



## The Widow's House

*Carol Goodman*

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This chilling novel from the bestselling, award-winning author of *The Lake of Dead Languages* blends the gothic allure of Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* and the crazed undertones of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* with the twisty, contemporary edge of A.S.A. Harrison's *The Silent Wife*—a harrowing tale of psychological suspense set in New York's Hudson Valley.

When Jess and Clare Martin move from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to their former college town in the Hudson River valley, they are hoping for rejuvenation—of their marriage, their savings, and Jess's writing career.

They take a caretaker's job at Riven House, a crumbling estate and the home of their old college writing professor. While Clare once had dreams of being a writer, those plans fell by the wayside when Jess made a big, splashy literary debut in their twenties. It's been years, now, since his first novel. The advance has long been spent. Clare's hope is that the pastoral beauty and nostalgia of the Hudson Valley will offer some inspiration.

But their new life isn't all quaint town libraries and fragrant apple orchards. There is a haunting pall that hangs over Riven House like a funeral veil. Something is just not right. Soon, Clare begins to hear babies crying at night, see strange figures in fog at the edge of their property. Diving into the history of the area, she realizes that Riven House has a dark and anguished past. And whatever this thing is—this menacing force that destroys the inhabitants of the estate—it seems to be after Clare next...

## The Widow's House Details

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## **From Reader Review The Widow's House for online ebook**

### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

I read *The Lake of Dead Languages* by Carol Goodman a couple of years ago and was deeply impressed with the book. After that, did I read *The Ghost Orchid* and *The Sonnet Lover* and was not as impressed (not bad books, just not as good as *The Lake of Dead Languages*). So, when I saw this book and read the description did I immediately want to read it. I love old mysterious houses and the description of this book, about a couple moving there as caretakers made me think of *The Shining*. Especially since the husband is a writer.

I quite enjoyed reading *The Widow's House*, the story is good, and I felt that the characters are complex and there is something very weird going on. Clare Martin has had problems in the past, for instance, a miscarriage when she was in college and her childhood was a hard one. And, now at the house, is she experiencing things that make her wonder if the house is haunted or if she is losing it.

One thing I truly loved about the book is how not everything is at it seems, Clare's husband Jess didn't make a good first impression on me, and although the book did I feel that he was a self-centered son of a bitch. But, the ending, without wanting to give anything away, I love how Carol Goodman decided to write an ending that just turned everything around.

*The Widow's House* kept my interest up from the beginning until the end. I've been a bit tired of reading psychological thrillers with a woman in center trying to solve a mystery, but this book felt refreshing to read. I felt that I connected with the story and its characters and I was eager to learn the truth about the house.

### **4.5 stars**

*I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through Edelweiss for an honest review!*

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### **Book of Secrets says**

I enjoyed this Modern Gothic from Carol Goodman. It's creepy and twisty, and it keeps you guessing as to what's really going on.

The main characters are Jess and Clare Martin, who met in an "invitation only" writing class in college. Jess had one novel published in his early twenties, but that was years ago, and now they're broke. The couple ends up back in their small college town as caretakers of their old writing professor's crumbling estate. It seems like the perfect place to rekindle Jess' writing career - possibly Clare's too - but the house has a dark history, and its ghosts don't want to keep quiet.

I liked the eerie atmosphere and uneasy feeling the story conveyed, and the mystery of the house's tragic past was intriguing. Loved how it all wrapped up in the end! I was quite surprised at the outcome. I'm glad I spotted this one at the library and will definitely add Carol Goodman's other books to my wishlist.

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## Fictionophile says

I'll admit first off that it was the stunning cover that first attracted me to this novel. Then, when I realized I had already read a book by this author that I really enjoyed ("The drowning tree"), the deal was sealed.

Set in the Hudson River Valley of Upper New York State, "The Widow's House" features a literary married couple, Clare and Jess Martin. They have left their Brooklyn life after experiencing financial problems and are now looking to 'escape to the country' and a new start. Their marriage has hit a rough patch and they sorely need a change. It seemed only natural that they would gravitate toward the Hudson River Valley, as that is where Clare grew up, where they had both gone to college, and where Jess had written his first novel.

