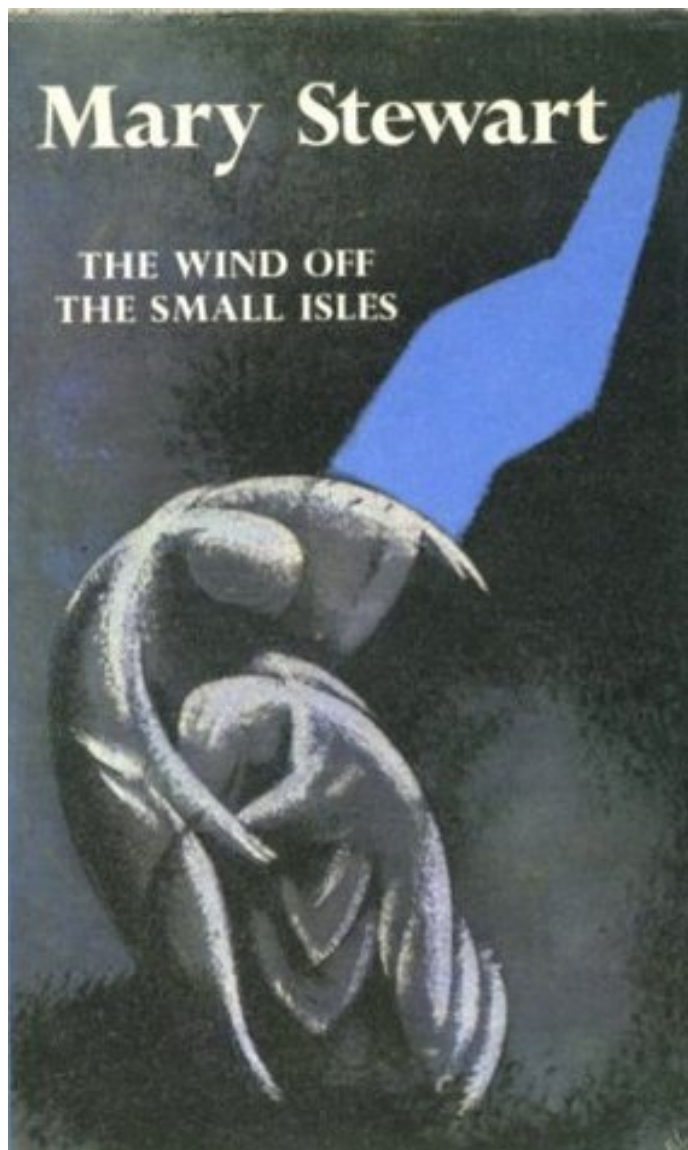

Mary Stewart

The Wind off the Small Isles



Title: The Wind off the Small Isles

Author: Mary Stewart

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Description

Mary Stewart's new story is lit with the special magic of people and of place that are the hallmarks of a famous author's best work. In a series of deft brushstrokes she brings her heroine, Perdita—a beautiful twenty-three year old—to vivid life. A secretary to the redoubtable children's novelist, Cora Gresham, Perdita's job carries her to the Canary Islands in search of local colour for a new masterpiece, and a peaceful house in which to write it.

But the house is already occupied—once by the past, and the haunting memory of what happened there a century ago; and now by its present owners—very much alive—a famous playwright and his research assistant, Michael. In the fierce beauty of the volcanic landscape, in the persons of Perdita and Michael, past and present meet, violently. The weird, semi-deserted island of Lanzarote is the scene for the collision which reshapes the lives of the young lovers, as it did a hundred years ago.

Insightful reviews

Laurie Petersen: Vintage Stewart in some ways (the good landscape descriptions, the intelligent narrator), but she rushes through the story.

Jen: I loved this little gem, like I love all of Mary Stewart's books. I had no idea it was so rare, and I wish I could remember where I bought it! I do remember thinking, oh I can't believe there's a Mary Stewart that I've never heard of!

Angelica Bentley: Perdita is travelling around Lanzarote with her employer, a successful writer of children's books, who is scouting the island looking for material for one of her pirate stories. At the end of a dusty, rutted track they find so much more: an irresistible house, a chance encounter, a ghostly ship, danger and terror, a happy ending. The plot is fairly simple but there is an older story that occasionally surfaces and interweaves with the modern one and, as it turns out, a few red herrings. I started reading it again as soon as I had finished it, and was immediately struck by the many subtle hints and references to the older story that are so casually scattered that they only become meaningful on a second reading. That is the charm of a Mary Stewart book. You can speed through it for the story and the atmosphere, or you can take your time and come back when your return will be amply recompensed by these charming touches.

The heroine is typical Stewart: young, beautiful, capable, independent, athletic but, ultimately, very happy to find a man she can lean on and fall in love with. The supporting cast is small but well drawn and through their conversation, Stewart offers fascinating insights into the creative writing process. The romance aspect is minimal and more understated than usual, but realistic enough for anyone who believes in love at first sight.

Although it appeared as a short story in Redbook Magazine, this was never published as a book in the US or in paperback form anywhere, so the only available edition is the original hard-cover, a slim volume in sombre grey cloth and barely stretching to 96 pages. The novel is charming but

really pared down and one can almost see the places where it could have been developed and fleshed out. Lady Stewart's next published work was the first of what later became the Arthurian series, and she wrote in an essay that she considers this as a "coda" to her previous novels and a "bridge" to "The Crystal Cave". It is exquisite but I, for one, was left wishing for more!

I would probably recommend it to confirmed Mary Stewart aficionados and completists like myself. If you are new to this author, you may want to start with something like "Nine Coaches Waiting", "Touch Not The Cat", "The Ivy Tree", her strong debut novel "Madam, Will You Talk?" or the fabulous "This Rough Magic".

Anne Borrowdale: it is a brief yet pleasant Mary Stewart tale set on Lanzarote within the 1960's. a customary Mary Stewart heroine is at risk (from the geology instead of villains) and is saved by means of her personal pluck and the help of an enticing younger man. This uncomplicated plot is supplemented with a narrative from a hundred years ahead of which has echoes within the present. It truly is lifted exceptional through Stewart's ability in describing the peril, and evoking the hot, rocky, lava-filled panorama of the island. I hadn't learn this Stewart ahead of yet came across it after her contemporary loss of life despatched me to her bibliography. It was once stress-free to learn and the appropriate size to learn in a single go.

Carolynne: a bit gem of a story: a bit secret approximately what occurred to a couple runaway enthusiasts 100 years in the past and the trace of a brand new romance to come. a few not likely coincidences weaken the plot a bit, yet still, a delightful brief learn for a sunny afternoon.

Electric Landlady: chanced on this on the Trinity booklet Sale and was once suspicious on condition that I might by no means heard of it, yet it really is classic Mary Stewart in miniature (except no villains). Delightful.

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