



India Fan

Victoria Holt

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"A mesmerizing story of blackmail, romance, and deception."—*Associated Press*

With Over 100 Million Books Sold, Victoria Holt is the Queen of Gothic Romance.

Blackmail. Arson. Murder. Obsession.

Beautiful as its peacock feathers may be, the priceless fan hidden deep within the Framling mansion has a legacy of death and destruction. And Drusilla Delany has no idea she's been marked by its curse...

But the fan's dark past might prove less of a danger than Fabian Framling himself. Dark, brooding, and dominating, will he be the one to save her from the fan's cruel fate...or cause her demise?

India Fan Details

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Author : Victoria Holt

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From Reader Review India Fan for online ebook

Ashley says

It had some issues, but at the end of the day I **loved** this book. I'm putting it on my favorite historical romances shelf, but just a head's up: though there's a romance element it's more of a coming of age story than anything. The book follows the heroine from birth until her late twenties. There's a romance thread throughout but it's in the background for much of the story.

Alicia says

I stayed up all night on a Sunday to finish this book and when it ended I laid in bed for another hour just thinking, and feeling, and recapping in my head all that I'd taken in over the last two days. I was haunted by the ebb and flow of this story, the characters, and the ending.

This is my first Victoria Holt novel, but from what I understand this is how one typically feels at the end. This story was long and detailed, it was a slow burn with potential that was obvious by the end of the first chapter, and it lived up to it all and then some.

There will be spoilers in the rest of this review so leave now if you can't jive.

I can see where some might get bored with this type of story - we meet our characters when they are small children, the story is told in the first person narrative, and the first half of the book is a novel within its own right. But I didn't get bored.

This story worked on me the way a mini series does when I binge watch it on Netflix: I became absolutely absorbed. I got to KNOW Drusilla and Lavinia. I loved Polly and Eff and thanked God Dru had them. By the time the first half of the story was over, I felt as though I had grown up with them as well.

I know this is considered gothic and light romance. I know that the description focuses on Dru's relationship with Fabian. But to me this story was about two pairs of women who perfectly complimented one another.

Polly and Eff - Sisters who supported each other, were together non-stop, and raised a child together. They were what Dru and Lavinia could have had if Lavinia had grown and matured... felt remorse for her actions... not been spoiled rotten... not been so selfish.

Dru and Lavinia - Childhood friends put together at every turn who couldn't be more different but loved each other in their own way. Dru NEEDED Lavinia to bring her to life, and Lavinia needed Dru to keep her grounded.

They knew they needed each other and my heart *hurt* last night when I read what happened to Lavinia. I hurt for Lavinia to imagine what her final moments were. I hurt for Dru to have found her friend that way, to have been SO close to getting her to safety, and for losing her lifelong, constant companion.

The ending... I just can't stop thinking about it. And by 'ending' I mean 'how Dru found Lavinia and how she was haunted when she returned home with all the memories of Lavinia around her.'

I do NOT mean 'how Dru ended up with Fabian.' That was nice and I'm glad Dru had a HEA, but this story wasn't about them. It was about two women who became unlikely best friends as they grew up together.

Last night I stayed up to imagine that Dru raised Lavinia's children and was the mother to them that Lavinia never could have been. I imagined that Fabian challenged Dru and brought the excitement to her life that Lavinia used to. I wondered if Dru found herself thinking about what Lavinia would have said to her in particular situations, and challenging herself through memories of her friend.

Was Lavinia a handful? Oh hell yes. Was there plenty not to like? Definitely. But was this a fantastic story that I had to get to the bottom of? Yes... and will it stay with me for a long, long time? Absolutely.

The India Fan was beautiful. It was long and complex and draining. It was gripping. I'm on my way to download another Victoria Holt novel now.