They find that the newer houses are not to their taste and they cannot afford an older home with character. So it is that they finally agree to be caretakers at a gothic mansion called River House. The locals have altered its name to Riven House due to its murky history. Some call it "The Widow's House" because of the purported ghost. The house just so happens to belong to Jess and Clare's college mentor, Montague (Monty). Now elderly and unwell, his huge, octagon-shaped, gothic mansion has become too much for him to handle on his own.

Upon arriving at the house, Clare begins to hear a baby crying at night. She sees a woman on the grounds - a woman she suspects is the ghost of Riven House. But of course, her logical side says that must be impossible...

*"Riven House had the feel of a place that was encumbered with more than just financial losses."*

Jess begins to write again. He has become 'chummy' with Monty who is also writing a novel. They share a nightly drink and literary discussion. Meanwhile, Clare has met up with Dunstan, her first love, now a local police detective. She begins to research her genealogy. She knows that she was adopted and that her birth mother resided in a psychiatric hospital. Her research and with the support of Monty, Clare herself begins to write again. She had given up on her writing when she married Jess. Now she is inspired by her old notebooks (which Monty has kept) and the atmospheric Riven House. She writes the house's story of Mary Foley, the local Apple Blossom Queen who was seduced by one of Monty's forebears and made pregnant.

*"Fifty acres, one hundred apple trees bearing, deeded to John Foley on May 12, 1929, by Birdsill Montague in exchange for the maidenhood of one Mary Foley."*

Researching the story of Mary Foley brings many family secrets to light. Secrets that can be dangerous for Clare - and for Monty.

Atmospheric, with well developed characters, this novel was an enjoyable read. I'll give you a hint.... the plot reminded me a bit of the old Ingrid Bergman novel "Gaslight". The end third of the book, dripping with tension, was much faster paced than the first two thirds, bringing the book to a suspense-filled ending that brought the book to a very satisfactory close.

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## **Rheama says**

I've gotta tell ya. Page 153: I literally gasped, jumped, and clutched my chest while standing in a room full of strangers. I didn't see that coming even for a second. You got me good, Carol.

My warmth and appreciation for this book snowballed. At first, it was just a big mess of apples (yes, apples), annoying writers, and ghost cliches. Then patterns, connections, and secrets began to emerge until the last few pages it dawned on me this was a 4 star read instead of a 3.

With that being said, there's a LOT going on with this plot. Almost too much. Words like "overwrought" and "convoluted" kept coming to mind. But then it all came together, and I was so relieved Goodman had it under control the whole time. She left no branch of these fictional family trees empty.

Then she let it unravel again, and I was left staring at the last sentence, wondering if I had put my trust in the right place after all.

Not a good feeling in life, but really enjoyable in fiction.

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## **Kira says**

The mystery was weak. It meandered rather than having one big issue to focus on. The first half mostly focused on the apple blossom girl. A lot of that unraveled rather quickly, so it wasn't suspenseful. About halfway through I wasn't really sure where the story was going, and frankly didn't care either.

The thing that made this unbearable to get through was the characters. Clare was a doormat. She threw her life away for the asshole she married. What made it worse was that Clare never realized this; no matter how much her husband acted like a selfish prick, she was still devoted to the guy. Eventually reality hit her in the face, but by then I felt like she was an idiot for not figuring it out sooner.

Jess, the husband, was a worthless piece of shit. He was one of those people who had a stroke of luck, wrote a best selling book, but lacked the talent to do it again. His ego was so inflated from the success of his only book that he still thought he was something special many years later. Decent jobs would come his way and he'd turn them down because he was too good for them. Which basically meant he was doing absolutely nothing with his life, all the while claiming that he's wonderful. He was nothing but a selfish, snobby prick. The opinion of his wife didn't mean a damn thing to him. I really hated the guy.

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## **Carol says**

**The Widow's House** by Carol Goodman

4 ★'s

From the Book:

When Jess and Clare Martin move from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to their former college town in the Hudson River valley, they are hoping for rejuvenation—of their marriage, their savings, and Jess's writing career.

They take a caretaker's job at Riven House, a crumbling estate and the home of their old college writing professor. While Clare once had dreams of being a writer, those plans fell by the wayside when Jess made a big, splashy literary debut in their twenties. It's been years, now, since his first novel. The advance has long been spent. Clare's hope is that the pastoral beauty and nostalgia of the Hudson Valley will offer some inspiration.

