



## The Carriage House

*Carla Neggers*

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## **The Carriage House** Carla Neggers

Fun and a little hard work. That's all Tess Haviland had in mind when Ike Grantham paid her for her graphic design work with the run-down, 19th-century carriage house on Boston's North Shore.

Then Ike disappeared and now Tess finds herself with much more than a simple weekend project to get her out of the city. It's not just the rumors that the carriage house is haunted. It is the neighbors: six-year-old Dolly Thorne, her reclusive babysitter, Harley Beckett and especially Dolly's father, Andrew Thorne, who has his own ideas about why Tess has turned up next door.

But when Tess discovers a human skeleton in her dirt cellar, she begins to ask questions about the history of the carriage house, the untimely death of Andrew's wife and Ike's disappearance. Questions a desperate killer wants to silence before the truth reveals that someone got away with murder.

## **The Carriage House Details**

Date : Published November 1st 2013 by Harlequin MIRA (first published 2001)

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Author : Carla Neggers

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Genre : Romance, Romantic Suspense, Suspense, Mystery, Fiction

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# From Reader Review The Carriage House for online ebook

## Linda says

In lieu of paying for graphic work done for him, Ike Grantham deeded the Carriage House over to Tess Haviland. Ike disappeared and Tess decides to look over her property. Going to the dirt cellar to find a yowling cat, she finds a skeleton which frightens her so much she lets out a heart-rending scream. Andrew Thorne and Harl Beckett, her neighbors, hear her and come running. She tells them it was a ghost but they know she is not telling the truth. She thinks the skeleton is Ike and remembers he was supposed to meet with her and never showed up. If this is Ike, who would kill him and leave his body in a cellar?

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## Veena says

The synopsis very much tells you the story and if I say anything more it will be a total giveaway. So I will just tell you my feelings on this book...it is predictable, and to me it seems that the author wanted it this way. I liked Tess a lot and her dad and her Godfather too. The dialog between Tess and her Godfather (who keeps on getting on her nerves) is hilarious and I loved it. You won't be able to stop from giggling on those. I really felt that I wanted a friend like Susan was to Tess and how Harley was to Andrew! And Dolly, oh sorry, Princess Dolly was adorable to say the least.

With highly likable characters and just a bit of mystery, this is a light and fluffy read that I enjoyed!

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## Jess says

I read this book for a group challenge, and it is my first by the author. I really enjoyed this one. At first it was a little slow going but this was mostly because the author had to set up the storyline.

This is an old fashioned mystery story with some romantic elements thrown in. A woman named Tess moves into an old house that she was given as payment for her services as a graphic designer. When she finally decides to move in, she's told it's actually a haunted house. Her neighbors next door are descendants of the supposed ghost that haunts her new house. She ignores what people are saying, and one night when her next door neighbors missing cat turns up in her cellar Tess hurries to help the cat. She goes into the cellar only to trip over a set of bones..

The rest of the story circles around if Tess was crazy or if she really did see bones in her basement.. and who those bones belong to.

I really liked the characters in this book and I thought the chemistry between Tess and Andrew was awesome. They worked well together, as well as with Harl and Dolly.

I plan on reading the rest of the books in this series.

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## Ann says

\*Read for S524: Adult Readers' Advisory\* So this is romantic suspense...I think for the genre, this fairly well written. Great literature it will never be, but it was a fun read, and I know it kept my interest as I was finishing it for class. Tess' random barfight in the middle of the book was pretty obnoxious, and I still don't quite get how the love interests could be groping each other after less than 24 hours, but who am I to say? The romance was pretty tame, and I did enjoy the New England atmosphere, which the author captured well. Each character was a little too cookie-cutter for my taste, but considering how much I enjoy quick reads like this in the middle of the semester, I wouldn't mind more of this series if they continue to evoke small town New England in such an appealing way (Ms. Neggers, please continue to include descriptions of clam chowder in every book! Nom nom nom).

