



## Fadeaway Girl

*Martha Grimes*

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**Fadeaway Girl** Martha Grimes

**The beguiling young sleuth Emma Graham returns.**

Martha Grimes returns to her twelve-year-old heroine, Emma Graham, in this suspenseful sequel to the bestselling *Belle Ruin*. Emma continues her investigation into the strange disappearance of the four-month-old Slade baby from the Belle Ruin Hotel more than twenty years before. The sudden appearance in town of the baby's father, Morris Slade, makes her even more determined to learn the truth. Then a mysterious drifter named Ralph Diggs appears at the Hotel Paradise, looking for work, ingratiating himself with everyone there. Everyone, that is, except Emma.

The perceptive Emma is bound once again to delight fans of the previous books *Hotel Paradise*, *Cold Flat Junction*, and *Belle Ruin*, and certain to win new readers with her intuition and humor.

## **Fadeaway Girl Details**

Date : Published February 3rd 2011 by Viking

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Author : Martha Grimes

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## From Reader Review Fadeaway Girl for online ebook

### **Starry says**

I've enjoyed this series, but I think it's time the author brought it to a close. It's getting repetitive, since the author has to re-explain so much of the plot and the character's characteristics. Sometimes I feel as if I've read the same line several times in previous chapters. And the mystery is getting more and more convoluted (so the next book will have to repeat even more from the first 4 books). [Or is the author being clever with all the repetition, since part of the whole atmosphere and plot of this book is the repetition of events through the generations plus in the people's day-to-day lives??]

The main character Emma is charming and I've enjoyed getting to know her, but I'm getting critical of how falsely precocious she is: she never sits down to read, so how could she be familiar with all those quotations from famous authors (eg, Tolstoy)? And why would ALL Emma's (actually, the author's) favorite people -- a mechanic, a diner waitress, and a sheriff-- be so literate and yet stay in this dismal small town among small-minded people?

I think an interesting wrap-up would be to solve the previous crimes in the first chapters of the next book and then focus on the mysteries surrounding Emma's own family and the hotel they run.

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### **Sarah says**

Gave it 5 stars because I think I've been a bit mean with the stars lately - and I just loved this book. It seems to catch such a deep feeling for life though a focus on quite surface things. I would have loved to spin the book out for weeks, but it was just not possible to stop reading for more than a few hours at a time. This is the fourth book set in Paradise Hotel and only a week covered in each book - should have felt hectic but instead sets a wonderful leisurely pace.

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### **Connie says**

they're rather difficult books, because while there are certainly mysterious and violent and tragic elements filling 12 yr old Emma Graham's life, these stories are not really mysteries. They are more a character study--the world sometime on the early 60's (late 50s?) of a small, backwater resort town as seen through the eyes of a bright, horribly marginalized girl.

That said, I find them hypnotic, certainly frustrating, as each book ends without revelation or explanation from a series of interwoven tragedies and appearances. But part of the intrigue is that this is exactly how Emma's world would be-- so much is kept back from her, so many experiences and possible motives are inaccessible to her. She doesn't "know" things, only intuits them and that vaguely, out of the corner of her eye. Definitely textured and rich and evocative . I can't wait for the next installment

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## **Richard Stueber says**

This is the 4th Martha Grimes novel with Emma Graham in it. It's really the second part of the story begun in *Belle Ruin*.

12 year old Emma Graham is still up to her sleuthing ways. In some ways she is very precocious, in other ways awfully naive. She is also a terrible liar and plays very mean-spirited tricks on various people. For these reasons I am not as fond of her as some readers profess to be.

The setting is a small town in the Western end of Maryland, just across from West Virginia. The whole thing takes place inside Emma's head and she doesn't give any dates. Because the great Jo Stafford is singing "You Belong to Me" on the jukebox the earliest it could be is 1952.

The main thing Emma is interested in solving was what was behind a kidnapping which may or may not have happened 20 years ago. The result of that incident is somebody now meeting an untimely death.

I much prefer the 22 Martha Grimes novels about Richard Jury of Scotland Yard.

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## **Rebecca says**

I really enjoyed *Fadeaway Girl*, a non-Richard Jury novel by Martha Grimes. I gather it's part of another series, but I may just rest with this one outing. In it, Grimes focuses on a single point of view, that of stubborn, sassy, smart, precocious Emma Graham. Emma could be the twin of Flavia del Luce, of the Alan Bradley mysteries: she's cranky, nosy, and very entertaining. Grimes has been experimenting with voice in the Jury novels (I mentioned that part of *The Black Cat* featured narration by a dog and a cat who can communicate telepathically . . . a bit jarring in a police procedural), but she remains in Emma's head for this novel. What Grimes continues to do--which lost her the final star in my opinion--is obscure the details of the solution, the murder, even the plot itself. Parts of this novel depend completely on the reader having read an earlier novel (*Belle Ruin*), which I have not read, and instead of providing a clear preface, a conversation that restates the salient details, or anything like that, Grimes scatters bits and pieces, allusions, etc, into the entirety of *Fadeaway Girl*. If I hadn't enjoyed Emma so much, I'd've quit about 2/3 through--because she does NOT explain the situation clearly at all.

