



Footsteps In The Dark

Georgette Heyer

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Guests spending the summer at an ancient priory mansion find it has a charm all its own--no modern conveniences, but it does have a resident ghost. In this case, however, the things that go bump in the night are flesh and blood . . . and deadly!

Footsteps In The Dark Details

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From Reader Review Footsteps In The Dark for online ebook

Brenda H says

Footsteps in the Dark was a fun mystery by Georgette Heyer.

Three siblings inherit an estate in the English countryside and they decide to spend their vacation there. The heirs, along with their spinster aunt and the husband of one of the women, arrive at the country house only to find out that it's haunted. Of course, this is all taken to be a local legend...until things begin to go bump in the night, shadowy figures prowl the grounds in the evenings and there's a murder.

It was an enjoyable read and moved at a good pace. Most of the clues were available to the reader but the connections were left to the reader to figure out. I plan to continue reading these Country House Mysteries as I find them quite entertaining and a good mystery.

Rating 4 Stars

CLM says

I allowed an early prejudice against Heyer's mysteries to prevent me from reading most of them at all, yet I found this very pleasant and entertaining. While the characters were not as well developed as those in her historical novels (and, indeed, seemed a bit cliched), the book compares favorably with some Ngaio Marsh and Patricia Wentworth titles.

Madeline says

Vintage *Scooby-Doo* episodes, while fun to watch when you're bored and there's nothing else on TV, presented a lot of annoyances to me when I was younger. First there was that period where the episodes featured nonsensical guest stars (oh man, did anyone else see that episode where the gang solves a mystery with Batman and Robin?), and then there's the fact that these kids always seemed to have the exact wrong response when faced with a monster or ghost or whatever - an average-sized mummy or ghost or whatever jumps out at them, and they all run screaming. For god's sake, there are *four of you* and a large dog, *just tackle the son of a bitch*.

Also there's the fact that whenever the mystery concerned a haunting or a weird monster, the reason behind it was almost always that someone wanted to scare people off for one of three reasons: the land/property/whatever is really valuable but can be bought for cheap if the culprit convinces everyone that the place is haunted, the place is the headquarters for some criminal operation, or there's some kind of treasure that the culprit wants to hunt for without having to deal with meddling kids in his business. (I swear I'm going somewhere with all of this, just stay with me)

And the kids were, honestly, pretty fucking annoying. They had the stupidest quips, their plans for catching the culprit only ever worked *because* they failed spectacularly, and *every single episode* Fred would be like, "Let's split up, gang!" and then they waste the next fifteen minutes trying to find each other in the haunted amusement park after they got separated.

My point is, if you enjoy mystery stories about hauntings and amateur detective antics but find Scooby-Doo and Co. annoying as hell, I recommend picking up Georgette Heyer's *Footsteps in the Dark* as soon as possible. It's like Heyer's preemptive strike against Scooby-Doo and his associated nonsense - the mystery centers around a haunted house with a menacing, very physical ghost known as the Monk, our detectives are quippy (but actually clever) young people who blunder their way around the mystery but manage to be sensible about things (while still getting separated at one point, but still), and the reason behind the haunting is one of the three I listed above. Out of respect for spoilers I won't say which one, but will say that Heyer very cleverly has her characters discuss all those reasons as the possible explanation for the haunting, so we as the readers immediately dismiss them and start trying to come up with another explanation. It's very smart, and fooled me completely.

It must be said that I guessed the culprit about halfway through the book, as well as a couple big twists that get revealed at the end, but this didn't even bother me. The haunted house that Heyer has created is genuinely creepy, and the Monk (as well as the other goings-on in the house) is especially scary. Also the four main characters, as I mentioned, are cute and quippy and generally delightful, trading witty banter and clever allusions with an ease that would impress Lord Peter Wimsey. There's even a romance element to the mystery, and it was surprisingly well-done and not at all cloying, although it ends on such a ridiculous note that I can't fully support it.

All in all, a fun and creepy haunted house story that shows those meddling kids how it's really done. I will definitely be looking up more Heyer mysteries in the future.

