



In the Shadow of Winter

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The Cotswolds, 1947

The relentless winter of 1947 holds post-war Britain in its deadly grip, and Eleanor Phillips rides out from her beleaguered Cotswold farm to rescue a stranger lost in the storm. But the near-dead man is no stranger and when she recognises Matthew Croft, the old ties of a failed romance tug deeply. Her sweetheart has returned from the war...

Suspicion, the police and the panicked flight of a desperate man beat a path to her door. And with a wanted man hidden in her home and stealing back into her heart, Eleanor must be on her guard—for the net is closing in on them both and enemies are all around...

In the Shadow of Winter Details

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From Reader Review In the Shadow of Winter for online ebook

Sylvia Warman says

I am not normally a fan of romance novels, but this was such a great adventure story I was hooked. There are excellent details of life in rural England in the early post war years which set the scene very well. The characters both human and equine are well written and the plot is gripping.

Linda Cook says

The slowest mystery ever! And the lamest heroine! This book seemed to go on forever and what bouts of action there were were infuriatingly limited by the heroine. Now I realize that this took place just after the war when women were expected to be more meek and fragile, but for a women that survived the war, the death of her father and was making a business of horse boarding and lessons and semi-adopting an almost orphan, this heroine broke down regularly and had trouble recognizing the dangers when in the midst of them. Only luck and good acting saved the day.

Dorine says

A post-war novel debut that will appeal to readers interested in Britain's more recent history, as well as those who enjoy a more rural setting. The mystery matches the pace of rural life, and then races off with the reader in a thrilling but satisfying climax.

I chose this book to read because of its beautiful cover. I was immediately drawn to it because I could sense the era in history that I'm gravitating to more in fiction. Finding out that this novel takes place in Britain on a Cotswolds' farm, is what sealed my request for review. I love stories from Britain since my great-grandmother entertained me with memories of her childhood. The English half of my family came to America as farmers in 1912, so reading books like this bring back nostalgic memories of stories told and letters shared while having tea.

In a year of regulations, rations and peace after World War II, Eleanor "Ellie" Phillips finds herself battling a foot of snow to feed her ponies. Times like this are hard enough for a family, but for a woman alone with only a boy to help her, it can be overwhelming. But it's the life she lives and loves, on her own without anyone to answer to since her father's death.

It was the young boy Freddy who spotted the man floundering in the snow, and in his agitated state convinced Ellie that she had to see for herself. No one should be out in this storm, but Ellie can't leave a person in such inclement weather to face it alone. Finding the man supposedly dead was enough of a shock, but when he comes alive and fights Ellie, she nearly runs for her life. Until she realizes that this almost dead man is the very same man she knew before the war, Mathew Croft.

Ellie and Freddy get Mathew into the house after some persistence, but it's when they start to take off his soaked clothes that they realize Mathew has been shot. Mathew isn't really sure where he is so he's muttering senselessly, but very plainly demands that Ellie not tell anyone he's there.

The ambience and unraveling mystery created by Lorna Gray's writing style is very enjoyable, once I got used to it. It's funny how what we read most consistently will influence how we react to a new style. Going from one historical era to another will often make me hesitate, stumbling through the words trying to make sense of them. Yet, when I go back to read those first chapters after I'm done, I understand them perfectly and wonder why I had trouble to begin with. Such is how I reacted to this story, at first. Once I was in the rhythm of Ellie's thought process, which can be rambling at times, I really enjoyed her character. The rambling showcases Ellie's personality and probably is very much like how many of us think. So it filters in a bit of her past and some of the mundane from everyday living, while throwing out clues to a murder mystery she's wrapped up in and trying to solve.

The rural setting is perfect. I got a real sense of what it may have been like in 1947 when everyone was picking up the pieces of their lives after the war. I fell for Ellie's character, laughing at her dry wit and the absurdity of her circumstances sometimes. She's hardened by life but you have to love her heart as it's revealed slowly throughout the story. I feared for Ellie's safety more than once and fell in love with Mathew right along with her. By chapter fifteen I was thoroughly swept up by the story, feeling as if I was there with each cautious step as the mystery builds in speed and anxiety.

An enchanting debut, Lorna Gray is a new author to experience. I'm already anxious for whatever she writes next. **IN THE SHADOW OF WINTER** is enthralling in the quietude of the rural setting in direct juxtaposition to the building suspense of the whodunit. The pacing can be unnerving as you'll surely want to know what happens before you get there, but it's the journey that's so lovely and enjoyable because the characterization is worth the savor.