So. It was an interesting read, with a terrific main character, but *Fadeaway Girl* stands as another example of Martha Grimes's refusal to write a straightforward story, so frustration is part of the package!

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## **John says**

Yesterday, I listened to an interview with the author, where she stated that she's frustrated that this series is marketed as "mystery" when it's really about Emma, and not the crimes she investigates. I agree, as the crime details are so convoluted and hard-to-follow that I really don't care all that much about the Devereau-Queen-Souder families (five years between books makes that especially problematic); I've stuck with the stories to learn more about the protagonist. However, at the end of this one, I feel as though I know Emma's situation *less* well. Four books later, the following remains outstanding:

How exactly is Emma related to the Paradises (specifically Aurora)? Aside from that her mother is a widow, and from West Virginia not Maryland, so the property came down through her late father's family by inference. Moreover, Aurora takes a swipe at "those Grahams" at one point as being an inferior branch of the

Paradise tree.

What's the deal with Lola Davidow, and Re-Jean? Why would Lola invest her money in the place. Why did Lola, Re-Jean, Jen and Will go to Florida on vacation at the beginning of the series, leaving 12 year old Emma home *alone* as a Cinderella figure? There's also been a mention that Lola took Emma to the pricey Silver Pear restaurant for lunch "to be nice" once. I'm going to expose the 800 lb. gorilla I've not seen expressed anywhere in a review: Lola and Jen are a couple. Moreover, Will and Mill are portrayed as stereotypically gay - spending their free time designing killer *musicals*? There's also a same sex couple that runs the Silver Pear itself as well. Life in Eisenhower America wasn't as some folks spo fondly recall it seems ...

Though the details of the crimes Emma's been solving are pretty much resolved at the end of the book, Grimes really needs to go on until Emma herself is resolved. I feel she owes us that.

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### **Sheena Ramirez says**

Do not read this book unless you have read the other books in the series. There are many references to previous plotlines which leaves you guessing for most of the book. I found the narrator, Emma, to be poorly written - obviously an adult mind, but with random out of character "little kid" characteristics thrown in. You could start this book in the last 50 pages and you really wouldn't have missed anything. It took me over a month to finish this book, and I only finished it because I'm not the kind of person to give up on a book, no matter how bad it is.

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### **Bobbie says**

I hardly know what to make of this fourth book in this series. I thought this was to be the last but now I wonder if there will be another. There are parts in this one and in the others when I laugh out loud and think "I just love this book" but then at other parts I am disappointed. I was ready to bring this to a close but now I want more or at least to have a true resolution to the mystery. I am becoming tired of some of the repetition. Maybe, I would like it to move forward to another time, when Emma is a little older, but she and the small town setting is what I loved about this story to begin with. I am still giving it 4 stars but I am certainly ambivalent at this point.

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### **Avid Series Reader says**

Fadeaway Girl by Martha Grimes is the 4th book of the Emma Graham mystery series, set in a small town in Maryland around the mid-20th-century. Emma is 12 years old. She lives in the Hotel Paradise, a rundown resort owned and operated by her mother. Emma's mother cooks for the hotel guests, and Emma fixes salads and waits on tables. Emma frequently sabotages the food she serves to Bertha, a guest she hates. Emma's great aunt Aurora Paradise never leaves her rooms at the top of the hotel. Emma creatively mixes cocktails for Aurora, who doesn't mind what she drinks as long as it is primarily alcohol and she gets lots of refills. Emma's brothers spend their time in the "Big Garage" putting on musicals. Emma's mother is evidently quite busy running the hotel, and Emma has complete freedom most of her days and nights. She travels into town by taxi, to see movies or spend time with her adult friends at the diner (the waitress and the sheriff). Emma also visits the newspaper editor, for whom she is writing up her story of the attempt on her life as she

solved a mystery in the previous book, *Belle Ruin*.

In *Fadeaway Girl*, Emma is obsessed with the 20-year-old unsolved kidnapping of the Slade baby from the *Belle Ruin* hotel. She questions town residents tirelessly (read: tiresomely) on their memories of the event – at every encounter, she brings up the kidnapping. Emma consults newspaper archives and researches at the library, but mostly pesters everyone continually with her questions. Residents remember the details differently and their stories change, as well. It seems the kidnapping was not properly investigated at the time, and Emma is eventually able to ferret out the truth.

