



## The Franchise Affair

*Josephine Tey*

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## **The Franchise Affair** Josephine Tey

Robert Blair, a sober and respectable solicitor in an English market town, had an orderly life and an orderly law practice -- until his phone rang toward the end of one typically dull afternoon.

The call came from an equally sedate local resident named Marion Sharpe, who was in trouble with the police - of all things. Blair, who only knew her by sight, suggested she try the town's more flamboyant law firm, but Marion persisted: she needed help immediately and she wanted *him*. Blair finally agreed to come, and thereby found himself involved in a struggle to clear the name of the most fascinating woman he had ever met.

## **The Franchise Affair Details**

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Author : Josephine Tey

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## From Reader Review *The Franchise Affair* for online ebook

### Tracey says

This is most of my blog review: <http://agoldoffish.wordpress.com/2012...>

I read this thinking throughout "This book would make a fantastic movie. I can't believe it hasn't been adapted – it has everything." But it has been filmed, in Hollywood in 1950 only on VHS at the moment – co-starring Patrick Troughton, which means I really want it. The suspense throughout was amazingly well done – even without a literal life being at risk at any point, the stakes were quite high enough, and my involvement with the protagonists was very quickly clinched. The story is simple, and terrific: a girl of fifteen has shown up home after having been missing for weeks, black and blue and with a horrible story of having been held prisoner by two women who demanded she be their maid-servant. She describes the women, their car, and the house in exacting detail – a feat which is alarming and significant because the women are very nearly recluses, and the house is located behind walls high enough to block all but an elevated viewpoint. She can't know what she does unless the story is true – and the story can't be true – and these two women, mother and daughter, are in terrible trouble.

...It might, if you asked her, be wise not to remind Mr. Macdermott about it or he would stay up too late and she had great trouble getting him up in the morning.

"It's not the whisky," Blair said, smiling at her, "it's the Irish in him. All the Irish hate getting up."

This gave her pause on the doorstep; evidently struck by this new idea.

"I wouldn't wonder," she said. "My old man's the same, and he's Irish. It's not whisky with him, just original sin. At least that's what I always thought. But perhaps it's just his misfortune in being a Murphy."

I find it particularly interesting reading this sort of thing so soon after reading that astrology-themed anthology (I can't believe the phrase "astrology anthology" was never used between those covers.) I mocked the concept that the entire population can be lumped together in twelve great huge masses, each mass seen as completely homogenous. But here Tey's characters do something similar, over and over: people with that particular shade of slate blue eyes are (in the current slang) players; with baby blue eyes, plausible liars – and, particularly with those eyes being set even slightly irregularly, likely to be murderers; all Irish like to sleep in of a morning. Being half Irish (I would prefer to stay up late and get up late than ever get up early – mornings were invented by a sadist) with blue eyes (denim, I guess? Not very slate-y, thank God, nor light enough to be powder) meant that my eyebrows went up almost as much as being a Leo reading that story collection. There are other generalities demonstrated in *The Franchise Affair*, even as the main character Robert Blair scoffs at them: class, politics, gender. At least there are some reasons behind why all (or many) people of one socio-economic bracket might behave in a specific way; being born on a certain day never, as far as I can determine, makes for a binding factor among people.

It's not too often that the protagonists' motives for solving a case are as clean and clear-cut as they are in *The*

*Franchise Affair*. Yes, there is the need to clear the Franchise ladies' names. But overriding even that is the desire – no, the need to exact punishment. It isn't so much vengeance as retribution. Marion and her mother long to see the girl responsible for the hell they have gone through "undressed in public" – and that becomes Robert's life's mission. Come what may, part of what sees them all through the horror of it all is the determination that Betty Kane will be not only held accountable, she will be publicly exposed as the evil little piece of work she is.