But their new life isn't all quaint town libraries and fragrant apple orchards. There is a haunting pall that hangs over Riven House like a funeral veil. Something is just not right. Soon, Clare begins to hear babies crying at night, see strange figures in fog at the edge of their property. Diving into the history of the area, she realizes that Riven House has a dark and anguished past. And whatever this thing is—this menacing force that destroys the inhabitants of the estate—it seems to be after Clare next.

My Thoughts:

It was not exactly the ghost story that I was expecting but overall not a disappointing read either. Enough specters appear to keep the ghost story enthusiasts happy. Surprises along the way gave the story a nice suspense building pace while at the same time providing a dark and edgy atmosphere. It was an easy read and I would recommend this book to anyone that loves a mystery mixed with a few goose bumps..

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### **Sherri Thacker says**

Hauntings, ghosts ... etc.. Not sure what I believe but this book makes you think about it all.

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### **Kristy says**

Jess and Clare Martin met at Bailey College, in the Hudson River valley, but have been living in New York for years. Jess wrote a successful first novel not long after graduation, but that money has long been spent. He's been working on his second book for ages; it's long overdue, and he needs a new muse. So the two decide to move back to the Hudson River area, where Jess can focus on the book without distractions. They take on duties as caretakers at Riven House, the home of their former college professor, Monty. They can live in a nearby cottage in exchange for helping the elderly Monty with chores. But the setup has its own issues: it's Monty, after all, who wrote a review of Jess' first book that torments him to this day. And as they settle in, Clare begins to hear a baby crying at night and see shadowy figures around the pond of Monty's property. As she investigates local history, she thinks what she sees may be tied to the house's tormented past. The locals say the place is haunted and destroys everyone who stays there. Are Clare and Jess next?

You know how sometimes you start a novel and immediately know, from the first page, that you'll enjoy it? *THE WIDOW'S HOUSE* was that way for me. It sucked me in immediately and kept me interested throughout; I read it in about 24 hours. The book is filled with complicated characters, starting with Clare. You start to realize she's the ultimate unreliable narrator, but are never able to tell exactly how much. She appears unhappy with her selfish author husband and her marriage. She had a rough childhood--growing up in the Hudson Valley not far from Monty's estate, which has clearly affected the way she sees the world. The entire story is told from her point of view, and we're stuck with all events being filtered through her lens. It's genius really, and it is a refreshing change from so many novels lately that change narrators and time periods. You find yourself working and guessing with Clare as she unravels local history and the events unfolding at Riven House.

The novel is certainly told in the Gothic tradition. I first fell for Goodman via her excellent novel, *The Lake of Dead Languages*, and this book reminded me of that one in some ways. Unlike some Gothic novels, you do not have to suspend much disbelief as the creepy events unfold around Clare and Jess. There are parts of this book that are incredibly spooky, and it's quite well-done. I loved that I was frantically flipping the pages, constantly second guessing everything and wondering what was happening. There are some great twists that shock you, even as you're still trying to figure things out in you're head (much like Clare). This novel will leave you guessing. It's crazy and confusing, but fascinating and incredibly hard to put down. It's completely enjoyable and stays with you after you've finished it, going over various plot points. Highly recommend.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Edelweiss (thank you!) in return for an unbiased review; it is available everywhere as of 03/07/2017.

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### **Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says**

Clare and Jess Martin are struggling writers even though Jess has already had one book published. They both want to continue writing, and Jess wants to make his second book a best seller, but their finances are holding them back.

They have exhausted their savings and are now looking for a new home that they can afford. Unfortunately, everything is out of their price range.

But....when they have the offer to be a caretaker at Riven House in the town where they both went to college, where Clare grew up, and where their writing professor lived, they jump at the chance. Free lodging wasn't a bad deal either.

Who wouldn't want to re-connect with a famous writer who had been your college professor ?

The only "catch" is that the house is in utter disrepair and has many odd, creepy folks that live on the estate with the professor.

?The treasures Clare finds in the house as she is cleaning as well as the ghosts and the sounds that haunt the house? caught my interest.

?

THE WIDOW'S HOUSE has a gorgeous cover that pulls you in, and the story line along with the characters and what has happened and what currently happens at Riven House is intriguing.

A paranormal aspect is there, but it isn't over powering ?and ??definitely ?adds to the book's? interest.

It took me about 100 pages to get connected, but it was worth the wait? as the family saga and secrets unfolded.?

?Along with the mystery and eeriness of the house, there is a mystery about who Clare's birth mother really was.

