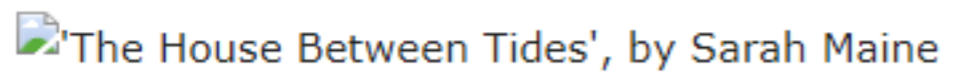




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# 'The House Between Tides', by Sarah Maine: Book Review

By Rachel Casey



Hetty Deveraux has inherited an old family home from her recently deceased grandmother. Muirlan House belonged to her great-great-grandmother's half-brother, and renowned artist, Theo Blake. Hetty dreams of turning it into a hotel with an adjoining golf course. But when she visits the Scottish island that the house inhabits, she realises it needs a lot more work than she imagined.

Muirlan House is in ruins. The roof has all but caved in and the windows boarded up. The house is seen as a danger to enter. A local contractor, James Cameron, and policeman Ruairidh Forbes have more bad news for her on her arrival. James has found bones buried underneath what was the conservatory. Until they find out who they belonged to, no work can be done.

As Hetty spends time on the island, waiting for word on who the ancient bones might have been, she begins to learn about it's past, and the past of Muirlan House.

Theo Blake was a reclusive artist and avid bird fan. He brought his wife, Beatrice, to the house in the summer of 1910. But she soon became disheartened when she realised that he was mostly interested in his bird collection. His relationship with local boy Cameron Forbes starts to worry her, and as Theo becomes more distant, she starts to wonder if she made the right decision in coming to Murlain House at all.

Told from the perspectives of Hetty, in 2010, and Beatrice and Theo in 1910, *The House Between Tides* is reminiscent of the kind of book that Daphne DuMaurier or Charlotte Brontë might write. The eerie and isolated Muirlan House is just as important to the story as Manderly to *Rebecca*. It's a character in itself and the heart of all the conflict in the story. In 2010, Hetty is trying to figure out if it's worth re-doing the house against the wishes of the inhabitants of the island, while in 1910, Theo is facing backlash from his tenants and his protégé Cameron, about the fact that they have lost their homes because of Muirlan House. Maine's descriptions are atmospheric and evocative of the nature that surrounds the house. As you read you can taste the salty sea air and feel the wind whip around your legs.

The actual characters in *The House Between Tides* are not always as impressive as Muirlan House. Hetty is a spineless woman who lets people walk all over her. She refuses to tell her boyfriend, Giles, that she doesn't want his help, and instead lets him and his agents take the lead while she just seethes in the background. And when she isn't taking orders from Giles, it's from James Cameron, the contractor hired to look at the house.

Beatrice is more likeable, and her parts of the story are more enjoyable to read. She is less of a pushover, although she still lets Cameron Forbes influence her more often than not.

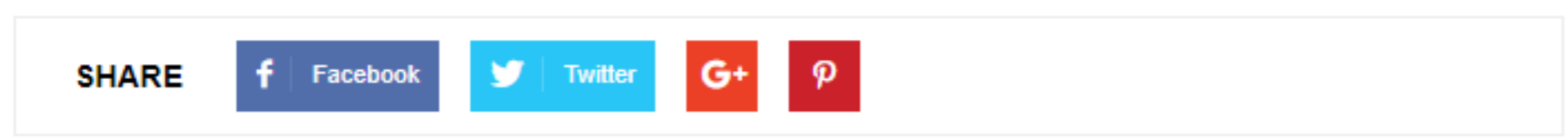

*The House Between Tides* can be a bit slow at times. It doesn't have the pace of a regular murder-mystery, and at times I found myself forgetting about the bones altogether as it can seem like an age between mentions of them. It can also be confusing trying to remember how some characters are related to others, like Ruairidh and his ancestors, but it's important to know for parts of the story, so that was frustrating. But overall this is a good book with an interesting plot and curious characters. Fans of *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* will definitely love this.

*The House Between Tides* is available from Freight Books.

## REVIEW OVERVIEW

'The House Between Tides', by Sarah Maine	★★★★☆
SUMMARY	3
	★★★★☆ OVERALL SCORE

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**Rachel Casey**

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