



The Shrouded Path

Sarah Ward

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The past won't stay buried forever.

November, 1957: Six teenage girls walk in the churning Derbyshire mists, the first chills of winter in the air. Their voices carrying across the fields, they follow the old train tracks into the dark tunnel of the Cutting. Only five appear on the other side.

October, 2014: a dying mother, feverishly fixated on a friend from her childhood, makes a plea: 'Find Valerie.' Mina's elderly mother had never discussed her childhood with her daughter before. So who was Valerie? Where does her obsession spring from?

DC Connie Childs, off balance after her last big case, is partnered up with new arrival to Bampton, Peter Dahl. Following up on what seems like a simple natural death, DC Childs' old instincts kick in, pointing her right back to one cold evening in 1957. As Connie starts to broaden her enquiries, the investigation begins to spiral increasingly close to home.

The Shrouded Path Details

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From Reader Review The Shrouded Path for online ebook

Joanne Robertson says

Oh what a twisty path this was to follow! Having read and loved all the previous DC Connie Child's books I was thrilled when I got a copy of The Shrouded Path to read. It's one of my very favourite series, with likeable characters and a setting that has become almost a character in its own right. The Derbyshire Peak District has never before seemed quite so chilling and eerie as when Sarah Ward explores the area she obviously loves and knows well.

When Mina visits her mother in hospital, in her confusion the older woman says that she has seen an old school friend but then remembers that she can't as she is dead! This leads Mina into some complex investigations as it is obviously very important to her dying mother. But what's the connection to the schoolgirls at the start of the novel, when one girl of a group of six girls goes into a tunnel and doesn't come out again? And who is the mysterious Valerie?

The relationships between the characters and the slowly built storyline were the most enjoyable parts of The Shrouded Path for me. DI Sadler is away on "holiday" for a week when he unwittingly meets self employed gardener Mina, thus involving him in the search for her mother's schoolfriend. And there was a feel of "An American Werewolf in London" at one point with the unfriendly and unhelpful locals in the village pub that made me wonder what the whole community were trying to hide.

Connie is working with Dahl, a new addition to the team, as they start to tie together cases that may be connected. Her new colleague breathed a new lease of life into the station and worked really well so I do hope that he stays for a bit as I really liked him. The investigation was as twisty and imaginative as ever, I rarely manage to interpret the clues dropped along the trail that Sarah Ward leaves but I enjoy her books all the more for that.

A perfectly pitched and warmly received storyline that was a great addition to this much loved series for me.

Rachel Sargeant says

I've read all of Sarah Ward's DC Connie Child's mysteries and this is the best so far. There is a wonderful cosy quality to the story with characters finding unexpected connections . Connie takes a background role for most of the novel, but we get to see a different side to Connie's boss, Sadler, and meet her new sidekick, DC Dahl. Centre stage is professional gardener Mina who has promised her dying mother she will find Valarie, a girl she knew in the 1950s. The plot weaves together buried secrets and present-day murder with a dash of Derbyshire folklore and sumptuous helpings of rugged Derbyshire countryside.

Kate says

Review to follow

Lizzie Hayes says

I have stated many times that I read crime fiction for the mystery not the crime, and this the fourth book in this series featuring DC Connie Childs, certainly provides plenty of tantalising mystery.

The story opens on a dank November day in rural Derbyshire in 1957, when six teenage girls are walking in the fields following the old train tracks that pass through a dark tunnel to Cutting Lane. Unbeknown to them a watcher is aware that only five girls reappear the other side of the tunnel.

Sixty years on Mina Kemp is called to the hospital where her mother Hilary has taken a turn for the worst. Feverish and confused she tells her daughter that she has seen Valerie and that Mina must find her and check that she is alright. But Mina has never heard her mother mention a Valerie, in fact her mother has never discussed or kept up with any of her childhood friends and she has no idea where to start.

In CID HQ things are for once quiet for which acting DI Matthews is grateful while she stands in for DI Francis Sadler who has been forced to take outstanding leave or lose it. Determined to succeed in this temporary position she is doing everything by the book and in doing so driving Connie Childs mad. Their latest case is one of the sudden death of Nell Colley an elderly unmarried lady who was found by a neighbour sitting on her sofa dead, seems just a simple death. However, Matthews wants no stone left unturned. So together with the newest addition to the team Peter Dahl Connie sets out to interview the neighbour and check through the house. Although, they can not find anything really amiss, Connie has an uneasy feeling that is reinforced when she learns that Nell had only recently retired in order to write her memoirs. But there is nothing in the house that confirms this. Just a newspaper with the death of another elderly lady circled!

There are both multiple characters and threads to this intriguing story. Slowly the links are uncovered and yet still the reader is at a loss as to how they come together and who and where is Valerie?

There are several third person narrators, that provide background to this fascinating mystery, but still the motive and the identity remain a mystery. A real page turner with a startling revelation. If you love a good mystery this is a must read for you. Most highly recommended.

