! This was perfect and actually did scare me a few times. Horrible and sinister things happening in dreary and dangerous places in turn of the century wales as well as modern day London.....with conjoined twins!!! What's not to love? I really became involved with the characters from both the the past and present day stories. Usually when I read books like this, there is a story I prefer and can't wait to get back to....here I really enjoyed reading both. I felt like the author really took care to make and keep both stories interesting and suspenseful. I would have given this 5 stars if not for the ending. Luckily, the part that was much too perfect was short. After all of the tension and edgy anticipation, I think we readers could have been left to hope for a few things. It made it feel like young adult or something that we had to have everything nicely wrapped up, and handed to us with a pretty bow on top! That was disappointing. However, like I said, that was short and the rest of the story was for me, a really good read.

Christy says

Journalist Harry Fitzglen has been assigned a story that is, on the surface, a review of a new art gallery. However, his real purpose is to find out more about the featured photographer artist, Simone Anderson. When Simone was born as one half of a conjoined twin, there was a lot of media fuss stirred up on account of the twins' politician father. But as Harry's editor notes, the story gets a bit murky from there – a few too many people dead or disappeared.

A series of diary entries by a woman named Charlotte Quinton run alongside this story. Charlotte gave birth to conjoined twins in the early years of the 20th century. What at first seems just a slight connection to Simone's story becomes even more complex further in the book.

A Dark Dividing is told in multiple voices from different eras: Charlotte; Simone's mother, Mel, at the time of the twins' infancy; Simone herself as a child and as an adult; and Harry, the outsider, flexing his research skills and digging deeper. Also, a nurse named Roz has some sections of narrative.

At the center of the multiple narratives is the chilling Mortmain House, a forbidding ruin that used to function in Victorian times as a work house and also as a place for abandoned and orphaned children.

The book definitely had lots of atmosphere, especially as the Mortmain House was concerned. One of the creepiest moments was when the child Simone enters the decrepit Mortmain house and the flash of her camera reveals that she is not alone.

Simone was definitely my favorite character, but I was invested in all the stories and characters, even minor ones like Mel's steadfast friend, Isabel.

British thrillers seem to be winning out with me lately. Sarah Rayne is an author I will have to seek out again.

Teresa says

A fabulous, engrossing read. I take my hat off to the author on the ease with which she intertwines 4 different time frames/stories and manages not to confuse the reader in the process! Looking forward to reading more by this author.

H. Anne Stoj says

I don't tend to read mysteries as a genre. If there's a mystery in a novel, then there is and I enjoy it, but aside from Doyle, that list is probably rather small. Oddly, though, the mysteries I do end up picking up are decidedly British. I've no idea why that is, but it's not particularly surprising to me as well. Anyhow, on to the novel.

I enjoyed *A Dark Dividing*. It certainly hooked me and I wanted to know what came next. The who-done-it, I suppose. It was the turn of the century parts that I enjoyed the most and wished, almost, that the novel had simply been entirely about Charlotte and/or the twins. However, I do appreciate Rayne's theme of duality that runs through, not just with the sets of twins, but the dual nature of people in general. The modern bits felt like they were needed more to keep the distant past and recent past running smoothly through the narrative. I really didn't care about Harry save when he was reading Floy's novel and Simone, well, she was needed, but I didn't find her present-self particularly interesting. I found the end to be a touch cliché, but that could be me entirely. It felt rather tongue-in-cheek as well, which I didn't mind.

Asghar Abbas says

Oh man, this one. Really really creepy book. Perfect for Halloween or any other time of the year. It truly disturbed me in a very good way. Liked it.

Or I could just say, another creepy book that shouldn't be missed.

Miranda says

Wow. Just, wow. I wasn't sure what to think of this novel going into it. The title intrigued me, as did the plot, but I didn't know what to really expect. What I got was sucked in. This copy of the novel has 470 pages, and while it started reading slow at first, before I realized it I had surpassed the middle-mark, and was well into the depths of the story. And what a story. Multiple stories in one, basically, with intertwining connecting links and bits. Two sets of cojoined twins; one from the beginning of the 20th century, the other from the latter part of the 20th century. And the person connected to both twins is a bat-shit-crazy woman who is hell bent on revenge and takes the coward's way out before she can be tried and convicted of her crimes. The Mortmain house sounds ghastly yet fascinating in a scary manner. What horrors the people living there had to endure. The hell the children had to put up with. What's worse? A life in Mortmain where you work in a

sweatshop, or being stolen and tricked out for men? What fate is worse? And what kind of connection do twins have? Is it like Simone and Sonia, who never met each other (until by chance at Mortmain when they were children) but still had the ability to speak with each other mentally? There's something magical about that; something about Simone meeting her sister for the first time and knowing everything Sonia was telling her about. I love how the story intertwined different eras/centuries/people. From a novel written by Floy to a journal penned by Charlotte, to photos snapped by Simone. And they connected and flourished and all were pieces of a large puzzle.

