



Columbella

Phyllis A. Whitney

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"Phyllis Whitney is, and always will be, the Grand Master of her craft."

-Barbara Michaels

Jessica's life was a closed book until she found herself entangled with the dangerous drama of a strange and passionate family. Searching for a new life on sultry St. Thomas Island, she is drawn into the wealthy family's dark betrayals....

That was a night of gold and red, with torches flaming on the hilltop and the lights of Charlotte Amalie fanning out around the harbor below. A night of water lily and sweet-smelling cereus. The night of the shell...

Jessica Abbott, fleeing her own past, finds herself the center of a whirlpool of conflict at Hampden House, high on its cliff in the Virgin Islands. She is confronted by Catherine Drew, a woman whose sole purpose is to torment and destroy. Catherine is the wife of a vital, driven man, Kingdon Drew-toward whom Jessica is irresistibly drawn. Jessica must defy the beautiful, self-indulgent Catherine, who likes to affect the name of a shell - Columbella. She must fight for the very future of another woman's child. Above all, she must find the strength to help the man she loves escape the trap Catherine has set for him. Yet each day Catherine seems to mock her in a new way - and win. Until the night of the shell...

Always, the brilliant island sun shines over Hampden House in St. Thomas and over Caprice, the plantation in St. Croix that is crumbling to eerie ruin, guarded by its unicorns. Always the threat of a hurricane looms over this exotic setting, where the past still affects the present.

Columbella Details

Date : Published October 12th 1982 by Ivy Books (first published 1966)

ISBN : 9780449202203

Author : Phyllis A. Whitney

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Romance, Gothic, Gothic Romance, Romantic Suspense

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From Reader Review Columbella for online ebook

Lauren says

Still a good story but not one of my favorites. I absolutely love gothic romances with all of the mystery and the strong female characters. Phyllis A. Whitney is an amazing author incorporating an unforgettable story with amazing characters.

Lindsay says

Boring. I know it's old, but I don't understand how this could have ever been marketed as a romantic suspense. Nothing happens. As is typical of these older romances, there is absolutely nothing going on between the heroine and the hero until suddenly they are madly in love and say they always have been. The twist in this one is that the hero is already married to another woman. Oh, and again as is typical of these older romances, the heroine had all these problems (in this case they were mental problems) that she couldn't solve on her own, and only the hero could have solved them for her. Seemed more like fantastical realism in that nothing seemed like it could possibly happen even for that time period. Even the tropical island setting made it seem unrealistic.

Diana McMinn says

To be honest, this was not my favorite. I loved the setting and the characters were interesting. I just felt that the romance between Jessica and King formed too quick. We knew her feelings but usually Ms. Whitney draws it out with glances and such. With this he just suddenly had feelings for her. Although the ending did have a twist in it, in Ms. Whitney's true fashion

Sarah Mac says

A nice surprise -- this was my first Whitney book, but I'll definitely be investing in more.

As you might guess from the lovely vintage cover, *Columbella* is a gentle melodrama/gothic romance hybrid that takes place on St Thomas. There are rich people with rich people problems. Cougars. Screwy mother/daughter dynamics. Jewel thieves. Seashells. Hurricanes. Scandalous bikinis. And someone gets crushed to death by a mango tree. This is contemporary rom suspense at its finest, y'all. It's squeaky clean & yet completely NOT BORING. See? IT IS POSSIBLE!

Anyway.

Out of the 'Big Four' 60s/70s romantic suspense authors (Holt, Stewart, Eden, & Whitney), Whitney has the reputation for being the most hacky. Granted, this is my first & only yardstick by which to measure her style...but at first blush, I'm calling bullshit. First -- *all* those authors have a style & preferred characters that they recycle. And second -- Whitney's writing is WAY, WAY better than the overrated boredom of anything ever penned by Dorothy Eden. Yeah, I said it. You win the rom suspense smackdown, Phyllis. It isn't even a fair fight. Comes to that, Holt & Whitney would crush Eden & Stewart in a TLC smackdown. THROW

THOSE CHAIRS, LADIES! :D

...WTF just happened to this review? I should probably cut back on the caffeine.

Joyce says

Girl idolizes mother with controlling ways. Island of St. Thomas.

M. says

Columbella is set in the U.S. Virgin Islands, specifically in Charlotte Amalie. Author Phyllis A. Whitney does a splendid job of making the reader feel as if present there, walking breezy grounds in the lazy sunshine and feeling the heat in the peak of the afternoon. She also does a fine turn in creating a malevolent lead character whose main purpose is to hurt those closest to her.

That person is Catherine Drew, who likes to call herself Columbella. Into her path walks young Jessica Abbott, who is hired by Catherine's mother to work on the schooling of Catherine's daughter Leila. Jessica anticipates a difficult situation but instead receives the challenge of her life.