Those readers who enjoy a mystery, a unique family, ghosts, family secrets, and a Gothic theme will enjoy THE WIDOW'S HOUSE.

Ms. Goodman has a marvelous writing style that will draw you in and have you easily connecting with the characters.

The ending is quite good. 4/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

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### **Lynn says**

I received this as a Goodreads Giveaway book but it was already on my list of books to look for. Carol Goodman is one of my favorite authors. This book did not disappoint.

Clare and Jess Martin relocate to the Hudson River Valley to try to restart their lives after they run into some professional, marital and financial difficulties. They take a job as caretakers for a mansion owned by their former English professor, Alden Montague, a rather eccentric old man. Clare starts seeing ghosts and hearing babies crying, reminiscent of an old village story about the house. As they both try to get their writing careers back on track, the story takes some strange and imaginative twists and turns. At some point you are just compelled to keep turning the pages to see how this all turns out. Some of the twists I saw coming, some took me by surprise.

The writing is very atmospheric and beautifully done. The term "Gothic" really applies here. A creepy old mansion, a haunted history, a woman in peril. Check, check, check.

The characters are all very interesting. For a while I thought that Clare might be an unreliable narrator, but I learned that many things in this story are not as they first seemed.

An absolute recommend.

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### **Melanie says**

Very atmospheric, with undertones that range from Rebecca and Rosemary's Baby to The Haunting of Hill House and Harvest Home. Not that this novel is derivative at all -- it's a truly engrossing and labyrinthine story of writers reconnecting with a former mentor in an octagonal house in upstate New York. They interact in the heart of apple country, with local folklore that may or may not be true, but certainly influences everyone's reality. As wonderful as Carol Goodman's previous Gothic-tinged novels.

Thanks to Edelweiss for the ARC.

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### **Jeanette says**

Many readers will like this one to at least 4 star, it's written through Claire's "eyes" thoughts. Her story, her marriage, her desires, her future wishes etc. She knows her own gifts, that's saying it mildly,



It is a constant melodrama. At one time she compares it to a soap opera plot when explaining to the law. On that, she is entirely correct.

This will be a treat for those who liked "Yellow Wallpaper" and action.

For me the writing was on the wall before the first 100 pages was out. A hazard of too much psychology and patho. psych. education and tracking in those cognitive field years work- so I'm going to leave this review before a branch from the tree outside spikes my keyboard.

Clever work, Carol Goodman- but leave less clues next time. How does one smell blood for hours in several locations when it originates with a finger nick in a distant original placement. But when bath tubs are strewn with it just upstairs? No? Claire has talents.

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## Elaine says

*The Widow's House* is a pretty formulaic ghost story stuffed full of family secrets in a small town, a woman spurned, a missing baby, an old, crumbling near derelict house and, of course, my favorite literary device (*I'm oozing with sarcasm*), **adultering**.

Clare and her husband Jess have returned to her small hometown of Concord for a fresh start in their lives; their marriage, their professional careers and their finances. In what feels like a serendipitous act of luck, they become caretakers to an old rambling estate nicknamed Riven House also owned by their former English professor, Alden Montague. The bond between the three of them grows and becomes a mutually beneficial, friendly and professional relationship.

Clare's creativity is triggered by the scary tale behind Riven House and she sets out to complete a story she wrote long ago in English class. At the same time, she is haunted by the specter of a long dead woman and feels her sanity begin crumbling in the wake of things she sees and can't explain. In the course of her research and investigation, she unlocks the secrets to her own identity, discovers her place and her special abilities in a family she had never known about, a sinister plot, and comes face to face with her own fears, much frightening than any ghost she can ever imagine.

The story wasn't bad, I guessed a few plot points as they happened but my main issue was that I didn't like Clare. I couldn't connect to her or empathize with her circumstances, not even when it was revealed she had a nervous breakdown and a difficult childhood. She had a doormat personality and allowed herself to be trumped by her famous husband, kowtowing to his demands, allowing her own talents as a writer to be overwhelmed by his criticism, her low esteem and passivity. That would explain why she doesn't realize her dick husband and former ex-girlfriend are trying to *Gaslight* her until the end.

