



## **The Clairvoyant Countess**

*Dorothy Gilman*

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As a psychic to the public, Madame Karitska has seen a lot. But when a chance encounter with Detective-Lieutenant Pruden of the Police Department catapults her into the unforeseen, she must use all of her resources to keep danger--and death--at bay....

## **The Clairvoyant Countess Details**

Date : Published December 12th 1986 by Fawcett (first published 1975)

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Author : Dorothy Gilman

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Fantasy, Paranormal, Cozy Mystery

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## **From Reader Review The Clairvoyant Countess for online ebook**

### **Maria says**

I love books about characters who are clairvoyant or psychic. It's always been a fantasy of mine to be able to "see" things that other people can't. I'm not sure how much I believe in it, but it's cool to fantasize. So while I was perusing books at the library to listen to in my car, this one jumped out at me and I snagged it. Two tracks into the first CD, I was hooked. It's about a clairvoyant countess who helps solve mysteries -- another favorite. How could I go wrong?

I mostly enjoyed the book. The characters were fun and interesting, but it was a little too "trite" for my taste. After a while, the characters seemed flat and the story lacked "umph." I can't quite put my finger on what, exactly, is lacking. The book mainly consisted of a series of mysterious deaths or other incidents, and the Countess helps solve them. They kind of flow into each other, and some are connected, but for the most part, they are individual cases, like a series of short stories.

Don't get me wrong; I enjoyed the book, but I'm taking off one star because it just wasn't quite "there."

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### **it'chy says**

turkish coffee got me curious

p21: "we sneaked a look at the speedometer on his car and checked it out with the garage where his car was last serviced. nothing there, but a knowledgeable amateur can set back a speedometer...."

p113: "i canceled them, this is the more important."

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### **Andrea says**

Enjoyable light read as a police detective slowly sheds his disbelief working with a clairvoyant.

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### **Mary Catelli says**

One might call this an urban fantasy, with its psychic heroine. But she and a few other psychics are the fantastic element; more fantastical elements are suggested to be psychosomatic. Also, the heroine is certainly getting on in years; it takes place in the 1970s or thereabouts, and she was a refugee from the Russian Revolution, albeit as a child. (I've got to admire the deftness with which her back story is brought to life and yet left in the background as not relevant. Also the chief thing I notice now that I didn't when I was in my teens and first reading it is how 1970s it was. The prices get me particularly.)

But her stories here opens with her dreams of a brownstone with a sign in the window -- Madame Karitska, Readings. She happens on the brownstone itself five minutes after the landlord has put up a sign saying an

apartment's for rent, and rents it. And the books wind on through an interlacing series of stories traced back to her readings.

A major thread in the book starts when she is consulted by a young woman. Reading her ring, she thinks it was worn by a woman who was murdered by poison, and her client says it was her mother's, who died of a heart attack. Reading her wallet, she warns her against the person whose letter is in it. When the woman is murdered, the police find her note about visiting Madame Karitska, and Lt. Pruden visits. She gives him a tip that seems absurd, and tells him that his father will, after all, live. He visits her with questions, she calls on him when police intervention is appropriate, and she steers some investigation the right way.

Other things these threads include involve a man whose marriage is unhappy, a song about a romance through reincarnations, a man who rescued his wife from a death camp, a spy and treacherous murders, the stealing of crosses, an attempt by the Syndicate to take over ice cream trucks, an alleged wicked witch and poison, and an early prediction of Madame Karitska's about Lt. Pruden coming true.

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### **Penny says**

Madame Karitska has psychic powers and a good deal of common sense. There are many cases that she helps Detective-Lieutenant Pruden solve. It's good fun in a rather old worldly manner. I enjoyed revisiting this book from the 1970's and may read Dorothy Gilman's Mrs. Pollifax series too. Now that I am a grandmother too, Mrs. Pollifax would be even more fun than when I first read of her adventures in my youth.

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### **Fen says**

Just reread this book for the I-don't-know-how-many times (I entered 12 in the field provided for such things, but I suspect it's much more than that). I first read *The Clairvoyant Countess* when I was 12... I'd just come off my dystopia phase (plowing through every piece of classic dystopian literature I could find) and I was having fun bouncing through the Subject card catalogue, using keywords as a method for finding new books, which is how I landed on this one (at the time, I was mostly hunting for SF&F dealing with psychic phenomena).

