



Phantom Traces

Claire Gem

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A history professor in a tweed jacket, a cheeky Goth chick, and a pipe-smoking, book-hurling ghost. Put them all together in an antiquated library and, well... Professor Jack Wood's silver-streaked hair definitely ages him, and he can thank Killer Dawn for that. He won't be falling into the love trap again anytime real soon. But this new librarian has him curious, with her head-to-toe black Goth garb, piercings, and a defiant attitude to match. Definitely not his type of girl, but still... Abigail Stryker's got her work cut out for her. The last two librarians didn't last a month before airborne books chased them off. But Abby's determined to make her new life a go-and to stay as far away from older men as possible. Once was enough. Might be tough to do when the library's best patron is none other than dreamy-eyed Jack Wood. And it seems the eccentric ghost may have taken a shine to her as well.

Phantom Traces Details

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From Reader Review Phantom Traces for online ebook

Chris says

Average

It's a good story but it gets slow and boring in some places. Easy to speed through and stop for the meat of the story. It's way to long for the story line. Easily drop 50 pages to make it something you would not put down.

Siobhan says

Ghostly happenings? Check. Library setting? Check. A sweet romance? Check. This book ticks all the boxes for things that interest me; therefore, it should be no surprise to find out I was super eager to jump into this one.

Phantom Traces is a wonderful little read, working as a great introduction to Claire Gem's work. Without a doubt, it works to ensure I'll be picking up more of the author's work. I already have one I plan to dive into as soon as I get the chance, and should it be as fun as it's promising to be I know I'll be picking up even more.

Whilst Phantom Traces may sound like a romance in the paranormal world, it is actually much more than that. Yes, there are paranormal elements to be seen; however, it is much more than that. The romance is very much of the contemporary variety, giving us a story dealing with all that you expect from a good romance read: tension, uncertainty, development, and twists. It takes the single aspects of contemporary romance – such as an age gap and hurt from past relationships – and mixes them into a story where more layers are added by the paranormal.

Not that the paranormal aspect is the only thing adding more to this story – oh no. There is plenty of drama to be seen from other characters and the storylines we follow. There is also a slight bit of mystery. Not in the whodunit sense, more in the 'what happened' way of thinking. You were left with questions about past events. You were left with questions of how certain things were linked together. Although some of these mystery aspects were glaringly obvious, I found I didn't mind such a thing at all. I enjoyed the air of mystery around events, watching as characters tried to puzzle things out, even if it wasn't much of a mystery for me – from my perspective the mystery aspects weren't the important part, watching how it progressed the story was the significant aspect.

I really don't want to say too much about this one, as things are interwoven in a beautiful way, so I apologise if what comes next isn't overly specific. I'll try to break down the story without ruining it for you.

What we have is a new girl in a small town kind of story going on. This means we're quickly pulled into all kinds of drama. The fact she has a gothic air about her means people think of her a certain way. Due to her family, people have thoughts about her that are not necessarily a reflection of who she is. With her job at the library, she is pulled into all kinds of drama – it seems she appears to have been pulled into some kind of feud between the college library and the town's historical library. Then there is the ghost. Is it real or not? What does it want? Not that he takes up all that much of her attention, as her eyes have been pulled to a man

who seems to have gripped her heart.

Honestly, the paranormal aspects seemed to take a backseat for quite a bit of the book. We get to follow the beautiful blooming romance, and I came to truly love our main characters. The way in which their story played out was fabulous, and I was addicted throughout. However, I do wish there had been a bit more of the paranormal. I love ghostly happenings, and I had expected a little bit more from the spooks. It wasn't that it was badly done – far from it – the synopsis merely had me believing the ghost would be a much more central aspect to the story. It was important for the development of the story, yes; but we didn't get to see as many paranormal events as I would have liked. Such was my only real disappointment with the book.

Due to the fact that the paranormal seemed to take a backseat at times, allowing us to focus upon all of the drama of their characters' lives, it felt as though the unveiling of information at the end happened much too quickly. It seemed as though all the big paranormal events hit at once. A part of this is a reflection of my reading preferences – I positively adore large amounts of supernatural events – and I'm sure many will be happy with the speed at which the paranormal aspects of the story progressed, but for me I wanted a tiny bit more.

Overall, though, I adored this one. It was a wonderful read, one I'd recommend to any bibliophile who dreams of finding love through their local library.

As a final note, I would like to thank the author for contacting me for a review of *Phantom Traces*. I appreciate it and cannot wait to jump into more of your work.

Janice says

Professor Jack Wood's works at the local community college. Abigail Stryker is the new librarian in town. The last two librarians didn't last a month before airborne books chased them off. But Abby's determined to make her new life a go.