*The Franchise Affair* is like an episode of *Criminal Minds* made personal, without any fussing about whether behavioral analysis is or isn't a science. Once the difference between what the girl is saying and what actually happened is completely understood, much of her makeup becomes very obvious, and that helps in the deduction of the rest. Interestingly, the character of Betty Kane is a sort of illustration of one side of the argument of "nature vs. nurture": her birth mother was worthless, and she takes after her mother despite a doting father and the perfect adoptive family. The woman who considers herself the girl's mother did everything right, and to all appearances had the results any mother would want: a quiet, well-adjusted, smart-though-not-brilliant, obedient girl. Appearances, however, are not only deceiving, they are very, very easily altered.

Horrifyingly, this is based on a true case: that of Elizabeth Canning, who wove a tissue of lies about being kidnapped and robbed and knocked out and locked up in 1753 ... or was it true? No one knows.

Alan Grant's participation in the story is peripheral – since the reader is wholeheartedly on the side of the accused, he is the enemy, at least technically, as he is the face of law enforcement required to investigate and prosecute based on the girl's story. And if the story had been true it would be a righteous cause. But his reluctance to be on her side is masterfully shown; he has his job to do, his duty, but he is not happy with the situation whatever evidence there is.

And he's right not to like it. Once the ball is started rolling, it will not be easy to stop, and no one involved is going to come out of this unscathed ... with the possible exception, if she wins, of Betty Kane.

The characters are, as is to be expected of Tey, fantastic. Robert is a wonderful unlikely hero, clawing his way out of the deep rut his life has become – and once he starts to emerge, there's no telling where he'll end up. The two Sharpe ladies, Marion and her mother, are never caricatures of a type or class or pigeonhole – they say and do and think unexpected things – in other words, they are about as close as you're going to get in a book to real human beings. The supporting cast – Robert's cousin and his aunt and his friend Bill Brough (the Patrick Troughton character) – are ... I'm going to need to resort to a thesaurus soon... just wonderful.

Books restore my faith in humanity. Day to day dealings whittle away at it – ample evidence of obtuseness and ignorance and sheer stupidity erode it like crashing waves eat away at stone. But in books, wise thoughtful books with wry humor which bring deep satisfaction in the reading – these show me that even if I meet nothing but idiots from the moment I leave the house till I come home again, someone, once, even someone fifty years gone, someone has felt exactly as I do. This is the sort of book I want to write.

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## **Lcitera says**

When the author Louise Penny recommends a book as one of her top five mystery-reads it is good to explore her choice. *THE FRANCHISE AFFAIR*, penned in 1948, is a mystery...refreshingly so, not a murder

mystery. Beautifully written with much descriptive, very very British, far more depth than a "cozy". A dusty relic on the library shelf!

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## **Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says**

Ahhhh, that's better. After a few disappointing reading choices of late, this well-written mystery without a murder was just my drop. It kept me engaged and interested to the very last. Trouble is, it doesn't fit my usual "mystery" shelves: we know whodunit (what little was actually done), it's neither noir fiction nor a police procedural, as the police basically don't see there's a case. It's about salvaging your reputation when you really are innocent, all indications to the contrary.

Trial by press (or at least online media) and public opinion is even worse now than it was in the day of smalltown weekly newspapers, so in that sense this book hasn't dated as much as some of Tey's work. The bored barrister-turned-sleuth is much more convincing than some of the more beloved figures of Golden Age detective fiction, but then this isn't a "mystery" novel as such. No body, no emphasis on physical clues. It's more about motivations--*why* does a young girl accuse two total strangers of kidnapping and abusing her? The nature vs. nurture debate is examined--is "the criminal mind" inherited, as a result of bad blood? Can hardened criminals be redeemed by kindness? And just what *is* a "hardened criminal"? All of these issues were hot topics when this book was published in 1948 (I direct the interested reader to Agatha Christie's *They Do It with Mirrors*). (view spoiler)

It was nice to see village characters that aren't caricatures, and serious professional people who accept and discuss and believe in Christianity and prayer without mawkishness or sentimentality. Tey knew her people and drew them well. An enjoyable read.