Mostly, it's a wonderfully light and fun book. Definitely dated to the era in which it was written, but not so much that it becomes inaccessible to the modern reader. It's essentially a series of connected short mystery stories and I'll admit that it always leaves me wishing we'd gotten something with a little more depth... the book is really much too short, when it comes right down to it.

Worth picking up if you've never read it, especially since it's a nice quick read.

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### **Jessica says**

An intriguing book that was entertaining and attention holding. It took me a while to figure out the time period the book was set in, but that missing information did not impair my enjoyment. I look forward to finding more of this author's books.

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### **Melissa says**

Enjoyed this quick read -- a woman with a flamboyant past sets up shop as a clairvoyant in Trafton, NJ ... and things happen. She meets a police detective and slowly he is won over to believing in her clairvoyance. A series of cases, but not short-story like -- some people from each case remain in the story, and move forward. The main character is interesting, and the characters surrounding her are interesting ... and the psychic element adds another world of understanding. The ending was more abrupt than I would have liked ...

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### **Vorbis says**

A happy way to pass an afternoon.

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### **John says**

This one had been sitting on my Audible purchased shelf for a while so thought I'd tackle it. Interesting protagonist, and well-crafted stories, and one that might be better heard than read as the narrator does a good job with the voice of Madame Karitsa. Sorry the sequel isn't available as an audiobook, but I've ordered a print copy. Written in the 60's, so folks call from pay phones with urgent messages, as well as mention of a guest bring a "portable television set" to a party for a special viewing (Madame doesn't own one herself).

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### **Sharla says**

Published in 1975, this book was a departure for Dorothy Gilman from her more popular Mrs. Pollifax series. The main character, Madame Karitska, has extraordinary powers. She is a psychic, who uses her gift to help detective-lieutenant Pruden solve several baffling crimes. Saving lives and setting things right comes naturally to the Countess, Madame Karitska. I enjoyed this retro excursion and would recommend it as a very good light read.

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### **Cat Fithian says**

Recommended by a co-worker. I enjoyed the read, but it is clearly schlock, and it's dated (1975). Several very short mysteries in one short paperback, all thrown together with one loosely pulled plot line. The clairvoyant helps the detective. Need I say more?

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### **Jill Elizabeth says**

I simply love Dorothy Gilman. She has an absolutely lovely way with language and her characters are always so human yet somehow also just that little bit more - more conscientious, more thoughtful, more thought, more human - than the people one encounters in everyday life... Perhaps I'm a relic, but I love that her books are stories - not plot contrivances designed to deliver violence or sex. There are always pertinent and relevant life lessons tucked away inside her dialogue, but they're delivered with such a deft hand and in such cheeky and also somehow casual ways that they never feel like lessons until you finish reading their sentences - then the simple truths they uncover just jump out at you. I miss the days when stories could be simple yet thoroughly complex through nothing more than the exigencies of human interaction. She manages to remind me of days gone by without waxing sentimental or getting maudlin. Madame Karitska is a worthy successor to the delightful Mrs. Pollifax, and if you haven't yet met either, you simply must resolve that with all expediency... :)

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### **Susan says**

At first, I was not sure if I would get into this book or not. However, only a few pages later I discovered that I was fully engaged in the story and appreciating the protagonist, Countess Karitska.

I found Karitska to be an intelligent, resourceful character who had lived through good times and hardships, and who had thought through who she is as a person and become comfortable with what she learned. The more I read, the more I liked this character.

Additionally, I appreciated the development of the other 'supporting' characters in the book - Detective-Lieutenant Pruden, Gavin, and Faber-Jones - each with their own outlooks and hurdles and each growing over time as they interact with Karitska and with each other.

Finally, I found that I really got into the story itself. I am unused to books of this type, where rather than having a single, over-arching, murder/set of murders (by the same person(s)) to solve, there are instead in this book a series of smaller plot lines, with individual crimes to be solved. Gilman was quite successful in this format as I found each mystery interesting and keeping of my attention. The sum of these mysteries was greater than the parts because throughout Gilman deftly threaded the stories of Madame Kartiska and her friends to tie it altogether.

Overall, a solid read. I will read the next in the series and have to same am sad that there seem to be no others.

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### **Regan says**

Some cute little vignettes about a psychic who uses psychometry to aid a police officer in solving crimes. Each one of them could have easily played out into a separate mystery rather than what was really a group of short stories about the psychic.

