



Strange Magic

Syd Moore

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Rosie Strange doesn't believe in ghosts or witches or magic. No, not at all. It's no surprise therefore when she inherits the ramshackle Essex Witch Museum, her first thought is to take the money and run.

Still, the museum exerts a curious pull over Rosie. There's the eccentric academic who bustles in to demand she help in a hunt for old bones, those of the notorious Ursula Cadence, a witch long since put to death. And there's curator Sam Stone, a man about whom Rosie can't decide if he's tiresomely annoying or extremely captivating. It all adds up to looking like her plans to sell the museum might need to be delayed, just for a while.

Finding herself and Sam embroiled in a most peculiar centuries-old mystery, Rosie is quickly expelled from her comfort zone, where to her horror, the secrets of the past come with their own real, and all too present, danger as a strange magic threatens to envelope them all.

Strange Magic Details

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From Reader Review Strange Magic for online ebook

Vanessa Wild says

When Rosie Strange's grandfather dies, she inherits the Essex Witch Museum. As she decides what exactly she is going to do with it, Rosie and the museum's curator, Sam Stone, are approached by a professor who has an odd request - to discover the whereabouts of the remains of a convicted witch from the 16thC, the bones of whom will help with the exorcism of a young boy who has been possessed. It's a tale loosely inspired by Ursula Kemp, a woman who was executed for witchcraft in 1582.

It took me a little while to get into the story as I didn't really take to the style of writing. It's told in a spoof-like way, somewhat 'tongue-in-cheek', which was at odds with the subject matter. Nonetheless, as I persevered I found that I was thoroughly enjoying the mystery and it ended up being quite a page turner! It's fast paced and very intriguing. It's a race against time type of plot. I loved all the little bits of interesting information, too. I did find Rosie a little irritating, though, and the 'will they, won't they' scenario between her and Sam grated. However, I got used to the banter between them by the end of the book.

A weirdly fun read which, after a rocky start, I had great trouble putting down! I look forward to reading the next book in the series, Strange Sight.

Reviewed for TBC on Facebook.

Sarah says

Strange Magic is a novel that young adults and adults alike can read and enjoy.

I loved the idea of inheriting a museum, especially one to do with witches. Sadly Rosie wants rid and to get back to her everyday life. These plans are delayed though when they end up on a mission to find the bones of a witch.

Rosie is quite a head strong character but I think she meets her match with Sam. Sam is very passionate about his work in the museum and he is determined to change Rosie's mind as well as help her on their mission.

I have to admit when I read the description, I think because it's to do with dark magic and witches I thought it would be darker than what it actually is. Being a horror and crime fan, I love my books quite dark. Where as this is a good read, it just wasn't quite dark enough for me. I would certainly still recommend it for people who like a mysterious and engaging read that is more on the lighter side though.

My thanks to Cailin at Point Blank for a copy of this book. All opinions are my own and not biased in anyway.

Kate~Bibliophile Book Club says

I'm a big fan of book covers, and upon seeing just the proof for *Strange Magic*, I knew I had to get my hands on it as I love a skull being used in a design. I've seen the finished product too, and it is even more beautiful!

Strange Magic focuses on Rosie Strange, who has inherited the Essex Witch Museum. Initially, her first thought is to sell it and go back to her life without a second thought. As we all know though, life is often not that simple. Upon claiming ownership, Rosie and the curator, Sam, are tasked with trying to recover the remains of a witch who had lived hundreds of years previously.

Strange Magic follows Rosie and Sam as they undertake this search, and find themselves tangled up in a centuries-old mystery surrounding Ursula Cadence. Odd things start to happen, and there is an air of prestidigitation throughout the course of the book which lends itself nicely to the story.

I think *Strange Magic* is a cosy mystery as opposed to a thriller, and there is nothing wrong with that. It was a welcome change of pace to my usual reads, and it was a very gentle story. The witchcraft and history were quite interesting too, as it's not something I would have ever thought to read about.

If you like Golden Age crime novels, I think *Strange Magic* would definitely be a book worth putting on your list. An easy pace, suspenseful and with interesting characters, it was a nice break from the norm for me.

Recommended!

Milliebot says

When I first saw this book listed on LibraryThing's monthly giveaway, I was initially enamored by the cover art and found the urban fantasy-sounding plot intriguing. Unfortunately, I found the cover more interesting than its contents.

I felt no initial excitement upon being introduced to Rosie and the museum she inherited, nor did I care about who I assumed would be her potential love interest, and current museum curator with a passion for all things witchcraft, Sam. The two are asked to help recover the bones of a long-dead local witch who was hung, as her son appears to have taken possession of a boy who fell from a tree and the strain on the child is killing him. I didn't find myself invested in this quest either, but at least hoped for some magic, as the title and plot summary implied.