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## **Jaline says**

Named the 11th greatest mystery novel of all time in 1990 by the Crime Writer's Association, *The Franchise Affair* was written in 1948. This is the only Inspector Grant novel where there is no murder, and the first one where Inspector Grant plays a minor role. For any mystery fan, this one is a treasure.

Robert Blair is a lawyer in a small English town and used to dealing with wills, land transfers, and other small town legal concerns. In his early 40's, he is a bachelor and lives with his Aunt Lin who tends to him with loving care. His world gets turned upside down when a young girl accuses two women of kidnapping her, confining her to a small attic room in their home called *The Franchise*, and beating her when she won't comply with their demands for her services as a maid.

There follows newspaper scandals, police investigations resulting in insufficient evidence to lay charges, and eventually charges followed by a trial when new evidence is produced. The story is exciting and well told.

Even more, it is the interactions between the characters - their psychological temperaments that are slowly revealed through the course of the novel - that add the depths and dimensions to this novel and make it stand out.

I found it difficult to put this book down because it was so fascinating and I didn't know for sure who was

believable and who wasn't. Then, when even that part became fairly obvious, I felt compelled to find out why and how it all came about – or if more might still be revealed.

I recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of mysteries and is interested in reading how a master in the craft goes about weaving a spell for the reader. An exceptionally satisfying read – and I loved the ending!

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## Ree says

This book is in a genre unto itself: nationalist mystery or maybe, conservative mystery, or imperialist mystery. One implies the others I suppose. This might be a common genre (common sense tells me it should be, because it would have sold well in that age), but this is the first book from the Golden Age of Mystery I have read that is so overtly vicious to liberalism and anti-imperialism. Coming from a country that was a British colony and from a century that recognises anti-imperialism for the inevitable evolution it was, I surely was not the group this book panders to. And pander it does, with a heavy, propoganda-laced hand. The writing itself is not bad, the characters (the ones Ms Tey deems important and human enough) are well-rounded, but the book left me with a bitter taste in my mouth. That the book still sits pretty on several 'Best Of' lists is quite baffling to me.

Tey knew her audience. And they recognised her. This goes beyond the recognition that writing in the confines of a particular genre naturally, and most of the time positively for both parties, engenders. Here is a very political recognition. The audience and Ms Tey knew who they were, and more importantly, who they were against. The story is about a girl of 15 (Betty Kane) who has disappeared for a month, and on turning up has a very interesting story to tell. She has, for the past month, been the captive of a couple of spinsters who wanted her to be their maid. When she refused, they locked her up in their attic, and beat her black and blue. By a stroke of luck, Betty made her escape. That is the story she has to tell, but the two Ms Sharpes, the accused, say they have never met her. An interesting premise and a promising one. So many ways this could be refracted, reflected, and played with. The premise comes with at least two sides, like any healthy premise. Isn't that the whole point of writing a mystery (or any novel for that matter): at least two sides, at least two ways to look at life? But Ms Tey wanted to write a blinkered political screed, not a novel.

Ms Tey had the ability for a less partisan and more novel-like treatment, she just didn't have the heart. I know she had the ability because I have read her other, more famous work, 'The Daughter of Time'. There she rails against the fallibility of narrative, of history and who gets to write it. She wants to vindicate someone long thought to be a villain by the popular psyche. Here, in this book, she rails against people who dare to have and fight for beliefs other than her own. See the irony? From the very beginning, it is assumed we know whom to root for. We are to unquestioningly be on the side of the unconventional (but not too unconventional, of course, just enough to be endearing) Sharpes. They are respectably middle-class, they drink good wine, they don't run around sloganeering for causes Tey deems unworthy. All these are supposed to automatically, without any proof yet introduced, make them innocent of any crime. Betty Kane is the crafty, lying siren-child, also without any proof. Who a character supports, in this book, is just a way to delineate who's on Tey's political side, and who's on the other, grievously mistaken, side. It's a quick, convenient way to dispose of all reasonable dissenters of the status quo.