There are many oddball characters in Emma's circle of friends and acquaintances. Rather than being charmingly quirky, they are mostly stupidly dysfunctional. Emma is given wide latitude in her behavior by the adults she continually visits and interrogates, and she is always offered sweets, which is consistent with her age. However Emma is also portrayed as possessing introspection and perception well beyond her age, well beyond the capabilities of the adults in her world, for that matter. She was the only one curious enough to solve an unsolved police case, for instance.

I am a big fan of Martha Grimes, consider her frequently tongue-in-cheek writing style delightful, and plan to continue to read all her books. But I enjoyed the previous books in the *Emma Graham* series much more than *Fadeaway Girl*. It seems like Emma's personality has become more obnoxious and smart-alecky, closer to that of Flavia de Luce in *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie* (which I loathed). I prefer the *Richard Jury* series, which also has quirky characters, but at least the reader is not expected to believe the protagonist solving mysteries is only 12.

My favorite part of *Fadeaway Girl* is Emma's fascination with Coles Phillips' "Fadeaway Girls" commercial artwork. I agree with Emma that the images are fabulous. Try a Google search of "Coles Phillips Fadeaway Girls" for a visual treat.

<http://www.google.com/search?q=coles+...>

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### **Larry Piper says**

This book is just the second half of *Belle Ruin*. The two should be combined. It's actually the fourth of the *Emma Graham* stories, but *Hotel Paradise* and *Cold Flat Junction* stand on their own. The last two only stand together.

By some quirk, my spouse picked up *Hotel Paradise* some 15 or so years ago for vacation reading (she probably thought it was another *Richard Jury* mystery). I loved it. It is one of my favorite books ever. The heroine, Emma Graham is a spunky, creative 12-year old. I have this awesome niece who was about 12 when I read *Hotel Paradise*, so in part I expect my liking of the book had to do with my liking my awesome niece. Still it was a great story. When we discovered *Cold Flat Junction* at a church fair a few years ago, I was delighted to become reacquainted with Emma. The story was almost as compelling as *Hotel Paradise*.

These last two books don't match up. Martha Grimes has let things which were once charming or funny become overworked and annoying. Spiking the salad of a crabby old lady once or twice is fun, but when Emma does it with regularity, it becomes sociopathically cruel. Not good.

One of the charms of the first two books, and *The End of the Pier*, which is set in the same place and has some of the same characters, albeit not Emma, is that you can't be sure of the time or place. The locale is around a faded resort hotel which has seen better times. Perhaps its in the Adirondacks or Poconos, that's where these kinds of resorts used to flourish. It turns out, in this book that they're in Western Maryland, Garret County, no doubt. Wow, I never knew any one in Maryland who ever bothered going to Garret County for vacation (or any other reason). They went to Ocean City or Pennsylvania, or some such. Even the Boy Scouts didn't go to Garret County. I would think it even less likely to have New Yorkers vacation in Garret County. But, it's possible, I suppose, so that part only bothered me a tiny bit.

But we get a much better handle on the time period in this book, which takes away some of the book's enigmatic charm. Things pretty much have to be in the 1960s at a minimum because there are 50 states and because young, star struck girls from 20 years before the period in the book were enamored by Veronica Lake. Well, Veronica was pretty much done by the mid 1940s and definitely not a factor in anyone's reckoning by 1950. So, here we are in the 1960s, but the 12-year old in the story knows *Ink Spots* songs by heart, and her older brother's musical friend is all over tin-pan alley, *Paper Moon*, and so forth. No way 1960s teenagers weren't into Elvis, Frankie Avalon, Annette, The Drifters, et al (but the 90-something year old great aunt liked Patience and Prudence? WTF?). Anyway, when the time wasn't clear, the books were rather more fun. When the time becomes clarified, one realizes that all the cultural references are wrong. WTF? I was much happier when I couldn't decide if the time were the 1940s or 1950s, but when it became clear it had to be the 1960s, it just didn't gibe.

So, I think what I'm trying to say, is the first couple of books in this series are rather awesome, but Martha Graham has pretty much shot her wad by the time she got to these last two. Even so, *Fadeaway Girl* and *Belle Ruin* are still fun reads, albeit no longer awesome (unlike my niece who has long since left 12 behind, but who is, never-the-less, still awesome).

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## **Richard says**

Martha Grimes defines quirky with every character in this outstanding novel: from the one on the cover, to the others we encounter in this really cold case. Although this is a sequel to *Belle Ruin*, it doesn't matter if you did not read the previous book.

