



House of Silence

Linda Gillard

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"My friends describe me as frighteningly sensible, not at all the sort of woman who would fall for an actor. And his home. And his family."

Orphaned by drink, drugs and rock n' roll, Gwen Rowland is invited to spend Christmas at her boyfriend Alfie's family home, Creak Hall - a ramshackle Tudor manor in Norfolk. Soon after she arrives, Gwen senses something isn't quite right. Alfie acts strangely towards his family and is reluctant to talk about the past. His mother, a celebrated children's author, keeps to her room, living in a twilight world, unable to distinguish between past and present, fact and fiction.

When Gwen discovers fragments of forgotten family letters sewn into an old patchwork quilt, she starts to piece together the jigsaw of the past and realises there's more to the family history than she's been told. It seems there are things people don't want her to know.

And one of those people is Alfie.

House of Silence Details

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From Reader Review House of Silence for online ebook

Louise says

I'd heard some wonderful things about Linda Gillard so was really looking forward to House of Silence. It is a stand alone novel so I didn't need to worry about not having read her earlier work and looking through her fan on Goodreads I found that she appealed to people of all ages. I have to admit that due to the number of recommendations I'd received, I didn't even read the blurb on the back so I sat down to read this having no idea what it was actually about..

The majority of the book takes place within only a few days, we have a couple of chapters beforehand introducing us to Gwen and Alfie but the main focus of the story is their trip to Alfie's family for Christmas. Given the short timeframe there isn't time to set up a complex web of mystery, what Gillard does brilliantly is let us know that something is slightly askew and then leave us wondering exactly what has happened in the past, what the truth is and what it is that everyone seems to be hiding. I love the fact that Gillard has managed to create a modern day mystery without the need for police investigations and CSI, everything is very self contained within the family with Gwen being the only outside presence.

Creak Hall provides a fantastically gothic backdrop for the novel with it's array of weird and wonderful characters by way of Alfie's family. The best thing about this book is Gillard's characterisation, she creates unique characters and draws a wonderful picture with her words. I have to be honest and say that out of Alfie and Gwen, I definitely preferred Alfie, he did the wrong thing but for the right reason and I think she should have been more forgiving for this.

Each of the characters in House of Silence has their flaws and is hiding a troubled past, it is to Gillard's credit that she has still managed to make them all so individual and also likeable, even the most troubled and unfriendly of the characters has their good points and you can't help but like. Even Gwen who I didn't particularly warm to and who I think made the wrong choices during the book was a nice person who wouldn't intentionally harm anyone while still not being boring.

I really enjoyed House of Silence and will be looking for Gillard's earlier work to catch up on all that she has done

Clare Flynn says

I really enjoyed this - a curl up and get absorbed with a cup of coffee kind of book. It is beautifully written (always important to me) and sweeps along so the pages seem to turn themselves.

At first the switching points of view threw me - but once I'd settled into the rhythm it was not a problem. I very much enjoyed the mysterious cello-playing Polish gardener who happens to be a psychiatrist haunted by his own past traumas and living in a disused windmill - hell what's not to like about that!

The book takes place in a country house in Norfolk populated by a mysterious family of misfits - all of whom are interesting in their own ways.

I could have done without the epilogue - I know many people will like all the loose ends being tidied away - but I prefer to leave it to the imagination - as it helps a book live on your mind - but that's a small quibble.

I have now bought Emotional Geology and look forward to reading that - as I gather all Linda Gillard's books are different and defy classification.

A really enjoyable read.

Anne says

With so many authors, their name on the cover tells you exactly what you're going to find inside. Not so with Linda Gillard. The only thing you're sure of when you pick up something she's written is that it'll be superbly written, meticulously plotted and that a couple of days of your life will disappear as you have to read to the very end.

