



Women of the Dunes

Sarah Maine

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From the author of the acclaimed novels *The House Between Tides* and *Beyond the Wild River*, a rich, atmospheric tale set on the sea-lashed coast of west Scotland, in which the lives of a ninth-century Norsewoman, a nineteenth-century woman, and a twenty-first-century archeologist weave together after a body is discovered in the dunes.

Libby Snow has always felt the pull of Ullanessm a lush Scottish island enshrouded in myth and deeply important to her family. Her great-great-grandmother Ellen was obsessed with the strange legend of Ulla, a Viking maiden who washed up on shore with the nearly lifeless body of her husband—and who inspired countless epic poems and the island’s name.

Central to the mystery is an ornate chalice and Libby, an archaeologist, finally has permission to excavate the site where Ulla is believed to have lived. But what Libby finds in the ancient dunes is a body from the Victorian era, clearly murdered...and potentially connected to Ellen.

What unfolds is an epic story that spans centuries, with Libby mining Ellen and Ulla’s stories for clues about the body, and in doing so, discovering the darker threads that bind all three women together across history.

Infused with Sarah Maine’s signature “meticulous research and descriptive passages of lush, beautiful landscapes” (*Publishers Weekly*), *Women of the Dunes* is a beautifully told and compelling mystery for fans of Kate Morton and Beatriz Williams.

Women of the Dunes Details

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Sarah says

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Happy Reading, friends!

Women of the Dunes by Sarah Maine Book Review

Three tales all surrounded by mythology, secrets & tradition on the western coast of Scotland. If you're wanting to leave your life behind for a bit, head to Ullaness with Sarah Maine to meet the Women of the Dunes.

An Archaeological Dig That Uncovers Secrets

Libby Snow has deep-rooted family history to the coastal sea town of Ullaness. Growing up, her grandmother regaled her with the myth & story of the mysterious Ulla. On the surface, Libby, an archaeologist, arrives in Ullaness prepared to participate in an excavation at Sturrock House. Libby's family has history & they carry secrets from this land. Yet, here Libby is, ready to slide in with the hope of uncovering some truth.

Unexpectedly, a man is found dead prior to the start of the official excavation. There's a give & take type of relationship between the landowners & the archaeologists. Libby takes on the role of appeasing the landowners while taking part in the investigation of who this man is & what he was doing in Ullaness. Quickly, emotions, history & her family's ties to this town rise to the surface.

Sarah Maine - Three Timelines, Beautiful Scenery & a Mystery.

While I can burn through a book in a day, I savored every syllable of Women of the Dunes. I honestly cannot remember reading a book that captivated me in this way. There's something about Sarah Maine's storytelling style that reels me in. Quickly I'm transported into the story, but something tells me to pace myself. This way, I understand & appreciate every morsel of the tale.

Let's All Go to Scotland

Women of the Dunes is incredibly atmospheric. While I haven't yet visited Scotland, I was THERE. I can picture Sturrock House, the water's edge, the land, the dunes & I loved every minute of Sarah Maine setting the scene. I'm ready to read another book that takes place in Scotland immediately. I need to go back!

THE VERDICT

I am Really Into This book. Women of the Dunes is not my typical fare & I loved reading a bit outside of my comfort zone. Women of the Dunes has layers of mystery with a historical fiction type of feel. The atmospheric writing is unbeatable & you'll no doubt be entranced by Ullaness.

Special thanks to Sarah Maine , Atria Books & NetGalley for providing our copy in exchange for an honest & fair review.

Erin says

Thanks to Netgalley for an e-ARC in exchange for an honest review

Well, I was quite excited to receive this story after being refused a copy of Sarah Maine's earlier book, *The House Between Tides*. Whoever designs the covers for Maine's books should know they are stunning and suit her stories well. However I am feeling (surprisingly) lukewarm over my reading experience. The writing is strong, the multi narrative, an intriguing story, but the **pace was slow** and the pagan story was probably the most fascinating and yet often played second fiddle to the contemporary storyline and that of 1890 which didn't always hold my full attention. Maybe it is me, the heat, or my itchy bug bites, but this was a real hit and miss.

Kendall says

Women of the Dunes is a beautifully written historical tale about treasures, mysteries, murder, and even a little bit of a romance.

The story is told in three alternating viewpoints which includes a Norsewoman in the 9th century, a 19th century woman, and Libby who is an archaeologist. The story slowly but beautifully connects the three timelines together.

