



The Girl in the Cellar

Patricia Wentworth

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Miss Silver helps a woman with no memory reconstruct a terrible crime

She awakes in a dark place. A young woman with a shattered memory, she knows neither who she is nor how she came to be in this abandoned house. All she possesses is a faint sense that someone is lying dead at the foot of the stairs. Horrifyingly, she is correct. In the cellar lies a young woman, her body broken, her head split, her life undone by a revolver's shell. The amnesiac flees and finally has a stroke of luck: She meets Maud Silver. A dowdy governess turned daring detective, Miss Silver sees immediately that something is wrong. She comforts the confused young woman, and coaxes out of her what little story she can tell. The memory of the body sets Miss Silver on a fantastic adventure--the last written by Patricia Wentworth, and one of the most thrilling of them all.

The Girl in the Cellar Details

Date : Published 1992 by Harper Perennial (first published 1961)

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Author : Patricia Wentworth

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Genre : Mystery, Crime, Cozy Mystery, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Golden Age Mystery, Classics, Literature, 20th Century, Audiobook

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From Reader Review The Girl in the Cellar for online ebook

Cynthia Corral says

LOL.

OK, this was a pleasant little "cozy mystery", the last one written by Patricia Wentworth before she died at 83 (1961). I think it's supposed to take place in the 1950s, but the characters behave more like turn of the century or earlier. Everyone is very prim and proper, the women don't appear to have a lot of strengths or rights, and the men are very much in control.

The story is about a young woman who awakens from a faint in a dark basement but doesn't know who she is or remember the dead girl on the floor or how she got there.

Pluses: Very heavy on female characters, and a good sprinkling of the good, bad and helpless. Most of the women go out of their way to help out our amnesiac, and Miss Silver is full of sense and connections - though she doesn't do much but sit calmly by and knit.

Minuses: There is a lot of repetition of lines, and I mean a LOT of repetition over and over and over. If there was no repetition the book would be less than a third of its already short length. Also, when poor Anne finally gets her memory back and we come to understand the whole story, it turns out to be a collection of the most cockamamie, improbable and coincidental events I've ever heard. The suspension of disbelief required here cannot be overstated.

But I took the end with good humor. It was a fast read, and I enjoyed, for the most part, trying to figure out the mystery. I wouldn't recommend it outright, but I wouldn't advise anyone against reading it either.

Mo says

All of Ms. Wentworth's usual tropes are here. Two young people instantly fall into love with each other, for no discernable reason. The hero is gruff, the heroine young, breathless and frightened.

Even though these novels were becoming a bit repetitive, I'm still bummed that I've come to the end of the series. These books were quick, delightful reads.

Katie Hilton says

One of the last of the Miss Silver mystery series. This is an intriguing thriller in which the protagonist is suffering from severe shock, so devastating that she has lost her memory from the moment she awoke from a faint, staring at a body in a cellar. The girl is assisted by Miss Silver, who sees her on the bus and realizes she is in very dangerous mental condition. Through a series of coincidences, the girl later comes to rely on Miss Silver's assistance as she tries to escape from captors, still desperately trying to establish her own identity. A fascinating read.

Tandis says

Miriam Smith says

I'm disappointed to have given up on this book so soon (chapter 3) after being given it from an elderly neighbour with a promise to read it, but although the story seems interesting I just can't read it comfortably. Written in 1961 and I think set in the 50's the writing is very repetitive, sentences often drawn out with repetitive wording when they could be a lot shorter. I understand that Patricia Wentworth writes cosy mysteries and I've no doubt I would have enjoyed the plot but unfortunately the style of writing wasn't for me.

Ellen says

The Girl in the Cellar (Miss Silver, #32) by Patricia Wentworth.

Anne comes to consciousness as one awakening from a deep sleep. She finds herself sitting on steps...steps leading down to a cellar. she doesn't remember how or why she's there but then she notices someone lying at the foot of these same steps.

This was an astonishing and quite moving emotional battle one young lady has with loss of memory. Anne cannot for the life of her remember anything . Her last name, her family or her familiarity with any town or home-all is just a blank. That's where our story begins. It's not a short story but this author does a steadfast job of letting us go through this vulnerable situation with Anne at Anne's pace.

This book was unlike any other Miss Silver I've read. to some it will seem too repetitive, but that's the way in reality it must surely be for someone attempting to recollect their identity.

Joy says

A frightened young woman becomes conscious standing in the dark above the murdered body of an unknown girl. She has no memory before that. Wentworth successfully puts us in her place as she tries to find safety and divine who her real friends are. This tense, scary story relies for its impact on our inner knowledge of the heroine, who takes the name Anne. Again, her appeal is a major factor in gluing us to the story.