Reviewer: Lizzie Sirett

Laura Moore says

Not quite as good as the previous three books in the series but still kept me gripped until the end. I'm never sure about crime novels where the police themselves become personally involved in the crime being investigated as it can become a little contrived - just my opinion.

Paul says

The Shrouded Path – The Mysteries of the Peak District

Sarah Ward has once again brought DC Connie Childs back to Bampton, a quiet Peak District Town, where

time stopped in about 1950. Or so it seems. Once again Sarah Ward has delivered a macabre masterpiece, that deals with the present while looking back to 1957.

Connie Childs is busy working away chasing up paper work and checking up on unexplained deaths, Bampton has not been this quiet for a while. It does not help that DI Sadler has actually bothered to go on a holiday and Matthews is acting up in the role and is making sure all the paperwork is up to date, she does not want Sadler pulling her up about it when he is back.

Connie is given a new partner DC Dahl who has transferred in from Glossop, which is on the edges of Derbyshire, could all most be in Greater Manchester. They are cannot find anything suspicious, but both have a gut instinct that something is not right. When a suspicious death in hospital things seems to be connected, but they cannot quite see how. With what looks like a saline drip murder, reminiscent of the murders at Stepping Hill Hospital not to far away, Sadler is called back from holiday.

What they do not realise is they will have to discover what happened in 1957 to crack the case. For Sadler that means things are a little too close to home. Especially when the drowned village of Derwent is central to the story. A story that stands in the mists of time and only ever reveals itself when Ladybower reservoir levels drop.

While Sadler slowly puts the picture together, Connie Childs has a more important task of finding a missing vulnerable teenager who has been missing. This teenager seems to be the centre of everything that has been happening, but not sure how.

I love what Sarah Ward writes, and always is able to keep my Mancunian prejudices alive about the Peak District towns. Down here in the valleys of the Peak we tend to think of people up there as owners of three armed cardigans and six fingered gloves, where your brother can also be your uncle!

Once again Sarah Ward has written a macabre thriller that draws the reader in and keeps them hooked throughout. Sarah Ward is one of the most able crime writers we have at the moment.

Noelle says

Set in Derby the reader is faced with fear, change, an urban legend...or is it? secrets, the past, guilt, village mentality, childhood relationships, jealousy, friendships and the search for the truth.

Wowzers! What a fantastically chilling opening chapter – eery, atmospheric and had me biting my nails in anticipation of what would happen next! ? The story has a dual timeline, expertly written so as not to confuse the reader and told in three parts from third person POV. There is a huge mystery happening and I loved the flavour of urban legend woven into the mix – dabbling on the verge of horror, I simply loved this aspect! This author has a knack for creating characters that seem real and that readers are easily drawn to, so it's no wonder that I raced through the pages in record time. I was hooked, plain and simple, and enjoyed every moment of this read!

The dual timeline allows the reader to get to know characters from both the past and present – and what a bunch of characters it was! I adore DC Connie Childs – she is just wonderfully written – a no nonsense attitude and determination to solve a case, I just find her to always be relatable on all levels. I even warmed to Sadler in this novel and loved the fact that a newbie, Dahl, was also thrown into the mix. The banter between Dahl and Childs was awesome and I can't wait to see where the author takes this.

Another character I want to mention is Mina Kemp – I was unsure about my feelings throughout the whole story...and I loved that! She came across as confident but also very secretive and I wondered how reliable she was throughout... mistrust just oozed from her! Fantabulous!!

I also wanted to mention the sense of place in this novel – I thought this was superbly done! The small village setting where everyone knows your business, gossip is rife but “outsiders” are not welcome was delivered perfectly. Living in a small village myself, I felt like an outsider for many years, and could relate to the experience well!

There are so many other characters and bits I want to mention but I feel this may take away from the whole reading experience so will zip my lips! ? However, I do want to say that with each novel, this series is just going from strength to strength!

Do I recommend this read? OMFG I absolutely do! I am a huge fan of Sarah Ward and if you love compelling plots, a unique but believable cast of characters and an absolutely unsettling sense of place – this book...this series...is for you! I can't wait to see where the author takes us next!

Kim says

This is the fourth in the crime series featuring D.C. Connie Childs and set in my home county of Derbyshire. Wonderful characters, including the landscape itself, combine with a gripping storyline to make yet another fabulous read from this relatively new author. More please, Sarah! 9.5/10.

Christopher Williams says

Very good police procedural set in the Peak District. I enjoyed the other books in this series and this is also great. Set partly in 1957 and the present, a technique which seems to work very well in thrillers now. A convoluted plot that is almost impossible to out-guess but is told at a good pace and all unfolds convincingly for me.

Anke says

Not as good as the other books, but still very engaging. Parts were a bit slow.

Cleo Bannister says

With its tale split between the past in 1957 and the present, this book certainly didn't disappoint and at the risk of being repetitive this was even better than the three that preceded it.

One November evening in 1957 six teenage girls walked into the train tunnel at The Cutting, but only five made it out again. What happened to the sixth is shrouded in a mystery as murky as the mists that swirled around the Derbyshire landscape.