"House of Silence", sadly only available for the Kindle (for shame, publishers!) ticked every possible box for me. A strong lead heroine in Gwen, a magnificently drawn supporting cast (Hattie my favourite...), brooding Marek the gardener – then there's the house itself, and the wonderful detail about the quilts, real and metaphoric. Secrets, lies, discoveries, tragedies, joy and redemption, this is a story that will appeal to all tastes – plenty for the romantic, interesting family history, part detective story. I loved every clicked page of it – absolutely superb stuff.

Diane Will says

Well what can I say, but ... I knew I would love it having read and loved Linda's other books. I waited patiently for this one to become available via printing my Amazon and was engrossed right away. I loved all the characters and the idea of the big house having secrets that unfold throughout was page turning. Gwen meets Alfie and is whisked away to Creake Hall to spend Christmas with him, but Alfie seems different when he goes back to the family home, but he only visits once a year, at Christmas....why? She meets his sisters and his mother, an author, but hardly ever leaves her room, and hasn't done so in years, due to a breakdown, but what caused it? Gwen begins to have her suspicions that Alfie is not who he says he is, the plot thickens. Tyler the gardener, befriends her and eventually she confides in him when she finds letters.

The plot unfolds page by page with a few unexpected twists I wasn't expecting. I loved it. It was nice to see references to quilting again with a mystery to tell. With a jumble of wonderful characters, I liked Hattie and the relationship she had with Gwen for their love of sewing and quilting, which in time unearths the mystery.

Thanks Linda for writing yet another page turner.

Natalie says

I have just spent the most fabulous day fully immersed in Creake Hall and all it's intrigues! I was a little dubious about reading on my laptop, I don't own a kindle, and as this book is (tragically) only available as an e-book, I downloaded the Kindle app for my laptop, intending to dip in and out and just read small sections! This worked well for the first quarter, and today, I sat down at 3pm to read another chapter or 2, 6 hours later, having only paused to cook dinner, I finished the book!

Gwen is a fabulous heroine, so real and accessible I felt I'd made a friend not met a character in a book, and she's surrounded by such a wonderful, wacky cast of characters. (I have a soft spot for dear Hattie) and not forgetting the gorgeous Marek, who will haunt my dreams for a long time I'm sure! Grey pyjamas will never

seem the same!

And the story itself is so artfully crafted, just as I thought I'd got it all figured out, and knew what was coming, so Linda put in another soaring loop of a twist, leaving me floundering again, in the best possible way, so I just HAD to keep reading to find out what was really going on at Creake Hall.

Overall, 10/10, fab read!!

Lindsay says

Really gripping read, atmospheric, mysterious, moving, kept wanting to get back to reading it.

Angie says

I've been a fan of Linda Gillard's books ever since I read *Star Gazing* and *Emotional Geology* last year. I will never understand why her books aren't more available here in the States (and just in general), and I love talking them up so that more readers can find and enjoy them just as I do. So when Linda alerted me to the imminent publication of *HOUSE OF SILENCE*, I knew I would have to get my hands on it. It sounded deliciously fun. The story of this book's publication is very interesting indeed. Linda's been trying to get it published for more than three years, but publishers seemed reluctant to attempt to market this cross-genre novel. Linda describes it as *Cold Comfort Farm* meets *Atonement*. And, of course, I'm sitting here thinking to myself, who in their right mind *wouldn't* want to read that book? Sometimes the publishing process mystifies me. So finally Linda decided to publish the book herself as an e-book. I applaud the move, and I was lucky enough to receive a copy for review.

My friends describe me as frighteningly sensible, not at all the sort of woman who would fall for an actor. And his home. And his family.