Linda says

In the early weeks of the 1900's Charlotte Quinton gave birth to twin girls. Viola and Sorrel were lovely babies but Edward the husband was less than thrilled. The little ones were conjoined you see. To a man's ego, this was a terrible blow. To a mother there is only love. One hundred years later Melissa and Joe Anderson's twin girls, Simone and Sonia are born - also conjoined.

Once I began this book, I was deeply taken by the stories of these two families. The writing flips from past to present by way of a diary kept by Charlotte Quinton. The Anderson's secrets unfold by way of Harry Fitzglen a newspaper reporter covering a photo exhibition by one Simone Marriot who he suspects to be Simone Anderson. If Harry's suspicions are correct, where then is Sonia her twin?

Wow is all I can say. I don't think I've read a book as bizarre, darkly twisted and heartbreaking as this one. Mortmain House built in the 1700's now a ruined old mansion with a very grim history indeed interlocks the mystery superbly. You will not want to put this one down until you turn the very last page. If you are a fan of the unusual, if creepy is your passion then I urge you not to miss this one. Cheers to Sarah Rayne for originating a complex chilling psychological thriller at it's best.

Kirsty says

Sarah Rayne's *The Dark Dividing* sounded deliciously creepy, and the Bloomsbury setting certainly endeared me to it further before I picked it up. I was very disappointed by the novel; it began in rather a dull manner, and ended the same way. Whilst it did pick up a little in places, and the Victorian story was relatively interesting, I found the storyline predictable. Rayne's writing was too simplistic for my liking, and the use of omniscient narration definitely lets the book down. I ended up skimming huge chunks of it when I reached the halfway point. Not for me.

Patricia says

A Dark Dividing is a novel that tells the story of two families, each with a set of twins. Both sets of twins were born conjoined. This is a rare but very sad occurrence. In both instances, the mothers loved their children no matter what the problems the births presented but the fathers of the twins each had a different outlook on the birth of the twins and neither father really loved the children.

Harry Fitzgerald is a journalist that is assigned the task of reporting on a new art gallery. Harry is less than

thrilled with the assignment until he meets Simone Anderson who is going by the name Simone Marriot, a photographer. Simone shows Harry some of her photographs that display a haunting quality much like Simone herself. Simone is said to have had a twin sister that is now deceased. Simone and her twin Sonia were born conjoined but no information has been published about the twins for years.

As Harry begins to research Simone's background he finds a book that has been out of print for years that tells the tale of another set of conjoined twins named Viola and Sorrel Quinton and their mother Charlotte. The twins were born years ago and their story is a sad one. Mortmain House plays a big part in the story of Viola and Sorrel. Mortmain House is dark, dreary and downright scary but the author keeps taking you back to this place of horrors.

Simone has had dreams of Mortmain House for years and finally moves near Mortmain where she has a terrifying experience that will haunt her for years.

The story of the two sets of twins is fascinating as well as horrifying. Harry's research into the lives of the two sets of twins uncovers long buried secrets. A Dark Dividing is the type of book that will haunt you long after you have read the last page.

This is Sarah Rayne's first novel to be published in the United States and it is a very, very good book

Max California says

Conjoined twins, crazed body-snatching lady, a freakshow? I really do love this author! A Dark Dividing is twisted, creepy and there were times I had to put the book down and just vegetate on what I'd just read. So messed up, so my favourite kind of book!

Stacia says

A creepy, gothic thriller.

Jennifer says

This was a great, pretty quick, exciting book. The story does goes back and forth between several related stories and several time periods. Some reviews that I read stated that this was confusing, but I didn't have any trouble keeping the timeframes separate.

Harry is a journalist in a job he hates, for a paper he does not respect. He is assigned to cover an art gallery opening - something he cannot believe he must do (but, due to an unfortunate divorce, money is actually an important requirement)...the editor tells him to check out one of the artists, a woman named Simone Anderson...he knows that there is a mystery about her and her family...her twin sister had disappeared...

The grim mystery unfolds - 100 years ago, a woman gave birth to conjoined twins. Fast forward 90 or so

years and another woman gives birth to conjoined twins. The two stories seem completely unrelated, however, Harry finds himself following both stories---there were too many similarities, and everything points to a forbidding, forbidden(?), ruined mansion, Mortmain House, located on the Welsh border.