John says

A breezy quartet -- Celia Malcolm and her husband Charles, plus Celia's siblings Peter and Margaret Fortescue -- inherit a gloomy old pile some distance out of London, and decide to inhabit it with their elderly maiden aunt despite the lack of mod cons . . . and despite the ghost that the locals tell them haunts the place.

Cue creaks and groans, apparitions in the night. Things get mysteriuser and mysteriuser, and it's evident that some of those locals aren't exactly what they present themselves to the world to be. But our heroes persist, and eventually they prove that there's a rational explanation for all those uncanny happenings, a rational explanation that hinges on an international criminal plot!

Oo-er.

I found the first half of the book tiresome, with the bright young things exchanging witless, heavy-handed, often snobbish banter in all directions and a buffoonish local PC Plod for everyone to guffaw at, oh jeez. Although it still had definite pacing problems (there's an interminable chapter in which two characters try one possibility, and then another, and then another, and then . . . in their hunt for an explanation as to why two others have disappeared) and although it became far too bloody obvious far too bloody early on just who was the baddy and who the main mystery figure really was, the second half picked up quite a lot -- either that or I finally got more into the mood for the book.

I don't think I've ever managed to plow through -- or even so much as crack open -- one of Heyer's historical novels, all of which seem to be called *Regency Buck*, but I do recall reading, and being disappointed by, one of her detective novels decades ago . . . and, who knows, perhaps it was this one. Until I came here to write these notes I was more or less decided that this'd be an end to my experiments with Heyer's detections, but then I noticed a remark in GR-friend Bev Hankins's review of *Footsteps in the Dark*:

"Footsteps in the Dark is a very welcome return to Georgette Heyer's usual breezy, comic mystery style--far removed from the dark and brooding Penhallow which I just recently finished."

So I may -- *pace* Bev! -- give *Penhallow* a try sometime soon.

Kim says

This was the first of Heyer's mysteries and it shows. Heyer apparently did not want it to be re-published so it can be presumed that she wasn't that keen on it, or at least that she recognised its weaknesses. And weaknesses it has. There's little character development (not that too much character development is to be expected in such a novel), the crime is a bit unconvincing and the resolution a bit pat. However, it exhibits some of the classic Heyer strengths: strong dialogue (albeit not quite as witty as in later mysteries), a nice sense of place and time and a predictable but nevertheless sweet romance.

The four star rating I have given this novel has been determined somewhat idiosyncratically. Two stars are for the mystery itself. An extra one is due to the writing and the fourth because it is Heyer's first mystery and is therefore of some historical and literary significance to her fans. The net result is a novel I liked very much. A must for anyone who is interested in Heyer in particular and 1930s mystery novels in general. Possibly a miss for most other readers.

Anna says

And now to the lighter side of a murder mystery ...

Some Bright Young Things inherit the Priory which has been sitting empty since their relative has died. After they move in, they hear from the villagers (and their butler) that the house is haunted by The Monk. It does not help that the house has spooky cellars and creaking stairs but no electricity or phone. Of course, none of them believe in ghosts - but the fun begins as they start to hear strange noises and see weird things in the dark and their aunt decides they must have a seance. Then, the very strange Michael Strange keeps popping up at unexpected times!

It reminded me of a Tommy and Tuppence story with a great secondary tier of characters including the bumbling village constable, the drunken French artist, the slimy carpet cleaner salesman and the trespassing moth collector.

tom bomp says

For a book set in a big old country house with tons of rooms, a big cellar and with attached church ruins it's surprisingly weak on setting - I'd have appreciated some more description of the village and the house and just anything but there's very little at all. The characterisation is also really weak, the main family of characters is totally interchangeable and the others are stereotypes, which at least makes them distinct. The French artist character is borderline offensive - I feel he's intended to be partially humorous but it really doesn't work. Also the main characters are all rich toffs and often talk in annoying ways which makes me

engaged even less. Also some ridiculousness - the female leads who were so desperate to move in and couldn't be swayed almost immediately want to move out when the possibility of a ghost is raised. (view spoiler)(view spoiler)

Will almost certainly finish because Georgette Heyer is someone I feel I should at least give a fair hearing to and it's a pretty easy read but blurgh. Maybe it improves.

