



## I Married a Dead Man

*Cornell Woolrich*

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Pregnant, abandoned by her slimy husband and destitute, Helen Georgesson boards a train going west. In the crowded train car she meets happy newlyweds Patrice Hazzard, also expecting, and Hugh. They are on their way to visit Hugh's parents, whom Patrice is meeting for the first time. After Patrice hands Helen her wedding band so she can wash her hands in the rest room, the train crashes, killing the Hazzards, but Helen survives. When she regains consciousness in the hospital, she discovers she has been mistaken for Patrice. Patrice's wealthy in-laws send for Helen, and she decides for the sake of her son to go along with the misunderstanding. They welcome her into the fold and her "brother-in-law" Bill even shows signs of romantic interest. But when her husband tracks her down and threatens her with blackmail, her dream turns into a nightmare.

## I Married a Dead Man Details

Date : Published March 1st 1994 by Penguin Books (first published January 1st 1948)

ISBN : 9780140234275

Author : Cornell Woolrich

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Mystery, Noir, Fiction, Crime

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## From Reader Review I Married a Dead Man for online ebook

### Nancy Loe says

The basis for my second favorite Stanwyck noir, NO MAN OF HER OWN (1950). Woolrich does not disappoint, but beyond that I will just say lovers of noir will enjoy this book hugely, all implausibilities aside.

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### sappho\_reader says

Fear, paranoia, dread, anxiety, and desperation are dripping thickly off these pages. A great work of psychological suspense. My heart was pounding fast while reading and I was anxious to find out what would happen next as if I was personally involved myself. What I appreciated most was the ambiguous morality. There were no clear cut answers if the main character was good or bad. A tale of mistaken identity after a train derailment leads Helen to assume the life of Patrice. But she did not murder Patrice, she just failed to correct the hospital staff of her true identity and I really couldn't blame her. She only had 17 cents in her pocket book and a newborn baby with nowhere to go. As the story unfolded Helen/Patrice watched every step to see if the truth will be revealed by others. Cornell Woolrich did a marvelous job in describing the psychological hell she was suffering. And the ending...Oh, that threw me for a loop. It was a double whammy surprise hit on my psyche.

Rating: 5 Stars ("It was amazing"). It would be difficult to find fault, honestly. I loved it from the beginning.

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### Lynn says

Easily my favorite book in the collection. Melodramatic as hell, but I could hardly put it down. Woolrich builds suspense, menace and character empathy like the best noir author, but there is something so simple and almost sweet about this tragic little tale that elevates it for me. The ending was classic and ambiguous and Excellent.

Read in Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1930s & 40s collection from the library.

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### Carla Remy says

(February 2017):

I read I Married a Dead Man several years ago in the Library of America's Crime Novels of the 1930s & 40s. I had never read anything by Cornell Woolrich before, and apparently it incited in me a drive to read everything by him I could get my hands on. So I was curious to examine this again. I believe, in this, I was attracted to Woolrich's detached, fable-like writing and the way this mixes with melodrama of almost cheesy sentimentality. And all with a edgy darkness, often literal. He does standout. Yes, there is often a clumsy convenience to his plots, but isn't that part of the weird fableness?

And, now I know that for a writer considered significant to the development of noir, Woolrich writes often from a female perspective. This and the Black Angel, also Night Has a Thousand Eyes and Deadline at Dawn. Like I said, he is extraordinary.

(July 2010):

Gothic soap-opera noir. I loved it. Cornell Woolrich (aka William Irish) divine? I loved the way the train crash scene was written.

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### **Bobby Underwood says**

I would have to term this one, as mentioned in the edition of the book I have, a Soap Opera noir. Even for Woolrich, this was an unusual work of suspense. For those who've read a lot of the great author's work it is fabulous, but others may have some difficulty getting into the style and flow. Once they do, they're hooked, but it can be jarring if you're used to the modern - and mundane - type of storytelling.

