



## The Queen of Hearts

*Wilkie Collins, Otto Penzler (Introduction)*

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**The Queen of Hearts** Wilkie Collins , Otto Penzler (Introduction)

**A trio of elderly bachelors plays Cupid in this ingeniously crafted novel by one of the 19th-century's finest storytellers**

A widowed lawyer named Griffith has been appointed legal guardian of Jessie, a lively young woman. In order for Jessie to claim her inheritance, her late father's will stipulates that she must spend 6 weeks with Griffith each year. Consequently, Jessie travels to a remote part of Wales to the castle where the lawyer and his 2 brothers reside. To everyone's surprise and delight, Jessie and the 3 men get along splendidly. Hoping that she will stay to meet Griffith's son, who is on his way home from the Crimean War, the brothers devise a plan à la Scheherezade: Each night they will tell Jessie a new thrilling story that will enchant her into staying.

This ebook features a new introduction from Otto Penzler and has been professionally proofread to ensure accuracy and readability on all devices.

## The Queen of Hearts Details

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## From Reader Review The Queen of Hearts for online ebook

### Cheryl says

It took me a few months to finish this book, however because the novel is really just ten separate short stories set into the framework of a novel it was not a problem and I didn't have the problem of losing the story line. The framework for the novel is that a young girl is required by her late father's will to spend a certain amount of time with an aged gentleman her father named as one of her guardians and his two bachelor brothers in a remote area of Wales. While she's staying there the guardian learns that his son, who is on his way home to England, is in love with the girl and wants his father to keep her there until he returns and can declare his love. So, in order to convince the girl to stay beyond her allotted time the man and his brothers each write down stories from their lives or that they heard from other people, ten stories in all, and read one each night. The stories had interesting variety and some probably could have been turned into full length novels, plus the structure makes this book one that you can pick up and put down very easily.

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### Sol González says

Este libro lo compe en el Fondo de Cultura de la Ciudad de México, en uno de mis paseos por el eje central. Anteriormente una visita a México y específicamente a la zona del Palacio de Bellas Artes era un sinónimo de visitar librerías; primero de viejo, posteriormente las nuevas. Era una aventura en la que me gustaba emprender cada cierto tiempo... y cada cierto tiempo acababa con el bolsillo roto porque no podía dejar pasar la oportunidad de tener en mis manos todos esos libros.

A partir de que compré el Reader he dejado un poco esa costumbre (debido al reader y a los constantes recordatorios de Agustín). Ahora leo mas... pero compro menos. Aunque sigo reacia a dejar al cien por ciento esta manía de decorar las paredes de mi casa con lomos de libros.

La llegada a The Glen Tower de Jessie, joven ahijada de Griffith, un anciano caballero inglés que comparte esta casa de campo con sus dos hermanos, también viejos y solos en el mundo, hace que la vida de estos caballeros se ponga súbitamente patas arriba. Lo que en principio no parecía más que un estorbo acaba convirtiéndose en una auténtica aventura, ya que los tres ancianos tendrán que ingeníárselas para que su invitada, una joven vivaracha y algo superficial, prolongue su estancia en su hogar. Con este fin, urden un plan magistral: entretenér a la muchacha contándole una historia diferente cada noche, como si de un moderno "Decamerón Victoriano" se tratase. Y así, la trama principal, con la hermosa campiña inglesa como telón de fondo magníficamente descrita, sirve para desgranar diez narraciones distintas en las que el autor despliega su gran maestría literaria al tocar todo tipo de géneros, desde la novela de misterio al folletín, pasando por el cuento moral o la narración humorística.

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### Becky says

Although it took me months to finish reading this collection of short stories by Wilkie Collins, I still found

most of it to be delightful. I just LOVED the framework of this book. Three old men are entertaining a young lady, Jessie Yelverton. (I believe one of the men is one of her guardians?). As her visit draws to a close, one of the men in hopes of keeping her around just long enough for his son to return home--he would love to have her for a daughter-in-law--proposes that she stay for ten more nights to hear ten stories. The brothers will take turns writing/telling/sharing stories. In between each of the stories, there is narrative linking them all together. The three brothers are Griffith, Owen, and Morgan. The ten stories are: Brother Owen's Story of the Black Cottage, Brother Griffith's Story of the Family Secret, Brother Morgan's Story of The Dream Woman, Brother Griffith's Story of Mad Monkton, Brother Morgan's Story of The Dead Hand, Brother Griffith's Story of the Biter Bit, Brother Owen's Story of the Parson's Scruple, Brother Griffith's Story of A Plot in Private Life, Brother Morgan's Story of Fauntleroy, Brother Owen's Story of Anne Rodway.