The author effortlessly builds upon her research and experience in this historical tale which heightens the story even more.

And.. let me just say how much I want to go to Scotland now! The metaphors and visualization in this novel is amazing!

In all.... this was an enjoyable read with a cozy mystery at it's finest! I read this in a day... so that must tell you something ;).

3.5 stars rounded up.

Thank you so much to Netgalley and Atria for the advanced arc in exchange for a honest review.

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Publication date: 7/24/18

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

The first book I read by Sarah Maine was THE HOUSE BETWEEN TIDES and I was blown away by the wonderful story and the atmospheric setting. I was eager to find out if WOMEN OF THE DUNES would be as good. And it was!

To be able to effortlessly write a book with three different storylines without confusing or making any of the storylines less interesting than the others is a gift and I think that Sarah Maine has this gift. I'm so used to dual storylines that getting one with three storylines feels like an oddity, in a good way.

READ THE REST OF THE REVIEW OVER AT FRESH FICTION!

Guylou says

I would like to thank NetGalley and Atria Book for providing me an ARC of **Women of the Dunes** by Sarah Maine in exchange for an honest review.

The story goes back and forth between three timelines which described the lives of three women. The first timeline is about a Norsewoman in the ninth century named Ulla who escaped her evil Viking husband with her lover and sailed to Scotland. There, Ulla meets a monk upon her arrival and asks him to help to save her lover who was seriously wounded. Her lover dies, but a legend is birthed.

The second timeline is about a Scottish servant woman in the nineteenth century named Ellen who lived on the estate where the legend of Ulla was born. Ellen is obsessed with Ulla's story. She ends up leaving Scotland and moving to Newfoundland, but never forgot the legend and passed it on to her daughter who passed it on to her grand-daughter, Libby.

The last timeline is about Libby, a young archeologist in the twenty-first century. Libby finds the perfect job; she is hired as a lead archeologist on a project which will take place in the birthplace of her grandmother. The project is to dig a mound where, it is believed, Ulla's lover was buried. In preparation for the dig, Libby visits the site and discovers that the mound hides many secrets which could change everything she heard about the legend.

This is a fantastic read. The book has all the elements of a great story: love, betrayal, murder, and forgiveness. This book will be available at your favorite bookstore on July 24, 2018.

Rebecca Hill says

Legends are just that - legends. As the stories are passed down from generation to generation, pieces of the stories get lost, but other stories are added in. But what if some of the family legends had more truth than originally thought?

Libby was drawn to the area where the legend started. With an archaeological dig planned there for the summer, she is excited to get started and uncover more about the stories that Ellen used to share. As her Nan shared the stories from Ellen, Libby was drawn in as a kid. But there are some surprises that are still waiting to be discovered.

Rodri is managing the estate for his brother, the current baronet. Yet there are things on his end that still shrouded in mystery. His brother has been absent for many years, and his wife, the Lady Sturrock is obsessed with wealth and material items. She is trying to sell off the estate a piece at a time, while Rodri tries to keep it intact.

What starts as an innocent encounter, quickly turns into much more. A body is revealed, but one that is much later than the time period Libby is studying, and yet, there is so much more than archaeology drawing her time and time again to the house...

The Women Of The Dunes drew me in from the beginning. Ulla, Ellen, and Libby all draw together to bring this story that spans centuries to a thrilling and exciting conclusion.

I honestly LOVED this book. I started and finished in one sitting. I could NOT put it down! Perfect for a

weekend read!

Jeanne Adamek says

3.5 stars

Melanie (Mel's Bookland Adventures) says

It's been nearly two weeks now that I finished this and it is interesting what time does to your opinion of the book. I can say that I did enjoy reading it because after all I stayed up until 2 am to finish this, but there was just one storyline too many. A Viking one, one set in Victorian time, one in present day. As much as I adore dual timeline narratives, I don't think triple timeline is really working for me, and it was the present day timeline that I was mainly interested in and that kept me reading. I also was hard pressed to accept the tenuous link between the timelines at times. Still: I liked it. Not as much as House Between Tides, but there is no doubt, that I will keep picking up Sarah Maine's books.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

4 fascinating Scottish stars to Women of the Dunes! ? ? ? ?

The description of this book captivated me. My alter ego in college enjoyed archaeological digs, so I'm up for anything with an excavation, multiple timelines, and history.