Evonne Hutton says

A double love affair. One in the present and one in the past.
The new librarian in town has her work cut out for her to keep the library going.
Can she do that despite the overwhelming load? And the ghost?
Well written with characters that stand out.

Diane Hernandez says

Phantom Traces is an excellent love story with a ghost story twist. A young, goth librarian named Abby gets a job at an old private library after a tragedy occurs during her college days. The library is haunted. The ghost has scared off at least a couple of the previous librarians. The mystery of who the ghost is and why he is haunting the library was compelling. I also liked that Abby's aunt was Wiccan (and that her name was Diane like mine). The dialog and voice acting seemed so real that sometimes I felt like I was listening to a

friend on my phone rather than to an audiobook in my car. Overall, an first-rate audiobook!

I received this audiobook from the author in exchange for an honest review.

R Grisham-Whitehouse says

Cute story

It went on a little long and really needed to explain Leda's problem better. But overall well written and interesting

L.J. Scar says

A May December romance (though only a 12 year difference) between an edgy looking librarian, Abby, and a college professor, Jack. The phantom is the library's resident protector of Abby and the stacks who sends books flying, clock hands whirling, and pipe smoke blowing as he entices Abby and Jack to determine who he is and what he wants. The conflict is the local college dean and her manic determination to close the historical library funneling funds and patrons to the university one.

Set in the Blue Ridge Mountains amongst a myriad of quirky background characters, this is a slow and leisurely paced romance not filled with all the angst and turmoil common in a lot of contemporary women's fiction. The story is well edited, flows and has a satisfying conclusion.

Danielle Suzanne DuSchene says

When It's Right You'll Know

An amazing book about a younger librarian and a professor that may be a little older getting over their pasts and falling in love! Falling in love that is while helping spirit come to terms with something that happened in his "past." Will everyone get their happy ending?

Gail says

Claire Gem's book, *Phantom Traces*, is a beautifully written, tightly plotted gem that gets the readers attention on so many levels. A librarian, and more mature history professor, mixed in with a pipe-smoking, book-hurling ghost and a landmark library was for me an upbeat love story with a twist.

When Abigail Stryker's empty relationship dies, she finds solace in a library in the small town of Caldwell, NC, a perfect place to utilize her librarian skills and move on. Just when she is settling in, history professor Jack Wood shows up and offers his help. She sees his help as aiding and abetting and worries another empty relationship will follow.

Professor Jack Wood, a man with his own issues, won't be caught into another love trap, but this gal has caught his eye, not his type, but together they work on solving the mystery, with an eccentric ghost, floating about in the Harvey Library, so the town can keep this historic icon. A definite page-turner. I hope Claire writes more ghost stories. She has this one by the tail.

Lorna says

(RabidReads.com) Ghost stories have always interested me, even as a young child. That being said, I don't read that many of them. When I came across the synopsis for this book, it intrigued me and I decided to go for it. I am really glad I did.

Abigail Stryker, fresh off of getting her masters in library science, takes a job in a small town library. She's twenty six, nursing a heartache, all the while trying to re-invent herself. To that end, she now looks not only edgy, but goth. She knows that the library is supposedly haunted, but she's not going to let that stop her. The small town is the one her beloved aunt lives in, so that's where she wants to live. Her aunt is Wiccan and runs a small store in the town. She meets history professor Jack Wood her first day at the library. He is thirty eight, fit, handsome in a kinda nerdy way, and is immediately drawn to Abby. On Abby's part, she is over romance and wants nothing to do with it, especially if it involves an older man. Oh, those best laid plans..

On the ghost's part, he's fond of throwing books around, opening a window to let his pipe smoke out, dimming the lights, and occasionally spinning the hands of the clock around-and backwards, as well. It's not long before Abby and Jack team up to find out why the ghost won't move on. To make things even dicier, Leda, wife of the county commissioner, Dennis Ludwig, has her own agenda concerning the library, and she is determined to have the historical library be closed. She goes out of her way to ruin anything good that Abby tries to do with the library.

This was a lot more than just a ghost story. It ended up being a sweet and even sexy at times love story, a mystery, and a story about how a town helps a young librarian find her way back from a horrible heartache and chapter in her life. There's typical small town characters, and some not so typical small town characters introduced. It all takes place in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and in the surrounding forest. Beautifully described by the author, it made me want to visit-or at least go there for a picnic!

