



The Pale Horse

Agatha Christie

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"Wickedness...such wickedness...."

The dying woman turned to Father Gorman with agony in her eyes. "Stopped....It must be stopped....You will...."

The priest spoke with reassuring authority. "I will do what is necessary. You can trust me."

Father Gorman tucked the list of names she had given him into his shoe. It was a meaningless list; the names were of people who had nothing in common.

On his way home, Father Gorman was murdered. But the police found the list and when Mark Easterbrook came to inquire into the circumstances of the people listed, he began to discover a connection between them, and an ominous pattern....

Every name of that list was either already dead or, he suspected, marked for murder.

The Pale Horse Details

Date : Published December 15th 2002 by Minotaur Books (first published 1961)

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Author : Agatha Christie

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From Reader Review The Pale Horse for online ebook

Kwoomac says

I was quite happy with this one. At first I thought it might be dated. Written in 1962, she writes about hip, rich, young girls playing at being poor. I was afraid it was going to be full of silly 60's lingo, man. You dig? But it wasn't.

I like that Christie never takes herself too seriously. One of her characters was an author of mysteries, who was having writer's block. She and the protag, Mark, talked about the three witches in Macbeth and how they should be portrayed as regular women, not so over-the-top ugly cackling witches. Christie goes on to introduce three women, all pretty average, who have a reputation in their small village as witches.

I was very happy with the whole murder scenario. Very clever. I figured it out before the characters, but not much before.

Nandakishore Varma says

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"In 1976, the year Agatha Christie died, a 19-month-old girl from Qatar was brought to Hammersmith Hospital, London, suffering from a mysterious disease. A nurse n

Oluseyi Bakare says

This is certainly a work that an African reader (like myself) will find fascinating and highly gripping. However the conclusion here would shatter what the likes of me would have hitherto been led to believe: so a white, western writer can write so convincingly about the true powers of "juju" (occult) !Agatha Christie is (was) of course a down to earth western writer, and at the end she coolly and rationally explains the events of this work which one could have sworn could only have been due to supernatural means. Hence I find this work instructive and relevant to we Africans, no matter how educated, who even till date tend to "explain" simple occurrences like footballing skill, talent, results; and even illnesses/ailments – by strongly alluding to the occult and the supernatural.

Ivan says

Today is Friday May 13th (2016) and this is the 13th Agatha Christie novel I've read. I enjoy her books, her style, although I've often found her plots too convoluted and contrived. However, when she is good, she's

really good – I’m thinking of “And Then There Were None” and “Murder on the Orient Express.” “The Pale Horse” is the best of all I’ve read so far. The plot is ingenious. The story flows with ease, is always interesting and suspenseful. The characters are familiar to Christie fans, and yet they are not her usual star players Hercule Poirot and Miss. Jane Marple – they include crime writer Ariadne Oliver, Rev and Mrs. Dane Calthrop and Detective-Inspector Lejeune. This book fooled me. I had it all figured out and then WHAM – the murderer wasn’t who I thought at all and yet all the clues had been right there in plain sight the entire time. This novel was great fun.

Roman Clodia says

A standalone Christie (though Mrs Oliver makes some cameo appearances) which mingles 1960s Chelsea with witchcraft and an ingenious means of death. Only Christie could have pulled off the last minute sleight of hand - and all the clues are in plain sight. Clever, if not one of her best.

Beverly says

Great mystery, even though there is no sign of Miss Marple.

Veronique says

"Evil is nothing superhuman".`

As much as I love Poirot and Marple, there is something even more appealing to a Christie book with a totally unknown 'investigator'.

Mark Easterbrook senses all is not what it seems in a series of events that lead him to look into *The Pale Horse*. The narrative follows him as well as Detective-Inspector Lejeune in their queries about certain deaths that appear normal. But are they?

This is quite a dark novel but an enjoyable one, if just by the short presence of Ariadne Oliver. Christie does her thing beautifully, leading us down one path while in fact going in a totally different way. She also seems to have commented on 'appearance'. One always expect criminals, and 'witches', to appear grander than life, but as mentioned in the book, it is the ones who look totally ordinary that are the scariest.