Woolrich places the reader into the mind of someone and you feel and experience the world and the situation from her perspective, as she takes the place of another and lives in fear. It is like an old-time melodrama where the tension is sustained throughout the narrative. Rich with moral complexity and psychology, Woolrich adds fabulous little moments of insight. One such moment occurs when the girl in question is called to supper. It floods her heart with a feeling of acceptance, because supper is a term used informally, with family; only when we dine with others, or go out in the evening, does it become dinner.

The premise is simple, the execution extremely difficult. Perhaps only Woolrich could have written something like this and made it work. A mesmerizing read for Woolrich fans, but most definitely not the book I'd recommend as your first exposure to this great author, who in my opinion, eclipsed all others of suspense. Definitely give The Bride Wore Black a read first, and though it's longer, Deadline at Dawn, which I consider to be Woolrich at his finest, before tackling I Married a Dead Man. This one is a type of masterpiece to be sure, but a bit less accessible than the aforementioned. Not for all tastes.

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### **Karl says**

This first edition hardcover has the original \$2.75 price on the dust jacket and is marked "First Edition" on the copyright page.

I read this book in the Centipede Books edition.

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### **Jim says**

Cornell Woolrich is one of the glories of American *noir* literature. And I Married a Dead Man is one of his best books. Unless you've spent the last half century cowering under your bed, you've heard of such films as **The Bride Wore Black, Rear Window, Phantom Lady, The Leopard Man, and Mississippi Mermaid**. Not once, not twice, but scores of times, Woolrich's stories have been turned into films.

**I Married a Dead Man** tells the story of an abandoned young pregnant woman who takes a cross-country train trip, on which she meets a pair of newlyweds the wife of whom is likewise pregnant. The train derails, but not before Patrice Hazzard asks Helen Georgesson to try on her wedding ring. Both the real Patrice and her husband perish in the wreck, but Helen awakes in a hospital with the ring still on her finger. It turned out that the dead Hazzards came from a rich family which thinks that Helen -- whom they had never met -- and her newly delivered infant son are all that is left of their family.

Helen decides to act the part of Patrice, though not without a sense of dread. Sure enough, complications begin to emerge. First, the late Hugh Hazzard's brother Bill falls in love with "Patrice"; and the lowlife who had seduced and abandoned Helen figures out what happened and comes a-blackmailing.

The blackmailer is killed -- but by whom? "Patrice" thinks she did it. Bill says he did it. The dying Mrs. Hazzard, his mother, writes a legal confession that she did it.

Despite the absence of any legal pursuit, the thought of murder begins to wear away at Bill and "Patrice's" relationship. This is an interesting twist, as pure guilt and the sense of mutual recrimination is so horrible of and by itself.

Woolrich writes his novel with a deft hand and a brilliant style, such as when "Patrice" is driving with the intent to confront her blackmailer:

Outside, the street-lights went spinning by like glowing bowls coming toward her down a bowling-alley. But each shot was a miss, they went alternately too far out to this side, too far out to that. With herself and the car, the kingpin in the middle that they never knocked down.

She thought. That must be fate, bowling against me. But I don't care, let them come.

I think it is time that Woolrich and the other great *noir* writers of the Thirties and Forties -- men like James M. Cain, Horace McCoy, Edward Anderson, Kenneth Fearing, and William Lindsay Gresham -- be recognized side by side with the academic standards of the same period.

