



# The Keeper of Secrets

*Judith Cutler*

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## **The Keeper of Secrets** Judith Cutler

Spring 1810. Young Parson Tobias Champion is excited to be taking over the small Warwickshire parish of Moreton Priory. But his first night in the village brings excitement of the wrong kind when Tobias intervenes in an attempted rape and becomes hero to housemaid Lizzie Woodman. As Tobias settles into life in Morton Priory he finds friendship in the form of Dr. Edmund Hansard and his concern for Lizzie quickly blossoms into something more. But as Jem, Tobias's groom, and local farm boy Matthew compete for Lizzie's attention Tobias resigns himself to the fact that his feeling for the girl will remain unrequited. Soon, however, his mind turns to other matters when the unsettling death of poverty stricken poacher Mr Jenkins, the suspicious demise of local aristocrat Lord Elham and a mysterious attack on Tobias himself make one thing clear; a malign influence is at work in the supposedly sleepy hamlet!

## **The Keeper of Secrets Details**

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Author : Judith Cutler

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## From Reader Review The Keeper of Secrets for online ebook

### Howard says

Well written presenting a beautiful window into Victorian life and language.

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### Penny Little says

An enjoyable historical mystery.

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### Sonja says

Really enjoyed this!

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### Ant Koplowitz says

Enjoyable story about a country person and his doctor friend, who try to solve the mystery of Lizzie's disappearance. The mystery element is fairly light, and the plot developments seemed a bit random in places. But it's populated by a set of likeable characters and there was a real sense of time to the story.

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### Heidi says

Well written, if slow-paced, and seemingly as much of a societal description of the era as a mystery. I thought the language and the tone were very authentic – quite Austen like, but without the impish humor and with a lot more awareness of lower-class mores.

I liked the characters and was able to stay with the story; but I have to say that the denouement was disappointing, as there was absolutely no surprise or twist to it.

I might try another one, just for the heck of it; but the series apparently didn't fly, as there are no more books in it, and if they're all this obvious, I can see why.

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### Nicole says

The Warwickshire parish of Moreton Priory is the setting. The manor house is grand but the villagers are impoverished and in 1810 England was cut off from buying wheat by the French wars. Napoleon, as Emperor, has been isolated by the British navy but has retaliated by cutting off European food supplies. British land owners are making money but that was not passed on to workers and the cost of food was high resulting in ever increasing.

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The new parson, Tobias Champion, arrives to minister to the village of his mother's distant cousin Lady Elham who has granted him the local living. Toby finds the family fairly feudal in its attitudes towards the servants and other dependent villagers. Toby's own father (implied to be a man of the 10,000) was rather enlightened so Toby is rather shocked to find the family holds an easy assumption of privileged access to the female servant personal charms and provides dreadful living conditions for both current and pensioned servants. So he begins a small campaign for social reform beginning by stopping the mishandling of the attractive parlour maid Lizzie Woodman.

Setting the tone of his incumbency Toby aligns the villagers rapidly as he attempts to bring education and real charity not just workhouse charity to the poorest villagers. He makes fast friends with the local Dr Edmund Hansard and others but also finds many who resent his easy assumption of authority. These include Lady Elham's son and friends who begin a campaign of petty but painful retributions.

Period background:

Geo III is still king and Spencer Percival is Prime Minister. The prince becomes regent in 1811. The Army is fighting the Spanish peninsular war where Wellington's British forces are augmented by the Portuguese, and Spanish army fighting the French Emperor.

The upper ranks of Georgian & Regency society were known as the haut ton (based on the French phrase bon ton - good manners and fashionable style) for their rich, well-born and extremely fashion conscious style. Only those who attended the London season and participate in the social activities are listed as a part of the 10,000. Money and birth are necessary but not sufficient to be ranked. Style is paramount!

Britain has outlawed slavery in its territories and banned the Atlantic slave trade but not yet persuaded other countries to join Britain in outlawing the slave trade.

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### **Barbara says**

As a mystery it isn't very mysterious but as an historical novel it is excellent.

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### **Mark Orr says**

I was given a recommendation to read this book. Well, I was given a recommendation to read a book called The Keeper of Secrets by Julie Thomas. Oops.

I went to chat with the person who recommended it, explaining that I was lost with some of the language and the customs of the day etc. She was very perplexed and then we figured out that I was reading the wrong novel.

Anywho, I enjoyed it.

Cheers

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## **Jennifer (JC-S) says**

‘Let us go and prepare ourselves.’

In spring 1810, Reverend Tobias Campion, who has turned his back on a life of privilege, takes up his small Warwickshire parish of Moreton Priory. Alas, his first night in the village as the guest of his distant cousin, Lady Elham, is exciting for all of the wrong reasons. Tobias intervenes in the attempted rape of Lizzie Woodman, a housemaid in his cousin’s home. While this makes him a hero to some, it brings him the enmity of others.

Nothing is quite what it seems in at Moreton Priory. Tobias makes friends with Dr Edmund Hansard, uses his social conscience in relation to the lives of the labourers and poor of the village, and consequently offends some of his parishioners. At the same time, while he has deepening feelings of affection for Lizzie, he is aware that others are also attracted to her. Soon, though, a number of deaths and accidents occur and soon Reverend Campion and Dr Hansard join forces to try to uncover some answers.

It is not particularly fast-paced and some may find that the scene-setting takes too long. However, once the scene is set and the characters established, the novel is full of twists and turns and some insights into the social history of the times. It is the historical setting rather than the mystery that makes this novel most enjoyable. This is the first book in a series and I’ll be reading the next book ‘Shadow of the Past’ to see how what the future holds in store for Tobias Campion.

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## **Tammy says**

The story is set in 1810 so the language reflects this. It is a historical mystery and even though the book is done, I am still drawn to what happens next to the main character Parson Tobias Campion. I hope there will be another book about this interesting and charming character.

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## **Anna Eskut says**

I? had high hopes for this book, and I? tried to like it, but I? couldn’t. Between the first half and the last half of the book I? felt like I? was reading two entirely different stories. The first involved a parson and a quiet country life, and the second a crazy woman and a handful of murders. There was nothing special about the writing, and the multiple grammatical errors I? found in the book were annoying. The characters were poorly developed, and I? didn’t feel even a little upset when terrible things were happening - the writing just wasn’t convincing. Overall, a pretty average, boring book.

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## **Sheri says**

Enjoyed this book -a very early who-dunnit. But the edition I read had many typos. Very badly proof-read.

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### **Pat says**

This was a quick and easy read but also very enjoyable and a real page turner. The writing is excellent and I feel the author has a real 'of the period' style. The main characters are all very likeable and the villains all very villainous. There is also some pithy social comment. I will be searching out more books by Judith Cutler.

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### **Johanna says**

I liked this. I admit I skimmed some, but well plotted!

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### **Therese says**

I found this book to be well written, and entertaining - but the plot lines were very simple and evident. Everyone in this novel turns out to be - exactly what they appear to be. The historical background research is well done, and integrated into the story line, but I thought that the attitudes of the main characters - especially their egalitarianism and concern for the poor - was rather anachronistic.

One of the fun aspects of reading this novel, is picking up references to other novels set in the era of Regency England. There are frequent uses of phrases familiar to readers of the novels of Georgette Heyer - a character who collapses is "done to cow's thumb", and a racy young person shows that they have "town bronze." And a nod to Jane Austen! At the end, someone is planning their wedding, and decides to have "very little white satin and very few lace veils" ...

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