



Within the Dark Hills

Sian Ann Bessey

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Desperate to escape the unwanted advances of a cruel master, chambermaid Annie Morgan runs miles through stormy weather to find sanctuary at the home of Reverend and Mrs. Davies. Without family and tainted by scandal, she's in dire need of a new identity and an occupation to match. Equally bleak is the future of Evan Powell, a miner who harbors dreams of escaping the black mines that are slowly killing him and finding refuge under the promised blue skies of America. But recently, the wife who Evan adored died, leaving the devoted father struggling to care for his young daughter, Jane.

To benefit both Annie and Evan, the kindly reverend arranges a marriage of convenience, one that is quietly contracted in a hasty ceremony—an event that sparks pointed gossip among those in the small Welsh town and outright rejection from Evan's family. Annie must tread carefully lest she let slip anything about her past—particularly when she learns that her former master has been afoot, inquiring about a missing maid. More importantly, she feels she must avoid any emotional entanglements with Evan, who remains devoted to his beloved deceased wife. But as Evan works with Annie to care for Jane, Evan knows their relationship is growing into something more and must face the torments of a divided heart. And in the midst of Mormon missionaries preaching a strange new religion, disaster strikes the town and Annie's troubled history can no longer be hidden.

Within the Dark Hills Details

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From Reader Review Within the Dark Hills for online ebook

Mary says

This was a quick read and was an interesting story. I liked the historical information about the miners in Wales. It didn't sound like a good life at all!

Jane says

I felt like I have read this book a number of times: Attractive, self-effacing, family-less woman flees unwanted advances of boss/suitor and enters marriage/relationship of convenience with widower with heart of stone and who has child with some sort of disability. Through the heroine's uncomplaining service the hero's heart is softened. The missionaries may or may not make an appearance.

Where this book stands out is in its depiction of Welsh mining- these scenes were vivid and showed the strongest relationships in the book. The Welsh mining town comes alive.

I found myself frustrated by Annie's passivity. For example, we are reminded every so often that Annie has had midwife experience. When the moment comes for her to use this experience, to step up and take an active part in the story, she again relies on the men around her to make her decisions for her.

Kathryn says

I love this author's writing style and book topic selection. Not only does she quench my desire to read a good, clean, sweet romance, but she also puts in some historical value that makes me appreciate the sufferings of ancestors that have brought us to this point in time through their hardships. (welsh in the coal mines)

Annie Morgan was without family, home, or work when she ran from her cruel master as a chambermaid, but when he made advances on her she fought and tried to disappear...ending up at the home of the Reverend Davies and his wife. This stormy night of her escape also brought the sound of trouble at the mine.

Unselfishly, she was willing to go to help besides that she was bone tired from her run and wet besides. Evan Powell, lost his wife and love, Catherine after the delivery of their daughter Jane. His sister, Maggie helped to care for his infant daughter until this point 2 years later. Now Maggie has 3 children with one on the way and her husband is injured in the mine with a broken leg. Evan knows that he can't ask anymore for his sister to watch his daughter.

The reverend proposes the idea of Evan marrying Annie a complete stranger, although she has a special touch with Jane that makes the young girl, though shy immediately drawn to her.

They both agree to the marriage of "convenience" as Evan doesn't believe he will ever be able to love again. Through mutually shared tasks and Annie's tender care of Jane and Evan he finds his heart is starting to feel again, but he is torn with guilt over his late wife and loyalty to her.

Annie surprises herself by developing feelings for Evan too. She worries when he enters the mind and when the Hooter blast when disaster is announced. Love blossoms. The missionaries come and teach of the

restored gospel and an opportunity to go to America. Even though it is hard they work through the ridicule of a hasty marriage and then the move to America. Maggie is one that is slow to accept, but when Annie helps her in the birth of her daughter and then helps financially with food as her husband Tom is laid up, forgiveness and acceptance comes.

I have read many books on the Welch miners and truly am grateful that my children very had to deal with that hardship and life sentence of death.

I wouldn't mind a continuation of this story...Will the best friends and Maggie and her husband's journey to acceptance and move to America.

Chanae says

This is really a 1.5 star book for me. This story was a type of "arranged marriage" love story, which I usually like but this one was just too rushed and predictable to enjoy. And then at the end the author had to throw in a quick conversion to Mormonism and send them on their way to Zion - all within 2 chapters or so - with hardly no trouble or heartache or persecution for this decision - and then the end. Really? I am a Mormon. I like historical Mormon/LDS fiction, reading about the pioneers and the early conversion stories and treks to Zion. But the way it was just throw in to this story I would say made it even more rushed and unbelievable. If you are going to have a conversion story (to any religion, not just the Mormon/LDS church) there should be time for the characters to really be converted so the reader believes that they believe it. I'm sure there are many of my fellow Mormons who will disagree with me, but that's just my personal preference when it comes to historical LDS fiction. This was a disappointing read for me.

Shellie says

Very quick read! Annie is running away from the only job and home she knows as a chambermaid at Master Howell's manor. Master Howell has made some unwelcome advances and Annie knows she must go. She turns to Reverend Davies for help.