Reviewed by Dorine, courtesy of Romance Junkies and TBR Mountain Range. ARC provided by HarperImpulse through NetGalley.

Rose Strong (Kljuc za knjigu Book Blog) says

Read the whole review here: <http://kljuczaknjigu.blogspot.hr/2017...>

Cijelu recenziju pro?itajte ovdje: <http://kljuczaknjigu.blogspot.hr/2017...>

Extract from the review:

What makes this novel different from the ones I usually read is the fact that, in this one, deep inner analysis of protagonist's feelings don't exist (normally they show up during inner monologues or sex scenes). Romantic scenes are rare, if not nonexistent and are only visible in motives like touching somebody's hand or faltering dialogues. From today's perspective those scenes would seem reserved or boring, but they are highly natural. After all, in many cases that is exactly how love is born. Great gestures are still a rarity.

Isje?ak iz recenzije:

Ono po *čemu* je ovaj roman drugačiji od knjiga koje u posljednje vrijeme *čitam* je to da se u njemu ne inzistira na dubokoj analizi osjećaja protagonista (obično kroz unutarnje monologiziranje ili seks), nego je pristup romantičnoj strani priče minimalistički, a opet ga ima. Takve scene opisane su u duhu vremena, a ono se u laganim dodirima ruku i nesigurnim dijalozima, pa bi u usporedbi s današnjim direktnim načinom opisivanja moglo djelovati previše suzdržano. Ono što svakako jesu, su prirodne. Velike geste još uvek su rijetkost i u stvarnom životu, a ljubav se većinom rada neprimjetna.

Ikira says

When I first started reading this book, I had a very strong feeling of 'de ja vu'. I was certain I must already have read it because I knew what was coming but then I couldn't remember anything further than the next page...very odd, I thought. Then it hit me. I've tried to read it a few times and never gotten through the first chapter. Somehow though, this time, I was able to keep going. The *de ja vu* feeling had me intrigued enough to push past the difficulties I had with it.

The author writes in a somewhat elaborate way. Her wording seemed quite superfluous to me in many scenes and in the beginning of the story, this made it a very slow starter. No doubt, I had a very good impression of the surroundings, Eleanors circumstances and how Matthew appeared to her but it just didn't seem to be going anywhere. I felt often frustrated and read only a few pages here and there to begin with.

A few chapters in, some action finally came, the story began to unfold and intrigue kept me coming back to it well enough to keep going but I did find I had to be in a particularly relaxed mood to keep going.

The story follows Eleanor; a single woman in post-war Britain. She's a straight-talking, straight-up lady who treats others with kindness and compassion but keeping her guard around her. She's definitely a strong sort who has a reason for her guard.

Matthew and Eleanor have history but it takes a while to find out what so I won't spoil that. He's been off, fighting in the War and whilst he's suddenly returned to the village, there is trouble following and he needs help so his feet unconsciously guide him into Eleanors path.

She has a choice. Does she help him and risk herself and her young lodger Freddie or does she leave Matthew to deal with his own issues? She owes him nothing, afterall...

The characters are so believable and their descriptions perfect - enough that I could cast the whole movie were it to be made. It'd make a good musical actually. For me, it was worth pushing past those first couple of chapters. The mystery and intrigue within the pages of this book are very well imagined and written in the end. It did become a page-turner!

Would definitely suit those of you who like a slow build up and plenty of detail as well as the rural and vintage setting.

Jo Barton says

There's a real sense of danger in this suspenseful novel which focuses on the events which happen in a small

Cotswold village over a short period of time in the winter of 1947.

The end of the war has not brought prosperity for Eleanor Phillips, and as she ekes out a meagre living on her farm, she struggles to keep body and soul together. During a violent snowstorm Eleanor rescues a man who is clearly in need of shelter, but this man has secrets which will put Eleanor, her beloved farm and those closest to her in real danger.

What then follows is a beautifully written suspenseful story which reads comfortably, almost like Eleanor's memoir. You feel she is speaking just for you and in a few short words conjures a real sense of the freezing cold, the secluded isolation and inherent danger. The mystery at the heart of the novel is well thought out and had me on the edge of my seat from the beginning. I really wanted everything to work out well for Eleanor and felt that she deserved some happiness.

I won't spoil any of the story by relating more of the plot as you really should read this for yourself to find out what happened. It's a perfect book to curl up with, preferably with a huge pot of tea and some comforting homemade biscuits.

Bonnie says

A gripping tale of murder, espionage and love.