Obsidian says

I don't even know how to start this review. I really enjoyed the other Victoria Holt book I read, *Mistress of Mellyn*, but this one, no. A thousand times no. There was sexism, classicism, racism, I am sure I am forgetting some -ism. And yes, I do get that the setting that this book takes place in is just echoing what these times were like, it still doesn't mean I have to like it. But more than that, the main character Drusilla sucks. She does. From her shaming a woman who was raped and wants to give the baby up for adoption, for her actually calling another woman she considers a good friend a slut, she is the most judgmental thing ever. And if you want her to keep reading about how plain she is every five seconds well then this is the book for you. Her being plain had nothing to do with her overall terribleness. I starting hoping that the curse of the fan would be a thing and she end up dead in a ditch holding a sign saying "I am plain."

Drusilla finds herself becoming more tied to the wealthy Framlings. She is a daughter of the local rector and though she's not of the same class as the Framlings, she is considered good enough to be a playmate to the Framling daughter Lucinda.

Drusilla also finds herself becoming more fascinated with the Framling son, Fabian. Why you ask? Because when she was a baby, he decided to kidnap her cause he wanted a baby of his own. I am not kidding people. This is a thing through the whole book. Instead of Drusilla's father saying yeah, give me back my daughter, she was allowed to stay with the family for two weeks, because Lady Harriet (Lucinda and Fabian's overly indulgent mother) never says no to her terrible ass kids.

Drusilla who should actually be more leery of the whole family just finds herself judging Lucinda for her wanton ways, and trying her best to resist Fabian and knowing that she's plain so he can't actually really like her.

The "India Fan" comes into play early in the book due to Fabian ordering Drusilla to take it and bring it back to him. Then she and readers finds out about a curse on the fan from the owner, Fabian and Lucinda's mentally impaired aunt/cousin. I can't even remember her relation to the family at this point. So Holt lures you into thinking that something terrible can happen to Drusilla at any moment because of the curse of this fan (oh how I wish) and it's kind of in Drusilla's head sometimes, but then it's not.

Maybe the book would have worked if the secondary characters had been more developed or not just terrible

too. But with a plot that really just shows Drusilla being tied more and more to the Framlings and for some dumb reason, Lady Harriet constantly manipulating things so that Drusilla is forced to follow along after Lucinda in order to get her to start acting right and proper. Lucinda is apparently just a nymphomaniac that cannot help having sex with any man that stares at her too long. Drusilla is okay with this though, because even though Lucinda is obviously beautiful, she at least it not intelligent. Also she can constantly bring up things Lucinda has done in order to slut-shame her.

Once the two young girls are sent off to a finishing school in France, the book just drags. We are introduced to some new characters here and there, but no one really is important until the character Janine. I won't get into her too much, because spoilers, but honestly I did feel for this character and hated what Holt did with her as well.

Drusilla finds herself growing to like Fabian more and more as she is older, but guards against it. Heck I don't know what to say about Fabian really except I was not feeling him at all.

Drusilla eventually goes to live as a companion to Lucinda after Lucinda and her new husband move to India. We find that Lucinda even after having two children keeps making terrible choices, but honestly at this point I just felt bad for her. She honestly seems to think the only thing that makes her worthwhile is her beauty and having men fighting/paying attention to her. And Drusilla treats her like a very slow-witted dog sometimes. Ugh. Moving on.

When the book moves settings to India, it got even more worse. Jesus, I need a better word than "worse" right now. During the time period of this book (early 1800s due to mention of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert) the British East India Company has gotten a foothold in India and has started to outlaw things like "Thuggee" during the Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts. And yes things like "thuggee" were flat out terrible. But a company going into a country with their own private military and telling another culture that they are not allowed to do things that they have been doing for hundreds of years tends to go over badly. Not to mention that the company's practices were seen as a direct cause of famine throughout India. Sorry I am getting a little too history-centric in my review. But due to the book's setting during this terrible history in India is actually important. Holt just takes a puddle deep examination of what is going on there and mostly the book is saying except for some loyal servants, most Indians are bad. Maybe that is not what she meant to do, but that is how it seems.

The writing did not seem written for the time period in this story. At times the language used was way too modern. The flow dragged. I think maybe the book could have been better if some of the earlier things dealing with Lucinda at school would have been cut. We get it book, she's terrible.

The ending was the saddest thing ever. Drusilla is thrilled because even though she's plain, she still has the love of [redacted]. She pretty much ignores the fact that she is still being manipulated by the Framlings to do what they want and she just goes along with it, because hey, she's getting what she wants.