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## Cosette says

This is the first book I read by this author and I loved it. The characters were well developed and her writing style made me feel as if I was sitting around and talking with them. I will read the next books in this series, and check out more by this author.

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## Anita says

### Actual Rating: 3.5 Stars

From Wikipedia:

A **carriage house**, also called a **remise** or **coach house**, is an outbuilding which was originally built to house horse-drawn carriages and the related tack.

The blurb of this book had me thinking that it was about a haunted house. After I started reading the book, I reread the blurb and realized that I might have been mistaken. Aside from the "*human skeleton in the dirt cellar*," and the "*rumors that the carriage house is haunted*," there really was no other indication that *The Carriage House* is a book about a haunted house. Ah well. Though I DID get curious about what a carriage house *is* because of the way it was being described as a farm and whatnot. Thus, the Wiki definition above.

I admit, my research stopped there. But I might look into it a bit more. The idea of old, historic homes, whether for people or carriages, still intrigues me.

Moving right along...

*The Carriage House* turned out to be an enjoyable, well-written, old-timey romance. And it isn't too dated either, although there were a few quibbles I had here and there about the way people acted towards one another. On the other hand, the romantic suspense part of the story was a little flimsy since there really wasn't much murder mystery to the murder crime. From the beginning, you pretty much know who the human skeleton in the cellar belongs to, and the murderer is pretty obvious as well.

But some of the parts of the book DID give me a creepy vibe: the victim was given enough significance in the book to give some significant emotions, and some of the other characters were just kind of scary. And a bit insane maybe. But mainly creepy.

Kudos on the attempt to derail the reader's suspicion by throwing another possible suspect out there. But seeing as how Andrew Thorne is the main male character, and this is a typical category romance (a la Harlequin Romances, after all), it wasn't like we didn't already know for a fact whether he had anything to do with the murder. Of course, it also helps take suspicion off of a lot of people when the murderer pretty much admits the crime, even if not vocally.

### **A Mix of Story Summary and More of My Thoughts:**

So the basic gist of *The Carriage House* is that Tess Haviland did some work for an eccentric rich guy named Ike Grantham. Ike Grantham is the most charming snake charmer to ever charm his charming way into the land of charming. But after all that charm is no longer in front of you, you realize how much you resent the guy for charming you into agreeing to do things you otherwise wouldn't have done. And somehow, that causes problems.

And so somehow he had managed to convince Tess that she would be very happy to take the old Thorne carriage house in Beacon-by-the-Sea, some fancy area overlooking a nice beach and ocean view, I think, as payment for the work she had done for him--something to do with graphic design. So instead of real money, she goes for it. To her, getting the new property for the price of her expertise is a bargain because she'd always wanted a large, old home in the middle of nowhere by cliffs and beaches with rumors of hauntings by an ancient ghost. It reminds her of her mother, she says... the area, not the actual house itself. And everyone else around her pretty much tells her that she's been swindled and wonders what the heck she'd been thinking.

**Now, my own personal thoughts were conflicting, to be honest.** The romantic in me would absolutely love to receive a nice, old-fashioned home with so much rich history, overlooking beautiful scenery. For one, it would be a nice, historically rich place to bask in; and things like that appeal to pretty much anyone.

**The practical, logical part of me, however, says that Tess should have had the darn house inspected first before going for it.** It's an old house, an old building, and it hadn't been inhabited in a long time. Yes, it's probably beautiful. Yes, it's probably got all sorts of stories to tell. Yes, it would be kind of cool to tell people you live in an historic landmark that might possibly be haunted. Like I said, it's a romantic notion and people are nothing if not impractical about romantic notions. It's attractive.

**But it's also an old rundown house without proper upkeep maintenance or modern plumbing, and probably doesn't even have electricity.** I don't know, I wasn't really paying too much attention and I don't think we went into too much detail about the shortcomings of this carriage house aside from some broken windows, creaky wood boards, useless locks and doors, and maybe some broken stairwells. I mean, Tess had to sleep in a makeshift cot on the floor of the front room.