Women of the Dunes is told in three timelines, including a Norsewoman in the 9th century, a 19th century woman, and a contemporary archaeologist, Libby. A Scottish island, Ullanessm, draws people to it with its ancient stories and myths, including the main characters. How the three timelines intersect is natural and fulfilling.

The author has clearly done impeccable research, and her own background in archaeology shows. In the end, this is an interesting tale of betrayal, murder, love, and redemption, shrouded in a cozy, easy-to-read, comforting historical mystery.

Thank you to Sarah Maines, Atria Books, and Netgalley for the copy.

Sofia says

Well, I was quite curious about this one. Love the name and the cover.

It's a bit slowed pace for me, but I enjoyed reading it.

It's narrated through 3 different times. But I didn't really understand why sometimes in same chapter it showed to times. I didn't feel right, I read 2 similar books in terms of construction this year and I kind of compared them unconsciously I suppose.

It's a mystery.

You don't understand if there's a slow burn romance going on or just some complicity happening. It's strange.

Sure, it is a historical novel, with what seems to be a repeating pattern.

To me it was okay, although it has potential.

Tami says

I wish I had read this about a month earlier during the time I was visiting Scotland because it would have made a wonderful story even better! Sarah Maine has written an engrossing tale of an old Scottish myth, complete with a dig for buried treasure, a budding romance, murder and mystery.

The story centers around Libby Snow, a young archaeologist who becomes involved in an excavation on a Scottish island that also has a connection to her own family history.

The story is told in the form of three different time periods, slowly weaving the ancient legend together and revealing the truth about the past.

I looked forward to reading this each day and it is definitely one of my favorite reads this year. It had everything to offer that I love about historical fiction. Mystery and history lovers will enjoy this as well.

Many thanks to NetGalley and Atria Books for allowing me to read an advance copy and give an honest review.

marlin1 says

Surrounded by the legend of Ulla as childhood stories told by her grandmother, Libby Snow gets the chance to work on an archaeological dig at the very place where these stories took place – Ullaness. She doesn't tell anyone of her connection, especially as her great grandmother Ellen was a servant at Sturrock House in 1890 or of the strange necklace she has in her possession. Finding a body is something that was anticipated, just not the Victorian age one that was discovered. And what was the connection of the same necklace that is in Libby's possession, as to the one that was discovered with the body.

This multi layered novel was a delight. Covering the three women, Ulla C800 AD – just small paragraphs inserted in the story, Ellen in 1890 and the modern day Libby I was transported into each story, although I did connect with Libby's story the most. I loved the slow relationship growth there was between Libby and Rodri Sturrock as they work together and the side story of Laila, the manipulative sister in law to Rodri.

This was a story to get lost in and I'm only sad that due to real life, I couldn't spend a day or two lost in it. Thank you to Netgalley and the Publisher for a digital ARC to read

Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

Scotland, back and forth in time, murders, illegitimate children, missing jewels, secrets, buried treasures, legends, a permitted excavation, authentic characters, and an old estate all greet us in WOMEN OF THE DUNES.

We follow Libby as she and her university team have gotten permission to excavate the estate of Hector Sturrock and an estate where Libby's great grandmother worked as a servant.

Libby's grandmother told her of the legend of Ulla that was part of the estate and the town of Ullaness. Libby had always enjoyed the legend and liked to hear it every time she visited her grandmother.

When Libby joined the team for the excavation, she had to decide if she would tell what her grandmother had told her and what her great grandmother had kept from the estate.

The legend began with a ship coming into a harbor where a monk named Odrhan lived. Ulla was pregnant with her husband's brother's child, but when the husband found out about the baby, he badly hurt his brother, Harald, so Ulla sailed away with the injured Harald and sailed to Odrhan for help.

As generations continued so did the legend and its people. The most interesting aspect was that Libby was the current generation of the women involved, and there were many secrets kept by them all.

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WOMEN OF THE DUNES was captivating simply because of the lifestyle of the original family as well as those who lived in the Sturrock estate today.

The women of all generations had stories to tell, the estate's castle-like home still kept its charm, and the legend made WOMEN OF THE DUNES enticing.

I really enjoyed the descriptions of the land and the house. Going back in time and hearing a story re-created is something I always love to read about.

The two stories - present and past - connected, came full circle, and brilliantly meshed together as mirrored stories.