Ah ok so after finishing it I'm no more satisfied. There's a romance subplot and it's AWFUL - there's 0 romance just "oh you two are in love now". And this from a writer of romance novels! It feels like a plot device too because it's used to plant some red herrings. And the very ending felt like a Scooby-Doo style unmasking - it was so silly I laughed. There are very few clues throughout the novel and so instead we get a summary right near the end from the person who's *actually* been solving the mystery. Which is pretty disappointing because I immediately thought I'd rather be reading the book from his perspective. In general re the whole mystery - it's full of holes and with not enough clues, red herrings or info on any of the possible suspects to really make it interesting. (view spoiler)

Weirdly probably the best part of the book was the "ghost story" aspect - it only comes through a bit but I found the sections where people see the Monk genuinely a bit spooky. Although maybe only because I'm really easily scared. In general just really really poor - yes, there's some satisfaction at the end, but the characters, setting, mystery, plotting, romance, descriptions etc... it just all really really falls short. Not unreadable but I'd never recommend it over the mountains of other cozy mystery type books out there.

lebe.liebe lese [Tina] says

Nee. Nicht mein Buch...

Das Cover hat mich sehr angesprochen und auch die Inhaltsangabe verspricht Grusel. Doch leider hatte ich meine Probleme mit dem Schreibstil, den Charakteren und auch der fehlenden Spannung. Ein Gruselfaktor kam nur auf, wenn ich dieses Buch im dunkeln und in völliger Stille gelesen habe. Doch unter 'Gruselfaktor' ist da zu verstehen, dass mich meine Gedanken, und nicht das Buch gruselten.

Leider konnte mich das Buch nicht überzeugen und so vergebe ich hier 2 Sterne. Die Idee hinter der Story ist nämlich gar nicht so ungruselig. An der Umsetzung hat es leider gehapert..

Tweety says

3 1/2 Stars

I must say this was better than my last Heyer mystery!

The last, No Wind of Blame, was dull and yawnifying. (Yes, I just coined that). But this one was a great improvement. The characters were more interesting and a bit more happens. Nonetheless, it's still a bit slow and there were moments where I just wanted things to happen FASTER.

Peter, Margaret, Ceila and her husband Chas have inherited an old run down priory. They are enchanted with the idea that it has a history with a resident ghost, as all the villagers claim. The ghost is named, 'The Monk' and several people claim to have seen him walking the priory's grounds at night.

The four of them think nothing of it till one odd incident after another adds up, a falling picture, a priest's hole, bones, footsteps, groaning in the night and finally, someone creeping about their grounds at night. But,

is it 'The Monk' or is there flesh and blood behind all of the spooks?

And if so, who is it? The mad artist? The small salesman? The dark man Margaret trusts completely called Strange? Or is it someone completely unexpected? What is the game? Why does someone want them to leave the priory?

I'll be frank, the plot sounds deliciously creepy and spine-tinglingly good. Throughout there's moments of creepiness and suspense, however it's not till the last fifth that I was really gripping the pages and getting excited and feeling thoroughly glad that I wasn't all by myself at home. And, if it had all been like that this would be five stars easy. The rest didn't quite do that for me though and so I'm going with what most of the book felt like, a three and a half.

This book has what all priory's should, pivoting walls, secret passageways and tunnels underground. Love that! I admit other books have held the suspense for a plot like this better (Enid Blyton's *The Island of Adventure*, anyone? I know it's a kids book, but still), and I think that with a bit more of the 'happenings' spread out it would have been better. Instead of every few chapters someone yet again sees something shadowy. Maybe more discovery of the mystery earlier on would have been better for me?

Anyway, I wouldn't say pick this up for your first Heyer, and maybe not for your first Heyer mystery. But if you like her works, pick it up and enjoy. And you might just love it. :)

Oh, as a side note, I really liked Margaret and her side story. She was my favorite character.