Even the revelation that she could "*make things happen*" by thinking about it was *ho-hum* because I still couldn't see her as anything other than a dullard. Her behavior was irritable especially the way she always seemed to be appeasing Jess, especially in regards to her miscarriage years ago when they were in college. It seemed as if she couldn't be without a man, having driven her old boyfriend, Dunstan, away to be with Jess, the wannabe hipster.

Jess was your typical swaggering, one-hit wonder, talent-less hack. After having published a book in his early twenties, a decade later, he is still having trouble completing his second novel. He is jealous and and

resentful of Clare's talent and does nothing to encourage her flair for writing.

Alden Montague is no better; an old, doddering man past his prime whose greed and selfishness turns into a act of betrayal when he plagiarizes a story.

Clare just can't win. Cheating, murderous husband; cheating, lying dad. But don't worry, Clare's hunky, ex-boyfriend Dunstan re-enters her life just when she needs him (*natch*) and the ending is just what you expected.

There are no secrets in a small town where everyone knows everybody and is related to everybody. Subplots abound; Clare's adoption and her troubled relationship with her mother, her own mixed feelings about having grown up in a small town and how her life is so similar to Mary Foley, the ghost that supposedly haunts Riven House; there is the shocking death of a neighbor and the secrets she confided to Clare. There's almost too much going on.

There are plenty of descriptions of fog swirling on the ground, boggy marshes and inclement weather to add to the morose atmosphere, not to mention the obligatory ghostly apparitions and the faint sounds of a baby crying (which is creepy in any book, no matter the genre).

*The Widow's House* is my first book by Ms. Goodman and though I disliked all the characters, I would recommend the book to friends.

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## **Joyce says**

I've always loved a good Gothic novel, contemporary and historical, and Carol Goodman usually has a touch of that in her books. Not horror really and not psychological suspense but that uneasiness that builds throughout. They often take place in an isolated setting (here, an old mansion in the Hudson River Valley. It may be haunted but it's certainly full of dark secrets. Does it have a special pull on our heroine Clare? Does it cause madness? It's so well described that it's almost a character on its own) and there may be weather or something else that further isolates the characters (here, there's a lot of snow and ice.) Clare and Jess sell their twice-mortgaged house in Brooklyn and return to the Concord, NY area where they went to school and met. Jess is a published writer who has burned through the advance on his second book and now is in the grips of writer's block. Clare gave up her writing career and took part-time copy editing work, but now back at Riven House, as caretakers at the home of their favorite professor who savaged Jess's first book and always thought Clare the better writer, Clare is captivated by local legends and begins to write. And hear the cries of an infant somewhere in the house and environs and sees ghosts. Is she going mad (she was born in a madhouse) or has the house begun to possess her? Wonderful family secrets, a little romance, long-planned and deadly plots (or they may be imagined), ghosts, suicides, murder, and madness. What's not to like? And with the story told from Clare's point of view, we begin to wonder if she really is reliable narrator. The story moves at a relentless pace; there's a cast of stock Gothic characters but Clare is convincing; lots of plot twists and although the setting is contemporary with flashbacks (through scrapbooks) to the past, it really has a timeless feel; compelling style and wonderfully descriptive with references to Gothic/Horror greats (Poe, Jackson, Gilman, DuMaurier); creepy, atmospheric tone, evocative, paranoid, nightmare. For fans who miss Barbara Michaels and Daphne DuMaurier.

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## **Diane S ? says**

Jesse and Clare met in a selection only Writer's class taught by an enigmatic Professor. Although this Professor thought Clare had more talent than Jesse, it is Jesse who publishes a book and Clare who ends up as a copy editor in order to support her talented husband. The years have not been kind financially, Jesse unable to complete a second book, so they decide to sell everything they have and find a place where Jesse feels he can write. They will end up at the Octagon shaped house, called Riven by the townspeople, based on the supposition of the house being haunted after all the tragedy it had seen.

Was so in the mood for a ghost story and this fit the bill nicely. There is much mystery, not only about the house but in Clare's background as well. The pace is very quick, something always happening, but what exactly is going on? Is this house haunted or could there be another explanation? At times I thought I knew but then the author would mysteriously throw in another curve and I would once again be left wondering.

The characters are not exactly likable, but that didn't matter. To be honest not sure this actually deserves a four for the rating, sometimes I felt too much was happening, but it definitely kept me guessing . So for the enjoyment it provided, for the imaginative, twisty storytelling, that is what I decided to give this entertaining read.

ARC from William Morrow.

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