F.R. says

Early in this novel a character muses about how best to portray the Witches in a production of ‘Macbeth’. It’s his contention that rather than pushing up the weirdness so the sisters become something which could feasibly fit into a pantomime, they are instead portrayed as the kind of normal – if slightly sinister – old ladies who are frequently dismissed as witches in English country villages. As apparently all English villages have witches (a fact which all country folk know), and it would just be more effective to use their type of

gentle malevolence for the Wyrd sisters, rather than go over the top and be silly.

'The Pale Horse' reads like Christie trying to do Dennis Wheatley and embrace supernatural horror. A Catholic priest is murdered and on his person is a list of names given to him by a dying lady. It becomes clear to the police that a number of the names on that list are now deceased, but that they all died – seemingly – of natural causes. It takes Mark Easterbrook, a busybody with too much time on his hands, and his plucky gal assistant Ginger Corrigan to link the deaths with three spiritualists who live in a former pub called The Pale Horse.

Here's where that theory about Macbeth falls down, as these three ladies – despite the powers they boast of – are not particularly scary. They are just eccentric old dears who mix spells and then offer cups of tea. Perhaps in a more skilled writer's hands, a really sinister quality could have been spun around them – but in Agatha Christie's, the entire book falls short of scares. Her jolly hockey-sticks prose style just doesn't lend itself to fear, and the fact that she wouldn't recognise a well-rounded character if one started beating her around the face and neck with her own typewriter, means there's no one really to care about either.

(There is also, oddly, a lot of talk about how nobody could be tried for murder by witchcraft. It was actually only seventeen years before the publication of this novel [in 1961:] that the last witchcraft trial took place in Britain, a case that the country's leading crime writer would surely have been aware of. Follow this link if you think I'm making that fact up – <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/jan....>)

The prosaic ending is distinctly irritating, but very like Christie. And unless you're an unshakable fan of Dame Agatha, then this book really does promise more than it delivers.

Susan says

Published in 1961, this is a later Agatha Christie novel, and a slightly different plot to that which you might be expecting. This is not a cosy mystery, set in a stately home, amid the drawing rooms of the aristocracy. Rather, this has a feel of Dennis Wheatley about it, with a real sense of the supernatural.

A dying woman gives her last confession to a Catholic priest. Father Gorman is troubled by what she tells him and, on the way home, he scribbles a list of names she has given him and tucks it into his shoe. However, Father Gorman is destined never to reach his destination and is found struck dead in the fog. Later, the list of names is found and the police are, obviously, interested in what linked them to the woman who so urgently required Father Gorman to visit her.

Meanwhile, in the coffee bars of Chelsea (a setting that you feel Christie did not feel quite comfortable with), author Mark Easterbrook witnesses a cat fight between two girls. Later, he discovers that one of the girls has died and that her name was on the list of names that Father Gorman had hidden. Later, he visits a village fete with mystery writer, Ariadne Oliver, and hears of an old house, converted from an Inn. The Pale Horse is said to be the home of three witches, led by the mysterious Thyrza Grey.

Along with Ginger Corrigan, who Mark Easterbrook meets while visiting the fete, the two begin to investigate the strange, unexplained deaths of those on that list. This is a novel which deals with the mysterious and the occult. Christie always had a great belief in good and evil and those themes make this an interesting read. There are weaknesses in some of her later writing – she often seems a little ill at ease discussing modern life, but she plotted better than any other crime writer I have ever read. Clever, subtle and

with excellent characters and a fiendishly clever ending.

Vicki says

The pale Horse is a really dark mystery. There are scenes that are just down right creepy. There are spells and threats that lend a spooky air to this book.

I listened to the AudioBook and found it very intense during those witch scenes. The mystery begins with the murder of a Catholic priest. He has a list of names in his shoe and that turn out to be a list of dead people. When Mark Easterbrook begins to look into this mystery because his godmother is on the list. Mark was a great character. He is intelligent and he is curious.

I found the humor lovely, just as I usually do from Agatha Christie. I liked it a lot. I liked the character Ginger. I was laughing as she and Mark were plotting together. Great fun story.

The story really kept me guessing. I loved that at the end, I had not guessed the correct suspect. It is a really wonderful book that I had missed reading when I was reading a lot of Agatha Christie. I was happy to have lucked up on this AudioBook.

Issa Deerbany says

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mark monday says

Choose Your Own Adventure!