Rosie was an adequate main character, but nothing about her personality had me rooting for her. Her relationship with Sam was puzzling, as they initially didn't like each other and he seems to have little faith in her navigational and driving skills – he's constantly giving her driving instructions and telling her to slow down throughout the whole book, and boy is there a lot of driving – and I didn't find myself hoping they would get together, though it appeared Rosie did, when she wasn't cursing Sam for being a nuisance. I know the whole, 'you annoy me and we seem to hate each other but then actually grow to love each other' is a common romantic trope, and I enjoy it when it's done well. But Rosie and Sam primarily seemed to annoy each other or just be on neutral ground, with the occasional flirty scene that felt out of place and never truly

culminated into any meaningful relationship.

Characters aside, the plot didn't grab me either, though I felt it should have. They were questing after these old bones, which had been sold to various different people since they'd been accidentally dug up from their original resting place. The boy was clearly exhibiting signs of possession and needed rescuing or death was imminent – yet I felt there were no stakes in this novel. Maybe it was because I knew the boy wouldn't die – I mean, I didn't truly know for certain, but it was a pretty safe assumption – and maybe it was because there was no actual magic happening that my interest flagged.

Mostly I was bored while reading – especially during the driving scenes; why is there so much driving!? There was a lot of historical information, which I assume is accurate, but most of it was delivered via infodumping, so I tended to skim those bits. I was expecting an urban fantasy novel with “real” magic, but *Strange Magic* takes a more skeptical approach and lets the reader decide whether some scenes in the book are truly magical or just strange coincidences and character belief. From my perspective the magic felt more like the product of Rosie's hyperactive imagination and thus, I was left disappointed.

It seems like there will be a sequel to this novel, but I won't be reading it. If you're interested in reading about the background of some of those who were killed as witches in England and you enjoy a vague, implied sort of magic, this book may be for you. It was not what I expected however and I didn't find anything about the characters or writing style that particularly stood out for me.

I received this book from LibraryThing in exchange for my honest review.

Pouting Always says

After her grandfather dies Rosie inherits the Essex Witch Museum from him even though they were never close. Determined to sell it and pocket the money she heads over to check it out and have a talk with who ever is maintaining the place. While there to talk to the curator Sam she gets interrupted by Professor George Chin who wants them to find the body of a women executed in the 16th century named Ursula Cadence. Initial Rosie wants to decline to do so but then she hears of the commission and decides otherwise. At there second meeting with Professor Chin they learn of the true reasons why they are on the hunt for Ursula's bones, that is a young boy named Max seems to have been taken over by her son Thomas who wasn't heard of again after Ursula's death. Thomas's testimony may have helped to get Ursula killed and the guilt is supposed to be making the ghost of Thomas distraught, leaving Max's only chance at life being reuniting Thomas and his mother. Rosie and Sam soon head out to hunt for the bones which leads them from one place to the next as they chase the clues, the constant supernatural happenings as they go along only making them question their own beliefs.

I'm not a fan of the quintessential British mystery novel and so this one just wasn't for me. It was more on the cozy reads side rather than the thriller and I really only like mysteries that build up the suspense. I also didn't really like the writing very much, it felt oddly childish and information kept being dumped on me that didn't quite feel relevant to the plot. I also found a lot of the scenes, especially the ones where they're not searching, to feel like they were there just to fill space. The book kind of reminded me of Scooby Doo type of mystery and it didn't work for me.

Eve Recinella (Between The Bookends) says

I read this AGES ago and totally forgot to write a review. All I remember is that I liked it. *lol*

Paromjit says

This is a witty and entertaining beginning to the Rosie Strange series. Essex girl and Leytonstone Benefit Fraud investigator, Rosie, has inherited the Essex Witch Museum from her estranged grandfather Septimus about whom she knows little. She arrives intending to sell the place, meeting the crazy Audrey outside, Hecate the cat, and the oddly attractive curator, Sam. As with all the best laid plans, things go haywire when the well known Professor George Chin arrives, sparking a budding bromance with Sam. Chin introduces them to James Harris, the father of Max, a possessed child, and the Reverend Dr Kaspar and are shown a disturbing video of Max who appears to have been taken over by Thomas, the son of a sixteenth century witch, Ursula Cadence. They want Sam and Rosie to locate the bones of Ursula to prevent Max dying.

Sam and Rosie agree to do so, embarking on a road trip that takes in the home of Ursula, St Osyth, Boscastle, Plymouth and Whitehall. It is not easy to discover exactly where the bones are and they encounter some pretty strange phenomena. In a search that brings Rosie closer to her family history and personal identity, they find themselves close enough to get their hands on the bones, only to have them stolen. Rosie is further startled to discover the existence of the Occult Bureau within MI6 and her family connections to the unit and Monty Walker. Monty informs them of the dangerous Macka Bogovic and the notorious Elizabeth Barbary, who have nefarious plans for Ursula's bones. Sam and Rosie make their way to the ridiculous and aptly named gothic Hades Hall. Facing betrayal and the fight of their lives, Rosie is determined to keep a promise to get the bones to St Dismas Church and save Max.

I really enjoyed reading this well written and atmospheric novel. The crazy, acerbic and comic character of Rosie Strange, sceptic and wit, is both compelling and mesmerising, she easily keeps and maintains our interest. The adventures her and Sam embark on leads to an intriguing and close relationship between them. There are some wonderfully pastiche comic horror moments that I loved. An engaging and funny read. Thanks to Oneworld Publications for an ARC.