I found this book to be well written, with characters I could easily picture, along with a good premise. For awhile I had a big problem with the way one of the peripheral characters was acting and I thought it was just for no real reason, until I was proven wrong. I should have just had faith and waited to see what was going on. It's one of those easily read books, ones that make you want to curl up with it and enjoy in front of a fireplace, or in my case, in bed.

Adult read. I received a copy from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Elke says

Wow, what a wonderful book! It is a perfect mix of romance and ghost story in the beautiful setting of an old library.

The tension between Abbey and Jack was perceptible from the moment they first met, and what followed was the well-known romance routine: the first awkward encounters until both realize and succumb to their mutual affection for each other. The misunderstandings that leads to their breakup, leaving both of them miserable. The ultimate happy end when love overcomes all obstacles and brings them together again. While this may sound corny and boring, it was anything but, not least by the added ghost mystery.

With ardent zeal I followed Abbeys and Jacks inquiries about the history of the library and its ghostly resident Harry and his wife. The solution was a sad yet at the same time happy one. The past and present love stories complemented one another perfectly, weaving both plot lines into an intricate tale of love, loss and reunion.

The characters were well-drawn, very vivid and each one unique in their own way, creating a kaleidoscope of odd and endearing personalities. Add to that the library itself, which can be considered a main character as well. Following Abbey's tireless struggle to revive the musty old building against all odds was a pleasure by itself.

A note on the audio book version: this was my first real audio book and not being a native English speaker I was concerned about understanding everything correctly. However, the speaker was very well chosen, with clear pronunciation, using only subtle changes in pitch to reflect different voices or situations. The soft smooth voice fit the story perfectly and was a pleasure to listen to.

An outstanding romance/mystery novel in every sense - highly recommended.

(I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review)

Punkin says

It was ok.

Liked the mystery. Didn't like some major viewpoints. Meh. No further interest. Didn't like the pov jumps mid chapter with no warning.

W. Tinkanesh says

'Phantom Traces' is a romantic novel. I don't like romantic novels. Then, why did I elect to read Claire Gem's novel? Because the blurb promised a goth librarian, an old library and a pipe-smoking ghost.

Abigail Stryker is the 26-year-old goth fresh from graduation and looking forward to her first job as a librarian. Her aunt is a Wiccan and runs a pagan shop in the small town of Caldwell, North Carolina. Her uncle runs a French restaurant. Goth is probably fashionable.

The Harvey library was built in the 1880's by Elijah Harvey for his wife Isabelle Laramy. It is an historical and beautiful building and, while the commissioner Dennis Ludwig values this important piece of local heritage, his wife would see it gone.

The pipe-smoking ghost, known as Harry throughout most of the book, has a tendency to hurl books at some librarians, but not at Abigail. To Abigail, he cryptically suggests to read books featuring the words 'bell' or 'bells' in their titles.

The writing of this novel was adequate for a romance and the two protagonists (Abigail and the tweed-wearing, old-fashion 38-year-old professor Jack) had a suitable amount of emotional baggage to make them conflicted.

However the ghost was not present often enough, and the ending of the story wasn't convincing. Hang on, it's a romance, so it'll please readers favouring this genre.

For adults. Rating: 3.5.

Susan James says

Abigail Stryker is starting over in the small town of Caldwell, North Carolina. She's determined to make a success of her new job and the book hurling, pipe smoking ghost who chased away the last two librarians from the historical Harvey Library isn't going to stop her.

But the local college's history professor, Jack Wood may. Her growing attraction to him terrifies her. Her only other love affair ended badly and she can't bear the idea of history repeating itself.

Jack's afraid that Abby's too young for him and the last thing he wants is to repeat a bad relationship. But the more he sees of her, the more he is sure there's a secret covered by Abby's brash Goth Chick exterior. And it's a mystery he wants to solve. Add in a bitchy college dean, a coven of Wiccans and you have a recipe for a great read. Lovely debut novel.

Katherine says

Phantom Traces is a rare blend of romance and paranormal that combine to create a story of nostalgia versus progress, good versus evil. Librarian Abigail Stryker has been called to the aging Harvey to help revive it but she's up against two forces she never expected: one, a social climbing, history hating trophy wife; the other a book chucking spirit who calls the library home. She also has to contend with the abnormally attractive older professor who not only engenders feelings of attraction in Abigail, but who also dredges up memories of a past she'd prefer to forget.

The beauty of this book is that it does not require the reader to have an opinion on whether or not spirits truly exist as there are plenty of characters who introduce a healthy level of skepticism. However, the atmosphere of the crumbling library lends itself well to a ghostly presence and the relationships formed between the characters give the story a strong foundation and allow the reader to put aside doubt and suspend belief as Abigail and Jack fight to save the Harvey and free its spirits.

