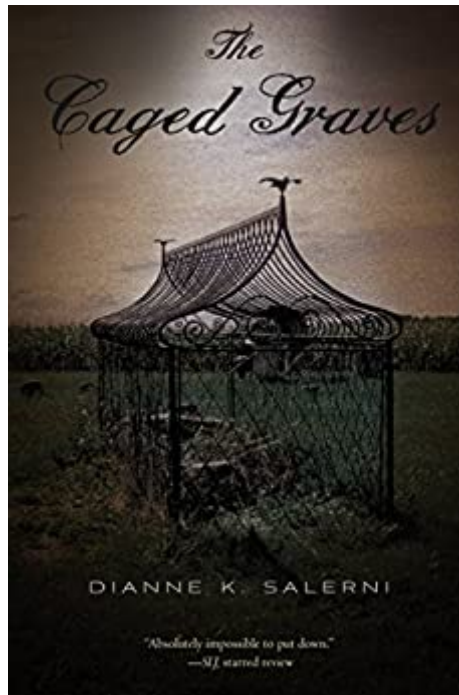




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The Caged Graves



Synopsis

The year is 1867, and seventeen-year-old Verity Boone is excited to return from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Catawissa, Pennsylvania, the hometown she left when she was just a baby. Now she will finally meet the fiancé she knows only through letters! Soon, however, she discovers two strangely caged graves . . . and learns that one of them is her own mother's. Verity swears she'll get to the bottom of why her mother was buried in "unhallowed ground" in this suspenseful teen mystery that swirls with rumors of witchcraft, buried gold from the days of the War of Independence, and even more shocking family secrets.

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Customer Reviews

4.5 Surprising Stars. This book wasn't anywhere close to on my radar and I don't think I would have given it a second look if a friend of mine Khanh hadn't given it high marks it would have passed me by. That would have been a shame as it was a great YA historical mystery and romance. Verity has lived with extended family for

the last fifteen years ever since her mother died. Now at seventeen she has agreed to an arranged marriage and is coming back to the home and the father she left so many years ago. Verity has only corresponded in letters to the man she agreed to marry. She is so excited by the idea of Nate from the letters he sent and the gifts that came along with him that the actual man might not live up to the idea of the man. "I'm not always a bumbling idiot," he told her. "You make me nervous." Verity sucked in her breath, partly indignant, partly hurt, "I realize people may consider me outspoken and some may take offense. But I was taught that a woman has a right to express her opinions, and--" "You're beautiful," he said bluntly, "and I didn't expect you to be." Verity is seventeen and once meeting Nate she is having second thoughts about marrying him. He doesn't seem like the same person she felt she knew in the letters. It seems as though Nate's sisters and mother have had their hands in it and perhaps she has no idea who the man she is supposed to marry is. Her second thoughts are tested even further when the assistant to the town Doctor makes it clear that he also has an interesting in her. "I think it is. It's a land deal." Her breath caught in her throat. "That's an unkind thing to say." He frowned. "Seeing this ring on your finger makes me feel unkind, Verity." Verity has notions of what love is but she struggles with the way each man makes her feel, uncertain what to do and feeling as though she has no one to confide in. Should she marry a man that might be interested in her father's land and not as interested in her? I normally despise love triangles, I hate them with a passion because quite simply they are normally wishy washy and I get mad at all parties involved. Sometimes I think it is a cop out by the author to not have a stronger plot for the story or they don't know how to slowly build romantic tension without the addition of a third party. This is not the case in instance. This seemed like genuine concerns a girl in the early Nineteenth Century would face. Verity explores her feelings, she is honest and true with everyone in question and yes there are some speed bumps along the way but in the end she truly is able to discover what love really is. As love triangles go it is minor and necessary to the development of the story. You might think from my review that the romance is the majority of the story but actually there is so much more going on. Verity's mother died of a strange sickness some considered a curse and is buried outside the cemetery with a cage around the grave. There is a stigma that follows Verity around and no one will give her a straight answer as