I read this for the Gothic Romance square for Romance Book Bingo 2017.

Rebecca Huston says

A vicar's daughter, Drusilla, is swept off to India when the local aristocratic family takes interest in her. Unfortunately, the Great Mutiny is about to happen. This romantic suspense novel is set in the 1850's, and is

full of the usual tropes -- milksop heroine, nasty bitchy friend, sarcastic hero. Unfortunately, the reader is kept at arm's reach throughout this one, the heroine not much more than a very passive observer. There's not a lot of character development, the Indians are portrayed in the worst possible light, the history is lightweight, but if you want something light and fluffy, it should work. I give it three stars and a somewhat recommendation.

For the longer review, please go here:
http://www.epinions.com/review/india_...

Gail says

My mother and I used to read these and Mary Stewart's books. This was a reread, but a very enjoyable one with great memories!

Caz says

Edited 1 April 2013

I wrote a second review for All About Romance and rated this a Desert Isle Keeper.

4.5 stars

I read a lot of novels by Victoria Holt when I was in my twenties, so when I saw that Sourcebooks was reissuing *The India Fan*, I was eager to discover how it would hold up twenty-five years after its original publication.

I am extremely happy to report that the answer is "very well indeed".

This isn't one of the titles I'd already read, so all I had to go on was the synopsis, although I am familiar enough with Holt's other books to know that she wrote what are often termed "Gothic" novels, in which the independent, spirited heroine is somehow endangered; the location is often exotic (which in terms of the genre can include places such as Scotland and Cornwall!); and the atmosphere is full of tension. *The India Fan* has all those things in spades (and more) and yet it has a different feel to the others of her books I've read.

Drusilla Delaney is the daughter of the rector in the parish which includes the grand *Framlings*, home of the local aristocratic family. It seems from an early age that Drusilla's fate is to be bound up with its inhabitants – the haughty Lady Harriet and her two very spoiled, bratty children, Fabian and Lavinia. Drusilla is frequently summoned to the house as a playmate for Lavinia, and initially, they don't like each other much. It's while they are children that Drusilla comes across the stunning peacock-feather fan that is in the possession of an elderly relative of Lady Harriet's and comes to know the nature of its curse.

Lavinia, always a pretty child, grows into an incredibly beautiful woman, although unfortunately she does not develop a personality to match. Instead she is shallow and selfish, needing the admiration and adoration of all around her – especially the men – and after being discovered *in flagrante delicto* with one of the

grooms, her mother decides to send her away to school. Knowing Drusilla to be an eminently *sensible* girl, Lady Harriet sends her with Lavinia with the tacit understanding that she is to keep Lavinia 'out of trouble'.

In a story that spans over twenty years, it seems as though "keeping Lavinia out of trouble" is to become Drusilla's mission in life as the girls move on to a French Finishing School and later, to India where they become caught up in the events of the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

Naturally, Lavinia is not a character one is supposed to like; she has no interest in anything that does not concern herself, and her drive to be desired by every man with whom she comes into contact leads eventually to tragedy. Given the overbearing nature of Lavinia's personality, it would have been easy for the author to make Drusilla a downtrodden doormat of a character, but she isn't. Her long experience of Lavinia enables her to maintain a relationship with her in which she (Drusilla) is able to assert herself and tell Lavinia exactly what she thinks of her – even if Lavinia doesn't care and takes no notice whatsoever. And despite her excesses, Drusilla does care for Lavinia; and, in an odd way, the feeling is reciprocated.

The story is a complex one, featuring a number of different locations and a large cast of supporting characters. The pace in the earlier part of the book is fairly sedate, but the novel is a slow-burn; there is a lot to take in, but nothing is rushed, and it was an absolute joy to read something in which the author was able to take the time to set up her story and to develop her characters. I realise that some may find the slow pacing off-putting, but a little perseverance will pay off in the end as the reader is able to gain a greater insight into the relationships between the characters and their motivations.