This book is part family drama, part romance and part mystery. I will say I was never bored by it and found nearly all of its twists and turns quite plausible. I have always found that the best books have characters that are motivated by something, be it a desire, a dream or even an emotion that consumes them. More than one character in this novel meets that description, and the end result is a memorable adventure. It is a great example of why Phyllis A. Whitney had such incredible and long-lasting success as an author.

Katie W says

Jessica flees her past and escapes to beautiful St. Thomas Island in the Caribbean to stay with an aunt for awhile. While there, she is asked to become a private teacher to a 14 year old girl--Leila. Leila's mother is a wild, cat-like, evil woman--Catherine (Cathy to her daughter and Columbella to herself). This woman puts her daughter down at every turn and has no respect for herself, her husband, or others. Jessica intended to stay just a few days, but became caught up in this crazy story that ended in death....or is it murder?

Phyllis Whitney's stories bring me back quite a few years to when I was younger--I read them all as a teen. They all have a similar pattern--exotic settings, a woman who is looking for a change, and a mystery on hand. There is always a love interest to some seemingly out of reach man, and that romance is always abrupt--nothing there one minute and then an undying love the next. But to me, they are comforting and clean and there's always a twist.

Arismere says

Esta é a história de Jéssica Abbott, uma ex-professora de 28 anos que passara cuidando de sua mãe doente e possessiva por vários anos. Após a morte da mãe, sem saber que rumo tomar, Jéssica vai para a ilha de St.

Thomas, nas Ilhas Virgens, ficar com sua tia.

Inicialmente a moça quer apenas descansar, mas logo é procurada pela matriarca da família mais importante da ilha, que deseja sua ajuda para supervisionar uma adolescente de 14 anos (neta desta senhora).

A menina que deve ficar aos seus cuidados se chama Leila e é uma adolescente rebelde, ora ignorada pela mãe, ora torturada pela mesma ou mimada. A mãe da menina se chama Catherine (Cathy para os íntimos e Columbella para ela mesma).

Sinceramente, Columbella é uma grande vagabunda-egoísta-traidora-etc,etc,etc. Ela não tem respeito por ninguém, seja a filha, o marido, a mãe... ninguém. Em certos momentos ela é tão cruel e maldosa com a garota que dá pena.

Acontece que Jéssica aceita o cargo e acaba por permanecer por pena de Leila e em seguida por amor ao pai da menina. Eu costumo detestar livros com mocinhas que se apaixonam por homens casados, mas Columbella é tão detestável que até me esqueci deste detalhe.

A tensão na casa vai se tornando cada vez mais intensa, até culminar em uma morte, masssss... terá sido um acidente ou um assassinato??? Eu fiquei me mordendo, ora de raiva, ora de curiosidade, ora de pena e assim por diante, mas tudo está tão bem distribuído que o livro se torna uma delícia.

O cenário é exótico e transmite todas as sensações do ambiente... pelo menos eu me senti assim :-)

O amor é profundo, intenso, mas casto, uma vez que o mocinho é casado e eles jamais cometeriam um ato tão repugnante quanto o da traição, mesmo com Columbella traindo o marido abertamente.

Muito interessante o paralelo que Jéssica faz entre ela e Leila, afinal, ambas possuíam mães dominadoras e egoístas. tendo passado por tudo isto a maior parte da vida até aquele momento a mocinha desejava libertar a menina deste tormento, dando-lhe força e segurança.

Eva says

One of my favorite Whitney books. Very suspenseful. I have read it several times jsut because I own it.

Heidi Campbell says

I enjoyed it much more than her other books that were written in the later years. Written in 1966, I was much more interested in the story. A real page turner for me. Not a five star because there was too many over the top coincidental things and also corny things. Other than that, I felt it was well written. It kept me wanting to read it.

Angie says

I always enjoy books by Phyllis A. Whitney, and this was no exception. This was actually not the first time I've read this book. My only critique, and this is the same with many books, is the relationship between two of the characters just seems to pop up out of nowhere! One minute they are arguing, and the next you find them in each other's arms professing their undying love to each other. But other than that, it was a good read!

Dayna Smith says

Probably my favorite of all Whitney's massive volume of work, this is the story of Jessica Abbott, a former

school teacher, who is talked into supervising a troubled teen by the family matriarch. The story is set on the island of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is a wonderful example of the romantic mystery novel of which Phyllis Whitney is the undisputed master. Some adult concepts: murder and adultery, but nothing graphic.

Mary says

One of my favorites!

Stephanie says

Is was so exciting! It kept me guessing until the very last 2 chapters. I thought I had it figured out, but of course, I didn't. The twist at the end was a total surprise. Great mystery!

Judith Kelley says

Excellent read

Well developed characters, interesting plot, a page Turner. Descriptions of the setting were well done. A very interesting story line.