There is not a single, intelligent, fleshed out character that expresses any doubt in favour of Betty Kane in a reasonable manner. This, you may argue, is just bad technique. It may have been if not for the fact that there are several that do come to her side are distinctly straw-men for the numerous causes Ms Tey reviles. Of the

two newspapers that write for Kane, one is a tabloid and the other is a liberal publication. The owner of the latter is a bleeding heart who writes maudlin pieces about “unrest, under-privileged, backward, unfortunate.” Ms Tey exhorts her readers to not be fooled by these “euphemisms” and call them by their rightful names: “violence, the poor, mentally deficient, and prostitutes.” Sounds awfully like the arguments against “political correctness” in today’s conservative discourse. The same newspaper supports an Irishman, who conveniently for Ms Tey’s cause, put a bomb in a woman’s bicycle basket. Violence from the other side is the only kind she talks about. This so she can dismiss everything else said about this subject and others without even engaging with them! So she can conveniently say (and she does right in the next sentence) that the Irish were not a repressed minority, and they just, without any provocation, ran around putting bombs in the bicycle baskets of poor dear English ladies.

(view spoiler)

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### **Eleanor says**

I'm strolling through Josephine Tey's mysteries in and between other books, having read them all many years ago.

This one is an interesting reworking of a real case that happened in the 18th century, and is enjoyable. There are a few jarring notes where individuals say they would like to beat up the girl who claims to have been abducted, beaten and held hostage, because the speaker believes she is lying. There is a tone of "no better than she ought to be" and a looking down on someone seen as coming from the "lower classes".

However, that is a reflection of the time it was written and the unravelling of the mystery is enjoyable. All ends satisfactorily with the possibility of a new and happy life ahead of the main characters.

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### **Laurie says**

Tey does things with her apparently simple plots that no one, but no one else can manage. A deliciously sly woman.

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### **Emilia Barnes says**

What a fascinating book to read in this day and age! Just as we are having a discussion about believing survivors or rape and abuse, I read a novel in which the reader is invited to cordially hate and despise the accuser in a case of abuse. Of course, it was written in the 1940s, and thus must be treated as a product of its time. And it doesn't add much to the discussion of how a situation, in which it's the word of the accuser against the word of the accused should be treated. In this book we're to judge people by appearances, by characteristics that betray them. Selfishness, wantonness or a tendency to fabricate with ease are all things you can tell by a persons demeanour, eye-colour or the way they speak. But it was interesting because both the accuser and the accused are women, and so sexism doesn't come into it, at least not in the usual way. And this saves the book from being uncomfortable to read, and instead makes it very tense and interesting: how

do you prove a negative? How do you prove you didn't abuse someone, when they very believably accuse you of having done it? It's very competently put together mystery, and another win for Tey.

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### **Leonie says**

I really liked *Brat Farrar* and *Miss Pym Disposes*, so it's a shame I absolutely hated the next two books of Tey's I read. In the first place, this book is not a mystery. From the blurb, I expected something more ambiguous, where we wouldn't be sure which party was telling the truth and would hopefully have an interesting journey finding out. But no. Right from the start, it is made very clear that the Sharpes are the salt of the earth, and the girl accusing them, a slutty fifteen-year-old whose eyes give her away as oversexed, is a representative of all that was wrong with the changing world. We know Betty Kane was off somewhere being no better than she ought to be and dragged the Sharpes in as a rather odd choice of cover story. And that's it. The evidence to prove this turns up. Nothing unexpected happens.