Gwen Rowland is precisely that--frighteningly sensible--though she has shockingly good reason to be. Raised (and I use the term *incredibly* loosely) by the unholy triumvirate of her drug addict mother, her nymphomaniac uncle, and her alcoholic aunt, Gwen's life has been one long exercise in pure anxiety, solitude, and longing for someone--*anyone*--she can trust. Orphaned and alone by the age of sixteen, she's since grown up and made a life for herself as a costume mistress. One day, while working on set for a BBC period drama, she meets the charming and offbeat Alfie Donovan, an actor playing a supporting role in the production. They strike up a friendship, which eventually leads to romance, and by the time Christmas rolls around Gwen feels it only natural Alfie might invite her to his home for Christmas. Seeing as she has no family to speak of. The usually composed and dapper Alfie is oddly reluctant, but he eventually agrees, and the two set off for his family manor in Norfolk. Though Alfie has prepped her for the eccentricities of his four sisters and mother, the reality is much more than Gwen expected. And soon she finds herself entangled in the unfolding drama surrounding the hapless and disturbing inhabitants of the Creake Hall.

What an absorbing read *HOUSE OF SILENCE* is. I will admit to a slight case of nerves as I sat down to read Linda Gillard's fourth novel. I had loved *Emotional Geology* so much, and I suppose I was somewhat worried about the self-publishing aspect, etc. But my mind was immediately set at ease as I found myself intensely fond of the characters right off the bat. I chuckled aloud at least a handful of times within the first few pages, and the writing was decidedly assured and the pacing even and extremely smooth. I loved the setup. Gwen (short for Guinevere, much to her distress), is a wonderfully sympathetic character, and I

thoroughly enjoyed watching her work her way into the hearts and lives of Alfie's family. A favorite passage early on:

We were kindred spirits in a way. Detached, self-centred, yet both obsessed with the past. *Our* past. The difference was, I had no family and Alfie did. He had a family-- a large one --but mostly he behaved as if he didn't, as if he wanted no part of them, however much they might want a piece of him.

As a lonely child, then a solitary adolescent, I used to fantasise about having a family--a *proper* family, teeming with rowdy siblings, jolly aunts and uncles and of course doting parents. Alfie had that. But I suspect his fantasy was that they all died, leaving him in peace as sole owner of Creak Hall.

It was a macabre joke we shared that he lived on grim expectations. I used to chide him for his callousness and he would get angry, which was unlike him. He'd say, 'You have no bloody idea, Gwen! You don't know how much *they* expect of *me*.'

And it was true. I had absolutely no idea.

The comparison to Cold Comfort Farm and, I think, to Rebecca is very apt. I was amused, touched, and effectively creeped out in turns. And I had a very good time attempting to decipher the mystery, to figure out just exactly what dark secret lay lurking under the quirky surface. The answer, by the way, doesn't disappoint. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the touch of romance in this book. I've loved that aspect of Ms. Gillard's previous books, and she comes through once again here in an extremely moving, tasteful, and unexpected way. The elusive and so often painful threads of our lives--happiness, family, grief, most of all, perhaps, forgiveness, as well as the daily struggle to hold them all together within one's consciousness--are at the heart of this engaging story. *HOUSE OF SILENCE* is a perfect choice for a rainy day or an evening in front of the fireplace. It has a little bit of everything and I definitely recommend it.

Bam says

*Between 3 and 3.5 stars.

Gwen is a seamstress working in Wardrobe for a theatre company when she meets the young actor, Alfie Donovan, whose mother has written a popular series of children's books based on her son.

As Christmas approaches, Gwen nags Alfie into inviting her to his family's home in Norfolk for the holidays. She has no family of her own and doesn't relish the thought of being alone for yet another Christmas. Alfie tries to discourage her with descriptions of eccentric sisters and a reclusive mother, but Gwen is adamant. He says to her: "Gwen, if I take you to Creak Hall you'd have to promise me you wouldn't ask any questions or ask me to explain anything. You'd just have to take everything and everyone as you found them." What's the big secret??

The first thing Gwen notices when they arrive at the family manse is how Alfie treats his four sisters--it's almost as if he is a different person than she has come to know. The women do their best to welcome her and she quickly develops a rapport with each.

But she does have questions...for instance, why is he holding a cricket racquet in his left hand in one of his childhood photos when he's right handed? And why is Alfie so cold to his family?

To complicate things, Gwen begins feeling an attraction for the gardener, Tyler/Marek--a former psychiatrist living in the old mill on the property and old enough to be her father. What's his story?

