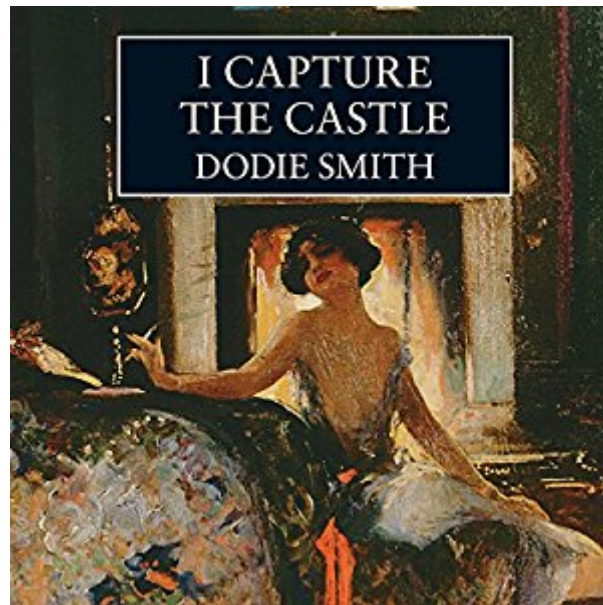


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I Capture The Castle



Synopsis

I write this sitting at the kitchen sink' is the first line of a novel about love, sibling rivalry and a bohemian existence in a crumbling castle in the middle of nowhere. Cassandra Mortmin's journal records her fadingly glamorous stepmother, her beautiful, wistful older sister and the man to whom they owe both their isolation and poverty - Father. The author of one experimental novel, and a minor cause celebre, he has since suffered from writer's block and is determined to drag his family down with him. But if the iron has entered Father's soul it hasn't penetrated Cassandra's... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have long adored this book! I am so pleased to see so many discovering and rediscovering it. I would like to share a letter I received from Dodie Smith in 1985, when she so kindly responded to a letter I wrote to her. She replied: Dear Lynn Hudson, Very many thanks for a particularly kind letter. "I Capture the Castle" was first published in 1948, 37 years ago and yet I still get letters about it, from old friends like you and also, occasionally, from new friends. I'm astonished and proud that it has lasted so long. I've written other novels and two of my childrens' books continue to be succesful, (paticularily The Hundred and one Dalmatians), but nothing (for me anyway) means as much as ICTC> Where did those characters come from? They are not drawn from life. The Castle partly is but I changed it a great deal and I much prefer my own castle! I've been asked again and again to write a sequel to ICTC but I'm sure I never could. I don't even like to think of the future of

the characters because I don't want them to grow older. I've been asked again and again to say whom Cassandra marries but I've no idea. I like to think of her just hopeful for the future and I shall let myself think you and I share this idea. I am now 89 and sometimes (but only sometimes) almost feel it, but not when I think about Cassandra. Thank You again for your letter which has given me great pleasure. And I like to think that in some mysterious realm of the imagination, the characters in my book are pleased to and send you their love-with mine. Dodie Smith Dodie Smith and I wrote back and forth a few more times, until she was unable to write again. She died in 1990. Thank-You, Dodie, for the wonderful gift of "I Capture the Castle"!

I hate when books are hyped out of proportion but, in this case, believe the hype. I rarely react to a book so strongly that it leaves me with a pleasant glow days after I have read it. Magically, this book manages to be the warmest, most positive, least cloying story I have ever read (even the end is satisfying without being a cop-out). It is beautifully written with an amazing sense of place, atmosphere and character. Who couldn't fall in love with Cassandra with her quick wit, intelligence and unconventional outlook? I have rarely read such an unpatronising, accurate and positive account of a girl on the brink of adulthood. Read ICTC for the cleverly constructed plot. Read it for the descriptive passages and the evocation of time and place. Read it for the distinctive and endearingly eccentric characters, especially the narrator, Cassandra. Just read it. And don't think you have to be a woman to love this book. I am a guy in his late twenties who intends to pass on my copy of the book to most of my friends - male and female - under the strict condition that it is returned in mint condition!

The plot of "I Capture the Castle" sounds, on its surface, a little Cinderella-y: two genteely impoverished sisters of between-the-wars Britain live in a ruined castle with their eccentric novelist father and his bohemian wife Topaz. (If you want a taste of author Dodie Smith's ability to write funny characters, bear in mind she is also the author of "101 Dalmations"). Two wealthy American brothers move in next door; although they are initially blinded by sister Rose's classic beauty, eventually one of them (I won't say which) sees the depth of character behind the narrator, the more sincere and thoughtful Cassandra. Cassandra is an enchanting narrator (the book is a series of first-person entries into her journal) - she is witty, self-effacing, and completely authentic. The reader will absolutely believe she is a real, irreplaceable person. I was so enamored of Cassandra that at first I worried for her when she fell in love - I was worried about a too-convenient fairy-tale ending. But happily the "happily ever after" is replaced by a more intriguing end; Cassandra's final decision is

perfectly consistent with her character. I only wish I had read this when I was, like her, a teenager - it would have meant a lot to me to meet a character so ambitious, energetic, lively, funny, who still clearly has romance in her future.

A couple months ago, an old friend crippled many years by poor health and physical pain called me up and said, "I've run out of things to read--do you have anything I'd enjoy?" I lent her "I Capture the Castle". A while later she phoned to say: "It was SO perfect, I don't want to read anything else for a long while--I want to savor it." We chatted about the multifaceted charm of this novel, and compared it favorably with the film based on it, which we both had seen on DVD. "On the 5th day of Christmas", 2006, I visited and found my friend dead in her bed--she seems to have died peacefully in her sleep. My book was on the table in her living room. In the days following I thoughtfully re-read the volume, thinking at every page how my late friend would have delighted at the offbeat wit and each nimble turn of phrase.--And for the first time, I was struck by the small but important role of the Vicar (who "looked like an elderly baby"), and noticed the "stealth comfort" he administers to the non-practising, nominally Christian protagonist, when late in the story she is confused and depressed by situations beyond her control. It may well have been the last reference to the comfort of religion which my friend read, which is felicitous; for she reminded me much of the main character in her views on God and religion. I am grateful to be granted the grace of giving my friend the pleasure of such an enchanting "last novel". I will savour that gentle and whimsical Providence (not unlike something which could have happened in the book) for the rest of my life.

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