



## Curious, If True: Strange Tales

*Elizabeth Gaskell*

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CURIOUS, IF TRUE: Strange Tales is a collection of five dark Victorian tales of suspense, horror, mood and mystery by Elizabeth Gaskell, published variously between 1852 and 1861. Includes "The Old Nurse's Story," "The Poor Clare," "Lois The Witch," "The Grey Woman," and "Curious, If True."

## Curious, If True: Strange Tales Details

Date : Published April 12th 2008 by Norilana Books (first published 1860)

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Author : Elizabeth Gaskell

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# From Reader Review Curious, If True: Strange Tales for online ebook

## Leslie says

Not enjoying these stories -- the moralizing irritates me and the paranormal (ghosts and demons) bores rather than frightens. I read the first 2 stories and the first chapter of the third; the last two stories I have read previously in "The Grey Woman and Other Tales". Those two would be the best in this collection...

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## Pamela says

If you are expecting another Cranford, you are in for a big surprise! About as far from it as you can get. Who knew Gaskell could hop genres like this? Definitely worth a read.

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## Guguk says

Terus terang, ketimbang Jane Austen dan Charlotte Bronte, aku lebih kagum dengan Mrs. Gaskell ini (?ω?)  
Ngarang kisah tentang penduduk kota kecil yang kocak...bisa!  
Bikin kisah *romance* berlatar revolusi industri dan demo buruh...juga oke!

Dan kali ini, aku bersyukur dapat mencicipi kisah horor karya beliau (((o(\*???)o)))  
Isinya ada 5 cerita :

- **The Old Nurse's Story** : gadis kecil, pengasuh yang setia, rumah tua dengan tragedi masa lalu, organ yang berbunyi sendiri...semuanya resep standar namun kompliit dan tak pernah gagal untuk membuat sajian kisah hantu yang pekat dengan aroma *gothic* (^oo^)\*mengendusendus\* Memuaskan!

- **Poor Clare** : untuk yang ini aku kurang puas (^ ^);>  
Padahal jenis hantunya itu tipe yang bisa dibikin serem-seseru-serunya, tapi ini malah lebih berkutat di tokoh utama cowok yang lembek—selembek Kanebo basah, dan nyaris tak berguna—ga seperti Kanebo...  
\*bukaniklan\*

- **Lois the Witch** : yang ini benar-benar!! Σd(ღωღ)  
Gadis Inggris yang patah hati dan sebatang kara, harus "mengemis" belas kasihan kerabatnya di dunia baru sana: di Amerika, tepatnya di Salem.  
Yep, perburuan penyihir pun dimulai~  
Tampak jelas bahwa "tindakan mematuhi hukum agama" yang timbul itu bukan karena rasa kasih dan bakti kepada Tuhan, namun lebih karena ketakutan dan ketidaktahuan, yang membawa manusianya kepada kepengecutan dan kefanatikan yang bersifat massal.  
Endingnya...(view spoiler)

- **The Grey Woman** : kisah seorang gadis Jerman yang pemalu, yang menikah karena pesona wajah bishie-tampilan seorang pria Prancis yang kaya, dan karena "terseret arus" orang-orang di sekitarnya...  
Entah gimana, aku bisa ngebayangin situasinya bahkan di dunia modern sekarang ini~

Serius. Mungkin bagi cewek yang berwatak kuat, si tokoh utama kisah ini amit-amit mustahilnya, tapi kondisi perempuan yang terdesak lalu terjebak dalam kungkungan penjara bernama pernikahan itu bukan dongeng.

Ga ada hantu di sini, hanya ada kejahatan manusia...

- **Curious, If True** : ya ampun!! ??( ?^∇^?)???? \*tepokmeja\* (???) \*tepokmuka\* (((o(\*???)o)))  
\*tepokpramuka\* //stop

Aku bener-bener ga nyadar pas baca dan sempet: "*Ini apa sih, kok ngebosenin gini...*"

Dan ga taunya!! ?(o???)? Oke, awalnya:

Seorang pria Inggris, yang sedang keluyuran di Prancis, kemalaman dan menumpang di sebuah *chateau*, di mana ada pesta dengan sejumlah besar tamu.

Aku nebak-nebak :

- kastilnya berhantu
- tamu-tamunya adalah hantu
- bakal ada pembunuhan di pesta

Jawabannya : (view spoiler)

Yang benar : (view spoiler)

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## Mikel says

A great little set of Gothic stories. They're not what you would expect from the author of *North & South* and *Wives & Daughters*. It goes to show how diversified authors used to be. I really enjoyed reading some Mrs. Gaskell's less well know works.

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## Elise Barker says

I taught "The Old Nurse's Story" last time I taught Brit Lit and the students ate it up. They did a great job relating it's themes to the Victorian period and enjoyed it on its own terms as well. I decided I needed to check out the rest of her short ghost stories. All of the other stories are equally interesting. They are gothic, and unlike "The Old Nurse's Story," the rest are set in the past and in foreign countries. It surprised me how well Gaskell wrote within the dark and gothic vein.

