



The Fainting Room

Sarah Pemberton Strong

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Fainting Room

Sarah Pemberton Strong

The Fainting Room Sarah Pemberton Strong

Ray Shepard is a wealthy architect who has mystified his friends by marrying Evelyn, a woman who works at a nail salon. Evelyn, in turn, hides a secret past about her former life in the circus, her ex-husband's mysterious death, and the colorful tattoos she carefully conceals under her clothes. When Evelyn starts to cave under the pressure of living in Ray's rarified world, she suggests they take in Ingrid, a 16-year-old girl with blue hair, a pet iguana, and no place to stay for the summer.

As Evelyn and Ray both make her their confidante, drawing her into the heart of what threatens their marriage, Ingrid increasingly adopts the noir alter ego of "Detective Slade"—fedora and all—in order to solve the mysteries that engulf all three characters.

The Fainting Room Details

Date : Published June 4th 2013 by Ig Publishing (first published April 19th 2013)

ISBN : 9781935439769

Author : Sarah Pemberton Strong

Format : Paperback 264 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Adult Fiction

 [Download The Fainting Room ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Fainting Room ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Fainting Room Sarah Pemberton Strong

From Reader Review The Fainting Room for online ebook

Gregory says

I read the first 100 pages, just didn't do it for me.

Heather says

This started out interesting. Interesting characters and premise. The way she jumped around narrating from different points of view was pretty confusing at times though. Unfortunately, the whole love triangle thing was so unbelievable, and icked me out enough, I just couldn't appreciate the story any longer.

Lorri Steinbacher says

Feeling cynical about this book. It like it was really about how we never know what goes on in the mind of another person, how mostly we use others to shore up the image we have (or want) of ourselves. Evelyn generated no sympathy from me her insecurity was just too much to take, Ray felt promising until he decided to substitute Ingrid for Evelyn, and they both lost me when they sucked a 16 year old girl into their vortex of self-doubt. Ingrid's was the only true voice in the novel. At 16 you should be questioning, you will be a little insecure, you do use others to figure out who you are, but as adults Evelyn and Ray should know better, be stronger than to use a young girl as a conduit for their emotions. An argument can be made that Evelyn never had a chance to mature, I suppose, although I don't buy it. As for Ray--puh-lease. I did enjoy the story, the plotting was tight, the detective story sideline was not distracting and added much to Ingrid's characterization.

Other "circus" selections: The Night Circus, Water for Elephants, Geek Love

Lasiciliana says

This book was "ok"... nothing amazing but a decent and easy read.

The combining of characters from totally different backgrounds is always a good combo for an interesting story and this certainly was but what they all do once they are together was rather lame.

A married man having a midlife crisis of sorts (weird feelings for a teenage girl, crazy love for his wife with a wild past, affair with coworker), a wife with an interesting past (she grew up in the circus) who now has the life she dreamed of and realizes it's extremely boring and a private high school student that moves in with them for a summer and turns their married life upside down, or as some would say "pushes them to realize exactly what is going on in their lives".

I didn't care for the 1920's style detective pieces and I don't really know if it adds anything to the story but it's there and is okay.

Again, it's an okay read. Easy and quick.

Elizabeth says

Same reaction that I had for "A Reliable Wife." Reviews used words like 'suspenseful' and 'hypnotic' and then the book is trite, dull, and mediocre. This is about as hypnotic as the federal budget.

Travis Fortney says

My review from The Chicago Center for Literature and Photography, which you can find here:
<http://bit.ly/147awtF>

--

Sarah Pemberton Strong's *The Fainting Room* is a dirty, dirty novel. And for this white, liberal, 30-ish, heterosexual male, calling this novel dirty isn't as easy as it sounds. The fact is that circa 2013 readers "like me" are so hyper-sensitive to certain social issues that it's sometimes difficult to know how to react to a novel like *The Fainting Room*.

The question is, is sex between a 16-year-old and a 30-something automatically dirty? What if it doesn't feel exploitative? What if the 16-year old is a wonderfully drawn character, who seems perfectly adult in some passages and very childish pages later, but certainly seems capable of making her own decisions? What if the sex in question is very explicit--albeit well-written and even titillating? What if the 16-year-old in the scenario plays the role of seductress?

So far, the novel in question must be automatically dirty. It must be. After all, we're talking about someone a decade removed from college having sex with a high-school sophomore (which it occurs to me is very close to the concept of Allissa Nutting's just-released *Tampa*, a very different book from this one).

But what if I told you that that the 30-something in the equation was a woman, that the explicit sex in question is lesbian sex, that the young girl's sexual awakening is beautifully and tenderly written, and that her infatuation/obsession with the thirty-something woman at the novel's center is somehow evocative of the quintessential American high-school crush? What if the novel moved like a romantic comedy, or a *Midsummer Night's Dream*-style farce? What if I told you we're rooting for the 16-year old in this equation, that by the time the explicit sex finally happens, it feels like a victory?