12 year old Emma Graham, a very creative bartender, waitress and general flunkie at Her mothers Hotel Paradise; a crumbling old place inhabited permanently by her great aunt, Aurora Paradise taking up the entire fourth floor.

Emma determines to solve the mystery of a missing baby from 20 years ago and in the course of doing so, solves a couple of related murders along the way. She flits from one corner of the back of beyond to the other on the train that links most of these hamlets or Alex's Taxi, although we never actually meet Alex.

In between there are the equally mysterious secret doings in the Big Garage as her older brother and a cast of misfits prepare a sequel to their original production *Medea, the Musical*. Strangers appear from nowhere and may or may not have something to do with the missing baby.

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## **Laura Rodd says**

Emma's heart is breaking in this novel. As a young teen she is trying to understand the deception, brutality, and intricate lies adults use to further their own agendas in the world of "grown ups". She is taught to obey and place her faith in adults who seem to have unstable moral compasses and often are mere cogs in a larger system in which the innocents are made "scapegoats", children can be snatched from their beds and made to disappear if enough money changes hand, and her town is "haunted" by those left to deal with the fall out of injustice.

This was a hard but beautiful read because Emma is a free thinker who is beginning to voice her judgements and concerns of her home life and hometown with a wit that is sangefroid and dead on in aim. She also is still a child whose mood is improved by chocolate milkshakes and ham pinwheels. Even when depressed and bone weary she can delight in butterflies or the way the sun moves through a canopy of trees.

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## **Vilo says**

Why do I read Martha Grimes' mysteries? Sometimes it feels as though all the characters do is sit in restaurants and talk and talk and talk. In this book, the third in a series that starts with *Cold Flat Junction*, the main character is a 12-year-old girl, so a diner/doughnut shop instead of a pub is the main hangout. However, very few authors can match Grimes for atmosphere, for wonderful descriptions, unusual but engrossing characters, and a mystery that unfolds slowly, tortuously through the uncovering of small clues and details and sifting through the endless conversations (fascinating conversation, admittedly). The books are truly marvelous. The majority of Grimes' work is set in Britain, but she has at least two series in the US, and this is one of them, set in a small community in Maryland. I have felt that the American books have a little extra passion to them--I just read that Ms. Grimes spent many of her childhood summers in a Maryland hotel owned by her mother, just like Emma.

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## **Michelle L says**

Where'd the enchanting Emma be without Huck Finn? That wonderful voice, the observation of life, the refusal to play by its rules, the rich roster of vividly engaging characters surrounding her, their adult behaviour to be seen, sorted and ultimately evaluated. And through all that, growing up a little at a time -- figuratively as well as literally coming to solve mysteries. Emma is ultimately a totally different character than Huck, but she is definitely descended from him.

Descent turns out to be a major part of the mystery (not a spoiler). Not having read the previous books in the series, I found that wasn't a problem as some here said it is. While I'd like to look back at the preceding episodes for the pleasure of reading them, I really don't think people should be discouraged from reading this one on its own. It became another twist or level to the puzzle for me - even driving me to scribble up a brief family tree on a paper scrap. Which helped.

This is such a beautiful creation of an idealized past, a classic mid-20th Century American South full of

innocence and community, with no racial issues -- in fact, no races other than white, no sexual politics, no anti-Semitism. For me, Ms Grimes has successfully rendered an artful fairy tale of unexpectedly loosened imagination, infused with mood and atmosphere, and a genre-satisfying mystery sticking to it like a spider's web.

A thoroughly enjoyable experience. A surprising world away from the Jury novels, which I've followed for years. I was captivated.

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### **Linda says**

Twelve-year-old Emma Graham is the precocious protagonist/narrator of *Fadeaway Girl*, precocious being the operative word. Emma's pretty busy for a pre-adolescent, waiting tables at the restaurant where her mother cooks, concocting exotic alcoholic cocktails for her aging aunt, and, in her spare time, solving decades-old cold cases of kidnapping. The bones of this story, and this series, are good. The problem lies within Emma as main character. The town in which she resides is small, a place where everyone knows everyone, and everyone seems to accept that Emma's wise beyond her years. She writes serious pieces for the local newspaper. Her vocabulary is prodigious, her deductions and insights penetrating and astute, and her powers of observation the best in town. Therein lies the problem - all this genius is admirable in a character like Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple. In a child, after the first moments of wonder, it becomes an distracting annoyance. There are moments of humor and moments of pathos, but it's hard to sustain interest in an investigation lead by a moppet, unless you're a moppet yourself.

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