My favorite was "The Poor Clare," which had some interesting complexity in terms of point of view; the practical, male speaker uses his position as a lawyer to dig into the history of strange women with witch-like powers -- he's on the edge of mystery and observes it, experiences it, but is still effectively an outsider to it.

"The Grey Woman" was also super interesting in its use of cross-dressing, female heroism, and sacrifice. Definitely a paper in there somewhere!

"Lois the Witch" was perhaps the most unexpected of all the stories as it was set in Salem during the witch trials. I wonder what got Gaskell interested in that! It rivals *The Crucible's* intensity. I wonder if Arthur Miller read this while researching for the play. Chris kept getting mad at me for reading it when I should

have been cleaning or watching the kids, but I couldn't put it down.

I read in some of the reviews that people think the stories are too moralistic, and I have to say I didn't find them to be any more so than other works of the period. I also read that someone found the language to be too difficult and "old English." I'd have to argue that in terms of Victorian style, this is very readable and accessible.

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### **Margaretmcmillan says**

This book was recommended to me because of an interest in re-told Victorian Fairy Tales. It literally kept me on the edge of my seat the whole time. I read the book on the train from Williamsburg to Philly, and after approximately 7 hours of train riding, I did not want the train to stop because I so wanted to finish my book.

My favorite in the series was the Old Nurse's Tale (which is often a favorite of the Norton Anthology as well as other Victorian compilations. I never actually read the story until I picked up this collection. I would recommend reading all of the stories at once, although they are not connected) and Lois the Witch (which also has been recommended to me because of the Puritan elements). However, the Grey Lady was also excellent, as were the rest of Gaskell's pieces. I was not thoroughly convinced by Gaskell's skills and ability until I read this collection so I would highly recommend it to anyone on the fence. Very suspenseful, very exciting.

Also, for those who have read the work, does anyone know if the plot to "The Others" has anything to do with the Old Nurse's Tale, or if "Crucible" and other similar witch-trail tales are simply a knock off of Gaskell? Lois the Witch has so many elements of the Crucible present in it that I fail to believe that Arthur Miller did not draw heavily on this piece of fiction for his play/screen play. Anyone? For all of those who love the 'Crucible' as I do, you are missing out if you do not read this short story! It's much better! Also, it is suspiciously similar to another old love of mine, "Witch of Blackbird Pond." Although, be forewarned, 'Lois the Witch' is a darker retelling and it shouldn't be read to children.

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### **Laura says**

1. The Old Nurse's Story
2. The Poor Clare
3. Lois The Witch
4. The Grey Woman
5. Curious, If True.

My favorites are "The Old Nurse's Story" and "Curious, if True".

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### **Kate says**

An interesting collection of stories. Lois the Witch was definitely my favorite, as it explored some really interesting themes in religion and hysteria. I found the last tale the least satisfying, but overall a great

selection of stories.

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### **Blair says**

'Bought' because it was free on Amazon. The first story, 'The Old Nurse's Tale', was okay but not at all exciting or scary, and didn't make me want to read on.

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### **Tocotin says**

All right, the book was definitely worth reading. "Lois the Witch" and "The Grey Woman" are the best stories IMHO, the first one very dark (it's about the witch hysteria in Salem and the first story I've ever read about it), the other dark also, but with a good (well kinda) outcome and a very interesting storyline which just begs for rewrite or reinterpretation. The few first ones weren't that absorbing though, hence 3 stars.

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### **Cecilia says**

Yeah, these are Victorian "scary" stories. Interesting to get perspective on what was creepy then versus what is creepy now. Three are a little creepy, the fourth more a morality tale. I would only recommend this to those into Victorian lit, and within that subset, those who like that style of gothic horror. The writing style is good though, so I can't completely pan it.

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### **Quirkyreader says**

I am giving this collection of stories only three stars. There were some good stories and some OK stories.

One of the OK stories was "Lois The Witch". It was set during the Salem witch trials. Gaskell could have made that story better.

I did enjoy "The Old Nurse's Tale". That story is wonderful on audio if you happen to have the right reader.

So there was a good creeper in this collection and some OK stories.

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### **Mary says**

Who would've thought Elizabeth Gaskell wrote horror? Well...suspense sometimes, although there are a couple of genuine spooks and witches in this collection, mostly presented in a historical vein. Victorians look back to the 17th century for their ghouls the way Tim Burton has us looking to the Victorians. The title story is more a clever parlor-reading exercise than great literature, but "The Grey Woman" is a gripping adventure tale in the line as Bluebeard, and "The Poor Clare" and "The Old Nurse's Tell" are genuinely freaky with specters that aren't often in our contemporary horror (the soulless doppelganger is truly terrifying).

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**Naomi says**

DNF at 44%. I've tried repeatedly to read this book, but the first tale in particular is a 101 on how to spoil a solid idea with tedious tangents, repetition and zero suspense. I like reading from this era and genre so I'm used to its conventions, but this bores me to tears.

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**Laura says**

For me, Lois the witch was the best story in this collection. The first two stories didn't manage to captivate my attention, however, I'm glad I didn't give up on the book since I also enjoyed the last two, The Grey Woman and Curious, if true.

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