



Mrs. Houdini

Victoria Kelly

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A captivating debut novel, meticulously researched and beautifully imagined, about the passionate marriage of Harry and Bess Houdini—a love story that defied death itself.

Before escape artist Harry Houdini died, he vowed he would find a way to speak to his beloved wife Bess from beyond the grave using a coded message known only to the two of them. When a widowed Bess begins seeing this code in seemingly impossible places, it becomes clear that Harry has an urgent message to convey. Unlocking the puzzle will set Bess on a course back through the pair's extraordinary romance, which swept the illusionist and his bride from the beaches of Coney Island, to the palaces of Budapest, to the back lots of Hollywood. When the mystery finally leads Bess to the doorstep of a mysterious young photographer, she realizes that her husband's magic may have been more than just illusion.

In surprising turns that weave through the uncertain days of the dawn of the twentieth century and continue into the dazzling 1920s, *Mrs. Houdini* is a thrilling tale that will take you deep into the heart of one of history's greatest love stories—asking what drives people to believe in something bigger than themselves—even as it reveals the famous magician's most remarkable feat of all.

Mrs. Houdini Details

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Author : Victoria Kelly

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From Reader Review Mrs. Houdini for online ebook

Peggy says

NOTE: Received as an ARC for review from Netgalley.

I didn't know much about Houdini beyond a couple of biopic-type movies and the song from the musical "Ragtime" until this book. I found it interesting that he was confident enough onstage to risk his life night after night, but offstage, desperately needed Bess behind him. The author's research apparently included a biography that quoted Bess extensively, so much so that she used some of the quotes as dialogue for the novel, and I think that may be what made it ring true for me.

What fascinated me most was the author's take on how Harry Houdini might have fulfilled his promise to return to his wife after death. The novel captures how difficult it would be to live with a man so obsessed with his work and magic, and then how difficult to live without him.

Alicia says

A magical chronicle of the Houdinis early life, and then Bess' quest to connect with Harry again, is the essence of ' Mrs Houdini. A well researched and equally well imagined piece of historical fiction-this tale leaves the reader under the illusion of really knowing Bess & to some extent Harry. I read this 100 year old story in 2 days-a great escape- transporting me back into the glamour, vaudevillian & magical 1900's.

Jennifer says

Magical and intriguing, "Mrs. Houdini" was a fast read that was both informative and entertaining.

This novel tells the tale of Harry and Bess Houdini -- the married circus and vaudeville team who performed together before Harry became truly famous as an escape artist. While we certainly read about the Houdinis' professional work and death-defying stunts, the real substance of the book is the love story between Harry and Bess, and their quest to determine whether it was actually possible to communicate with those who had passed away. Harry Houdini himself spent his life disproving the so-called spiritualists who claimed to speak with the dead, while at the same time desperately wanting this form of communication to exist. He promised his wife that he would find a way to speak to her beyond the grave.

Ms. Kelly's writing flows easily, although it doesn't necessarily "sing". Still this book was enjoyable.

3.5 stars

Thank you to Atria Books and NetGalley for a galley of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Trin says

Harry Houdini was a larger than life figure; his marriage to Bess Houdini has always been, in my mind, one of history's great tragic romances. Yet somehow Victoria Kelly has managed to make both seem petty and small. Now, I'm no expert on the Houdinis -- unless reading Wikipedia, listening to that super epic Kate Bush song, and being literally the only person to watch the show *Houdini and Doyle* grants one expertise. Nevertheless, Kelly's depiction of the couple felt wildly out of character to me: the way she writes them, neither Harry nor Bess even seems *clever*. They are pedestrian at best, awkward and gullible at worst. I didn't buy Kelly's characterization, so this book was never going to work for me.

It might have worked better, however, if the tone she was going for was gritty realism. Instead, this book attempts a spiritualist solution that even Arthur Conan Doyle would have found dopey. I strongly believe that this book, properly done, would have left me in tears (Kate Bush's song has made me a little sniffly from time to time); instead, I felt nothing the whole way through, except an urge to roll my eyes. There's no spark to the romance, no verve to the characters, and the ending is so cheesy it's likely to cause lactose intolerance. Where was the magic?

Reviews of A Shameless Fangirl says

I have always been fascinated with Harry Houdini, illusionists and spiritualists of that time are incredible individuals, so advanced and intelligent, often beyond their time. I must confess however I did not know a great deal of his story. What little I had witnessed in various film cameos of the character did not really instill a great deal of knowledge.

So, I went into this story with very little preconceptions and an open mind. I think that helped. Throughout the pages of this tale, the reader is taken on a journey with Bess Houdini. We see their lives together from when they met, until his death.

It was one of those books with alternating stories from past to present, we get to see life before and after Harry's death. This book had all the rights tools, it was haunting, intriguing but something just didn't click. It could be a personal issue, I have found before that books with alternating points of view (that are not clearly defined) or alternating timelines can confuse me. (I was a good chunk into New Moon before I realized it had switched and Jacob was telling the story sometimes).

The book was clearly well researched! I applaud the author for that. I love a good historical fiction that is accurate to its time. It is a truly magical insight into the man very few truly knew.

If you love historical fiction with a hint of paranormal intrigue! You should definitely pick up this title!

Full Review: <http://www.yafangirlreviews.com/2016/...>

Rebecca says

(DNF @ 40%) Perfectly serviceable historical fiction, but with no spark. I felt like I was just being given a lot of information about the two major time periods (1894 and 1929). Alas, scenes set at a séance, a circus,

and an insane asylum are not nearly as exciting as they promise to be. And, as is often the case with these famous wives books – a genre I generally love but can also find oddly disappointing from time to time – the protagonist tries but fails to explain why she finds her husband so fascinating. “His eyes danced. There was a madness to his passion, but he was not insane. There was something real and familiar about him. ... Harry was promising her a life of possibility, of magic, and it was unlike anything she had ever imagined for herself.” (I was meant to review this for BookBrowse but couldn’t rate it highly enough.)