The descriptions of the sights and sounds of India are very evocative, and the story of the days leading up to the Mutiny bristle with tension. There are certain (fictional) events that feel as though they have been somewhat glossed over, but I didn't find that spoiled my enjoyment of the story overall.

Also gently simmering throughout the book is Drusilla's relationship with Fabian Framling. There were, I have to admit, rather too many mentions of the fact that he had "kidnapped" her as a child because he'd decided he wanted a baby to look after, but other than that, he turned out to be rather an attractive hero. Holt's stories are told in the first person, and one of the things I found in the other books I've read of hers is that the hero is often a less well-defined character because the reader only sees him through the eyes of the heroine. I did feel that to be the case initially, but despite the singular viewpoint, Holt is able to show us that he has – fortunately – grown out of most of his "brattish" tendencies and become a strong and likeable man. Still prone to the occasional high-handedness, he has a good sense of humour and rather a roguish air; and the sense to value Drusilla's strength and courage.

Fabian's interest in Drusilla is clear – although she is wary of his motives and sceptical that he could ever be interested in someone as plain as she is. I really liked the fact that there is no miraculous transformation at the end by judicious application of a new dress and some eyebrow-plucking; the things that make Drusilla attractive are her intelligence, her wit and her common sense, things which eventually win around not only the man she loves, but his domineering mother as well!

All in all, I found this to be an absolutely engrossing read. The story-telling is excellent and I found the historical background fascinating. If you enjoy well-developed and complex stories peopled with interesting characters, this book is highly recommended.

With thanks to Sourcebooks and NetGalley for the review copy.

This title will be (re)published 5 March 2013

Mojca says

Drusilla's life has been somewhat governed by the Framling family, especially by young Fabian who considered her his toy for a brief time in their childhood and his sister Lavinia, a spoiled beauty who finds Drusilla a perfect friend and accomplice...

This is a great romance novel (especially for a huge VH fan like me), sweeping the reader from England to France, and India with its exotic environment, sometimes frightening customs, and historical struggle to rid itself of the British occupation. Considering all this, the romance is pushed into the backdrop, but that doesn't spoil the reading experience.

Nicely crafted, well-paced, with intriguing and multi-layered characters, good suspense, and exotic settings.
3 ½ stars

Regan Walker says

Sweeping Victorian Tale of Adventure and Love in England, France and India

This is the story of Drusilla Delaney, daughter of a rector living in England in the mid 19th century. Near Drusilla's home was the elaborate Framling estate, or as she thought of it, "the big house". The Framlings were an old wealthy family tied to the East India Company and they were significant in Drusilla's life.

We meet Drusilla as a young girl when she is taken to the big house to be the playmate of the spoiled but beautiful Lavinia Framling. Drusilla had previously encountered Lavinia's brother Fabian, who kidnapped her when she was only two because he wanted to "play at being a father" and needed a child. Ever there after, Drusilla was fascinated not only by the big house and its secrets but also by Fabian. And because of that she would tolerate Lavinia.

In the big house lives Aunt Lucille who once lived and loved in India and who possesses a fan made of peacock feathers. Drusilla wonders at the tears shed by Aunt Lucille whenever she reads her old letters from her lost love. And Drusilla wonders about the fan, until one day Aunt Lucille tells her it is cursed and brings tragedy to one who has possessed it, which thanks to one of Fabian's games, Drusilla has done.

Because of her early relationship with Lavinia, Drusilla is swept off to France and later to India where she experiences the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a perilous time for Drusilla and those she has come to care about. It seems she cannot escape the evil magic of the peacock fan nor the Framlings, for good or for bad. There are three men in Drusilla's life and whether she will end up with any of them is kept in doubt for much of the story. There are no love scenes in this well-told tale but there is much emotion.

While I don't generally prefer stories told in first person, there are exceptions, and Victoria Holt's wonderful stories are among them. Superbly written, it tells a tale of mystery and intrigue, of a young girl's strengths and insecurities, and her distant father who is more interested in Greek mythology than her. Interestingly, Holt rarely describes what anyone is wearing (the only clothing of her father we know of are his spectacles). She describes faces, most often expressions, that reflect the person's character—and she does that very well.