That's what it feels like in *The Fainting Room* when 16-year-old Ingrid finally seduces 30-something Evelyn. Dirty or not dirty? I'm not particularly interested in such classifications anyway, and readers of my reviews will know that I prefer my fiction a little bit (or a lot) dirty. Ms. Strong's book is the second book this year that I've read and loved from Ig publishing that pushes the reader just outside of her comfort zone (after Diana Wagman's *Care and Feeding of Exotic Pets*).

The plot of the novel goes like this: Ingrid is a boarding school student who gets suspended just before summer and can't stay in her dorm like she had planned. Ray Shepard, an architect, and his wife Evelyn, a former circus performer turned hairdresser turned housewife, are friends with the school's headmistress, Mrs. Luce. When Mrs. Luce can't find Ingrid's parents, the Shepard's offer to take Ingrid in. Ray and Evelyn are newlyweds, and Evelyn isn't adjusting particularly well to their new life. Ray thinks having Ingrid around might distract Evelyn from her troubles. Evelyn thinks Ingrid might become her friend. And Ingrid wants to

stay with the Shephards to avoid returning to her stepmother and the suburban California existence she escaped when she moved east. Over the course of the novel, Ingrid helps Ray write and detective story, and he becomes increasingly, even disturbingly, infatuated with her. Ingrid, meanwhile, is captivated by Evelyn's mysterious past.

Ms. Strong has created a wonderfully-drawn character in Evelyn. She's beautiful, though not self-confident, with brilliant red hair and a past as a tattooed lady that threatens to reveal itself if she doesn't keep her skin carefully hidden under the uncomfortable long-sleeved blouses she wears. She also has a recently dead former husband--the circus's sword swallower--who has an abusive alcoholic. But where Ms. Strong has done her best work is in capturing Evelyn's many anxieties. Evelyn has slipped into a "Dream Life" she never never thought she could have. It's heartbreaking how badly she wants to become the kind of person who fits into that life, the kind of person she thinks Ray wants and deserves--that is, someone who can cook gourmet meals, knows about fine wine and the perfect cheese to pair it with, knows about art and music, is comfortable carrying on a conversation with Ray's fancy friends, is at home in a beautifully restored 19th century house and also in her own skin. It's a daunting task, and it's impossible not to grown fonder of Evelyn as the novel goes on. It's doubly heartbreaking that Ray doesn't want Evelyn to be the new version of herself that she's trying to become, he simply wants the woman he fell in love with, although he might prefer her to be a little less troubled by what he views as trivial problems.

As the summer goes on, things get, well, hotter. I've always loved a novel that goes off the rails in the final act and becomes a new book entirely. I've also long admired authors who aren't afraid to tread where others might not go. No one could accuse Ms. Strong of fearful writing, and her ear for ecstatic and even worshipful language in the erotic scenes is undeniable. This one comes highly recommended, especially for readers who don't mind a little hot, hot lesbian sex.

Kate says

I really enjoyed this novel. The characters and the story felt real to me in spite of the unusual circumstances: Evelyn's odd past and her strained marriage with Ray, the unlikely love triangle (or some other shape...since not everything intersects neatly), and even Ingrid's affectation of a PI. It worked for me and I think I'll be seeking more of the same.

Albert says

Title - The Fainting Room

Author - Sarah Pemberton Strong

Summary -

Evelyn has the perfect life. A big house. A wonderful doting husband in Ray. A life of leisure and wealth. A far cry from the life she left behind. But it is the life she left behind that is catching up to her. The life of a battered woman. The body covered in tattoos that harkened back to an earlier time. A time when she was little more than a teenage bride in a traveling destitute circus.

A life she thought she had left behind except for the recesses of her mind. A mind that is haunted by the past and a dead husband.

Ray has the perfect life. A beautiful home given to him by his wealthy parents. A job doing what he loves and a wife he adores. A wife who's past excites and thrills him. A past he doesn't understand holds dangers that in his world he cannot fathom.

"..There were bad things inside her; things Ray knew nothing about..."

Into this home comes Ingrid. A student at the local private school who is in the midst of being suspended for drinking when she finds that she cannot go home. Her father and new wife are out of the country. Evelyn and Ray decide to take her in. A distraction for the cracks that are being to unravel their marriage.

Ingrid is smart, but rebellious in her musings. She sees in herself a writer of detective novels and begins to sense a mystery in the lives of her caregivers. Slowly she begins to peel back the layers of the relationship between Ray and Evelyn.

"..Each of these possibilities produced the same flare of panic in his chest. Down the hall she was still crying. In the sea of the sound of her sobs Ray sat down, put his head on the desk and cried, too, not only because he had hurt Ingrid, not only for the loss of her who he could never have, but for the loss of the part of himself he most cherished: the part he thought of as Arthur Braeburn Shepard, a good man..."

In her fantasies, as the noir detective she writes about, Ingrid is falling in love with the red haired, tattooed Evelyn with the dark past. Oblivious to the haunting desire that is in Ray's eyes.

"...Why's it called a fainting room?" Ingrid asked.

"That's what the Victorians called it. Some of the houses from this period have a room like this on the second floor. After climbing the stairs in tight corsets," Ray smiled, "breathless ladies would go into the fainting room to sit down and sniff sal volatile to recover themselves..."

The three, in the large house, this one summer, are colliding in their emotions and desires. Until they are breathless seeking a rest in The Fainting Room.

