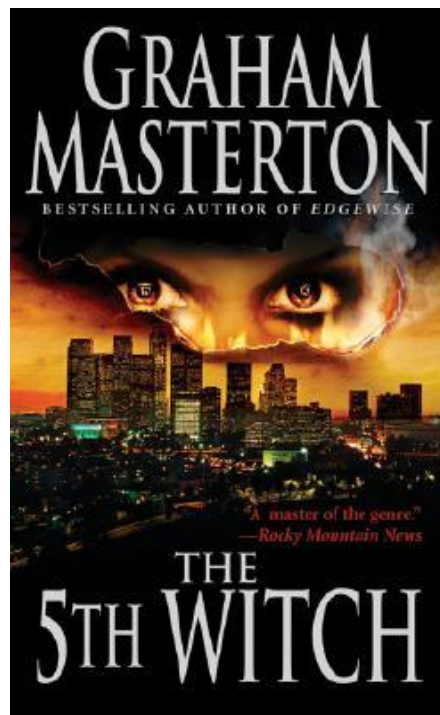




The 5th Witch

Graham Masterton

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A crime cartel is using four witches to hold L.A. in a grip of fear. No one can stop them--except the 5th witch!

The 5th Witch Details

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From Reader Review The 5th Witch for online ebook

Stiv_Matters says

Graham Masterton qualifies as one of my guilty pleasures. I've been reading his books since I was in junior high and read "The Manitou". When he's on his game, he can tell a good story with lots of gore and a real skill at describing a scene so it's very easy to picture in your mind. His weaknesses are shallow, two-dimensional characters and horrible dialogue but that's easy to overlook when he's spinning a good yarn. "The Fifth Witch" starts out with a great spontaneous combustion scene and a great premise, that the major crimelords in Los Angeles have allied themselves with a group of powerful witches and they fearlessly take over the city. There are lots of stock Masterton moments, one of the witches covers her face with her hands so that only her eyes show out just like Misquamacus, the vengeful indian from Masterton's most known work, "The Manitou". One of the witches attacks through mirrors much like a previous book, "Mirror". And the protagonist has nightmares about the death of his wife much like the protagonist from "The Pariah". In fact, as soon as the dead wife was mentioned, I knew she'd be back and she'd have sex with the protagonist. And she did. After a great start, the book quickly loses steam. The witches continue to escalate their outrageous acts against the people of Los Angeles and there are some great scenes of gore and devastation but the plot wanders and the sub-plot involving the dead wife is poorly developed. The protagonist is pretty much the same protagonist from every Masterton novel, the good witch downstairs is okay except that any time someone comes over she offers them a "brewski" which I found annoying. The buddy is a stereotypical mexican character who is obviously marked for death as soon as we meet him. At about the halfway point, it's clear where the story is going and that's exactly where Masterton takes it. Along the way, there are some cool monsters, the witches do hurt and kill people in interesting ways and lots and lots of gore. Nothing we haven't seen before in a Masterton story but well written. Much of this plays like Masterton's Greatest Hits and I think he lost interest about halfway through. The ending is contrived and predictable. Nevertheless, in the larger picture of the Masterton oeuvre, this one stands right in the middle. He's written a lot of books better than this one but he's certainly written worse. If you're a fan of Masterton, there are parts of this book that are classic Masterton moments and that makes up for a lot of the books weaknesses. If you're not a fan of Masterton, this isn't a good place to start.

Sara says

This was a great book full of twists and turns, highly recommend it :)

Anthony Cardenas says

Reading this book, I was reminded of another book about modern day witches: Conjure Wife by Fritz Leiber, which in my estimation is the superior work. Where Leiber's book was inventive, wonderfully written with fully developed characters that you come to know and care about (or hate if they are villains)...the 5th Witch never reaches any of those heights, nor does it even try. Instead, it tells a rather simply story in a very simple way without bothering to develop his characters too much, thereby never really letting us fully care about them or feel that they are in much danger at all.

The story moves quickly enough, and the writing in some places is actually rather good. But the characters are a bit flat and 2-dimension and cliched (why do all Mexican-American characters have to pepper their language with ridiculous Spanish terms like Muchaco or Hombre, as if the writer is constantly trying to tell

the reader "Look it's a Mexican, because he uses Spanish words..." but I digress), and the plot unfolds in a wonderfully gruesome but ultimately predictable way, so much that you already know what's going to happen before you're even done with a chapter. I kept reading the book, hoping that it would get better or that I would be surprised by something...but it never happened. and so i finished the book with the same feeling that I have when I eat at McDonalds or other fast food restaurants: I ate some edible but forgettable food, and it occupied me for a period of time.