Drusilla is very perceptive, sensing others' thinking long before those thoughts are reflected in their actions. So, while we are not in anyone else's head, we have an idea of their thoughts.

The saga covers many years and is based on meticulous research. It is very well done, the only exception perhaps being that the romance between Drusilla and Fabian was a bit understated until the very end. I recommend it!

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

1.5 stars. This book almost put Victoria Holt on my list of never-read-again authors. *The India Fan* didn't quite plumb the depths of awfulness to the extent that I demand before I one-star a book, but it was a close call. I actually clicked back and forth between one star and two several times.

Drusilla Delaney--who, despite what the GR blurb says, is **not** beautiful--grows up in the mid-19th century in England in shadow of the wealthy Framling family who lives nearby. Lady Harriet Framling bosses the entire neighborhood around and spoils her children: Fabian, who "kidnaps" Drusilla when he's 7 and she's 2 for two weeks because he "wants to be a father;" and the lovely and reckless Lavinia, who cares only about the admiration of men. Despite their differences (Drusilla is plain, sensible and intelligent) the girls grow up as kinda-sorta friends. All of the adults expect Drusilla to keep Lavinia out of trouble. It never works: not in their home town, not when they're sent away to school in England, or at a finishing school in Switzerland, or later in India ... you get the idea.

There is also a mysterious peacock feather fan, originally owned by Lavinia's elderly aunt, that pops up at intervals.

It's supposed to bring bad luck to the owner; whether it really does is a matter of some debate. But in the end it's just a MacGuffin.

Reasons I disliked this book:

1. A main character named Drusilla. Seriously? Did the author lose a bet with someone?
2. The storyline meanders, making its leisurely way through Drusilla's entire childhood for no compelling reason. I was bored, but I kept thinking it *had* to get better.
3. The book is written in first person, and it reads like a diary. "We did this, and then we did that, and then he said this." The story is told, not *shown*. There was nothing in the writing style that intrigued or engaged me.
4. The romance is so low-key it's practically non-existent.
5. At the same time, why do all these guys want to marry our plain, practical main character?
6. Fragmented plot, with several dead ends. Don't make a big deal out of something (e.g., the creepiness of Aunt Emily's clinic) unless it's going to play a role in the plot! It's just irritating.
7. The descriptions of British-controlled India were squicky, with stereotypical characters. It sounded just like you might expect the British to think of the native Indians 150 years ago. Maybe that was part of the point, but I'm not convinced the author was thinking on that subtle of a level.

I skimmed the last third because I wanted to see how it ended, but in the end it still felt like a big fat waste of time.

The Lit Bitch says

I loved Drusilla as the heroine in this novel. She is a modernized Jane Eyre, the poor plain country lass seducing the dark and mysterious lord of the manor. She was intelligent and never careless like Lavinia. She always did what was sensible and I admired her greatly for that. She was strong but at the same time vulnerable. The audience really grows up with her throughout the novel and though there aren't drastic changes to her character, she is solid and continues to grow into herself throughout the book.

Fabian was also a likable character. He wasn't unredeemable and I never felt ill at ease with him. He was clearly the hero and acted appropriately and also grew in the story. It was wonderful to watch Drusilla and Fabian grown as individuals and as a couple in the novel.

The novel read a little slower than I expected. I read it aggressively for a couple of days and still was like really I am only that much through it?! It was only 400 pages and I felt like I should have finished it much faster than I did. But just because it read slow doesn't mean it was a slow story. There was a lot happening and every page was critical to the story. The novel covered a number of years and a lot of scenery and history—all things considering I was glad that I didn't rush through this novel.

I loved the gothic elements sprinkled in the storyline. The mysticism, 'curses', and the mad woman in the attic were all familiar tools and I thought it added a lot of sensationalism and atmosphere to the book.

This is a book that I would not hesitate to pick up again. It would be a fun book to read by the fire on a dark stormy night with a cup of tea—or anywhere for that matter. If you haven't read Victoria Holt, *The India Fan* seems like it would be a good one to start with. A cursed heroine, an exotic setting, salacious sandals, adventure....this book really has a lot to keep the reader interested and enjoying not just the plot but the characters as well.