**Color me shallow, but I needz my modern plumbing!**

Anyway, back to the book...

So Tess decides to stay at the carriage house for a weekend in order to determine whether or not she'd like to

keep the home or put it back on the market for sale. After all, Ike very much turned over the entirety of ownership to her and she is very much legally the owner of this carriage house. She can either have a nice, history-rich home to live in, or she can sell it and make a ton of money. As it seems, everyone and their neighbors in this book seem to want to snatch the place right up if Tess were to sell it.

In staying the weekend at the carriage house, Tess inadvertently triggers a mountain of activity, especially after finding the human skeletal remains of a possible murder victim in her cellar... who then disappears after she keeps the incident a secret because she thinks she was hallucinating and isn't sure of what she saw. Now the local police and the media thinks she's insane or trying to stir up trouble, and the real murderer thinks that Tess Haviland needs to be eliminated before she digs too much deeper.

Meanwhile, there's a handsome next door neighbor with an adorable six year old princess to contend with.

### **Final Thoughts:**

As I already stated, the murder mystery was pretty predictable from the start. Among all the discussion between characters about whom the skeletal remains belong to, if Tess even saw a human skeleton, or if the house is haunted at all, all fingers inadvertently point to all the answers quite obviously. It doesn't take a start detective to know the entire story without reading the entire story. And so, in the end *The Carriage House* was more a romance than it was a murder mystery.

Although, I must say, that the atmosphere and the imagery of the book were quite excellently done. If any other books by Carla Neggers focuses more on the crime thriller parts and tweaks certain storytelling styles just right, I'm certain they'd be excellent murder mysteries to read.

I will definitely try to pick up another Carla Neggers book in the future.

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### **2016 Reading Challenges:**

- Goodreads Reading Challenge
- BookLikes Reading Challenge
- Reading Assignment Challenge
- Bookish Resolutions Challenge

-- My TBR List -- March Winner!

**See Other My TBR List Reviews @ Because Reading**

- Mount TBR Challenge

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### **Melissa says**

Just OK. I picked this up because of the setting. A little heavier on the romance than I usually read and not that intriguing of a mystery. Not sure I'll read anymore of the series.

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## **Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says**

Really enjoyed this mystery and even though it was somewhat predictable and obvious who the killer was, I loved the family dynamics and the slow burn romance. Definitely will be trying more from this series and this author.

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## **Pattianne says**

The Carriage House - Carriage House Series #1 - (TESS AND Andrew) - Mystery concerning the haunted house. Find killer and each others love.

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Then Ike disappeared and now Tess finds herself with much more than a simple weekend project to get her out of the city. It's not just the rumors that the carriage house is haunted. It is the neighbors: six-year-old Dolly Thorne, her reclusive babysitter, Harley Beckett and especially Dolly's father, Andrew Thorne, who has his own ideas about why Tess has turned up next door.

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## **Aanu says**

A romantic suspense..But its so predictable dat u can't actually call it a suspense..The possible angles were so interesting than d actual plot which is clear to all from the start,I felt some lines kept being repeated and few unnecessary investigative hypothesis which was just to push the story to more pages...the characters were indeed so well done and i felt the description of a character was sometimes unasked for as they were already clearly etched..My fav character was Harl - such a gruff guy wit soft heart, he could deal with brawls and murder but found it difficult wit school kids ;))) i loved the similarity drawn between pop,Davey & Tess wit Andrew,Harl & Dolly...(wished some ghost angle had been used here but alas no...)

Apart from main story i really loved few lines in the book generally. For eg the one where Tess thinks *"...having a book in the house signalled an open mind. An ability to compromise. An understanding of different tastes and sensibilities."*

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## **Stacy says**

The characters were all enjoyable, if not memorable. The story was fast paced and although you knew who did it relatively early on there was some confusion thrown in to keep you reading. I really liked the secondary characters. Andrew's cousin Harley Beckett was an original and Tess's dad and godfather were loving manly men and it was easy to forgive their chauvinistic ways.