Monique says

This is one of my favorite horror novels. I read it years ago, back in 2006. I need to refresh my memory by reading it again soon. I'll post a review after.

Kinksrock says

I had trouble deciding between three stars or four stars for this one.

On the one hand, the book has an awesome plot, with some great, evil witches doing some really nasty stuff in creative ways, and you can try to predict what will happen, but the author may fool you (at least he fooled me).

However, for some reason, Masterton rushed the ending. It almost felt like he was anxious to get to the ending.

And it seems like a lot of readers are baffled by the last few lines. And when you have to skip around the book to figure out what the last few lines mean, it can kind of spoil your enjoyment.

***** SPOILER ALERT *****

Sorry, Graham, but I didn't spend the whole book remembering what color Annie's cat was.

ADDENDUM (7/13/12): Looking back, I really enjoyed this book, despite the problem with the third act and the ending. I'm bumping it up to four stars.

ADDENDUM (12/24/16): I found that I forgot a lot about this book, but I remember enjoying it, so I'm going to re-read it soon.

ADDENDUM (1/17/17): I reread this novel, and it is still a great read. I didn't feel like the third act was so rushed this time. It is really only the last two pages that are messed up, but I think that could be fixed if Masterton would only write a sequel. This novel begs some questions. Who is Annie Conjure? What are her motivations?

Edmund Lester says

Well written horror novel from one of the masters. The diverse mythologies underlying each type of witchcraft are blended together well.

Mike Kazmierczak says

I've mentioned similar thoughts before but Masterton is kind of underappreciated. Or maybe more accurately, he doesn't get mentioned or included in as many lists of horror authors as I would expect. He's written a significant number of books but somehow he still gets skipped over. Maybe it's just my library though as I don't have as many books by him as I would expect. **THE 5TH WITCH** is another strong book by him. Not great but still good and very much in the vein of a good '80s horror book.

The book starts incredibly strong and jumps straight into the action. A trio of witches have come to Los Angeles and teamed up with three different mob gangs. Immediately the witches make their presence known by killing detectives and civilians, by strong-arming the Chief of Police and by making Homicide Detective Dan Fisher spit up thirty dollars worth of quarters. As Detective Fisher gets pulled into the weird happenings, he's fortunate to have Annie, a good witch, as a downstairs neighbor. She convinces him of the reality of the magic and then helps him to thwart the trio of witches and the additional witch who is assisting the trio.

First the good. The characters were all interesting and enjoyable. I could picture the events as they happened and they made me cringe, smile and wince. The story moved quickly and kept me engaged. Several of the times that I stopped reading for the day was because I was too tired or I had to do something else. In other words, I didn't want to stop but had to. Now, not really the bad but the convenient. It struck me as a tad convenient that the main character needed a witch to help fight the evil witches and that he happened to live right upstairs from one. Sure, that's the nature of books like this but it was a tad convenient. The same was true that she had enough power to fight the witches. Yes, it was part of the suspension of disbelief for the book but it also struck me as a tad easy. I was hoping for a bit more confrontation for the final act of the book. Something a bit more dramatic. Masterton kept it within the reality of the book and there was even some mystery that wasn't resolved until the end but I was hoping for a tad more. Still, I wouldn't ding the book based on that. I was pulled into the book enough that I started creating my own storylines and ideas. That's got to be a good sign.

Adam Wilson says

The 5th Witch by Graham Masterton is yet another Masterton novel involving rituals, supernatural occurrences, and horrific, brutal violence of which only the author could think. Some scenes in this book are awful in a good and memorable sort of way. These witches and the organized crime bosses they work for are relentless and punish severely. We also learn about some rituals in locating witches, enjoy a protagonist who is a detective without it being something recycled again and again by thousands of other authors, and we get a scene where our protagonist vomits up 30 dollars in small change. Also very unforgettable. Even the beginning, where three detectives are burned alive inside their car in a scene a bit similar to Masterton's The Hymn (The Burning), should be enough to grab the attention of most horror fans. Surprisingly, this has emotion in it as well. Emotion is something a lot of new horror novels seem to lack. In this one, you should care about Dan, especially after his talk with his father, or after he begins encountering his dead girlfriend Gale. The emotion and reality put into every single character in this novel is what really made the book a good one for me.