[See my full review here](#)

Sarah says

I can't believe I just discovered Victoria Holt! She's described as the Queen of Gothic Romance, and she has tons and tons of books. I feel like I just found a hidden stash of Oreos.

Neja says

Super knjiga, ki me je prav zares pozitivno presenetila. Do avtoric kot je Holtova imam že od nekdaj odpor. Pred kratkim pa mi je med brskanjem po mamini knjižni polici v oči stopila Indijska pahljača in mami mi jo je celo priporočila. Nad Indijo se navdušujem že dlje časa in tako sem se odločila, da tej (vsaj zame) nenavadni knjigi dam priložnost.

Prav je napisana v malo bolj arhaičnem jeziku in na mojo grozo celo slovničnih napak ni manjkalo, mi je bila pravzaprav zelo všeč. Stil pisanja je definitivno drugačen od ostalih knjig, ki jih berem, navsezadnje sem

brala knjigo iz leta 1988. Ljudje se na veliko vikajo, od žensk se pri?akuje milina in ustrežljivost, vse kar se ti?e spolnosti je zgolj nakazano, predvsem pa: struktura stavkov je druga?na. Seveda sem to vedela, ampak nisem bila pa pripravljena.

Pri?akovala sem osladno romanti?no zgodbo ženske protagonistke, ki se bo zaljubila v nedostopnega moškega in na koncu se bo zanju vse dobro izšlo. Med osrednjim delom zgodbe si bosta dvorila, ampak ne preve?, le toliko da se bo zgodba vlekla. AMPAK NE!

Spremljamo življenje Drusille Delany. Zgodba se vrti le okoli nje. Spremljamo vse od njenega odraš?anja, obiskovanje Framlingovih do šolanja itd. ?eprav je tempo umirjen se vendarle marsikaj zanimivega pripeti. Osebnost mi je bilo predvsem vše?, da se pahlja?a pojavi ve?krat oz. se vsaj omeni. Najboljši del pa je seveda potovanje in življenje v Indiji. Zelo mi je bilo zanimivo brati o tedanjem ?asu in nenavadnih obi?ajih ko je recimo tale: ko moževo truplo zažgejo se od vdove pri?akuje, da se vrže v plamene.

Kljub temu da sem se motila glede osladnosti zgodbe, sem nekaj vendarle imela prav. Ljubezen je pomemben motiv zgodbe a še zdale? ne edini.

Meni je bila knjiga super in zagotovo bom prebrala še kakšno knjigo nekdanje izredno popularne V. Holt.

Nandakishore Varma says

Recipe for Creating a Romance

1. Proud and rakish hero, a member of the landed gentry, who actually has a heart of gold
2. Attractive self-willed heroine from the lower classes
3. Flighty and foolish female antagonist
4. Formidable matriarch
5. The faithful nanny
6. Dark and dangerous villain

Add exotic setting, season with blackmail and murder and garnish with suitable MacGuffin*. Serve up to a sensation-loving readership.

*From Wikipedia:

In fiction, a MacGuffin (sometimes McGuffin or maguffin) is a plot device in the form of some goal, desired object, or other motivator that the protagonist pursues, often with little or no narrative explanation. The specific nature of a MacGuffin is typically unimportant to the overall plot. The most common type of MacGuffin is an object, place, or person; other, more abstract types include money, victory, glory, survival, power, love, or some unexplained driving force.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's what the "India Fan" is in this novel.

I never knew peacock feather fans were considered to be unlucky: they are plentiful in India (I think there was one in my house during my childhood). Peacock feathers are sometimes taken as sacred: Lord Krishna is always shown with one in his hair. I did a google search and found some vague references about how they were considered unlucky in England, in the past.

This vague English superstition (which, according to my knowledge, has no validity in India) is taken by Victoria Holt and made into a sort of metaphor for doomed love in *The India Fan*. The fan in question is owned by Lucille, the insane old lady of Framling Hall: it was bought for her by her lover in India who was murdered immediately afterwards by "the Natives". Drusilla Delaney, the County Rector's plain daughter and friend of Lavinia Framling of Framling Hall, once takes it inadvertently during a session of play; and the mad old lady is immediately convinced that the "curse" of the fan is passed on to the young girl that she leaves it to her in her will.