Evan Powell lost his wife, Catherine, nearly 2 years ago minutes after giving birth to their daughter Jane. Working 12-14 hour days as a miner does not leave Evan a lot of time for his daughter who is most often taken care of by Maggie, Evan's sister.

As Evan seeks council from Reverend Davies as well, the good Reverend suggests that Annie and Evan marry for convenience, which would provide Jane with a mother figure, Annie with a home and stability, and Evan with a helpmate. Neither Evan nor Annie are prepared to fall in love.

Add to this a few disasters at the mine, in which some dear friends are lost, the return of Master Howell who has been searching for Annie, and the arrival of the "devil worshipping" Mormon missionaries, and you have one exciting, easy, fast-paced story!

Angela Whiteley says

Good, but the story was super predictable. The building of characters was shallow and the emotion was not

written in a way that you connected with it. Despite all of that, it is a decent read and if you have nothing better I would recommend it.

Katie W says

Annie has to escape her employer in Wales. Evan is trying to work in the mines and care for a young, motherless daughter. A preacher suggests for them to enter a marriage of convenience, but will that solve everything? Annie still has to hide and Evan isn't sure his heart will ever heal enough to love again.

I wasn't too sure I'd like the story as it was started to build, but I ended up loving it!! I love how tough Annie is--not only physically, but mentally. Although the tongues are wagging all around her and she is shunned by her new sister-in-law, she manages to hold her head high and carry on. Evan is amazing too. He's been saving for America forever, but when hard times fall upon his sister, he dips in to help out--even though it's clear she's angry with him for being hasty.

I hope there's another book coming--it ends with a semi-cliffhanger and I really want more.

Diana says

Meh. Kind of forgettable. I didn't appreciate that the author summarized so much of their falling in love. I'd rather she included these conversations she mentioned.

A.L. Sowards says

I've been interested in reading this book since it ended up on the Whitney Finalist list and I was able to have dinner with the author (she's very nice, by the way). It took me a while to get around to it, but I recently listened to the audio version and enjoyed it. It's a sweet story about a Welsh coal-mining town, with the two main characters getting married in desperation, and then falling in love after that. I enjoyed seeing their relationship grow, liked the camaraderie Evan had with the other coal miners, and loved how the minister was portrayed as such a good, prayerful man. The love story was a big part of the book, but there were also mining disasters and a few other things that kept it interesting. I've listened to a few other audiobooks read by the same narrator and didn't love her, but she did a good job with this one. Recommended if you enjoy historical fiction about nice characters or have an interest in coal mining.

Melissa says

This is a clean LDS or Christian light romance/history fiction. The cover is way off and irritated me but everything else was great. I love arranged marriage stories and this one was done well and Very clean. I loved learning a little about the miners in a more intimate way. I got a little claustrophobic in some of those scenes! This was a very quick read and I was a little sad the romance wrapped up so quickly. A sequel could be added but it ended nicely. This has a Christian book feel until the very end when the Mormon religion is introduced. Nothing preachy in this book, (SPOILER)It wraps up quickly with them reading the book of Mormon and then getting baptized. It was a little quick but I hate reading about a long drawn out conversion

story. Soooo it was just what I wanted for this rainy spring day: }

Heidi says

Loved Loved Loved this book! Such a clean, sweet read. Little bit tense here and there so couldn't wait to see what would happen next. Couldn't put it down from the very beginning to the very end.

Toni says

Loved this book. I learned a lot about the coal mines in Wales. I am certainly glad my husband and children aren't involved in mining. The love story was sweet and compelling with such great characters. It is always nice to have a satisfactory ending. I will be looking for more from this author.

Susan says

Mining in Wales was the main focus in this fictional account. Scary to know that men's lives back then were expendable--men's greed! I really enjoyed Annie and Evan's love story--early pioneers.

Susan says

Desperate to escape the unwanted advances of a cruel master, chambermaid Annie Morgan runs miles through stormy weather to find sanctuary at the home of Reverend and Mrs. Davies. Without family and tainted by scandal, she's in dire need of a new identity and an occupation to match. Equally bleak is the future of Evan Powell, a miner who harbors dreams of escaping the black mines that are slowly killing him and finding refuge under the promised blue skies of America. But recently, the wife who Evan adored died, leaving the devoted father struggling to care for his young daughter, Jane. To benefit both Annie and Evan, the kindly reverend arranges a marriage of convenience, one that is quietly contracted in a hasty ceremony. An event that sparks pointed gossip among those in the small Welsh town and outright rejection from Evan's family. Annie must tread carefully lest she let slip anything about her past, particularly when she learns that her former master has been afoot, inquiring about a missing maid. More importantly, she feels she must avoid any emotional entanglements with Evan, who remains devoted to his beloved deceased wife. But as Evan works with Annie to care for Jane, Evan knows their relationship is growing into something more and must face the torments of a divided heart. And in the midst of Mormon missionaries preaching a strange new religion, disaster strikes the town and Annie's troubled history can no longer be hidden.

Good for LDS fiction lovers.

Theresa says

Listened to this book.