If you have read a couple Mastertons, you should be familiar with the way he makes ridiculous plots and somehow pulls all of it together and makes it reasonable in an entertaining way if not believable. This book is no exception. If you keep an open mind and know how Masterton writes, this should be another memorable and fun read. It is also unpredictable in many ways, big and small, and that is yet another reason

why this book (and most by Masterton) are so much fun to read and so memorable.

James Parsons says

I decided to read another Masterton book which I had not yet been through, for the Halloween period. I probably did choose this one as it has 'witch' in the title, but it is not a regular tales of witches and black cats. This tale sees modern day urban American under threat as a group of mysterious and dealy witches work with the known lcoal mob leaders and organized crime lords.

After some sudden and unexplainable deaths of officers and detectives, one detective must learn the truth of the witches and how to stop them.

Well, like many Masterton books, it is a great easy read. He is often forgotten among other well-known horror authors unfairly. He may not be the most literary of horror authors, but he always has a great energy and flow to his books. This is an author who will always pull to right into a story from the first few pages, and you want to keep ready. Events unfold, and a good pace moves the story along.

This was a little unusual, with crime lords of L.A. working with powerful and dangerous witches. At times, like a crime thriller until the next grizzly scenes of death and murder by occult spells.

Another good Masterton read, a little different but still very satisfying for horror fans.

Carl Alves says

The 5th Witch is a bit of a departure from some of Graham Masterton's other work. It's slick and stylish and highly engaging. The novel starts off with a group of crime czars attempting to take over Los Angeles with the aid of an ancient witch. She is aided by three other witches who support the crime lords in their quest to conquer the city. Standing opposed to them is Homicide detective Dan Fisher, and his neighbor Annie Conjure, who is a good witch. Dan is haunted by his wife who had died three years earlier. Dan faces a monumental challenge in taking on both the crime bosses and the witches.

This is a highly enjoyable, fast paced novel. Although it is ostensibly a horror novel, there are strong thriller elements to it as well. Graham Masterton weaves through both of these worlds with a high skill level. My only quibble was that Annie's role in the story was telegraphed and pretty easy to see, so when the reveal came there was no real surprise to it. The story is well-plotted, well-written and thoroughly enjoyable. I highly recommend reading it.

Carl Alves – author of Blood Street

Kristen says

Short Summary:

The three main mafia/gang lords of Los Angeles have suddenly found new girlfriends, and they aren't afraid to use them. They have apparently shipped in witches from across the globe who are willing to act as their personal magical bodyguards. Much to the dismay of the police, innocent bystanders and restaurant guests who now find themselves in extremely dangerous situations... like spontaneously combusting. It's up to one down and out cop and his "white witch" neighbor to figure out how to stop them.

This was a very fast read, I started and finished it in the Emergency Room waiting area before we even got to go back to the second holding tank. I read the back of the book to my husband and he laughed "Witches and gangsters, I can't imagine why THAT hasn't been done before." But ignoring his scoffing I plunged ahead anyway and from the start, this book was promising.

Crazy deaths right from the beginning, police baffled, powerful witches on the arms of gang lords... it sounds a bit off when said outloud, but it was going very well. I was drawn in, curious and eager to continue. The beginning is by far the very best part of this book, it's down hill from there but thankfully the slope is gradual. It isn't until you get to the last 50 pages that you realize that Masterton is running out of room to wrap this tale up, and unfortunately the ending feels like a real rush job. Still, the ending was okay, not great, but tolerable.

My biggest issue (which also seems to be a recurring theme in Masterton books... the few I have read at least) is the lack of time passing. Everything occurs in a flash, no one seems overly concerned other than the main characters and the resolution is disturbingly easy. I never found myself worried over our main characters because nothing they did seemed overly hard or stressful. There really weren't any nail biting moments or pages where you find yourself checking your armpits to see if the sweat has soaked through your shirt. I guess that's it... it doesn't evoke any emotion. If you're on a plane or have a long car ride this book will do nicely, but it won't change your world or turn you into a raving Masterton fan.

Ashley Brown says

I'd been meaning to read this for a while - the plot summaries that I'd read online had really grabbed me and, after finishing Masterton's 'The Doorkeepers', this was next on my list.

Let me give you the skinny on the plot...so, basically a load of LA crime lords unite with some powerful witches to rule eternal and do away with all their enemies. Of course, the local law enforcement aren't overly keen on this at first...however a little bit of black magic soon changes their minds.