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### **Heidi says**

I've liked everything I've read by Wilkie Collins but this collection of 10 short stories (plus an 11th story to provide the framework for the others) was merely okay. And for some reason I expected ghost stories (I don't know why) but these stories were more like character studies with a light mystery.

I like Wilkie Collins' writing and his characters. But if you haven't read anything by him, I'd recommend *The Woman in White* or *The Moonstone* instead.

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### **Megan says**

This was the first book of "short stories" by Wilkie Collins I have read, and I loved it! The main plot was a great game of tricking someone into staying for her own happiness and that of a beloved son, and the short stories that were told throughout were funny, sad, romantic and very interesting. They all varied in plot and style, and I loved how none of them fit together except in their purpose: to encourage Jessie to stay.

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### **Amle says**

Griffith, a widower and retired lawyer, finds himself the sole legal guardian of Jessie, a spritely, young woman set on lighthearted adventure. According to her late father's will she must spend six weeks per year with her guardian if she is to gain full access to her inheritance. So she sets out to one of the most desolate and remote areas of Britain to live for six weeks with Griffith and his two older brothers.

Will the three old men manage to keep the young lady entertained and comfortable in their tower? Why is it so important that she stays?

Willie Collins has quickly worked his way to being one of my favourite authors. *The Queen of Hearts* is a collection of short stories surrounded by a frame of the thoughts and observations of a kind, old man, set on the happiness of the people around him.

A light story of many stories. There will be ghosts, there will be villains and there will be love.

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## **Mary says**

It's not *The Woman in White*, but it's entertaining. Some stories are good and some are bad, but I particularly enjoyed the way Ann Rodway in the last story reminded me of the (awesome) protagonist of *The Woman in White* (not yet written at this time if I'm not mistaken). The framing story was also cute and even a bit suspenseful. I like how Collins seems to play with short story framing conventions--so many of the classics of the genre (see the *Decameron*, *Heptameron*) basically have their characters stuck together and trying to kill time by telling stories. Collins adds an objective to make it a bit more; the stories have to accomplish an end. That was fun.

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## **~ Cheryl ~ says**

### **I'd forgotten how much I enjoy Wilkie Collins' writing!**

In *The Queen of Hearts*, three elderly brothers host a young woman in their rambling old castle in South Wales, called The Glen Tower. The prescribed length of her stay is six weeks, but due to extenuating (spoiler) circumstances, the brothers devise a great plan to trick her into lengthening her stay, by means of composing stories, and promising to read one per night for an additional ten days.

This premise sounds ridiculous when written out like this, but the motive for the plan is rather charming; the brothers are adorable each in their own way; and I was totally on board with this playful spin on the Arabian Nights theme.

Essentially, the book is more a collection of these ten short stories ('written' and read by the brothers), than it is one long novel. But the main story of the brothers and their young charge acts as an outer frame holding it all together. I enjoyed some of the short stories more than others, but each was suspenseful enough to keep me engaged. It's a neat little trick on Collins' part, as I myself was "tricked" into "lengthening my stay" in the book, all so I could see how the brothers' plan to detain their fair houseguest turns out in the end.

Note to self: Must remember to mix more Wilkie Collins into my reading pile.

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## **Lucy says**

I think he may have been paid by the word for this one. An excellent framing device, but much longer than necessary, and a very mixed collection of stories within it. One or two could have been excellent full length novels - Mr Dark is a funnier Sergeant Cuff - but some of them were just potboilers. Probably only one for the Collins completist.

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### **Julie Davis says**

This is a set of mystery stories with a framing story. Most reviews seem to enjoy the mysteries most but I, contrary as always, really liked the main framework.

