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The Dead Travel Fast: A Victorian Gothic Historical Romance



Synopsis

Rediscover this gothic romance that is a gripping combination of historical atmosphere and psychological thriller, from New York Times bestselling author Deanna Raybourn. A husband, a family, a comfortable life: Theodora LeStrange lives in terror of it all. With a modest inheritance and the three gowns that comprise her entire wardrobe, Theodora leaves Edinburgh and a disappointed suitor far behind. She is bound for Rumania, where tales of vampires are still whispered, to visit an old friend and write the book that will bring her true independence. She arrives at a magnificent, decaying castle in the Carpathians, replete with eccentric inhabitants: the ailing dowager; the troubled steward; her own fearful friend, Cosmina. But all are outstripped in dark glamour by the castle's master, Count Andrei Dragulescu. Bewildering and bewitching in equal measure, the brooding nobleman ignites Theodora's imagination and awakens passions in her that she can neither deny nor conceal. His allure is superlative, his dominion over the superstitious town, absolute. Theodora may simply be one more person under his sway. Before her sojourn is ended or her novel completed, Theodora will have encountered things as strange and terrible as they are seductive. For obsession can prove fatal and she is in danger of falling prey to more than desire. Originally published in 2010

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Customer Reviews

Theodora Lestrangle is living with her sister and brother-in-law in Scotland unsure of what is next in her life. She is trying to make a living as a writer, not easy in Victorian times. Her sister wants her to find someone to marry and her publisher has proposed marriage to her. But while Theodora is fond of him, she wants true love. So when a former school friend, Cosmina invites her to stay with her for several months in a castle in Transylvania, Theodora jumps at the chance. She thinks the atmosphere will be perfect for the novel she wants to write. She is immediately attracted to the strange Count Andrei Dragulescu, Cosmina's cousin. But Theodora finds that the stories Cosmina used to tell her in school are not just considered folklore by the townspeople and that they believe in werewolves and vampires. After a maid in the castle is found dead with fang marks in her neck, Theodora is unsure what to believe.

my review: I enjoyed the author's Lady Julia series and was unsure what to expect of this novel. But I really liked the Gothic atmosphere and the creepy characters. Theodora is young but knows what she wants. I liked her a lot. I also thought Andrei sounded sexy even while I wondered if he was a vampire. I know some have been disappointed in this novel as compared to her series but I think I liked this one better. It was deliciously creepy and as it is a stand alone novel it didn't get bogged down with setting things up for future books. Of course I liked Theodora and Andrei so much that I would like it to be a series but then their relationship would have dragged on like Lady Julia and Nicholas Brisbane. This is not a paranormal book but a dark, thriller in an excellent setting. It seemed like the author really did her research and created a fantastic mystery. I would have loved to stay in a castle in Transylvania though I would have been scared silly. I thought that the ending had some nice twists and I was unsure what to expect for much of this novel. It was worth the read alone for the atmosphere but Raybourn served up much more. I was sorry to have it end. This is a definite re-read for me! my rating- 4.5/5

I enjoy this author's humor, and especially her gift for creating the tall dark hero with a past. Her character embodiment is very good, with even minor players being drawn carefully and with sufficient depth. She creates complex, engaging plots and is quite good with historical accuracy, though occasional small errors do creep in. Still, these are not enough to disrupt the enjoyment of the narrative, and the connection between her protagonists is strong and well-conceived. As a criticism, I would note that sometimes she lets tiny details slip enough to later contradict or change them, but again, these are rare and small issues and in general I have found her a very good writer

whose work I bought up and am moving through at a solid pace. Well done and an excellent find.

This was an entertaining enough read, but not up to the level I've come to expect from Raybourn's Lady Julia novels. There is an interesting contrast between the intelligent and respectful way in which the author treats the folklore of the Carpathians and the often simplistic personal interactions of her main characters -- they are stock figures (spirited heroine, ominous housekeeper, darkly handsome but mysterious Count, etc.), their dialog is peppered with cliches, and they exhibit too many improbable motivations to be credited. Surely, real people do not behave in such ways -- even in gothic novels (and I'm prepared to suspend a degree of belief in the course of a good storyline). I won't reveal the best example of this implausible behavior, because it would ruin a plot surprise, but when it occurred in the storyline, it so beggared belief that it caused me to groan aloud.

Furthermore, the relationship between the heroine and the Count is about as sophisticated as a Barbara Cartland romance. On the positive side, the plot twists cleverly, and the atmosphere is created so evocatively that one can share with the heroine the frissons she felt when the chill mountain wind carried the cries of wolves in the night. For my money, Raybourn's brilliant description of the mountain castle is the best thing in the novel -- it is almost elevated to character status. Overall, this novel could have been a wonderful and creative re-working of the gothic genre, but for me, it fell short of the mark.

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