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## Nhi Nguy?n says

?i?u ??u tiên khi?n mình ?n t??ng nh?t khi b?t ??u ??c cu?n sách này, ?ó chính là ch?t v?n m??t mà, giàu bi?u c?m c?a bá?c Woolrich, v?i nh?ng câu v?n ?i sâu vào khám phá nh?ng ng?c ngách th?m kín nh?t trong suy ngh? và c?m nh?n c?a nh?n v?t chính (và c?ng nhi?t li?t khen ng?i d?ch gi? lu?n, chuy?n ng? ???c nh? th? là quá tuy?t v?i r?i ^^). T? khi c?o ?y là m?t c?o gái b? b?n trai b? r?i, nghè? ki?t xác (ch? có 17 xu trong túi, c?ng chi?c vé tàu h?a m?t chi?u), l?i ?ang mang thai 8 tháng, sau ?ó b? nh?n nh?m là con dâu nh? giàu sang, quy?t ??nh thu?n theo s? nh?m l?n này ?? ki?m cho mình và ??a con m?i chào ??i m?t mái ?m an toàn, ??y ??; m?c c?m t?i l?i tr??c s? chào ?ón và t?m lòng hào ph?ng, r?ng l??ng c?a ba m? ch?ng gi?; t?nh c?m m?i n? d?nh cho ng??i em ch?ng h?; cho ??n s? c?ng th?ng d?n n?n c?m gi?c n?m n?p lo s? th?n ph?n th?t c?a m?nh b? phát hi?n, nh?t là khi t?n b?n trai c? quay tr? v? và t?ng ti?n c?o.

T?t c? nh?ng cung b?c c?m xíc ?y, nh?ng suy ngh? sâu kín c?a nh?n v?t ?ó, ??u ???c Woolrich miêu t? m?t cách ch?n th?c và v?o c?ng tài t?nh. Chính nh?ng miêu t? tuy?t hay này ?ã g?p ph?n t?o n?n và ??y cao b?u kh?ng kh?i gi?t g?n, c?ng th?ng, kh?o oán c?a câu chuy?n, khi ??c gi? nh?n ra m?nh ?ang l?ng th?m ?ng h? cho m?i s? ???c hanh th?ng và an toàn ??i v?i nh?n v?t n? chính, khi ch?ng ta có th? d? d?ng ??ng c?m v?i t?nh hu?ng d??ng nh? b?t l?c c?a n? chính tr??c t?n b?n trai c? h?m ti?n.

Và ?úng v?i truy?n th?ng vi?t truy?n c?a bác Woolrich, s? lu?n c? m?t c?u plot twist, dù to hay nh?, ? cu?i truy?n. Cá nh?n m?nh th?y cu?n n?y kh?ng ph?i d?ng qu? ly k?, u ám nh? hai cu?n tr??c c?a bác m?nh ??c, l? “Cô D?u ?en” và “Ám ?nh ?en”, v?i th? c?i plot twist c?a cu?n n?y c?ng thu?c d?ng v?a ph?i, nh?ng theo m?nh l? s? ?? l?i nhi?u d?m và suy ngh? h?n cho ??c gi?.

P.S.: T? d?ng m?nh th?y c?t truy?n cu?n n?y c?ng có nét gi?ng gi?ng v?i b? phim t?nh c?m h?i l?ng m?n “While You Were Sleeping” (c?a M? ch? kh?ng ph?i TV series c?a H?n nha :D), c?ng Sandra Bullock ?óng vai ch?nh ?? D? n?i nh?n l? c?t truy?n c?a b? phim t?nh c?m h?i n?y th? t??i s?ng h?n r?t r?t nhi?u so v?i cu?n s?c n?y r?i, kh?ng c?ng gi?t ng??i, t?ng ti?n g? s?t :D Nh?ng n?u b?n ?ã xem b? phim n?y th? s? th?y c?ng c?i s?c n?y r?ng ?6, nh?t l? m?i chuy?n c?ng b?t ??u t? c?i chuy?n nh?n nh?m ng??i ha ha ha =))))

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### **Randolph says**

One of the few books I've ever read twice (actually three times). A title that just makes you have to pick it up. Steeped in paranoia it is one of the best noir novels ever written, full of Woolrich's creepy imagery. The only thing I have never bought is the ending and the only thing that keeps the novel from being perfect. Woolrich in an effort to put yet another layer of paranoia on the existential cake leaves us with a footnote that just doesn't ring true given the characters he has drawn for us. The enigma of the ending would have stood better on its own without further comment. Finish the book and pretend it ended, like Clockwork Orange, at the penultimate chapter.