What fills in the time is Tey elaborating on her theme of how the world is going to hell in a handcart and those people who have the right values need to find each other and clap each other on the back and tell each other how right they are. The English have inherited the earth because they're better than anyone else, the bleeding heart liberals are ruining everything, a conversation occurs about how some fat tart thinks the character we're supposed to approve of is cruel because she was seen hitting her dog, whereas said fat blonde with the uplift bra is ruining her dog by spoiling it, again as a symptom for wider society, blood will always out and if your mother was a bad mother and a bad wife you will be a promiscuous liar before you're sixteen for no more nuanced reason than that, and the working classes, "elevated democracy" are so stupid and unanalytical they ideally wouldn't be allowed to have opinions. It's like being cooped up with the Dursleys from Harry Potter or something. It's reactionary and incredibly self-indulgent. It's one of those books where the author is very visible, trying to waffle on at the reader rather than tell them a story, and I'm afraid I get the idea I don't care for Josephine Tey's personality and opinions. I really, really loathed it and thought it was trash.

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### **Emma Rose Ribbons says**

Tremendously good read and I never expected that from the summary - the tale of two women being framed for a brutal kidnapping seemed incredibly far-fetched to me but I'd loved *Miss Pym Disposes* by the same author so I thought I might as well see if the rest of her work was as good.

Well, it is, and then some. Her writing is astonishing. The book isn't thick but the amount of detail she manages to put in is quite stupendous. After reading a particularly well-written passage, I often caught myself thinking 'I feel completely different about this character than I did two pages ago, how did she do this?' A great deal of her genius has to do with knowing her characters inside out - not two characters in this are the same and they all have a very distinctive voice. We might follow Robert but I know as much about the Sharpes and Aunt Lin. This is also a masterpiece of a mystery novel - until very late in the book, the author makes sure we just don't know whether or not the Sharpes are guilty and since we spend so much time with them and they're so endearing, it's quite a feast. The investigation is realistic and suspenseful and Tey's sense of timing is impeccable - she does know when to drop us a bone and when to leave us in the dark, it's incredible. The end trial could have been a case of *deus ex machina* if it weren't so well crafted and it becomes not only plausible but the only solution to the plot. The end is interesting and totally unexpected like the rest of the book - the romance hinted at throughout the novel finds a very unusual open-ended



conclusion and I loved that. I can't tell you how vivid and deeply witty Tey's writing is - I will not only miss Marion, Mrs Sharpe and Robert but I'll really miss The Franchise, too. You're left with a very good impression of what everything and everyone is and closing the book is like parting with friends. Amazing author - I'll never doubt her again.

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### **Chip says**

Josephine Tey was recommended to me as an excellent classic mystery author, and various online reviews of her work supported that view. I chose The Franchise Affair as the first of her books to read based on the number of online references thereto and positive reviews thereof. However - it's not good; rather, it is incredibly dated and, worse, terribly lazily written (e.g., "her intelligent eyes") and plotted. Far too many things didn't ring true: the protagonist lawyer's assumption that the Sharpes were innocent; his quick infatuation with Marion; the initial lack of reaction (much less arrests) by the police; complete lack of discussion of payment aside from Marion's statement of poverty and inability to pay properly (and the lawyer's continuing representation regardless); the unquestioning willingness of the foster mother to speak with the lawyer of the supposed kidnappers; etc. etc. A classic it is not, much less one that stands the test of time. I won't be wasting my time with any of her other books.

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### **Damaskcat says**

Marion Sharpe and her mother live in a house called The Franchise - left to them by a distant relative. They lead a quiet and uneventful life until they are confronted out of the blue by a young girl - Betty Kane - who accuses them of kidnapping her, keeping her locked in an attic room and beating her black and blue. Something about the story doesn't ring quite true to Inspector Alan Grant of Scotland Yard but everything about the girl's description of the house ties up and it seems as though she could just be telling the truth.

However solicitor Robert Blair believes otherwise and sets out to prove the girl is lying. I thought the sheer helplessness of the Sharpes was very well done. They could not prove their innocence and they were both ostracised by their local community when the story was taken up by the media. They are also subjected to abuse and feel themselves to be almost under siege behind their high wall and iron gates.

