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Davenport House



Synopsis

Davenport House is the first book in a family saga following the wealthy Davenports and their servants in 1915 America. Mary Davenport is a 22-year-old idealist who worries that the world in the Progressive Era is leaving her behind. She lives isolated in the Pennsylvania countryside with her affluent and secretive family. When her father dies suddenly, Mary becomes pained with grief and increasingly suspicious of those around her. A humble servant girl has the chance of a lifetime to become a lady's companion. Costly dresses, exquisite rooms, and fine dinners are pleasant distractions from what is really happening in the house.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The author chose to use a very formal stilted way of speaking, perhaps since the era was the early twentieth century and takes place in an upper class mansion, but the servants did not have a different voice from the educated daughter of the house. There were no contractions at all that I noted in the whole book, even outside of the conversations. The characters were mostly one sided,

all good or all evil with the exception of one. This seems to be a story for middle school girls. They are likely the only ones to enjoy the story without being disturbed by the other factors.

Stilted dialog, flat, undeveloped characters and a predictable story line that jumps all around with no proper segues. In dire need of a good editor and proofreader.

This read like it was written by a twelve-year-old, with the most stilted dialogue I have ever experienced. I have to admit I read it all, just to see if it improved - NOT!

I must have read a different book to some other reviewers. The plot is hackneyed, the dialogue stilted and the characters have no life. And the grammar at times. "She lied in bed" occurs twice. No she wasn't telling lies she was lying down on her bed.

I am not quite sure how to classify this book. It is set in early America where the Davenports have a large estate and presumably plenty of money. The timing was around the first world war, and the whole social structures of Europe are collapsing, but the social divide in America was apparently untouched. The Davenports seem not to notice what is going on in the rest of the world, and maybe some of the wealthy did not. The book largely centres around Mary, whose main activity of the day, at least at the start of the book, is to go riding. However, the somewhat idyllic setting, at least for some, is to change. Mr Davenport has plans, but the change is not quite what is expected when he is murdered. So is it a mystery? Mary sees the library through a crack in a wall and sees her father with a knife in the back, her mother and the local doctor talking. Later, the local doctor asserts he died of a sickness, and when Mary protests, he heavily sedates her. However, Mary gets news to the police and . . . The story gives an interesting account of what the lives of the rich and idle were like, and that of the servants. It is reasonably well-written, except I have one criticism that could have made things easier to read. The story is written in scenes, like a movie, but in a movie, you see the scene change. In a book, what seems to happen is the story appears to lurch through different points of view. I would prefer a gap to occur when there is a major change of point of view. The speech is somewhat formal, as the author tries to make the speech sound as if it came from that time; whether it is accurate, I have no idea. There is little change of speech for the servants, but maybe that is for the best, because trying to create a speech type often does not work because it is not natural. The author can get away with one type, but two would need considerable skill. I also thought the characters were unnecessarily dim. Thus the police come and hear two stories about

the death: natural causes, knife in back. What should they do? Surely examine the body? They don't think of that, and that dimness is somewhat widespread, in other words, the story is forced into being difficult to swallow to gain suspense.

This was a simplistic read which reflected just how innocent Mary was at the beginning of the story. The pacing was slow in some places, with peaks of action during the murder of Mary's father and ensuing investigation. The writing felt like a historical novel. The crux of this story is the mystery of Mr. Davenport's death, including hints of secrets throughout concerning a conspiracy against him. I was about 30% in before I could start to guess what was really going on. Not that it's a bad thing, but the mystery was revealed in many layers. Those with notions of love had huge lessons to learn. The narrative and dialogue of Davenport House seemed a carefree read at times, while at other times showed instances of real pain from Mary. She handled the entire ordeal as a lady would, with elegance and compassion. While the ending of this story was not a complete surprise, it did leave me in a happy place.

Mary Davenport is a sheltered young woman living in a small Pennsylvania town in 1915. Her family owns a large estate, and her father is one of her closest friends. One day, her father summons her to the library to tell her that things around the estate will be changing. Mary notices her father is very ill and becomes concerned. Mary's maid Clara has lived at Davenport House all her life. Clara dreams of a life greater than what she has, and her work and a secret engagement aren't enough to satisfy her. When her mother gives her a beautiful gown and tells her that she's been elevated to a new position in the house, Clara thinks that her dreams are finally coming true. But Mr. Davenport passes away before Clara learns about her new position, and the household descends into chaos when foul play is suspected. This was a clean period drama that could be read as a standalone. The plot was similar to a Gothic romance. The writing was simple and straightforward. The mystery was easily solved, but I enjoyed the journey. I thought Mary was likable and was really worried for her well-being a time or two! She matured a lot through the book and I'm curious to read the rest of the series to see what's in store for the family. The narration was really well done, Allyson Voller has the perfect voice to portray Mary and Clara. Her voice is pleasant and immersed me in the story. I received a copy of the audiobook, and I'm voluntarily leaving a review.

Even though I'm a tiny bit tempted to get the next in series, I won't, because there are so many better writers out there! Good plot, but average writing with too many grammatical errors.

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