This is an evocative and moving work written with skill and expertise by an author who knows exactly what she is doing, Lorna Gray writes in the best tradition reminiscent of John Buchan's *The Thirty Nine Steps*, using a controlled, linguistic style which perfectly evokes the post war era. Well researched and authentically mired in the cold wet winter of 1947, the scene is set with impeccable and haunting descriptions of the Cotswolds. The reader is right there, with Eleanor and her farm and can feel every biting wind and deprivation. Cups of tea have never felt so welcoming as those in her rustic kitchen and it is easy to develop an intense empathy for Eleanor and her love of lost causes. The intrepid Freddy wins our hearts and the smouldering presence of the fugitive Matthew draws us into their emotional turmoil. The intensity of the drama plays out around the heroic exploits of the trusty Beechnut who proves her worth time and time again; if you love horses you will truly adore this one. A gripping tale of murder, espionage and love that keeps a frantic, galloping pace right to the end.

Debra Schoenberger says

A great mystery! I couldn't put it down. Lots of plot twists and turns to keep you turning the pages. Great character development.

Wendy Jones says

Beautifully written post war tale of romance, intrigue and the struggle to survive. Loved this book. Wonderful writing that put me right in the story from the beginning.

Pamela Wooden says

Too Wordy

So sorry, really could not get into it. When one sentence is a paragraph long and adjectives and adverbs are included only to fill in space, I find it very distracting. I loved the idea of the story but could not stay with it.

Ailish Fitzgerald says

This story is set post World War Two, Eleanor and a young boy Freddy find a man in a foot of snow - clearly in an agitated state. Seeing him in a troubled state, they decide to bring him home. When he starts to fight them Eleanor gets such a shock when she realises that it is Mathew Croft, a man she knew before the war. They struggle to get him in to the house and once they remove his soaked clothes they realise that he has been attacked. Mathew insists to Eleanor that no one must know where he is and then the mystery unravels.

I enjoyed Lorna Gray's style of writing. She sets the rural scene after the war, very well and we get a sense of how people are getting pieces of their lives back. Eleanor is a strong character, hardened by life but we get to know her as the novel progresses as it is from her point view. The story is slow to begin with but the pace is picked up half way through with a few twists and Eleanor really comes in to her own.

This is a great debut from Lorna Gray. I am looking forward to her next book.

Jane Hunt says

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Set in the devastating winter of 1947 'In the Shadow of Winter' is an atmospheric story brimming with history, mystery, romance and suspense. Written in the first person, the story reads as Eleanor's memoir. It allows the reader to experience post war rationing and poverty in a wholly realistic way. I remember my own grandparents and parents shuddering, when they recounted this cruel winter, so close to the austerity of WW2 and this story has the same authenticity.

Eleanor believes herself to be an eccentric person. In many ways this is true but it makes her easy to imagine and like. A strong, independent woman, Eleanor overcomes the obstacles thrown in her way and I admired her spirit. Her household is unconventional, but loving. The animals, which are an integral part of it, have distinct personalities, recognisable to anyone who shares similar lives with their animal friends.

Matthew is the perfect anti-hero. Seen through Eleanor's eyes his transformation is believable and enlightening. The interplay between Eleanor and Matthew is interesting and sweetly romantic, in keeping with the attitudes of 1940's England.

Absorbing and chilling, yet tempered with echoes of a lost romance, which makes Eleanor's struggle to do what it is right poignant. Well paced with plenty of action packed scenes, this story is one of the best I've read this year for its imagery and originality.

I received a copy of this book from Harper Impulse via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Lorna Gray

Tien says

For some reason, I had a different impression of the blurb. I'm blaming it on my currently permanent status of babybrain. Somehow, I thought the stranger rescued had amnesia... I love this type of stories! He didn't have amnesia at all so I was a little disappointed but I did quite enjoy the book anyway. I've just read *A Time of Secrets* which is also set in 1940s in Australia which I loved. These readings weren't planned to be back to back but as it happened, of course, I'd automatically compare these 2 historical fiction works... I think I might like this book better if I didn't read it right after *A Time of Secrets*.

I loved the descriptive narrative employed by Lorna Gray in *In the Shadow of Winter*. She's made nature come alive and I could feel the crispness of the snow, see the cold puffs of horses' breaths, and oh... those hot cups of tea just sound so divine. I've never been to England though I'd like to one day visit nor am I someone who would live on a farm but I do really want to now. Despite the hardship felt by Eleanor (shortage & rations due to WW2), everything sounds beautiful & appealing. This, I believe, is contributed by Eleanor's love of her surrounding area, her horses, and her highly sympathetic nature. She is an easily likeable character; generous, loving, courageous, funny, and at times, clumsy –in other words, human... a woman who is just like your best friend.