Any reader who enjoys castles, secrets, looking for clues in old documents, and re-tracing the steps of characters that lived long ago will want to read WOMEN OF THE DUNES.

WOMEN OF THE DUNES is going to be a favorite. 5/5

This book was given to be as an ARC by the publisher. All opinions are my own.

The Lit Bitch says

Can I give this one more than 5 stars?!?

Sometimes a book comes along and it's like it was written just for you. I have been a huge Sarah Maine fan since reading Bhalla Strand, which is now known as The House Between Tides.

When I saw that this one was out, I was a little disappointed that I didn't get a chance to read it earlier, so I checked it out from my library and brought it with me to Seattle for vacation.

Her books are always so atmospheric and have this kind of dark romantic prose so I figured it would be an exciting vacation read.

So let's just say that it was evident that this book was going to keep me up into the late hours of the evening. From the second I picked it up, I couldn't put it down! Like I literally had to tear myself away from this book because I didn't want it to be over and I wanted to savor every single page!

I love the archeology parts. In another life, I planned on being Indiana Jones and I actually did take quite a few classes in college to become a Biblical archeologist, but then I loved literature and writing so much that my path went another way. But I love books with archeology in them and Maine's knowledge and attention to detail shines in this book. I love the legend and oral tradition aspects of this story and how that played out in multiple ways in this book.

This was the most interesting angle for me and I absolutely devoured the history, legend, and archeological elements. In a word—outstanding.

Then came the characters....a smart, yet secretive independent woman with a mysterious connection to the legend and past, double check. A handsome, yet brooding caretaker with a tragic past—YES YES YES CHECK. I loved that the secondary characters and the alternating time period characters didn't eclipse the two main ones. Libby and Rodri have great chemistry and carried the story without any problem. In fact, when we switched to Ellen and the other Sturrock characters, I was greatly annoyed. I wanted to keep reading just Libby and Rodri's story however, before I knew it, I was enjoying Ellen's portions just as much.

I think what stood out to me was the romantic angle. Ellen's portions were clearly a love story, but Libby and Rodri's were less obvious. Throughout the book, the chemistry and growing attraction between Libby and Rodri are hardly mentioned but the reader will easily see the subtle changes as the story goes on.

It takes a true talent to show readers a subtle romance without any real confirmation of the feelings. There isn't some grand, let me tear your clothes off moment, to tell the reader that YES they are in love. All of a sudden about half way through this book I was like awww they like each other—a lot. And it literally stole my heart. I loved loved loved how mature and how surprisingly romantic this approach was.

There were so many things to love about this book. The setting, the legend, the romance—it had everything. Maine's books always remind me a little of a modern Victoria Holt or Daphne du Maurier. I can't get enough of her books and I am looking forward to reading the next one she puts out. Not going to lie, I wouldn't mind revisiting these characters in other books but I know that Maine will create new characters that I will love just as much!

This was easily my favorite read of the summer, if not the entire year. I can't remember having loved a book as much as I loved this one in a long time!

Final note—whoever her cover designer is should get a huge shout out. Her covers are beautiful and the artist captures the essence of her books so well. I am absolutely in love with this cover and can't get enough of it!

See my full review [here](#)

Blodeuedd Finland says

This book has 3 big POVS, even if Libby is the main one.

Libby comes to Scotland for a dig. But her great grandmother was from there and she knows the legend they are to uncover.

Then there is Ellen in 1890, a servant at the big house. She loves the old legend. And the question is, why did she leave for Canada? What happened back there? Ellen had her head in the clouds. I get that she was pretty, but everyone sure went crazy for her. Also, she was not alone with her POV, the priest Oliver has a POV here too.

Which brings us to Ulla, who comes with her dying lover to this part of Scotland that will have her name. Fleeing from her husband and meeting a monk, but, it was not Ulla who had this POV. It was Oran the monk who was fine living there as a hermit before vikings comes and mess things up. Oran was so! Well you can imagine, but he was a man of his time. I did wonder about Ulla and her thoughts, but we never got those. Oh and how on earth could they speak with each other?

A dig. And uncovering what happened to her ancestor. Libby has a lot before her. And she also becomes embroiled with those who own the land. Oh he was hard to get to know, but I liked him. You will see.

A lovely book set in different times and connected to each other. In more than one way.

Narrator Ruth Urqhart

I really like her voice and she was perfect for this.