to why the grave has been treated like that, all she knows is that it has something to do with her aunt who also died and possibly witchcraft or a lost revolutionary war treasure. The more she searches for answers the more weird events take place including a someone messing with her mother's diary and the pages right before her untimely death. I was engulfed in the mystery of the graves and the treasure. The ending of the mystery held enough surprises for me that I held on until that last second trying to work it out for myself before the big reveal. Your enjoyment of the book will undoubtedly hinge on if you like Verity. I found her great as a heroine, she wasn't perfect she made mistakes and owned them when they happened. She was incredibly likable for me as she struggled through trying to reconnect with the father she barely knows and town that she left behind so long ago. She was strong willed but still very real to the people around her. Great if you like Historical Fiction, Mysteries, YA and a little bit of Romance.

When 17-year-old, Verity Boone moves back home to get married, she is greeted with a nasty surprise. She discovers her mother's death was highly controversial and she was buried outside of the hallowed ground cemetery with a fence around her grave. Hers is also not the only one. The midwife at her birth where her mother died, also died about the same time. Is there more to her mother's death than she was first told? Why did the townsfolk condemn her mom as a witch after her death? A little slow at first, but the story is well-developed and engaging. The characters are likable and heartwarming. The mystery of her mother's death is intriguing and has a few plot twists and turns I didn't expect. Overall, I give it 4 stars. The story had a few problems, but was worth the read.

A compelling gothic mystery story set in the 1800s. There is something about how the atmosphere of the novel that interest me most. It can be dragging at times (I misconstrued it as a paranormal story), but I love how authentic and well-written the characters are. The traditions and beliefs were there, the interactions of the people were so on-point in that era. I also enjoyed the love triangle so much, as it gives more depth to the characters especially to Verity Boone, who is trying to solve the mystery of why her mother's grave was caged along with another tombstone. The grand gesture of Verity in the end made up for the moments I thought that this could have been a failed attempt at inserting a romance subplot to attract readers.

As not to spoil the complete story for all who wish to read this fascinating novel, I'd like to review it a bit differently. For me *The Caged Graves* sends the reader back in time. The author, Dianne Salerni,

transports us back to rural nineteenth century Pennsylvania. A simpler, gentler, yet naive and superstitious era of young America. A time where woman are submissive, and were raised to marry young, bear children, and listen to their husbands. But Verity Boone is different. She is opinionated, stubborn, and passionate. Very much like Jo March in Little Woman. The author's prose flows beautifully, mirroring Alcott's own days. The struggles, the desires, and innocence of Verity. The dialogue is effortless, as if the author herself conversed with Alcott over afternoon tea. It seriously blew my mind. If I didn't know better, I would have believed this novel was written in the nineteenth century. But our author does something more intriguing than just penning a story of a young woman on the verge of marrying. She ever so subtly introduces a mystery. And it was this mystery that our heroin pursues, even jeopardizing her future, to find the answers. WHY? What was this obsession that drove her to find out the truth. Who were the unfortunate souls buried in these graves, and WHY were they entombed in cages outside the cemetery? One must read the full novel until the end to find out. It's a slow and steady build up with lots of interesting subplots, mysterious and chilling characters, as well as more than one love interest to keep the reader turning the page. I thoroughly enjoyed The Caged Graves. Not your typical historical novel by any means. What really fascinates me the most is that Ms. Salerni wrote this novel after discovering the original Caged Graves on a trip to Pennsylvania. Now imagine going to a cemetery, picking a few names off headstones, and creating a whole scenario with the spirits from the past. It takes a great deal of imagination to do this successfully and I am happy to say that Ms. Salerni pulls it off amazingly well. Thank you Dianne, for creating such a memorable story for us to step back in time. In closing I would like to clarify that I have never given a five star rating BUT ... THE CAGED GRAVES does deserve at least a four and a half star rating.

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