PG There's mention of 'ghosts' and ghost stories which aren't told and a seance which was more of a farce and didn't get anywhere. A few swears and nothing more.

Buddy Read with Anne, glad we could read it together! Buddy Reads help me read books that I might put off and not get round to for ages. :)

Carol ?? says

Georgette Heyer suppressed some of her early books, presumably because she wasn't happy with them. These include *Simon the Coldheart* (deadly dull) *The Great Roxhythe* (unintentionally very funny!) & her "contemporaries" (Helen was so terrible I feel no desire to seek out the other three!) I believe GH also suppressed this one for a time, so I approached this read with some trepidation. But I need not have worried. This book certainly isn't a masterpiece & some of the writing is very "jolly hockey sticks" <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dicti...> but it is still an enjoyable romp, albeit with a lot of filler & a few plot holes, most notably (view spoiler) & the romance was very poorly done.

Worth a read, but I read most Heyers multiple times. I'm unlikely to bother reading this one again.

Hannah says

It is books like this that cause me to remember why I love mysteries so much. I had so much fun reading this. It was a little like reading a grown up version of a Nancy Drew, only with some Agatha Christie-like

elements.

Think: meets and you have an idea of what I'm talking about.

Footsteps in the Dark is, I believe, Heyer's first attempt to pen a murder mystery, and though some would argue that it lacks the polish of her later mysteries, I think it's the best of the eight I've read so far. I appreciate that the sleuths aren't professionals (Heyer later used the recurring Scotland Yard detectives Hannasyde and Hemingway for her novels). Instead, a good majority of the "detecting" is done by a foursome consisting of 3 siblings (Peter, Margaret and Celia) and Celia's spouse, Charles. They, along with their unintentionally funny aunt Mrs. Bosanquet, have been left an ancient Priory house and intend to refurbish it into a country retreat. Not long after settling in, the locals regale them with the spooky truth: the Priory is haunted by "The Monk", a ghostly, faceless figure seen roaming the estate. No one thinks they should stay there, but the siblings are determined to reveal the identity of "The Monk" and determine whether he is corporeal or not. After a series of gothic incidences including eerie moaning, hidden passages, crypts, a skeleton-inhabited priest hole, spectral visitors, a murder victim and a wide array of local suspects, Peter, Margaret, Celia and Charles finally uncover the truth about the mysterious goings-on at the priory.

It's a cheeky, funny and page turning ride. The characters are interesting without being overly obnoxious (as sometimes happens in Heyer's mysteries). The banter and comraiderie are witty and very in keeping with sibling and spousal relationships. While it is campy in places, the story is written with a firm tongue-in-cheek by Heyer. I would have enjoyed seeing Aunt Bosanquet in another Heyer book - she was that good. It also featured a very subtle love story which played out nicely (but with just enough bumps along the way to keep it interesting).

A definite re-read one of these days, and an instant favorite on my shelf.

Anne says

A solid 4.5 stars!

My very first Heyer mystery! This is cause for celebration! Also my first cozy-mystery in ages, and it's now got me hooked on the genre! More celebration!

I really, *really* enjoyed myself with *Footsteps in the Dark*. It was spooky, exciting, suspenseful, and just plain good fun! The mystery was rather easy to solve (it didn't take me long to figure out the villain's identity, and who was actually on the good side), but it still kept me on edge and turning the pages in excited anticipation to see how it would all unravel. I'm pretty sure that the eerie-creepy-mansion-full-of-ghosts-and-secret-passages plot has been done many a time, but since I'm a newbie to the genre, it was all new and intriguing to me. Plus, it's a Georgette Heyer novel, so you're guaranteed a few laughs and witty repartee along the way, just to make things ever more engaging!

I would have given it a solid 5 if it hadn't been for a few slow parts that I wish read through faster, the romance that felt a little too out of the blue, and the fact that the characters were no way near as well developed as I know Georgette Heyer can develop. They were a fun set and I loved Charles and the aunt Bosanquet in particular, but overall her cast was miles away from the wonderful characters of her Regency novels. But still, it was a really great book, and contrary to popular opinion, I *would* recommend it to cozy-mystery newbies, because chances are if you haven't really anything else to compare it to, you'll find it wonderful. It's well-written and well done, and although not held as Heyer's best mystery, I'd say start with

this one and save the bests for last!