Lauren says

High hopes for this but thought it was badly written, full of ableism, classism and fatphobia, and the main character takes pride in being a Benefit Fraud investigator/class traitor.

2 stars because I did learn a bit about the Essex Witch Trials.

Rose A says

An intriguing premise that grew more interesting as I progressed through the book, but marred by a protagonist and narrator I simply couldn't like. This was less to do with Rosie herself than the inner voice she had. It was too subtly and obviously chick lit when the subject matter of the book was more fantasy. Too many descriptions of what characters were wearing and a blatant and unsubtle attempt to show Rosie's attraction to Sam. She grew on me a bit over the course of the book but not enough to encourage me to read more of her adventures. This is a shame because the concept of the novel was interesting. I just wish it had been differently written.

Amanda says

When Benefit Fraud investigator Rosie Strange inherits the ramshackle Essex Witch Museum her grandfather Septimus built, she plans to sell it as soon as possible. She doesn't believe in witches and magic, and she's taking a few days off work to get the place in order before she calls the estate agents. Still, she can't help but see the potential in the place, and in the curator, Sam Stone. He's brilliant and sexy, but prickly and annoying.

Rosie barely has time to acclimatize when George Chin, a rather eccentric academic, arrives with an urgent request: find the bones of the notorious Ursula Cadence (a witch burned at the stake during one of the first witch hunts) and reunite her with her long-dead son. Rosie and Sam are thrown into a race against time to find the bones, save a young boy, and try not to drive each other bonkers in the process.

This story has everything: a smart, capable, funny protagonist; an interesting, twisty magical mystery; secret societies engaged in an age-old battle of good vs. evil; an enjoyable but not distracting romantic subplot; nascent magical abilities; and a really great cat named Hecate who's probably the most sensible out of everyone.

This was a deftly-woven tale of mystery, magic, and love and I had such a blast reading it. I've already added the next in the series, *Strange Sight*, to my to-read list: this is one of those series you hope goes on to span a good dozen books or more.

Provided by Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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❀?Rory?❀ says

Not bad at all. Lots of strange and interesting characters and the author has a great sense of humor.

Kirsty 📚📖♥? says

This is a fun book that takes us on a tour of the South East of England as Rosie Strange and Sam go on a

hunt for the missing bones of a 16th century witch. Rosie has inherited the Essex Witch museum from her late grandfather and skeptical of all things spooky and witchy has plans to sell before agreeing to find the missing witch bones to potentially save a young boys life.

There's not a great deal of mystery in it. It's a beach read for those of us that don't read chick-lit. It passes quite quietly as the two go off on what to me felt mostly like a road trip tale for the first half of the book kicking in then as the bad guys starting coming out of the woodwork and we get the intriguing MI6/ spy network joining in the chase.

I would have liked more on the bad guy (girl in this instance). She sounded actually really interesting and with a name like Elizabeth Bathory I was dying for them to bring in links about the namesake but sadly they didn't. But I did like the fact that despite being the bad guy she has no lines and is practically non-existent in the book. I want more!

It's fast paced, taking place over a few days. There's a lot of energy in the book. I enjoyed the characters. They guys have hidden depths and I'm looking forward to Rosie accepting her latent talents and working with them in future books. There's a lot of room for these characters to grow.

Overall a good book. Thumbs up :)

Claire says

Recap - Rosie Strange inherits her Grandfather's witch museum and on a visit to determine how best to shut it down & sell it she gets dragged into a witch hunt with curator Sam Stone. A little boys life hangs in the balance and a witches skeleton is the only cure.

Review - pacey, filled with interesting historical snippets, and the thrill of supernatural horror. I enjoyed all the witch hunt backstory and the theory that the Essex girl is the new hunted witch - interesting stuff. The hauntings, possession and exorcism were suitably spooky, atmospheric and bone chilling. The relationship between Strange and Stone however felt a little off, almost trying too hard to be a will they, won't they. First they flirted then they didn't, then they were, then they weren't. All a bit too YA for this book. The other part that didn't really work for me was the apparent ritual about to happen at Hades Hall with Lady Barbary et al, it felt rushed. It was a great angle to include and historically interesting but felt almost tacked onto the end.

I enjoyed reading this and I'm intrigued by the set up for the next adventure of Strange & Stone.

Sara (thebookwitchscauldron) says

Rating: 1/5 Stars

I might come back to do a proper review for this, but not only did I think that this book was a mess structurally, with a confused, all over the place plot, but it is sprinkled with ableism, fatphobic characterisations, and slut shaming.

This book is bad. Don't waste your time.

Lisa says

I couldn't finish this one as it's not for me :(

I love the cover! And thought witches would be interesting but this is not really what I expected and I'm not keen on the interplay between the two main characters.

They fancy each other but also wind each other up - it's a love/hate thing - I know these things happen but I just don't want to read about it.

Made it to 40% but the thought of carrying on with it was putting me off reading.

Sorry, not my cup of tea!