The way Robert gradually pieces together evidence which contradicts the girl's story is very well done. I thought the book demonstrated very well the danger of mob violence and vigilante action against perceived criminals as well as showing how difficult it is to prove a negative. Alan Grant doesn't feature all that much in this story as it is Robert Blair who does most of the detecting. While Josephine Tey's Alan Grant mysteries form a series the books do not need to be read in any order and can be read as standalone novels.

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### **Carol ?? says**

I've been wanting to read this Tey title for a very long time &, other than the reader sees very little of Inspector Grant, it did not disappoint.

This tale of the disappearance of a young girl & her bizarre accusations against a mother & daughter was very hard to put down and I wolfed through it in around 24 hours.

As it is a Golden Age you have to put up with an author's foibles, & Ms Tey has the firm belief that you can tell a criminal by certain characteristics - in this book eye colour(!) Never mind. Tey's ability to sketch characters in a few words & her realisation of small town life (view spoiler) is quite wonderful & I was entertained until the end.

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### **Rage says**

There's no subtlety in this book. Betty Kane is, we're assured, rotten to the core, a completely nasty piece of work. People who are good and decent recognize Betty Kane as a poisonous liar (because of the color and/or spacing of her eyes), people who are stupid and vacuous think she's a harmless little dear. The mystery isn't really what happened to Betty so much as how to prove that she's a liar, which is to be accomplished in court so that the entire world can see that she's a liar and they were horribly mistaken. On one hand, I liked Robert (although to be honest I liked Nevil more) and Marion and her mother; on the other hand, I didn't find the story terribly compelling. I wanted more from it, not just: people in a small country town are terrible, girls who look or talk a certain way are sluts, punish them (almost exactly this line appears in the book, by the way. Harsh!). Betty is such an empty vessel; her actions really don't make sense, and her motives or thought process or justifications are never explored. And it seemed a bit bizarre to me how casually Robert and Marion and Nevil et al could go on about how much they would love to actually torture Betty -- perhaps realistic, but I'm not sure if it was supposed to make the characters more sympathetic or was it an attempt at humor...? Perhaps it was because I could tell how things were going to end that it seemed so unnecessary, even petty, to me.

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### **Nancy Oakes says**

Actually, this is my second time with this book after having read it eons ago, and I enjoyed it much more this time around, since I read it now with more of a focus on character and postwar issues.

The Franchise Affair is just a perfect gem of a novel, based on the real-life case of Elizabeth Canning in 1753 which you can read about [here](#). Moving the case into contemporary times, Tey updated this story to reflect various postwar concerns, as Sarah Waters notes, looking at the "moral panics - about 'problem' children and juvenile delinquency, for example - of postwar life."

For plot you can [click here](#); what I will say is that

The main focus here is on the young Elisabeth Kane (Betty - 15), who had gone off to a suburb of Larborough to visit an aunt over a school vacation and disappeared for four weeks, bringing an accusation of kidnapping against two women (Mrs. Sharpe and her daughter Marion) of a much higher class upon her return, and their lawyer's search for justice as well as his need to expose Betty for the liar he believes she is.

To say that The Franchise Affair is a good book does it absolutely no justice. To me, it is one of her very best works, and I've read them all. Not only does it shine in terms of plot and plot turns, but Tey is also examining postwar British society here. I can't really divulge much about Betty Kane without ruining things, although what Tey has to say about her in a cumulative way reflects the dangers someone of her sort

represented to the social order of the time. The English public is also looked at here -- the tendency for tabloid readers to believe what they read and make judgments based on their impressions with no real facts strikes a chord with our own times of sleazy tabloids in print and online, as well as the non-questioning sheep who believe everything that comes out via social media. Tey's novel also reflects the tendencies of those same judgmental people to make trouble for those under media scrutiny. And then there's Robert Blair, the attorney who is "usually so placid, so lazily good-natured," but discovers that with the Sharpe case, he has a "focus of interest," changing "the pattern of his life." Used to a somewhat prescribed lifestyle "without hurry and without emotion," he finds himself actually feeling alive with this case, quite possibly for the first time. The Sharpes live in a big house that once upon a time had seen better days; now they barely scrape by without servants or money but there are still certain forms that need to be maintained for the sake of appearances. There's so much more to talk about with this novel, but well time and all of that.