(Wow this is a short review, I have no idea how to review a mystery without spoiling anything!!)

Buddy-read with Tweety! :D

Dorcas says

I am sorry to say I am giving up on this. I gave it a good go (185 pages) but I'm just not feeling it, basically, well, its torture. I know! Don't hate me! It may just be the mood I'm in (I am a firm believer in "last book dictates present mood" but it may just not be my style of writing. Cest la vie.

A side note: The print size is rather HUGE in these GH mysteries. A strange complaint probably but I find it very awkward reading larger type, it makes my eyes bug. I think if the font was smaller I would have made myself finish it. (My eyes like to "sweep in a paragraph" and large print makes me read line by line. That sounds weird, I know).

Anyway! Have no fear! I *will* try another GH (just not at the moment) because its probably fluke that I didn't like this one. So! Another day!

Tami says

What a great crime novel! I am a long-standing Georgette Heyer fan. I love her books. Her stories were always so incredibly well drawn, her characters unforgettable. She is one of the very few authors with many, many books in one genre who didn't have "types" in the sense of recurring schemes or personalities.

And this classic and clean crime novel is no exception.

The dialogues and the cheerful sense of humor made it very entertaining.

The characters were drawn through their actions, their speeches and their little mannerisms.

mark monday says

for those fans of cozy mysteries, particularly the ones featuring goofy aristocrats stuck in an eerie mansion with murder in the background and light banter constantly in the foreground, please ignore the 2 stars. this is a 4 star book for you.

so a group of la-di-da, fiddle-dee-dee upper class English types, their aunt, and couple of their servants take over a Bad House with a Bad History for their summer vacation. haunting and terrorizing them is the dreaded, maybe-a-ghost Monk, who apparently has a lot of death on his hands. eventually murder occurs. what is behind all of these sinister shenanigans? and who is this mysterious Mr. Strange - a potential lover or a dreadful villain lying in wait?

I have no doubt that Heyer knows how to write and it is hard for me to put a finger on what left me cold.

perhaps it was due to the dialogue being light but not bubbly or sparkling - and I wanted champagne not tap water! perhaps it was due to the characters being basically quite unremarkable and uninteresting and even rather interchangeable. perhaps it was due to being able to figure out the identity of the dread villain fairly early on. maybe I should just blame the tepid romance. I dunno. but this one did leave me with a feeling of EH? EH! and that means 2 stars.

Hana says

More than a little silly, but a fun and mildly diverting read. Like Hannah, I kept harking back to my childhood favorite Nancy Drew and *The Hidden Staircase* I loved all the 1930 period details, the hidden passages and Gothic goings on, but the plot was clunky and the four main characters never really came alive for me. Nancy Drew would never have been as foolish as the Celia and Margaret!

I'm definitely planning to read more of Georgette Heyer's mysteries--this was her first and my expert GR friends say the later ones are better.

Group read with Georgette Heyer Fans for August.

<https://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/...>

Ivonne Rovira says

You've read this book before — and more deftly executed. A married couple and the wife's brother and sister go on vacation (holiday in Britspeak) in a run-down pile out in the country with a reputation for being haunted. By Chapter 2, the husband, Charles Malcolm, and his intrepid brother-in-law, Peter Fortescue, have realized that the ghost is a ruse by an all-too-real adversary. When the police prove less than useless, the brothers-in-law begin sleuthing on their own.

Admittedly, I didn't figure out who the villain was until the end; however, most readers will be able to eliminate the prime suspect with one-third of the novel to go. As this novel was first published in 1932, I'll give Georgette Heyer some credit for coming up with the idea earlier rather than later. In other words, the books that you've read that more expertly handle this same plot probably took a page from *Footsteps in the Dark*; for that reason, I'll add an extra star.