The characters were engaging and felt real but I'm not sure I liked the way the perspective jumped from first person to third--that literary device seemed a bit like cheating.

At about 50%, I had guessed the first plot twist and felt really clever doing so, but those twists kept on coming and coming. That's where the author lost me and lost at least 1/2 a star. The cost for this book on Kindle is only .99 and it is certainly worth reading for that price. There is a lovely English country house setting at Christmas time, good characterizations, some humor and romance combined with tons of family and psychological dysfunction--as Marek called it: self-inflicted punishment.

I enjoyed listening to the pieces Marek played on his cello in the story:

Mendelssohn--Song without Words opus 109

Rachmaninoff--cello sonata in G minor opus 19: Andante

Josef Suk: Serenade for cello and piano in A major, opus 3 No. 2

Bach: Prelude from Suite No. 2 in D minor

Ali says

House of Silence is Linda Gillard's fourth novel. Available as an ebook via Kindle.

Wardrobe mistress Gwen, meets the handsome Alfie, an actor, and embarks on a passionate relationship. With Christmas approaching, she persuades him to take her with him to Creak Hall, his family home for the holiday. Alfie, however, is very secretive about his childhood, and seems to have a difficult relationship with his family. Gwen senses early on that this Christmas is going to be very different, and that there are things about Alfie that she has no idea about. Upon getting to Creak Hall, Gwen meets Alfie's sisters, and his reclusive mother, a renowned children's writer. An added attraction is the gardener, Tyler - real name Marek, who has a past he too seems haunted by. Gwen feels drawn to Marek who lives in a nearby mill straight away. In Alfie's sister Hattie, Gwen discovers a shared love of quilting, and fabrics and this connection begins to lead Gwen to other discoveries about the family.

In the fast paced family drama, Linda Gillard has blended romance, quilting and a complicated family mystery to create a page turner of a story, that lovers of sewing will also really enjoy. I really liked the character of Hattie, and although I am not a fan of sewing of any kind, hers and Gwen's passion for fabrics, and quilts in particular made me think I was missing out on something.

Joan says

I finished reading this with a sense of real sadness – not that I had finished the book, but that I didn't feel satisfied with the ending. The story is lovely, the characters come to life on the page and the writing is pretty near perfect, apart from the moment in chapter 13 where the author writes: *..I had almost literally drooled*

... ' You either almost drool, or you literally drool, surely? I almost literally gave up reading at that moment ;)

Seriously though, this is a gem of a book but you may feel, like me, that the ending leaves you feeling a little bereft. Perhaps it's because the author made such a superb job of fleshing out the characters and I wanted a HEA for everyone.

3.5 stars rounded up to 4.

Debbie Young says

An engrossing psychological mystery about a young couple - Alfie, an actor, and Gwen, a wardrobe mistress - who decide to spend their first Christmas together in a spectacular stately home owned by his mother, a successful but reclusive, elderly author, despite Alfie's apparent misgivings for reasons he is unwilling to disclose. There his four very different sisters congregate for the festive season.

The outwardly likeable cast of characters soon turn out to be hiding something that increasingly spooks the isolated Gwen, and the unravelling of the mystery provides the central focus of the novel.

This intriguing and engaging story is reminiscent of Stella Gibbons' "Cold Comfort Farm" for its batty, very English characters, and the haunting setting and coming-of-age subtheme reminded me of Dodie Smith's "I Capture The Castle".

Linda Gillard has cleverly woven together experiences from her own life - acting, teaching, textiles, writing, and illness - to create a moving story with themes of motherhood, family, identity and belonging. I'd hesitate to call it either a romance or a comedy, though there are strong elements of both, nor is it exactly a thriller (more of a mystery). It's simply an intelligent, thoughtful, memorable and satisfying novel which, with its restricted cast and limited number of sets, it would make a great stage play (I'd much prefer that to a movie - at key points there'd be gasps across the auditorium!)