Sally says

It looks like many of the Goodreads reviewers did not think this was one of Patricia Wentworth's best in the Miss Silver mysteries, but I rather liked it in spite of some short-comings and coincidences. It had a really

different twist on who the criminals were and why. I did feel a little sad that, with this reading (listening to the Isis audio recording), I had come to the end of the 32-book series. Since I did get all of the series as audiobooks, I will probably give them all a listen again sometime in the future.

Antonia says

a nice traditional crime story. a woman comes to on a staircase and at the bottom of it lies a dead girl. she finds a letter in a handbag and goes to the address, then her supposed husband turns up and things start happening - some thoughtless spinsters and do-no-gooders thrown in for good measure.

it seemed to hop about a bit and sometimes i could not follow the motivation of the people at times. occasionally i was put out by the sudden changes of perspective. too many coincidences as well but hey, it was all made worth it for the romance... who would not want a strong jim to take care of one... liked the descriptions of life at the time, that was nice. back then when lady's companion was still a proper job. overall, a pleasing read but not an author i would particularly seek out again.

Susan says

Anne knows two things: She can't remember anything but her first name, and she just found a dead girl. Fortunately, Anne meets Maud Silver, who recommends checking her purse. That indicates that Anne is Mrs. James Fancourt and is expected by his aunts in the country. The mystery grows, involving, eventually, Scotland Yard's Frank Abbott as well as Miss Silver and James Fancourt himself, who has never seen Anne before. Wentworth leaves a lot of loose ends, but the suspense is high enough that you'll probably not notice until you close the book.

RuthG says

Years ago I read many of the Miss Silver mysteries and perhaps this one, as well. I remembered liking them a great deal, but this time I was somewhat disappointed. The mystery was simpler than I would have preferred and Miss Silver was in it a lot less than I would have liked. Even the descriptions of the time and place were not as complete as I remembered as Wentworth's style. It was worth reading as a light, simple cozy but not as a complex mystery.

Julie says

A young woman wakes up in a cellar with a dead young woman and no memory of who she is or what has happened. She runs into Miss Silver on the bus who helps her figure out what to do next. She goes to an address on a letter in her purse and ends up meeting a wonderful young man. But there are still scares in store for her. Can she recall what is going on before it's too late?

Well-written mystery.

Bev says

In *The Girl in the Cellar* (1961) by Patricia Wentworth, a young woman regains consciousness in the dark on what she soon realizes are the steps of a cellar. She doesn't know where she is or how she got there....In fact, she's not even sure of who she is. All she knows is her name is Anne (but Anne what?) and that if goes to the bottom of the staircase she will find a dead body. She finds a flashlight in what she believes is her handbag and discovers that she's right. But her bout of amnesia doesn't allow her to identify the girl (who has been shot) or remember anything at all before coming to herself on the steps. She knows she must get away quickly--but where should she go?

In a daze, she leaves the house and gets on a bus where fate intervenes. Miss Silver, that former governess turned detective, notices the dazed young woman and invites her to join her for tea. Through her gentle leading, Anne finds a letter in the handbag that indicates that she is Mrs. James Fancourt and she was on her way to stay with her new husband's relatives. But how did she get in the cellar? Was she involved in the girl's death. What happened to cause her to lose her memory? And is she really who the letter says she is?

Miss Silver urges her to go the relatives as planned, but the house isn't the expected haven. Jim Fancourt's relatives have never met his wife, so they can't help her remember. And the feeling of dread which gripped her in the cellar isn't shaken--it takes on reality when a strange, threatening man appears. Fortunately, Jim Fancourt seems to be an ally and Miss Silver hasn't abandoned her. The three will work on the problem in their separate ways--bringing an end to Anne's fears (and light on her past) and unraveling the mystery of the girl in the cellar.

This is Wentworth's final book with Miss Silver. Using a favorite stratagem (amnesia), she weaves a convincing tale of fear and mystery. Anne's gradual recovery of her memory is plausible and the suspense is built up quite nicely. Admittedly, there are quite a few coincidences along the way--from the identity of the murdered girl (and Anne's real identity) to the strangers who happen along to help Anne at all the right moments. But the story is solid and even at her advanced age, Wentworth spins a good tale.

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Rachel Piper says

Read in one sitting. A good entryway back into reading.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Girl in the Cellar (Miss Silver #32), Patricia Wentworth

As she flees the scene of a murder, a young woman suffering from amnesia can only remember that her first name is Anne. The panic-stricken woman encounters Miss Silver, who attempts to solve the riddle of Anne's identity before her dreaded fears become reality. Originally published in 1961. Miss Silver helps a woman with no memory reconstruct a terrible crime. She awakes ... Miss Silver on a fantastic adventure--the last written by Patricia Wentworth, ...

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