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

If you've decided that you've had your fill of dying, then choose <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

If you've decided that you've had enough of living, then choose <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

Vikas Singh says

Christie at her poisonous best. What sets apart this novel from her other writings is the development of the plot is not linear. There are interesting diversions to keep you glued till end with great deal of occult and witches in the plot. The inspiration for solving the murder appears to be too sudden. Mrs. Oliver without her friend Poirot manages to add that extra bit of fun and frolic.

Hannah says

Extremely dark and chilling - read with a stuffed animal or a huggable friend nearby! Very thrilling and powerful read, and definitely my favourite non-Poirot or Marple mystery, hands down. Definitely a tense and creepy affair; the atmosphere is very much like what I would imagine the dark streets of Whitechapel would be during the late 19th Century. Mark Easterbrook is a loveable hero, intelligent and brave, and you can't help but be nervous and root for him at the same time as he plunges headlong into danger in order to solve the mystery. The romance was reasonably well-developed and rather cute, too; totally cheered when he found the right girl and came to his senses about the boring, snobby one. The random appearances of Ariadne Oliver made a nice tie-in with her other cases, and her slightly batty, cheery personality made a great contrast with the rest of the case. This is probably the first time I liked her rather than finding her annoying!

Teresa says

Ad indagare su questo caso non ci sono solo un ispettore di polizia ed un medico legale, ma anche uno scrittore, una restauratrice, un annoiato farmacista in pensione, un'altra scrittrice.

Be', con tanto dispiegamento di forze è evidente che si arriverà in fretta al colpevole...

O forse, visto che in questo romanzo sono coinvolte forze oscure, magia nera e streghe, la faccenda rischia di essere più complicata del previsto?

Tara says

Loved loved loved this! Read by the inestimable Hugh Fraser (aka Captain Hastings), which is quite delightful, despite the lack of Hastings or Poirot in the story. It has murder, it has mystery, supernatural seances, and even a bit of romance. A great stand alone tale that shows why Christie was the master (or mistress) of mysteries.

Sifat's BooK KingdoM says

Remember the word : Wickedness

A Catholic priest is killed on his path home from giving the last ceremonies to a lady. He has a list of names

in his shoe of detached individuals who have all kicked the bucket resoundingly from normal causes.

Check Easterbrook witnesses battle between two lady in which the hair turns out in bunches without recognizable agony. At that point there is the secretive Pale Horse Inn now shut and involved by three abnormal lady who broadcast to be witches and mystics. What are the associations among these individuals that lead Mark and the police to presume murder yet how and why.

Jaksen says

An interesting mystery from Ms. Christie. First off, two things...

One, there are a lot of twists and turns in this story, lots of red herrings, lots of 'lots of' to just put it out there. So much so there's a contrived feeling that runs through the book. The author really had to jump through hoops to make everything 'fit.' But it does. You end up feeling, well that makes sense - why didn't I see it! (I did guess at one part of the ending and got it right.)

Two, another takeaway from the book, which has totally nothing at all to do with the story, characters, mood, theme, tension, etc: I am totally surprised that so much of what was going on in 1961 resembles today's world when it comes to fashion. Yes, clothes, fashion, what we wear. You could transport some of the 'outfits' or manner of dress from 1961 to 1971, '81, '91 and all the way to 2011 and 2016 and no one would bat an eye. Jeans and a sweatshirt. The young are wearing tights, 'jumpers,' (or sweaters to us Americans), and jeans. It's as if the uniform of the young, the casual and the I'm kicking around at home personality was created then and not much happens after.

I've noticed this before while watching movies set in this time period. Okay, when going out, you see very dressed up people and men wearing hats, and women in fabulous coats, etc., and yet among the young of the time and in the early 60's it's early rock and the remains of the beat generations, you see jeans and shirts and jeans and sweatshirts and jeans and 'jumpers.' What happened? Whoever created that look needs a reward for longevity and it's possible the look goes back even further than 1961. Long digression...

Back to the story. A woman who is dying of pneumonia manages to pass a message to a Catholic priest on her deathbed. But then the priest is murdered. Tucked in his shoe is a list of names - what for? Who are they? Well, most of them are dead, too. Enter a hodge-podge of investigators including a journalist, a writer, some odd folks here and there, including the local vicar's wife. It's a jumble of confusion for about 100 pages because this turns out to be a howdunnit, not whodunnit. There are seances and weird women who claim to be witches. Two possible love interests for the semi-main character. A chemist (pharmacist) with a knack for remembering faces and a wealthy invalid living in a house filled with curious items from all over the world. Plus several minor characters who drop hints and possible information about who did what and when. It's as if Christie's mind had a creative explosion late in life and she put it all down in one story.