It's notoriously challenging to pull off a novel told through multiple viewpoints, but I understand why Gillard has taken this approach. While wanting to tell the story, Rebecca-like, largely from Gwen's viewpoint, other perspectives bolster the narrative and add further depths. I was particularly moved by the mother's first-person ramblings, in this dignified, compassionate and poignant portrait of a woman with a crumbling, unreliable memory and a precarious hold on reality.

Disclosure: I have met Linda Gillard once and she has given me a free review copy of another of her books, but I bought this one for myself.

Paula says

I have read three books by Linda Gillard so far, 'Emotional Geology', 'A Lifetime's Burning' and 'Star Gazing', I enjoyed them all immensely as I did with 'House of Silence'.

Linda Gillard has a amazing talent in her creation and development of characters, characters you are care about and identify with. With 'House of Silence' all of the characters are memorable and leave a lasting impression. Gwen, the main character is down to earth, talented, likeable and strong. Her background has left a lasting impression, Gwen's is still coping with her grief but has created a front to show the world that she is coping.

Alfie was very much a complex character, at times you did not know why he acted the way he did and as the story progressed, you realise he had reached a point where he did not know how to act, did not know who he was.

Along with Gwen, Marek was my favourite character, the mysterious Polish gardener (which added even more to his mystique) he was a subtle character but made a impact, like the rest of the characters he had a past, which he faced as best he could and tried to moved on.

Alfie's sisters and mother were also well written characters, they had lived with secrets and it showed in Creake Hall, at times, the house seemed claustrophobic despite the size, all of the secrets weighting the people who lived there down.

'House of Silence' is a mystery with a difference and keeps you thinking to the end.

A definite must read, read it as soon as you can.

Ashley Daviau says

This book was definitely not what I was expecting and I thoroughly enjoyed every page of it! Every time I thought I had something figured out a new twist came along that shook everything up and had my jaw dropping. This was such a fast paced, crazy family story with so many hidden secrets and once I started reading I couldn't turn the pages fast enough! The only thing that slightly affected my enjoyment was Alfie, I truly despised him as a character!

Kathleen Jones says

Another respectably published author whose publisher didn't think her latest book was 'commercial' enough, so Linda took the business into her own hands and has already sold 12,000 copies of her novel over the internet without any hype, reviews, or marketing campaign.

Linda Gillard is one of my fellow authors over on what used to be 'Kindle Authors UK' before Amazon complained and is now 'Authors Electric'.

I liked the plot summary of House of Silence (Rebecca meets Cold Comfort Farm) so I downloaded a sample and was soon captivated enough to buy the book. Like a lot of E-books, it's an affordable bargain at £1.90, unlike the outrageous £11.49 you have to pay to read Philippa Gregory on Kindle - twice the price of her paperbacks. How do they justify that?

This is a very well written novel, easy to read with a fascinating plot. Gwen, an orphan, meets Alfie, the actor, on the set of a BBC TV historical drama and begins an affair. Things get a little sticky when he goes home for his annual Xmas visit and Gwen insists on being taken along too.

Alfie's mother is a famous children's author who has written a best-selling series based on her son. She has four daughters, all outrageously neglected and is currently a senile figure confined to her bedroom (the mad woman in the attic). Home is a 17th century manor in Norfolk (the aptly named Creak Hall) and the family turns out to have more secrets than the Pentagon.

I enjoyed every minute of this book. It's written with considerable panache and humour, despite the fact that there's a very serious underlying thread to the book - how do we, as individuals and families, deal with tragedy?

If publishers are going to turn down sure-fire bestsellers like this one (as they seem to be doing) then I'm afraid the industry is in for a crisis. Authors don't need publishers any more. Not when they can do it for themselves as successfully as this.

If you're interested in E-books and authors doing it for themselves, check out www.authorselectric.blogspot.com

Liza Perrat says

A well-crafted suspenseful mystery of family secrets and drama that had me turning the pages till I reached the end. Thoroughly enjoyed it.