The Franchise Affair can be read by mystery/crime fiction readers across the board, except perhaps for those people who trend toward kickass thriller stuff ... it is so well done that it should appeal to pretty much everyone. Tey was a gifted writer, but in this book, she's gone beyond her norm and given readers a book that should, in my opinion, be considered a classic. It is an incredibly superb book that all aficionados of British crime fiction/mysteries should read.

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## Jane says

*"The first dark germ of The Little Stranger, however, came to me from another genre entirely. The book has its origins in my response to a detective novel from 1948: The Franchise Affair by Josephine Tey, a novel I first read more than a decade ago, and which has fascinated and troubled me, in about equal measures, ever since."*

Josephine Tey's novels have been sitting on my shelves for a while now, but it was Sarah Waters who finally make me pick this one up. I'm very glad that she did.

The story opens in a solicitor's office in a quiet country town. The scene is set perfectly. Robert Blair's usual business is conveyancing, wills and investments but, just as he is rising to leave the office, he receives a telephone call that will lead him to a very different case.

He is summoned to The Franchise, a large house behind a high wall on the edge of town. Marion Sharpe lives there with her mother in genteel poverty. The story he hears there is extraordinary.

Betty Kane had just left school. One day, she says, she missed the bus home from town. She accepted a lift from two ladies in a car. And those two women kidnapped her and kept her prisoner to act as their servant. Because they couldn't find anybody willing to work in their big house on the edge of town. She was locked up, beaten and kept hungry to make her comply. Finally she found a locked door and made her escape.

She describes the Sharpes, their car, details of their home perfectly.

They are astounded, and insist that they have never seen the girl before. Robert believes them. But how does she know so much. How can he prove that she wasn't there?

So begins an extraordinary mystery. A crime without a body, without a single drop of blood shed.

Little facts emerge and a picture builds and changes. Progress is slow, and yet a fairly unremarkable country solicitor holds the attention.

Why? Well Josephine Tey can certainly write. All of her characters are distinctive beautifully drawn, her story-telling is assured, her plotting is clever, and she paints a clear picture of a time and place.

The social changes that followed the war are illuminated. The tabloid press take a keen interest. And their neighbours are eager that the women that they perceive to be wicked criminals are punished. There is much food for thought, with every element judged and balanced perfectly.

The story culminates in a brilliant court room scene. The truth is revealed. And followed by a wonderful observation.

It was the right conclusion to a wonderful story. It won't be too long until Josephine Tey's other books come off the shelf.

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### **Laurel Hicks says**

An intriguing mystery well solved.

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### **Paul says**

An undemanding read and a clever mystery novel. It portrays Britain in the 1940s and its idiosyncrasies very well. The dilemmas of the more impoverished middle classes who could not now afford servants are documented without judgement.

The story concerns a mother and her middle aged daughter who are accused of kidnapping and beating a 16 year old girl with a view to forcing her to work as a maid. They are defended by a country solicitor who takes up their cause. They are pilloried by the tabloid press and the liberal left and the cause looks lost.

The ending has some loose ends, which I did not expect as I thought that all the plot lines would be tied up tight. I liked the book the better for that. I was uncomfortable with the characterisation of the young girl as having absolutely no redeeming features; the court case scene was too contrived.

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### **Bill Kerwin says**

Josephine Tey is a Tory reactionary and a snob, but she writes like an angel. This mystery novel of the English middle class at bay under the post WW II Labor party is almost as good as her "The Daughter of Time"--and that is high praise indeed.

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## **Miss Carax says**

No está mal. Josephine Tey sabe muy bien cómo describir personajes y consigue meter de lleno al lector en el ambiente de la novela. Sin embargo, para ser novela de intriga, el final me ha dejado un poco fría, esperaba un último giro sorprendente de la trama del estilo de Agatha Christie.

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