Still, it's a good story, and one that might be neglected by the mystery fan. Worth a read, but be ready to be totally confused for a while. It's a tangled mess at times that slowly, slowly straightens itself out.

Nameeta says

[Initially I thought maybe it was a story within a story concept. But that

Carol. says

Imagine: a Christie I hadn't read. Ever. But I've re-read enough Christie in my adult life to know that sometimes she works well, sometimes less so. Which would this be?

It turns out, a strange mix of classic Christie, modern Christie, Christie commentary and something unfinished that makes it a most odd kind of book.

It begins with Christie's traditional rather anonymous, milquetoast narrator, something along the lines of Roger Ackroyd. He is supposed to be working on his latest manuscript on Mogul architecture when he **"had suffered from one of those sudden revulsions that all writers know.... --all the fascinating problems it raised, become suddenly as dust and ashes. What did they matter? Why did I want to write about them?"** He takes a coffee in Chelsea, musing on the sinister noise of modern conveniences, when two of the 'off-beat' (and we chuckle a little at the naivete of the narrator) clientele get in a fighting match over a boy one has stolen from the other. I was struck by how present Christie seemed in his words, Mark's musing on writing, the lament of "contemporary noises," and dress styles of the new generation no doubt echoing her own.

Only a week later, Mark is reading the obituaries and realizes one of the young ladies who was in the fight has suddenly died, and will not be getting her kicks in Chelsea any longer. He feels sympathy, but then notes, **"Yet after all, I reminded myself, how did I know that my view was the right one? Who was I to pronounce it a wasted life? Perhaps it was my life, my quiet scholarly life, immersed in books, shut off from the world, that was the wasted one. Life at second hand. Be honest now, was I getting kicks out of life?"**

Really quite brilliant, both in hearing the author's experience and age coming through, and in justification for Mark's future actions. But not right away, of course. First he must pay a visit to his friend Ariadne Oliver. And once again, I heard Christie loud and clear: **"Or, it might be someone wanting an interview--asking me all those embarrassing questions which are always the same every time. What made you first think of taking up writing? How many books have you written? How much money do you make. Etc. etc."** Just as I was chuckling over that, she launches in the oddness of murder in real life compared to books:

"Say what you like, it's not natural for five or six people to be on the spot when B is murdered and all to have a motive for killing B-unless, that is, B is absolutely madly unpleasant and in that case nobody will mind whether he's been killed or not..."

'I see your problem,' I said. 'But if you've dealt with it successfully fifty-five times, you will manage to deal with it once again.'

'That's what I tell myself,' said Mrs. Oliver, 'over and over again, but every single time I can't believe it and so I'm in agony.'

Really, the beginning bit of the story feels so clearly Christie commentary, that though the murder came along by page twenty, I was enjoying the digression and insight. So I was all set to adore, the meta and the concrete blending so nicely, when it turns out that a large portion of the plot is the new-fangled notion of the psychology of the individual (echoes of Poirot) being convinced through a combination of psychology and superstitious belief that they are ill, soon becoming truly physically ill, only to finally die. That sort of pre-60s, recast 1900s mysticism. Yes, there is a séance.

Then she interjects herself again, in the form of a chemist who is very excited to be a witness to the murder, having practiced memorizing faces for just such an opportunity. Oh, Christie, you sly dog. I might have giggled when he came along.

The Pale Horse was, I believe, was close to her fifty-fifth book, and just lacked something for me in terms of plot translation. Add to that that the transitions between sections was particularly abrupt, it wasn't the charming, insightful read I first thought. The plot meandered for a bit, following the local coroner and detective, the coroner conveniently a friend of Mark's. There is more than a bit of atmospheric silliness at the end that completely failed to develop much of an atmosphere for me--had we been talking decades earlier, perhaps I could have taken it more seriously--but there were a solid couple of plot twists at the end that I appreciated. So, mark down as enjoyable, diverting; worthy of thoughts on a long career and social change, but not one to add to my own library.

Three-and-a-half stars, rounding up for authorial voice.
