



Dolly Vardon

Anton Holden

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"I was bought as a slave and for a slave," Dolly told her daughters at bedtime. "Your father never loved me."

DOLLY VARDON is the story of a pretty orphan girl's struggle to survive in turn-of-the-century London and Paris; dancing in the streets for pennies, begging, stealing, and the dark side of Victorian England - one of the most horrendous eras of prostitution in the modern world. A chance encounter brings Dolly - the poorest of the poor - together with Harry Sidney Nichols, wealthy publisher and dealer of the rarest books, and publisher of books of every variety of sexual diversion and perversion at a time when printing and selling clandestine erotica was highly illegal. Bound together by Harry's fetish for the tiny foot and shoe, Dolly is introduced to a world of luxury and debauchery she never imagined. But there is a price, and it haunts Dolly Vardon all her life, through three generations of a dysfunctional family saga.

DOLLY VARDON is based on the many tales that Dolly told to her daughters, her lovers, and to the author, one of her many grandchildren.

Dolly Vardon Details

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From Reader Review Dolly Vardon for online ebook

Meghan says

Won this book as a Goodreads first-reads giveaway winner.

Written by grandchild Anton Holden, this is the autobiographical account of grandmother Dolly Vardon from birth to death. This novel takes readers through Dolly's life and is not for the faint of heart. Dolly grew up in London, however her account of the city is nothing near why we fantasize about going there today. Dolly grew up poor and the accounts throughout the book of molestation and sexual encounters make a person squirm in their seat for sure. Reading about a young Dolly's encounter with an older men who are quite perverted certainly makes a person uncomfortable. While it is a bit uncomfortable to read this is certainly a book worth reading as you do want to find out what happens to Dolly Vardon next. Dolly Vardon shows and incredible amount of strength and resilience in the novel. Despite growing up in deplorable conditions she does everything she can to survive and anything that is necessary for the survival of her family.

The book is very well written and I was very impressed at the level of detail since it comes forms Tories in which Dolly passed on to her grandchildren and is not being written by Dolly herself.

Stephanie says

In this biographical account,author Anton Holden takes us through the amazing life of his grandmother, Dolly Vardon. From birth to death, Dolly's life is quite extraordinary. She was abandoned shortly after birth to a London 'Baby Farm' in 1886 where she is put to work on the streets as soon is she is old enough so she can earn whatever money she can in whatever way she can.

While on the streets, Dolly's tiny feet catch the eye of Harry Sidney Nichols, a rich bookseller. Harry employs Dolly and uses her for his sexual fetish. These sections are written very straightforward and graphically, directly from stories passed down from Dolly. At times these sections were hard to read; however, it is definitely a story that needs to be told.

The author allows us to read about his grandmother's entire life giving us a wonderful look into a rare life of an inspiring and strong woman.

This book was received from the author in a Goodreads First-Reads giveaway in exchange for an honest review.

Linda Munro says

I won this book on goodreads but it was not at all what I anticipated. While some may consider it biograry and others may consider it historical, and I agree with both, there is definately both aspects in the book, it is far more porn than either.

I may have been able to handle reading the book if it did not concern a child; but it really got to me and I

would have to place the book aside on many occasions.

It is not a book that I would recommend.

Marie says

A look into the darker side of the Victorian era, when children and women were little more than playthings to depraved men.

Kept me riveted from the first page to the last.

Etcetorize says

This is a very disturbing book to read. I must admit that had I not won it for free in a GoodReads giveaway, I'm not entirely sure that I would've made it past the first few couple of chapters.

The subject matter includes various explicit references to fetishes and other sexual acts that include children. I understand that this may have been a reflection of the times (however I'm not naive enough to completely ignore the fact these despicable acts still happen today) but I don't want to read about it.

Seeing as how this is based on a true story I kept stopping to wonder just much the main character of the book had confessed to her grandson (the author) or other family members and just how much came from the author's own imagination.

Not only did the subject matter distress me but I found the style(s) of writing difficult to follow. The book changes perspective and style of storytelling often sometimes within the same paragraph. Once you get used to this you can begin to follow the story a little more easily.

I have no doubt that Ms. Dolly Vardon led a fascinating life. Her accomplishments, despite her childhood horrors, were many. However, her life choices even as an adult were extremely sad and self-centered.

This is what happens with a true story though. Sometimes people make stupid decisions. Sometimes people bury their head in the sand because it's easier than facing the truth. Sometimes history must repeat itself several times over before anyone realizes that there's a lesson to be learnt. There's no hiding from these weaknesses of humans.

I'm glad I had the opportunity to check this book out but it was a challenge for me.

Jeweleye says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway, but after about 80 pages, I found the descriptions of young Dolly's encounters with Nichols too distasteful to continue. To describe his obsession with young girls as a foot fetish is disingenuous.

Janet says

This biography about the author's grandmother, does not disappoint; an intriguing tale about class, poverty, ambition and fear that I could not put down. I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway, and really anticipated reading it, as it had been rated 5 stars. Dolly's life and family are described by family member's recollections and her strength and determination to provide for her family, given the times, her abuse at the hands of her family, and her lack of formal education, is inspiring. One of my favourite books this year.

Kristine says

3.5 stars

Original review found at <http://kristineandterri.blogspot.ca/2...>

* I won this book in a goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review.*

I don't even know where to begin with this book. So much happens throughout Dolly's life that it almost unimaginable. Most of it is not good and the majority of it is disgusting and extremely disturbing.