Jennifer S. Brown says

As someone who knows virtually nothing about Harry Houdini and his life, I found this book fascinating. The story is of Bess, the vaudeville performer who marries Harry. The story is told in two time lines--one from when Bess marries Harry and the second of Bess's attempts to contact Harry after his death. I have no idea where the line between fact and fiction lies in this novel, nor did I care, because the story is gripping and I read this quite quickly. A terrifically interesting novel.

Cfkotula says

A story of the hardscrabble beginnings of Houdini and his endless quest to push the envelope of entertainment. The second half turns into the fantastic...maybe a little too much so. However I did like the idea of meeting at a designated place in the next life, and the idea of people past, present and future inhabiting the same world. Perhaps the mystical side of Houdini could have been its own exploration in another book.

Therese says

Harry Houdini and his wife, Bess had a pact that if one of them died, they would try to contact the one who lived on. After Harry's death, Bess unsuccessfully tried to find Harry and any messages he might be trying to leave her. This book puts a new spin on the story, asking us to imagine what might have happened if Harry were actually able to break through and communicate with Bess. The end reminded me of a scene from The Shining...a bit creepy, yet satisfying. ?

Heather Fineisen says

The spiritualist movement was at its height in the 1920s and the Houdinis were enthralled. This story is an imaginative biographical tale of the magic and the beliefs. Cameo appearances by some famous faces lend authenticity to the era. An interesting chronicle of whether Houdini contacts his wife from the dead as promised.

Copy provided by the Publisher and NetGalley

Rebecca Rosenberg says

What a gift Victoria Kelly gave us with this immaculately researched re-imagining of the incomparable Houdini, the world's most renown magician and escape artist. And from the unique perspective of his wife, Bess. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the story this way, up close and personal, instead of a biography. I particularly loved how Victoria handled the time after Houdini died... I won't reveal the end, but it really created resonance with me, leaving me wanting the Houdinis to live on! As they do in this stellar novel, Mrs. Houdini... <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B072KRP7MN>

Sarah (thegirltheycalljones) says

More like a 3,5 stars.

I picked this one up because I just learnt that my son shared his birthday with Harry Houdini and I think it's pretty cool. Then I realised I knew fuck all about Harry Houdini except the basics.

Here comes Mrs Houdini, a book telling the life of Harry and Beth Houdini from Beth's POV. You may or may not like the story itself but this book is extremely well documented. I can tell because I actually checked many of the facts to differentiate real events from fiction, and as it happens, the Houdini's life had been extraordinary enough not to have to make up a lot of things!

I read it as a documentary more than a novel - even if it is a novel - and highly enjoyed my time. Recommended to readers who'd like to know more about Houdini but favour novels over essays or biographies.

Barbara says

Many years ago when I was a girl of 14 I saw the movie "Houdini". Ever since that time I have had a curiosity about the lives of Bess and Harry Houdini. Victoria Kelly's book "Mrs. Houdini" follows their lives from the moment they first met until both of their deaths. Much of the book deals with Bess trying to find some sort of communication from Harry after his death. He had promised to contact her from the other side. This is a very well-written book. Victoria Kelly has done a lot of research to put it together and she does so in a way that it is interesting and very readable. I would recommend it to everyone with no hesitation. A very good read.

Tina says

I have always found Houdini fascinating and this historical fiction book focuses on his wife Bess and their life from her perspective. The author used alternate storylines that focused on the couple's life before and after Harry's death. While the author did her homework on the Houdini's and their rise to stardom, the story did not flow easily and batches of information were somewhat thrown at you in random paragraphs and inserted into scenes where they may or may not have belonged. It threw me off the story I was trying to get interested in repeatedly. Its hard to explain, but it just did not work for me.

The Houdini's were a fascinating couple, but this fictional account of their lives from Bess' point of view was lacking the excitement it could have had. No character, even Houdini himself, drew me in emotionally. No event, magical illusion, stunt or sad moment grabbed me. Everything was a little bit bland and forced. With a couple that offers so much interesting writing material and that was as fascinating as the Houdini's, this book about them has no wow factor.

My star rating: 2.5

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Escape artist Harry Houdini promised his wife Bess before he died that if it was possible would he find a way to speak to her again after death with a coded message only she would understand. Through this book, we get to follow Bess as she struggles through a life without Harry and hoping to get a message from him that he is waiting for her. The book also has a parallel storyline with her meeting Harry and their life together up until his death.

I have a longstanding fascination with Harry Houdini and knew instantly I wanted to read this book. But, strangely enough, I had a bit of a hard time getting into the story. I felt that the characters never really came to life for me. It was a good, book just not a riveting book. I had hoped to really get lost in the story, instead, if felt that I struggled to read, despite the book being not that thick. However, towards the end of the book, did I finally feel that the book's story started to get to me. There was just something about the last part that resonated with me. I wish I had felt the same connection towards the rest of the book, but I'm happy that at least did I feel that the book got to me.

It was not in any way a bad book. Both storylines are good and I did enjoy reading about the Houdini's and I liked the way Victoria Kelly took some liberties with their story. And, I absolutely loved the ending! Also, I like the cover, but I didn't know the meaning of it until I had finished the book. I love reading a book and when you are done you finally realize the meaning of the cover.

I recommend this book. It's an interesting mix of fiction and fact and it's fascinating to read a story from Bess point-of-view, her life with Harry Houdini. A love story that not even death could stop...

3.5 stars

I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through Edelweiss for an honest review.

Read this review and others on A Bookaholic Swede