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### **Tony says**

I MARRIED A DEAD MAN. (1948). Cornell Woolrich. \*\*\*\*.

Woolrich certainly had the knack for picking out titles that would grab prospective readers.

This was one of them. I have to admit that I have read this novel before – many years ago – and did not realize it until about forty pages into it. Since I obviously did not remember any of the details, and was enjoying the story, I plodded on to the end. It is a well-conceived plot with a unique device as the base of the story. A young woman, five-months' pregnant, is on a train from New York to San Francisco. She makes friends with a couple she meets as fellow passengers. The two women go off to the bathroom to fix their makeup, and our pregnant girl holds the others wedding ring so that it won't slip off and fall down the drain. The train is then in an accident. As it turns out, the other lady passenger and her husband are killed, while our young mother-to-be is not. She is rescued from the wreck and is identified as the dead woman because of the ring she had been wearing on her finger. The family of the dead husband comes to see her at the hospital. They had not met before, since their true son and daughter-in-law had been married while their son was overseas in the service. They never had a picture from her either. She was accepted as their son's wife. She goes along with the mistaken identity because by doing so she would be able to provide safety for her newborn son in California. There was never any husband – just a one-night fling that turned out wrong. The chance meeting with the man went sour when she was still in New York. He gave her a five-dollar bill and a ticket to California as consolation prizes. This case of mistaken identity leads to all kinds of problems for her, especially when the other son in California falls in love with her and wants to marry her. There is still the problem of the real father of her child, who shows up after a period of time, with a clever blackmailing scheme that puts her in peril. This is a well-paced and thought out novel that will keep you turning pages. Recommended.

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### **Nina says**

I enjoyed this book very much as a mystery novel. I was fascinated with the story when I saw the movie "No Man of Her Own" with Barbara Stanwyck years ago (not to be confused with a movie of the same name with Clark Gable. I had also viewed a remake called Mrs. Winterbourne with a terribly miscast of Ricky Lake, but other characters were strong. The book reads as a Perry Mason episode, and does not bog itself down with too much verbage. The story is of an abandoned pregnant girl who is given a ticket on a train, and five dollars. She is befriended by another couple who are also expecting and a train wreck and mistaken identity occurs. The ending is different than the movie so I will not spoil it, but for an afternoon of fun light reading, and a "Who did it?" mystery I give it four stars for a "pleasure read."

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### **Kirk Smith says**

The tone is very 1940's. It brings to mind John O'Hara or Graham Greene, but not quite at their level. I really like the way Woolrich can pump up the drama, but this is probably not his best work.

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### **Karl says**

I just ran across this first edition of "I Married a Dead Man" in a box of books I had put into the back room perhaps ten or so years ago. The book is J. B. Lippincott Company, A Story Press Book, copyright 1948. Stated First Edition.

The book still had the sales receipt in the back and it seems that I paid \$2.98 for the book at a used book store.

What a pleasant surprise.

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

For Helen, a future mom with no man and no money to her name, she finds a rather morbid and twisted way to get herself into a wealthy family. What ensues is dramatic and emotional, and *I Married a Dead Man* is as eye-opening as it is dark. It's a story of a woman who isn't really a bad person, but she's desperate and her ordeals are very intense.

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### **Sarah says**

Don't you hate it when the Goodreads synopsis gives away the entire plot? This is supposed to be a *suspense* novel, after all.

Well, no matter. It's beautifully written. Dark, spare, and melodic. Despite the B-movie title, it felt to me most reminiscent of Nella Larsen or Jean Rhys in its rhythms. Indeed, the female protagonist was so relatable to me, I had to double (and triple) check that the author was in fact male! Men tend to shy away from portraying female experiences of vulnerability. Whether that's because they have trouble empathizing or are just afraid to mention it, I can't say. But I get awfully tired of reading about the same happy hookers and highly capable, critical-but-nurturant wives all the time. This character, despite the extraordinary circumstances, felt real. Admittedly, the plot points didn't add up quite the way I'd hoped they would. But emotionally, it rang true.

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