The mystery element was interesting enough. The ending was hardly surprising but I do love following Eleanor and Matthew sleuthing around. There were that combination of tension (of discovery and of romance) that was just lovely. The one surprising thing with this novel is just how clean the romance is! There is barely a kiss and even then, so very circumspect. I'm not complaining as the romance is still quite sweet especially when you consider the world these characters are inhabiting. I'd describe it as just a tad more racy than Jane Austen's ;)

I could just imagine myself reading this in the middle of winter curled up in a very comfy armchair by a roaring fire with a rug over my lap and a very hot cuppa nearby. It would've been just the perfect setting to read *In the Shadow of Winter*. As it is (we're in Autumn in Australia), I really had to depend on the author's words to bring me her world and she truly had me ensconced in British winter. It was a lovely & easy-going read for my busy mummy days.

Thanks to HarperImpulse for copy of eARC via NetGalley in exchange of honest review

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

My head hit my desk fifty pages into Lorna Gray's *In the Shadow of Winter*. I don't mean to be dramatic, but it's true. I honestly looked at the page count and groaned. I was bored with the novel's sluggish pace and generic romantic premise. I was visibly frustrated and things didn't get much better moving forward.

I suppose my major complaint is the lack of tension. I know HarperImpulse means to take women's fiction in new directions, but I can't say I fancied this particular excursion. This kind of story require tangible suspense and nothing about this piece played on my emotions. In point of fact, I found the narrative exceedingly predictable. Gray attempts a couple of curve balls, but I saw them coming and called each resolution long before it was actually revealed.

The book is also very light on detail. I understand it's a romance, but I think Gray could have done a lot more in terms of developing the atmosphere and backdrop on which her story unfolds. Gray's is a superficial approach and that's fine, but the fact is, I can't see myself recommending this piece on its historic merit.

I'd high hopes going in, but the reality fell flat in my eyes. It's a nice beach read, but when push comes to shove, *In the Shadow of Winter* didn't deliver the sort of drama I both expect and crave.

Suze Lavender says

It's 1947 and people are struggling. Food is still on ration and the winter is devastatingly cold. Eleanor doesn't have much, but what she does have she shares. She's looking after Freddy, who's a little bit different from other boys his age. They live on a farm and Eleanor loves horses. She's a good rider and a great trainer. The peaceful life she and Freddy are living is disrupted because of Matthew. He's injured and on the run from the police and something more sinister. He and Eleanor used to be together and even though he once broke her heart she takes Matthew in.

Eleanor offers Matthew a place to stay, which means he finally has found shelter after being in the bitter cold. It also keeps him away from the authorities. This puts her own safety at risk. Eleanor knows there's something awful going on and things don't add up, so she decides to give Matthew a chance. Getting caught would mean the gallows for him, but has he really done what he's being accused of? Eleanor tries to get to the bottom of the matter, but is that a wise thing to do?

In the Shadow of Winter is a fabulous gripping novel. The mystery is intriguing and I loved Eleanor from the start. She is strong and capable and when life is hard she doesn't run away, but finds a way to deal with it instead. Eleanor is kind and honest, but she's also fiery and determined. She can perfectly manage on her own. She's a powerful woman and I liked that about her character. She's brave and trusts her instincts, which is something that will get her far. She knows welcoming Matthew into her home means trouble, but she does it anyway. She's a fantastic main character and I enjoyed reading about her very much.

Eleanor lives on a farm and I instantly loved her home. It's warm and cozy and it's a welcoming place for both people and animals. I admired Lorna Gray's tone of voice, it perfectly suits Eleanor's character, which made the book even more wonderful to read for me. Eleanor's passion is horses and Lorna Gray writes about

them in a beautiful way. I could easily picture them and they have distinct personalities. I'm a big fan of books with animals and *In the Shadow of Winter* is definitely a good one.

Matthew has to stay out of sight, but he can't go far, because that would mean the end of a normal existence for sure. Eleanor understands him and she gives him space and time, which was endearing to see. The crime Matthew is being accused of is complicated and interesting. The love story is romantic, which balances the cruelty of the criminals. All these elements together make *In the Shadow of Winter* a complete story. It kept me on the edge of my seat and I loved every single word.