Review -

I really liked The Fainting Room. The characters drive this novel and in this S P Strong has done a masterful job. Evelyn is powerful as the wife with the haunted past who finally has all she ever wanted but finds herself imprisoned in a gilded cage. Ray is the husband, so used to having all he wants, how he wants until he finds something he wants that even he knows he must deny himself. And then there is Ingrid, the lost girl whose desire for a family pushes her way into their lives.

The Fainting Room is a well written emotional roller coaster of a book that explores forbidden passion as well as the frail fabric between reality and the fantasies we sometimes wish we had instead. It is a novel about what happens when you get everything you want and find out that the only thing that can take it from you is yourself.

Evelyn's character drives this book for me. Her secrets and tendency to violence lay just under the surface and she is losing the ability to control it. She wavers between the woman she is and the girl she use to be. She is so well written that I found myself rushing through the parts of the novel where she wasn't present just to get to the next scene she was in.

A very good read.

A very good read.

willowdog says

When punk, Ingrid is banned from summer semester at a boarding school and comes to live with Ray, a successful architect, and his wife, a woman with an interesting past life, the family's members hidden past and hidden selves are revealed. The story, told by flashbacks and a story within a story, is well written and the characters that are well crafted. Ingrid tries to come to terms with her distant family and her sexuality.

Jenny Demonic says

A tale of obsession and cruelty, how the things we want can destroy us just as easily as the things we already have. "The Fainting Room" tells the story of a couple who take in a teenage girl over summer break, and the way introducing something new into your life can completely change the dynamic. Sometimes dragging and often times incredulous in plot, this book has merit but falls into fantasy too often to stay grounded in reality. The characters are memorable but fickle, or so single-minded at times you pray the chapter ends soon and the book will jump to another angle of the story. This story does also touch on sexuality in youth and adults, and the resolution the author comes up with is no less sordid than it would have been had it happened another way; people are used and abused and thrown away under the guise of "love," but the emotions are only conveyed as hypocrisy and the need to dominate. While this may largely be how the world seems to operate, it was not the story I was hoping for.

Jenn says

The compression and drama make this a horrifyingly, devastatingly good read. I felt compassion for the characters even as I wanted to scream at them--the kind of visceral reaction to the the story that only comes from well-crafted writing. And SPS knows her craft. Part pulp, part literary fiction, part family drama, I was immediately invested and had to keep reading until I'd followed these characters to the final shattering outcomes of their decisions. Abounding in this three-ring circus of a novel: suburban ennui, tattooed ladies, teens obsessed with nuclear fallout, obsession, sexuality, desire, and the laughing ghost of a drunken ex-husband--that kept me up late into the night.

Dead John Williams says

The Fainting Room I did not think that I was going to get into this book.

I found the basic proposition of a white trash circus girl, who was unable to perform even simple circus acts, coming out of a full-on abusive marriage to an alcoholic meeting then marrying a white wealthy middle class architect. So I found the first few chapters an uphill struggle. But then something happened, the characters themselves started to emerge from this unbelievable scenario. The circus woman came out of this cliché to reveal herself as an insecure out-of-her-depth woman on the edge of things. Her husband also starts to reveal himself a loving man who is missing the main plot. Then comes this crazy young girl who is also falling off the edge of things. She brings much to this story. I loved her imaginary detective novel running along in the background and very nicely filling in the gaps in a way that real dialogue could never quite do. So in effect there are 4 characters in this story, the three humans and one trashy pulp paperback detective. I also had no idea where the story was going and was pleasantly surprised at times. Overall a very unlikely good read.

Well done!

Kathy says

Sarah Pemberton Strong knows how to plot a novel, to tell a good story, to take us to a different time and place, but what I love most about *The Fainting Room* is its characters, every one of them fully rounded, believable, flawed and lovely. Just as I begin to think it's teenaged Ingrid who steals the show with her combat boots and her fear of radiation, her sharp edges and her naïve vulnerabilities, I veer toward red-headed, tattooed, self-conscious, trying-so-hard Evelyn and think, no, this story is so much hers. And then there's ordinary, good-hearted, stupid Ray. He, too, is integral to this genre-blurring, energy-charged, quirky story. Strong even knows how to write a satisfying ending, the place where so many novels ultimately falter. Don't be like the more timid readers on this thread. Don't let the corporate publishers pick everything you read. Instead, pick up this terrific novel and see what's out there in the big, wide open sky of indy publishing. Better yet, bring it to your book club and have a rollicking discussion. Serve champagne in coffee mugs.

Sharon says

A troubled couple takes in a troubled teenager for the summer. Their developing friendships lead to rifts in the various relationships. The whole thing is peppered with references to pulp detective fiction. An inspired blend of characters and technique.

Kimberly says

Strong is a great storyteller, and she has crafted a layered story, with great humor, anguish...I picked up the book and read it in two days, I couldn't turn the pages fast enough. The story is set in the Boston area on or about 1982 and the author fits in great references about the landmarks of the time. The characters are beautifully flawed...I just loved all the energy that zipped through the story...and there were plot turns I didn't expect. Highly intense story...