This is a really fast-paced read - with plenty of chills and thrills. If you're not looking for anything too demanding or if you're after a simple book to read on holiday I'd recommend it. For me however, there was so much scope here for a bigger novel that I was left disappointed. Masterton's ideas and ways of reimagining old legend or urban myths always inspire me...but, sometimes I just wish he'd do more with them.

The action is good here and there are some really memorable scenes however it did very occasionally feel as if Masterton was sitting there at his PC thinking 'hmmm what crazy shit can I do next?' and then just going with whatever he felt. But...maybe that's what the creativite process is all about?

I wanted a bit more background information, but I didn't get it - for example there's no explanation as to how the witches and the gangsters even formed an alliance. If the witches were so all-powerful why on Earth don't they just kill off the gangsters too and rule all of LA, or even the world? The ending is also a little weird...and not in a good way, I won't spoil it but if you google it you'll notice that many others were left scratching their heads about it.

I couldn't really get on board with any of the characters, either. About the only one who seemed to have any kind of depth was the lead Detective's partner. While the main character, Dan, had a tragic incident in his past there wasn't much else about him that really stood out. Also, as with many horror books, there are a lot of people who make really silly decisions and as a result of that whole groups of people are dispatched, all

because they wouldn't listen to reason and plan out their actions.

All in all, two stars for me. Great, imaginative idea but the execution lacked the depth and drive it could have had. It felt as if this was just a page-turner that was written to sell a few copies, and the author just left it at that. But, then again, maybe that's what the publishing house wanted?

Allan Smulling says

I had heard comments complementing the writing of Graham Masterton and while I appreciated the story, it was, I felt a bit unpolished. I think Mr. Masterton would benefit from a good copy editor who is better at eliminating the many cliches that appeared in this novel.

I guess I blame the editor... The story could be REALLY strong, if it weren't for some awkward stereotypes that could have been smoothed over and made subtle. Instead the reader is presented with cardboard cut-outs of villains. Too many times, I pictured TV character actors playing the part of the characters in this novel. It's one thing to give a nod to a particular character type, such as the hard boiled detective, or the Russian mobster, but (and I suppose this is kind of a back handed compliment) the author's portrayal of such characters seem to become a placeholder for a particular actor. *While this isn't in the story, picture a cop saying "I'm too old for this shit." and you get the idea.*

Enough of the negative... Masterton's settings and description of the horrific is wonderful! I won't ruin it for you, but there were times I was actually squirming with discomfort (and what higher praise can you give a horror writer!) from some of the exposition of our heroes fighting against the antagonists (Yes, you guessed it, witches!).

It may be a bit long, and in need of a good editor, but The 5th Witch kept me reading to the end. I would say, for me, that is praise enough. While it may not be high on my list, I will certainly read another Graham Masterton novel again. If anyone has a recommendation, I will certainly follow up on it. Graham Masterton

Amy says

This book started off great with lots of gory details, but the story began right in the middle of a grand showdown between several policemen, a drug lord, and four witches, no gradual plot build-up here. Where did these witches come from? We do learn more about the witches as the story progresses, and we are later introduced to a 5th witch. I lost interest as I continued reading, however. The story didn't grab me. There were many brief appearances by irrelevant characters, slowing down the pace of the novel, although the pace did pick up in the end, closing with an interesting plot twist. Don't get me wrong, I liked this book, my first Graham Masterton. I will give him another try. Masterton, a supposed master of the horror genre and author of over forty novels, is bound to have written a book that I can rave about. The 5th Witch just wasn't it.

T says

While the story was entertaining throughout, I did not like the way it ended. The overwhelming ambiguity with which it concluded made the whole thing seem cheap and I felt like I'd wasted my time reading it. A repeated theme with Masterton is the use of the mirror 'world' to unsettle the reader - and there were instances where it was right on target. There were other parts of the plot that were predictable and that didn't work as well - who couldn't tell that the ghostly visits were going to end badly.

I didn't feel particularly connected to any of the characters, but as usual in the fight between good and evil I was partial to the good side. The chanting and charms seemed real enough, and the action scenes gave the story momentum. There definitely was a building up to the climatic end and you could almost mark the points in the story where it transitioned. There were several secondary characters that were used in the plot to fulfill one specific purpose, so there is even less of a connection to them. It felt forced when one of these secondary characters was used to motivate the protagonist and escalated the story to its climax.

This is basically a throw away read, not something that's memorable. It's was a modern take on old fantasy fiction. If you have a couple hours to fill or are looking for something that's not too demanding then here a piece of pop-fiction for you!