In 2014 Mina Kemp is sitting by her mother's bed in hospital. Hilary is dying but she has become unusually agitated believing that she has seen her childhood friend. She begs Mina to find Valerie and despite not knowing where to start, her mother never having mentioned Valerie before Mina determines to do her bidding.

Meanwhile the Bampton police should be having a quiet time of it. With just one natural death on the books to follow-up while DI Sadler is on his holidays it is only the temporary elevation of Matthews in his absence that is causing the work to be more arduous than needs be. However there is the new DC, Peter Dahl to show the ropes to so they pay a visit to the deceased, Nell Colley's home, to see if there is anything at all suspicious about her death.

This series is everything you could want from a crime fiction novel. Even though it is part of a series each book is entirely self-contained, although of course the characters develop from book to book. One of my favourite aspects is that all the characters are great, they are all genuine people, police as we like to imagine our local police force to be; caring and diligent with an absolute drive to get to the truth. This isn't a series overburdened by police politics or gripes about how the force has changed. These are detectives in the old mode, ones that really want to detect. Of course one of the most striking The setting is superb, as one who has holidayed in the area the village of Bampton is as you'd imagine a typical village in the area to be and by taking us back as far as 1957 that feeling is reinforced even more in The Shrouded Path. Best of all there are multiple threads that are meticulously plotted so that there is a real sense of satisfaction at a well-told story by the time you turn the last page.

In a book that changes from past to present and back again we get a flavour of life in the 1950s not by way of obvious signposted items but from the everyday context from a girl not allowed to sing carols before Christmas Eve (and not arguing about her father's strict order) to the simpler times where life was about making your own entertainment, riding bicycles to choir practice and secrets being hidden well away from prying eyes.

This is the perfect autumnal read – my only disappointment is now I need to wait a while before I learn what Sarah Ward will serve up next for DC Connie Childs.

Liz Barnsley says

Review to follow.

Emma says

All of my reviews can be found on <http://www.damppebbles.com>

The Shrouded Path by Sarah Ward is the fourth book in the excellent DC Connie Childs series and continues to remain a very firm favourite of mine. A series I return to time and time again.

One of my most eagerly anticipated releases of the year is always the next DC Connie Childs book from Sarah Ward. And do you know what? I am NEVER disappointed. Never. It's that simple really. If you're a fan of crime fiction and you haven't read one of Ward's books, then you're doing something wrong. Her characters are fully formed, living beings who leap off the page at the reader. You're drawn into the misty fictional town of Bampton and its surrounding Peak District towns, a landscape which feels as much a part of

the book as the characters. And then you're handed a complex, enthralling mystery to get your teeth into. It's fictional bliss and I can't get enough of Ward's masterful writing.

I adore Ward's lead protagonist, Connie Childs, but I also have a rather large soft spot for her DI, Francis Sadler, who, unlike many senior officers you find in crime fiction, is supportive of his DC. Sadler offers an encouraging word and a gentle shove in the right direction whilst also providing the authority which spontaneous and impulsive Connie needs at times. They're a wonderful match and such a refreshing change to many other DI/DC relationships I read about. I must also mention the new boy, DC Peter Dahl. He's not as fiery as some of Connie's previous colleagues but he felt a good fit for the team. I look forward to finding out more about him in future novels.

I very much enjoyed the leaps from the late-1950s to the present day. The author has built a wonderfully enjoyable mystery around a small group of school friends, both in the past and in the present. The secrets, the lies and the half-truths made for compelling reading. And yes, I tried from the very start to figure out where the story was headed and who was responsible but I would never have reached the correct conclusion. I was bowled over by how simple parts of the story were, how Ward manages to keep her big reveal, her 'taddah' moment away from the reader's mind. Absolutely brilliant.

Would I recommend this book? Absolutely. And it's predecessors too. This is one of the very best crime fiction series out there at the moment and Ward's books are a must read for every crime thriller fan. A dark and brooding mystery which I couldn't put down. The eerie atmosphere of 'the Cutting' sent chills down my spine. I absolutely loved it!

Five out of five stars.

I chose to read and review an ARC of The Shrouded Path. The above review is my own unbiased opinion.

Kerrie says

Susan definitely saw 6 girls enter the tunnel and then only 5 emerged at the other end. She walked through the tunnel in trepidation but did not find the missing girl. For her it simply confirmed the sinister and evil nature of the place. After that she avoided going near the tunnel and years passed, then decades.

Six decades later Mina's mother Hilary is hospitalised with an aggressive cancer. She has a raging temperature which doesn't seem to respond to treatment. Hilary becomes frightened when she receives a visit from someone from her past. She is unable to explain much to her daughter Mina about who this person is. At one stage she tells Mina that she killed Valerie, that Valerie is dead, and then asks Mina to find Valerie. When Hilary dies Mina becomes determined to find Valerie, but then the possibility arises that Hilary has been murdered.

This story is a real page turner. The story is full of mysteries and fascinating scenarios.

Jo says

DC Connie Childs and her fellow Bampton detectives find themselves investigating a couple of mysterious deaths that link back to the 1950s. Another excellent novel from Sarah Ward.