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### **Kate says**

Ah, the '70's. Madame Karitska, in straitened circumstances but confident that all will be well, begins taking

psychic readings in a new apartment. She is full of the power of the understood self, is gentle and nonviolent but not naive, and ends by surrounding herself with police detective Pruden, Gavin the young psychic, businessman Faber-Jones, and a few other men (all men, so odd) and solving or sniffing out crimes. I miss books so certain of the untapped potential of the human mind, but I very much blame them for the current situation of the world when characters can say “Frankly, I think we’ve had an overdose of rational minds in the world lately...They seem to create as many problems as they solve” and we are expected to have some sympathy with that. Madame Karitska feels much like the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, and I can use the balm to the soul at the moment. I also long for a time when a businesswoman in a book could spend exactly 0 minutes marketing herself and still manage to survive, now that we are all expected to market ourselves nonstop and enjoy the process. I enjoyed this much more than the first time I read it, despite my greater skepticism.

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### **Sheryl Tribble says**

Very episodic, meaning there's no feeling of closure when you finish it, which isn't a big deal but always bugs me when the book was categorized as a mystery.

Light hearted fluff confronts and hopefully dominates ugly realities. This is a world where a boy can psychically predict *and psychically witness* his father's murder/suicide of his whole family (parents and three siblings), then within a few weeks the deaths have no impact except how he makes use of his orphan status to get away with stuff at school, and the reader is supposed to see him as a normal, healthy kid.

Obviously, a book that does not improve with thought. :p But it doesn't ask much thought, either, moving sprightly along from one incident to the next, the heroine collecting characters around her and generally improving the lives of those she touches. If you enjoy Mrs. Pollifax, and like the idea of real psychic powers, you'll likely appreciate this.

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### **Megan says**

I'm not sure what to say about this book... It is quaint, and charming, and truly comfortable. If it had been written today it would have been put firmly into the paranormal mystery category, and it would have a much brasher heroine and be all around more of what we expect. But this book was written before cozy Paranormal's were a thing, which is quite possibly the thing I love most about this book. Either that or the very palpable atmosphere, the transportation to another time and place that it has. I loved visiting the world of the Clairvoyant Countess I took my time with it reading one little bit at a time savouring the slower, quieter, more confident world that she lived in.

This is not really a novel. It's more like the portrait of a relationship between Madame Karitska and Detective Pruden, written as a series of short stories or snippets gathered up here and there from where their lives begin to overlap. It's almost a collection of short stories, but it's not really that either. If you are looking for one storyline that builds in tension, has a climax and then a denouement and an ending, you won't find that here. But if you are looking for something interesting and different, you will definitely find that.

You know, more than anything this reminds me of the mysteries I would read as a kid (probably written around the same time as this book) where the hero would solve a whole series of small cases, with some

threads weaving through and between the short stories, meant to take you along for the ride seeing if you could spot the clues... Though, with this one I actually found myself underlining certain sections... I'm pretty sure there's more Universal wisdom than mystery tucked away in this book.

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### **Pam says**

AS many others have stated, a collection of short stories with a common set of characters. Definitely has the same feel of Mrs. Pollifax, I can tell they were written by the same author. Love Mrs. Pollifax, but like Madame Karitska. It's a light read, but I will read the sequel.

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

More than one cohesive story, this book is more like a chain of short stories loosely connected by common characters and a few events, rather like the old TV shows where each episode stood alone. But the book does not hand you the stories all nicely wrapped up in 22/44 minutes. The ending was abrupt and unsatisfying, as if the author had been interrupted, or perhaps realised that she was up to her deadline and just mailed off what she had to the publisher.

As far as the stories themselves go, they're pleasant fluff which reflect the fascination with psychometry, psychics helping the police, and "transcendentalism" which marked the mid 70s and later birthed the New Age (same old stuff, new wrapping). The line between "white" and "black" magic is clearly drawn, the goodies are good and the baddies are very, very bad. There are a lot of memes of the "we use only 10% of our brain power" type; two characters use up an inordinate amount of effort trying to turn pages with their minds. I suppose it's a skill, but unless both arms are in plaster, I don't see much point.

I wonder if the author envisaged a series of CC books, starring the young boy as the sorceress' apprentice. Having read and enjoyed the Mrs Pollifax novels and hugely enjoyed A Nun in the Closet I will admit to being a tad disappointed with this excursion.

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