To be fair, I should say that I started this on the plane last week and the fact that it kept my attention at all is an endorsement. I could be the world's worst flier. So, it did keep my interest for pages at a time and this is all I could have hoped for on the plane.

there's more on my blog <http://stacybuckeye.wordpress.com/200...>

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## **Nancy says**

Nice book. Good plot. Exciting. Suspenseful. Fun characters!!

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## **Jennifer (BTH Reviews) says**

Review from BTH Reviews

This is another updated, expanded, and edited review that first appeared on Books That Hook. I read The Carriage House back in 2014. Surprisingly, I still remember a lot about the book.

Although it had some issues, the overall story was enjoyable and memorable.

I remember I picked up this book at the public library because I had heard good things about Carla Neggers and I hadn't read her before.

### **The Story**

Tess is given a carriage house instead of payment for her graphic design services. Now, the owner is missing, and she's stuck with a tax bill. Tess decides to go out to the carriage house to ascertain her best course of action—sell it or keep it?

While there, she meets her next door neighbors: a sexy architect, his precocious daughter, and his tough, ex-cop cousin. Worse, though, she discovers a skeleton in the cellar. She doesn't tell anyone what she has seen until it is too late.

My biggest complaint is that the author makes it way too easy to figure out whose bones are in the carriage



house. It's also way too easy to figure out who killed him.

The story is pretty predictable. However, the characters make up for that.

#### The Characters

Tess doubts herself a lot. And she worries too much about what other people think. She waits too long to act. Then, when other people don't believe her, she questions herself rather than try to figure out what really happened. I liked Tess, despite all that, but I wanted more from her. There were times when she should have been scared, and it didn't seem like she was.

Andrew, an architect, is the romantic interest. They get more involved with one another than they are ready for.

I especially liked Tess's father and her godfather. They added some humor into the story. The little girl was fun, too. These characters were different, quirky at times, and entertaining.

I'm a sucker for books that have animals. This one ranks up there for me because of the inclusion of a pregnant cat and, later, her litter of kittens.

#### The Writing

Carla Neggers wrote well. It was easy for me to visualize the scenery and characters. I don't have any complaints about her writing style or execution of the plot. My dislikes have to do with the plot itself and the lack of appropriate reactions from Tess.

#### Do I Recommend?

If you don't mind a story that presents a mystery but doesn't actually make it mysterious or suspenseful, then read *The Carriage House*. The overall story line and characters make it fun to read. I probably won't go back to this series myself, just because I have so many other books to read, but I would if I had unlimited time to spend reading.

For interesting characters, a believable romance, and vivid setting descriptions, I recommend reading *The Carriage House*.

My rating 4/5 stars (B)

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#### **Amy says**

Murder mystery. Some funny parts. Not my favorite genre, especially when it gives me an upset stomach.

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#### **Laura Rittenhouse says**

This book is classified as Suspense Romance on its back spine. The suspense isn't something that keeps you on the edge of your seat since you are told early on who the skeleton in the cellar was before his life was cut short and who killed him. The drama revolves around how the heroine (the woman with the skeleton under her carriagehouse) will deal with the discovery and when/if the guilty party will be caught. The 2nd strain of

the story is a classic romance between the heroine and her reticent (but extremely attractive) neighbour. As is required by the genre, there is a lot of heating up only to have cold water thrown on it multiple times before boy-gets-girl can be realised. I'm sure I'm not doing this part of the book justice because Romance isn't a genre I read and generally avoid. From what I've read of this genre, this is a cut above.

This was an easy read, ticked all the boxes, maintained a consistency within the characters (something I often complain doesn't happen in these genres) and was a good holiday read (yes, I was on a short holiday when reading it).

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