So much for the fan. Now that the Mac Guffin is out, we can discuss the actual story.

Lavinia Framling is the beautiful and nymphomaniac (well, practically) daughter of the redoubtable Lady Harriet Framling of Framling Hall. The Countess thinks the world of her children, Lavinia and her elder brother Fabian who is arrogant and possibly a rake. Drusilla Delaney, the heroine, is plain to look at (a point the author stresses) but has a fine brain inside that rather unlovely head - which is noticed by Fabian who relentlessly pursues her throughout the novel (and wins her in the end, needless to say).

Drusilla and Lavinia are friends despite their diametrically opposite natures. Hoping that the sensible daughter of the rector would be a steadying influence on her flighty progeny, Lady Harriet sees to it that she accompanies her to school (and later to India, though Fabian has a hand in that). But Drusilla's presence cannot prevent Lavinia from delivering an illegitimate child, leading to distressing events like blackmail and murder (though not directly affecting any of the main characters). She also manages to ensnare Dougal Carruthers who was one time thought of as a likely suitor for Drusilla, into tying the knot with her.

It seems as though the author decided "enough of England!" at this point of the story and carts all the main characters (except Lady Harriet and Drusilla's nanny Poppy) to India, where the rebellion of 1857 is waiting to happen. This is easy as both Fabian and Dougal are employees of the East India Company. There is murder and mayhem. Drusilla manages to escape((view spoiler)) and ultimately marries Fabian (ho-hum).

My problems with the novel:

1. Lack of structure. The story jumps around in time and space. A lot of plot lines are started and abruptly terminated, as though the author had second thoughts or was too tired to follow up.
2. Pasteboard characters. All of them could have stepped from a melodrama, except Drusilla.
3. Sloppy language. Do 19th century English people use words like "teen" and "reckon"? I don't think so.
4. Abyssmal lack of knowledge of India. Since the story is told in first person, so we can forgive the impossibly arrogant statements about the benefits brought by the East India Company which the ungrateful natives are ignoring; but for a novel written in the late eighties, the author should at least know that Asraf is a Muslim name, and Muslim widows do not commit *Sati*! And "orientals" usually do not prowl through sub-Saharan Africa, looking for a chance to kidnap English girls to add to some Sultan's harem-this is more of a Victorian lady's secret sexual fantasy.

5. Plain boredom. Towards the close, I just wanted the torture to end.

Even though it is called a "Gothic Romance", there is very little of either in it.

Here is where Ms. Holt and I part company forever. I had enjoyed her *The Shivering Sands*, which is why I picked this up.

Gaile says

Although somewhat rambling and a bit longer than I thought it should be, I gave this five stars as it is on the whole an excellent read. Druscilla Delany is the daughter of the rector. Nearby is Framling, a house of nobility which of course has two spoiled children. Druscilla is elected to be companion to the younger child Lavinia with whom she goes away to boarding school first in England and then in France. For all her beauty, Lavinia is remarkably empty headed and constantly in trouble. After being expelled from the first boarding school they are sent to another one in France. Here again Lavinia gets herself in a difficult position which Druscilla schemes to help her out of.

Back home Druscilla thinks she may have found the man she will marry until he sees Lavinia. The new bride and her husband along with big brother Fabian go off to India while Druscilla remains behind to take care of her ailing father but when he dies and she refuses to marry the new rector, Lavinia, now the mother of two children wants her in India as a companion. Game for this adventure and excited to see Fabian again although she knows he will never notice her, she agrees to go arriving at a time when The Mutiny Of India is simmering below the surface unknown to the British inhabitants but all too soon the situation boils over.

Warned of the danger by the children's ayah, everything hits the fan fast!!!!

This was a smooth read although some of the rambling tone of the novel bored me but I enjoyed it very much regardless.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

For a woman we are told is "plain" (nearly as many times as we are told Fabian "kidnapped" her in infancy), she certainly does seem to attract male attention.
