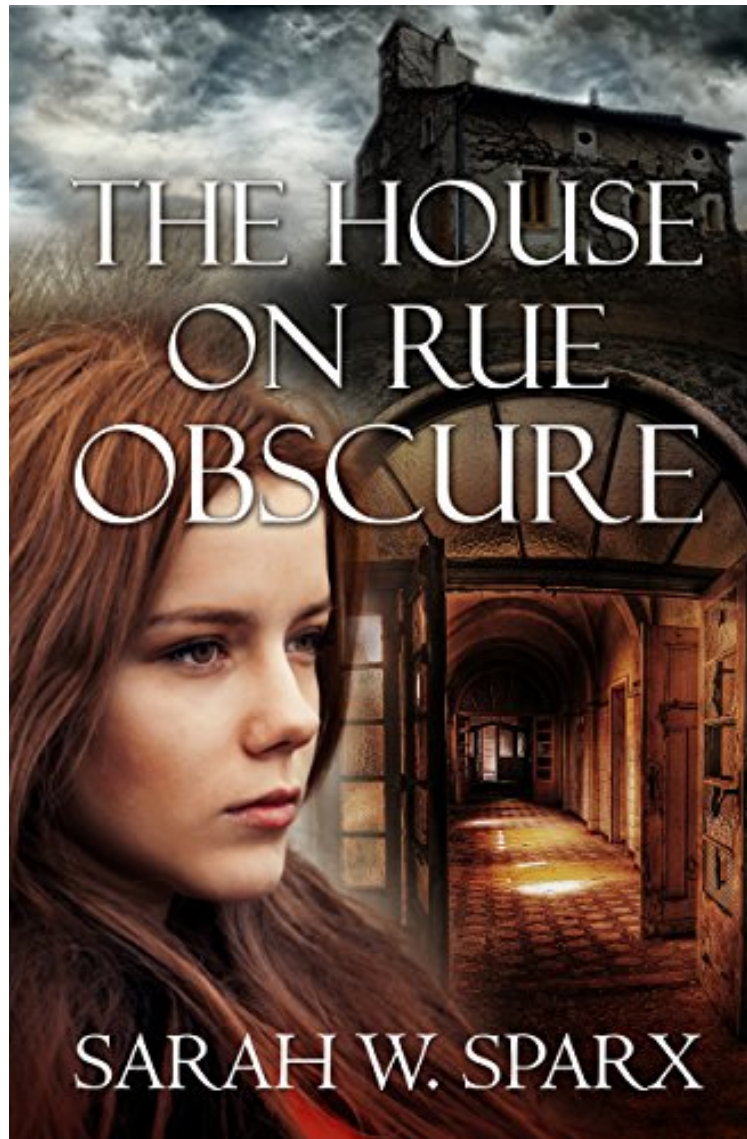


[FREE] The House on Rue Obscure (Echoes of the Cathars Book 1) (English Edition)

The House on Rue Obscure (Echoes of the Cathars Book 1) (English Edition)

Von Sarah W. Sparx

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Von Sarah W. Sparx : The House on Rue Obscure (Echoes of the Cathars Book 1) (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The House on Rue Obscure (Echoes of the Cathars Book 1) (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. An