Three aged brothers live in an isolated country manor. One of the brothers is guardian to a lovely, willful girl and, as part of a complicated set of legal requirements, she must spend 6 weeks with them. The brothers, for reasons I don't want to disclose, write down some of their most interesting stories and they read one a night for the girl.

Sounds boring, I know, but the relationship between the men and the girl was charming and I loved it. Plus some of the stories went on to become classics because I know I've read them in different mystery anthologies.

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### **Kathleen says**

The author, Wilkie Collins, wrote in the mid 1800's, so this novel, "The Queen of Hearts," reflects the sensibilities of the time. In all his novels, the author's words create an environment of suspicion, mystery, and unease, like scary music in a movie. He weaves an overwhelming feeling of suspense for today's reader despite our differing ideas of what constitutes horror, insult, and danger, especially for women. This novel is different from Mr. Collins more famous mysteries. "The Queen of Hearts" is a collection of short stories surrounded by an overall plot of the main character, his son, and a young woman houseguest. I thoroughly enjoy reading Wilkie Collins.

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### **Pat says**

(read in the Project Gutenberg edition, which is pretty free of typos) A collection of stories told to entertain a young woman. The usual Wilkie mix of suspense, humor, and memorable characters: I'd love to read more about Mr. Dark ("A Plot in Private Life"), who's one of Collins' eccentric geniuses. "The Siege of the Black Cottage" and "The Dead Hand" are genuinely tense. (How *would* I react if I had to share a room with a corpse?) "Anne Rodway" is an interesting bit of amateur detecting. Of two minds about "The Parson's Scruple," which seems unclear on whether or not the parson is to be admired for sticking with what he preaches, or disdained for being so inhuman.

I do love Collins' women, who are much more realistic than Dickens': heroines are generally level-headed, and there's none of that tweeness Dickens indulged in. The heroine of "Black Cottage" does an excellent job of holding off bad guys, and Anne Rodway is admirable in her quest to give her friend a dignity in death that she was denied in life. His male characters are great, too, from the scrupulously loyal narrator in "Plot in Private Life" to Mr. Dark, the jolly-looking investigator who interviews people without seeming to (and poor Mr. Meeke!). There is some racism here, though, with a biracial character being insulted almost every time she appears (though that's also because of who's telling the story).

All in all, a nice collection of entertaining stories.

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### **Manuel Alfonseca says**

Interesting collection of 10 short stories, plus an extra one, equally interesting, that makes the frame of the other ten. The best stories, in my opinion, are the frequently antologized "The biter bit," plus "A plot in private life" and the frame story ("The Queen of Hearts").

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### **Mandolin says**

A remote castle in Wales inhabited by three older men is the last place on earth that a young, lively girl of 18 would want to spend time. And yet, when forced by circumstances to take up residence there for six weeks prior to coming of age, Jessie surprises them all by finding immense enjoyment in the experience and by capturing each of her adopted uncles' hearts. As the time grows near for her to return to England, the three brothers find it necessary to trick her into prolonging her stay until a certain day. They cunningly decide to "trap" her interest by suggesting a new scheme of entertainment. Having heard her complaints about the lack of good stories present in the day's literature ("I'm sick to death of novels with an earnest purpose...what I want is something that seizes hold of my interest and makes me forget when it is time to dress for dinner, something that keeps me reading, reading, reading, in a breathless state to find out the end,") they propose to take turns telling her thrilling stories that will satisfy her taste for excitement and adventure. Jessie agrees to a trial run and, delighted by the first of the stories, continues to await each new installment with eager anticipation. When the last story is told, the reason for their scheme's necessity is unveiled after a brief period of heightened uncertainty about its success and Jessie finds her ties to the three men and the old castle made even tighter.

I enjoyed this book so much! Wilkie Collins was such a masterful storyteller and I became his devoted fan when I first read his novels, *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. Collins' ability to evoke an intense atmosphere of suspense and mystery is equaled by very few authors today and is evident in all of the short stories told by the three brothers. Though they all have their merits, my favorite was certainly the lighter tale told by Brother Griffith (the main narrator) about the humorous trial of a "cunning" (and not too modest) law clerk as a member of the police force. Definitely a recommendation for any mystery / suspense lover or Wilkie Collins fan.

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### **Nicola Brown says**

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An enjoyable read.