



The Hellfire Club

By Peter Straub

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"Surprising twists [and a] wildly inventive plot."

--*The New York Times*

They are dying, one by one. Wealthy, middle-aged women in an exclusive Connecticut suburb. Their murderer remains at large. Nora Chancel, wife of publishing scion Davey Chancel, fears she may be next. After all, her past has branded her a victim . . .

"Combines the intellectual-puzzle mystery with a powerful vein of psycho-thriller suspense."

--*The Washington Post*

Then Davey tells Nora a surreal story about the Hellfire Club, where years before he met an obsessed fan of Chancel House's most successful book, **Night Journey**--a book that has a strange history of its own. . . .

"One of the most chilling villains to come along since Hannibal Lecter."

--*San Francisco Chronicle*

Suddenly terror engulfs Nora: She must defend herself against fantastic accusations even as a madman lies in wait. And when he springs, she will embark on a night journey that will put her victimhood to rest forever, dead or alive. . . .

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Straub's recent series of books, while excellent, have been dense and rather cerebral as horror books go. This one, while employing many of the same devices about family secrets and mysteries half-buried in the past, has an action storyline with a viscerally satisfying villain and a strong female protagonist. The premise is that the history of a famous fantasy novel not only concerns some eccentric authors, but collides with a wily killer on a rampage. The settings--in seedy motel rooms, New England houses, a bizarre private club and an over-the-hill literary retreat--are especially fun.

From Publishers Weekly

Continuing his shift away from occult horror toward terrors inspired by the ragged social fabric of American life, Straub (*The Throat*) turns in another violent yet richly nuanced thriller. As in much of his work (*Mystery*; *Koko*), the past impinges on the present through secrets kept, then revealed. Here, the secrets are both familial and literary. Four women in upscale Westerholm, Conn., have disappeared from blood-spattered bedrooms. Meanwhile, Westerholm resident Nora Chancel, who's newly menopausal, broods about a stalking wolf while her husband, publisher Davey Chancel, a decade her junior, obsesses about the novel trilogy (begun in 1939) written by Chancel House's most popular writer, Hugo Driver. When yet another woman disappears, Nora learns that Davey once had an affair with her. Then the woman shows up, only to accuse Nora of kidnapping and torturing her, leading to Nora's arrest. But also at the police station is Dick Dart, scion of an old local family, who is being questioned about the killings. Dart steals a cop's gun, grabs Nora as his hostage and, he believes, potential future accomplice?and the woman's real agony begins. Dart, a serial killer who has always loved "cutting things up. Loved it," rapes Nora and takes her on a grisly spree of terror. In time, Nora manages to escape, but in a surprising yet, with hindsight, seemingly inevitable turn of events, she again finds herself in mortal danger. Dart is a memorable villain, funny, bold and charming (and as difficult to kill as Rasputin). Nora proves his equal, however, gutsy and clever, and as the two clash, the secrets that Straub intimates early on reveal themselves. These secrets manifest neither easily nor predictably, however, for, as is said of characters in a Driver novel, Straub's own characters are "colorful and involved, full of danger, heroism and betrayal"?as is this supple, exciting book. Major ad/promo. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Straub (*The Throat*, Dutton, 1994) delivers a complicated two-fold thriller. A former nurse in Vietnam, Nora Chancel lives in Westerholm, Connecticut, with her ineffectual husband, Davey. While visiting the local police station to identify the most recent victim of a serial killer, Nora is kidnapped by the accused killer, the satirical villain Dick Dart. Intertwined with the kidnapping plot is an account of the terrifying events that followed the writing of a horror story at the Shorelands writers' colony in 1938. Fighting her own demons from Vietnam, Nora becomes stronger and braver as the story progresses. The climax brings the two stories together, as Dart and Nora visit Shorelands. Horror meets horror in this bizarre, enigmatic tale, which reveals itself in onion-like layers. *The Hellfire Club* will be popular with Straub's fans as well as readers of horror. --Stacie Browne Chandler, *Newbury Coll. Lib., Brookline, Mass.* Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Betty Ahlstrom:

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Mary Tillman:

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