Heyer's no Dame Agatha Christie, but some of her mysteries rise to four-star levels. The novel's not as abysmal as *Behold, Here's Poison*, but it certainly isn't in the same league as Heyer's much better *The Unfinished Clue*.

Sophia says

I've been on a Georgette Heyer kick recently both rereading a few of her Regency Romances and also trying her murder mysteries for the first time. I enjoy how she brings her light, engaging tone, snappy dialogue, mayhem and romps, and quirky characters into her murder mysteries like she did her historical romance. I'm

not sure exactly the time frame, but I think this one was 20's era.

The setting was English country house/village and centered around a family inheriting an old estate that was once an abbey that is thought to be haunted. Things happen and either it really is haunted or someone is working very hard to get them to leave. Suspicious characters roam the grounds, weird sounds are within, sightings of a creepy Monk and a icky skeleton, the ravings of a mad artist, and the warnings of a very sane innkeeper top it off. But the Fortescue clan remain and try their luck at solving the mystery.

I love this type of set up for a mystery- creepy house, weird happenings, and lots of characters and possibilities. There is a murder, but it happens around the midway point and was one of the odd occurrences. I enjoyed the family dynamics with the three Fortescue siblings- Celia, Peter, and Margaret, with Celia's husband Charles Malcolm and the Fortescue aunt, Lillian. They are good, sensible people though with a sense of humor who love the old abbey house and grounds and it was fun seeing them all play at amateur sleuths and suspecting half the neighborhood. There is a side of romance though its mild and only barely there much of the time.

It's not a strongly developed story as to setting and characters, but still a fun mystery romp for all that.

Miriam says

Pleasant if not hugely innovative mystery of the "hapless folk move into house with mysterious goings-on" set-up. In this case, sisters Celia and Margaret and their brother Peter inherit a large old home where they used to visit their aunt as children. They stay there on vacation, along with Celia's husband Charles and a widowed aunt (of the sensible rather than skittish variety). Villagers tell them ghost stories but they suspect human causes for the strange noises interrupting their holiday. Especially since everyone and his brother keeps wandering round their property at night. When the cliché country constable fails to discover anything they decide to investigate on their own...

Well, make that the *men* investigate. Celia is kind of a twit, and doesn't seem to have much in common with her independent and spunky siblings. Margaret could have been a really strong character except Heyer decided to make her fall in love and go all silly. This was one of the weakest points of the plot, that a sensible, happy adult woman would be so head over heels concerning a man she not only hardly knew but had every reason to be suspicious of. I just didn't believe she would have so much trust in Michael at this point, and really Heyer could have written it in such a way that she got to know him better and thus had some grounds for her devotion. Even an afternoon walk with intense conversation would have worked; a quick exchange of glances over a flat tire didn't do it for me.

For once I guessed the villain. Probably because there weren't that many characters! It wasn't that complex as mysteries go, but it was an amusing little read -- especially so soon after *The Reluctant Widow*, which is practically the same story only with an historical setting and slightly more romance.

Maine Colonial says

I was having one of those reading funks, where I couldn't seem to find anything I was enthusiastic about reading. Actually, it was a listening funk, since it was only affecting my audiobooks. When that happens, I either re-listen to something (like a Dorothy L. Sayers) or I find some lightweight book, ideally a Golden Age mystery. In this case, I picked this Georgette Heyer mystery, since I've enjoyed them before and I like

the reader, Ulli Birvé.

Unfortunately, this was not up to snuff. For most of the book, it's really more of a ghost/haunted house story, a genre that doesn't interest me. The main characters don't believe the house is haunted; they are convinced somebody is trying to drive them from the formerly empty house that they've inherited. Their investigation is frustrated by some, especially one person, who say they have vital information but refuse to reveal it, saying they can't. Well, I don't think it's a spoiler to say that that's total BS. Once all is revealed, if you look back and think about it, there's no reason not to have revealed that information—except that it would most likely have shortened the plot.

The characters are as appealing as Heyer's usually are, but the story is so unsatisfying that I can't recommend this one.