I thought that the writing was average, but the author was able to draw me in and care about the characters --
- and there are certainly both good and bad characters in this gothic mystery.

Victoria says

I read this book in one sitting. Intricately, deftly plotted, it was IMPOSSIBLE to put down! And such a Gothic, spooky atmosphere, too! Parts of it genuinely gave me the creeps. I just adored it! There were so many layers to the plot and it all just fit together so perfectly! And I loved the novel-within-the-novel, as well as Charlotte's diary. And I liked the twin aspect as well! I am very anxious to read this talented author's other books, but as they are rather emotionally draining, I think I will space them out a little bit. As this was a pretty dark book, I am not sure that it would have a very universal appeal, but I certainly loved it! For a longer book, with such complicated elements, the level of suspense and tension just made it an absolutely thrilling read!

Mauoijenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

I thought this was going to be darker than it was. Some parts were better than others but it was a good read all together.

Particle_Person says

I enjoyed this book. Sarah Rayne has taken a bit of a throw-in-the-kitchen-sink approach to writing a gothic novel — she's got a haunted house, an insane nun, a ghost, a reporter, a lot of sex, a late Victorian feminist and her Dickensian author lover, child prostitution, creepy nursery rhymes and probably some things I'm forgetting. Yes, this is the sort of book where people get thrown down wells. With all that going on, it's almost surprising that it all fits together so well. Rayne is a very good writer. She owes me an extra eight hours of sleep, on account of that's what I gave up to finish her book.

Alison says

Some of the scariest writing I've ever read. I'd never heard of Sarah Rayne prior to this, but now I'm going to be looking out for her, and for the press that publishes her in the U.S., Felony & Mayhem. No spoilers here, just know that if you can imagine yourself inside a story the way I can, then inhabiting the very dark house that is Mortmain in Wales, where much of the action takes place, will be a scary, or even terrifying, experience. Rayne crafts this story carefully, visually, as though she were there, describing the action to you, her silent witness. Creepy and unpleasant, with a satisfying, if somewhat too cheerful ending neatly tying up all the story lines. Ghosts, murder, suicide, Edwardian-era 'punishment', and the odd added 'bonus' of intertwining stories about twin girls, Viola and Sorrel and Simone and Sonia, taking place in two different

times, WWI/1914-era England and modern-day London, all in the way of something dark and wicked by Poe or the Gothic ghost stories of Sheridan Le Fanu. This is one story that I can honestly say kept me up late to finish it, and probably also inspired the nightmare I woke up from sometime in the middle of last night, muttering, "what have you got down there?!"

Rebecca says

I really enjoyed this book a lot. There is definitely a very creepy feel to the link between the characters, especially the two pairs of conjoined twins, born almost a century apart. Also, the gothic old workhouse, Mortmain (meaning dead hands), is by far one of the scariest old haunted places I've come across. The story shifts between the past and the present and there are a lot of twists and surprises. A very satisfying read indeed.

Kristen says

Well my goodness. I loved this.

Melki says

Let's flashback some twenty odd years. Conjoined twins are born. They are a pair of darling baby girls. The doctors say they could easily be separated with little risk to either child. Their mother wants the surgery. But their ambitious father sees political advantage in keeping the girls "as God made them."

But what do these girls have to do with a pair of conjoined twins born at the turn of the century? The answer lies in a creepy old institution called Mortmain House. It was once a workhouse and orphanage where bad things happened in the night. The now abandoned building still houses the aura of misery, suffering, and fear. (Cue the sinister organ music and bring in the fog machine, please!)

This is a psychological thriller, packed with good gothicky fun. Strong female characters to root for, and lots of villains to jeer. This book features a long, slow buildup, then sets a lot of plots simmering. Despite some "Gee, what a coincidence THAT was!" moments, everything was solved to my satisfaction.

Rebecca says

An interesting novel told from three different viewpoints over three different times. It can be hard to do this kind of story off without confusing the reader, but Rayne pulls it off. Harry is a down-on-his-luck reporter who's been asked to write a story about Simone, a woman who's just opened an art gallery. Simone was born a co-joined twin which included a lot of publicity when her father died mysteriously and other people disappeared.

Harry's research turns up a pair of other co-joined twins, Viola and Sorrel, who were born at the turn of the century into a darker age which involved being displayed in a freak show.

This story has good characters, a great plot, and is easy to read. Only the villain seems silly.

Recommended.