ancient house full of mysteries and a dash of romance
Von Blue Dolphin
First, I must apologize for not writing in German. However, since all my German friends speak English beautifully, I hope my comments will be useful to anyone who can understand them.
An intriguing contemporary novel set in the recent past (1999) and featuring a good balance between mystery/thriller and romance elements. The author is a self-confessed admirer of Mary Stewart, who practically invented the mystery/romance genre, and one can discern the inspiration. Sarah Sparx has her own unique style but employs many of the familiar motifs that Stewart's aficionados will recognize: a young and beautiful, strong-willed heroine hardened by misfortune, a fascinating but tough love interest who is guarding many secrets, a geographical locale that is as much a protagonist as the human characters, an intriguing, fast-paced story with plenty of action, and a mystery rooted in the ancient history of the Cathars in Cordes-sur-Ciel, a fortified town in the deep south of France, many miles away in spirit and distance from the frivolous Cte d'Azur.
Chantal Harrison, still smarting from a bitter romantic breakup, arrives in Cordes-sur-Ciel to bury Jeanne, her French great-aunt, with whom she spent happy holidays since she was ten years old. The mystery of Jeanne's accidental death, down a staircase she had climbed all her life, is only overshadowed by an even greater one: why did the old lady suddenly sell the house she was devoted to and had promised never to leave? Chantal finds herself immediately in conflict with the new owner of the house at no. 8 Rue Obscure, who has urgent plans and wants her out of his way. She has precious little time to hunt for answers while the house itself seems to turn against her as she is assaulted by frightening accidents and disturbing nightmares.
I loved the quality writing and descriptive style, including a lot of interesting detail about well-researched subjects: wine making, the Cathars, the ancient stronghold of Cordes-sur-Ciel, and even hand-crafted jewellery. The sense of place and history is very strong and my imagination carried me into the shady, stone-bound, cobbled streets of Cordes-sur-Ciel, a town I have never visited. I am familiar, however, with Toulouse, Albi and the Carcassonne area of southern France, and the excellent descriptions allowed me to inhabit the story.
The mystery aspect was perhaps a little predictable, with many clues that suggested the solution and not enough red herrings, but the conflicted relationship held my interest. The dialogue was reasonably good, occasionally a little unnatural, but nothing to break the flow. Characterization was very well done. The main cast and even the secondary players were beautifully nuanced and remained plausible for the majority of the story.
I found myself eager to move through the narrative but also slowing down to savour particular passages or backing up to check on clues. I don't have a lot of time for reading but I was looking forward each night to my time in bed with this story to discover. Having read all of Mary Stewart's books more than once, I had been looking for a contemporary author with a similar talent for combining intelligent mysteries with a romantic storyline. Many names have been proposed as successors to the title, but to my mind none has even remotely come close.
I thought I had found a potential contender till I started Chapter 38. Up until then the book had been an easy 5-star for me. However, without giving anything away (I hate spoilers), I will just say that the story careens into a further cliff-hanger that, to my mind, was utterly unnecessary. I suspect the author's inexperience tricked her into adding what is commonly known as conflict. Bad idea, one has to know when to stop.
I would still recommend this book for the 90% of the narrative that is very worthwhile and, in particular, for the intense bedroom scene that is a beautiful example of how to blend hotness with class. Very few authors manage to get the balance right and, to my mind, Sarah Sparx did just fine. Pity about that later lapse in judgement. For me, the heroine never truly recovers her credibility, however, the ending and epilogue are satisfactory enough and give me hope for a return to form in future works.
With that personal proviso, I really enjoyed reading this debut novel, and am very pleased to hear that the series Echoes of the Cathars has two more books planned, focusing respectively on the heroine's twin sister and on young Louise, who is only six when this story takes place. It sounds as though these sequels will be fully-formed stories and not the usual lazy device of artificially chopping one book in three to make a trilogy. I look forward to the next one.

Kurzbeschreibung
Mystery. Menace. Mistrust.
South-west France, 1999.
An ancient house creaks with secrets. The dead owners niece hunts answers. Will the new owner be her friend or foe?
Chantal is lonely and bruised by failure. Arriving in France to arrange Aunt Jeanne's funeral, she discovers Jeanne had sold her lovingly preserved medieval home. Mystified, Chantal embarks on a search for the truth. Soon she is menaced by maddening visions at night and dangerous mishaps by day.
Forced into a wary alliance with Berenger, the new owner, and her top suspect, Chantal finds her heart faces even more danger than her body and mind. If Berenger isnt the modern villain, could the house be guarding its Cathar secrets by trying to drive her mad?
For fans of Mary Stewart and Victoria Holt, this modern Gothic has a fast-paced, twisting plot with a strong sense of local atmosphere.
Buy The House on Rue Obscure today to escape to the land of the Cathars.
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ber den Autor und weitere Mitwirkende Sarah W. Sparx is fascinated by how things long past can still impinge on the living. Old places, lost secrets, family history: these elements infuse her writing, something she attributes to being adopted and not meeting a blood relative till her mid-twenties. Her love of writing stories emerged in primary school, and when eventually, she learned that her by-blood uncle and great grandfather had been the storytellers in their communities, it made perfect sense. Sarah grew up in the Far East, UK and southern France but now lives in a very young country - New Zealand - with her husband and two teenage children. You can find out more at her author website www.sarahwsparx.com.