The book itself is well written and detailed with many short chapters. I must warn readers though that it deals with the perversions of that time in great detail and the entire book is centred around it. Anyone uncomfortable reading about sexuality, detailed sexual encounters or molestation should stay far away from this book.

Dolly's story is told from the time of her birth until her death and details the unfortunate circumstances that made up her life. From poverty as a young girl, to her time with Harry, her lover, and later her husband we get to know her story from beginning to end.

I felt sorry for Dolly during her early years in London and Paris and found myself rooting for her in the hopes that her situation would improve. She endured so much at such a young age that nobody should ever endure. I found myself not liking her as much at about the time that she decided to follow Harry to America. She seemed to have forgotten where she came from and turned selfish, conceited and cared only for class and money and looked down on the less fortunate. Perhaps this was because of her impoverished beginnings or the terrible things she went through but it was still unbecoming. I thought perhaps that her life would improve once she was in America and became a mother but it didn't. Her years in America I found hard to swallow. It went from disturbing to down right disgusting as far as I was concerned. I found myself hating pretty much everyone in the book including Dolly. After everything she went through I found it hard to fathom the way she dealt with the situation with her own daughter. I understand that times were different and I guess I should be thankful that I didn't live in that time because if it were me I would be locked up for murder. I just could not stomach her reaction to that situation.

I am glad that I read the book because I am always interested in stories of different times but it was not an easy read as far as content is concerned. Having said that, I am not going to lie, it is a very depressing and disturbing book.

Elizabeth says

I did not enjoy this book at all. I feel bad saying this, especially since you find out at the end of the book that the author was abused by the same man who sexually abused basically the whole family, but I almost felt like the portions about Dolly's abuse and rapes, and the rapes of her daughter, were written in pornographic

way. I don't think I can even keep this book, it was too disturbing and I will probably recycle it.

Sherry says

This is a disturbing book. Guess I have been sheltered. Couldn't put it down. The only reason I gave it 4 stars instead of 5 is because some of the descriptions were "over the top". This is not for the faint of heart, yet you will be mesmerized.

I have no doubt all this happened to Dolly and her family. She did anything she needed to do to survive. She was resourceful and it's not telling what she would have become if she had been born in a more privileged life.

I challenge you to NOT come away with the thoughts that Men Are Sick. Women were just objects to so many back in those days. I am sure there were some good ones but you won't find them between the covers of this book.

I don't have much time to read but I finished this in 3 days. Be prepared if you pick it up to read, you won't be able to put it down.

nikkia neil says

very graphic, be prepared to learn a lot about the unsavory side of victorian england and abroad.

Paula says

Dolly Vardon by Anton Holden

At the turn of the 19th century in Victorian London, Dolly Vardon is an orphan child living with Mrs. Dodd who takes care of her for money. While chasing a coal laden cart and picking up the falling pieces of coal to heat her home, Dolly is noticed by Harry S. Nichols, a wealthy publisher and seller of erotic books. He takes her in as his ward and promptly abuses her sexually while giving her everything that money can buy.

Although Dolly dislikes him, she goes with him to France and later, follows him to New York City because she needs a financial protector for herself and her children and she likes the life his money brings. All the while, she saves any money she gets for her future. When Harry becomes ill, Dolly sets up her own book shop with her own money.

An interesting story of how an orphaned girl does what she has to do to survive the inequities and injustices of the poor versus the rich in Victorian times and the injustices of being a woman in those times. Dolly is very clever and learns to be an independent woman in a time when women did not work or have the rights that they have today. When asked if she had a hard life Dolly answers, "Oh no!" she says cheerfully, "Life is what one makes of it."

I enjoyed reading about Dolly Vardon.

Mary says

I received this for FREE as a Goodreads giveaway. This book made me really really uncomfortable. A true story told from the seamy side of life. Poor Dolly grows up in deplorable conditions, and you just know it's going to get worse for her. And it does. There are a lot of perverted men in this book, and it is not for the faint of heart. I honestly cringed throughout, especially when young children were sexualized (fetish shoes, really?) I am not saying it is a bad book, it was actually a well written story, interesting and oddly compelling. The author paints a gritty picture of London at the turn of the century, when life was harsh and ugly. The sexual deviancies described throughout were often difficult to get through emotionally, and my own personal "ick reflex" to all of it is why I struggled between 3 and 4 stars. I eventually decided that while it was a tragic story, it was still a really good read. Hence my 4 star rating... I still can't get over that the life belonged to the author's Grandmother. I feel almost guilty for enjoying her story. A really nice touch were the photo's included at the back of the book.

Sarah Jackson says

I was lucky enough to win this book through a Goodreads Giveaway.

I must say that I was hardly able to put this book down. I was fascinated with Dolly's life and what was going to happen next. I wanted to see her as a survivor.

The story about Dolly's life is very well told. I cannot believe some of the things that she lived through from such an early age, however, she was fighting to continue to thrive. This book really opened my eyes regarding things that went on that you do not hear about everyday.

Dolly was abandoned about two weeks after her birth and when old enough was forced to the streets to find money any way she could. She went through more than you could imagine and grew up faster than she should have and at times I wondered if she would continue on, but she did.

In the end Dolly ended up doing what she had to for herself and her family to survive.

Win says

I won this book from Goodreads giveaway.

It is a real life tragic story. Dolly was a strong woman and managed to have the power back to live her life.
