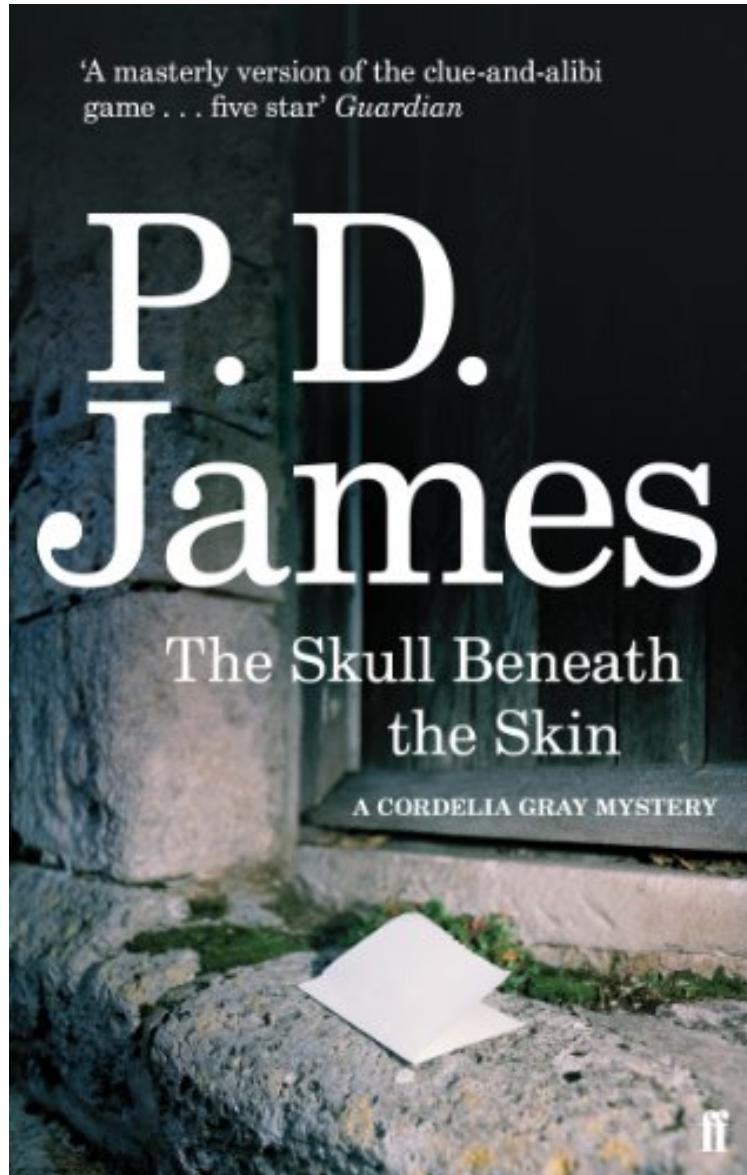


(Free pdf) The Skull Beneath the Skin (Cordelia Gray Mystery)

## The Skull Beneath the Skin (Cordelia Gray Mystery)

Von P. D. James

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**Von P. D. James : The Skull Beneath the Skin (Cordelia Gray Mystery)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Skull Beneath the Skin (Cordelia Gray Mystery):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen6 von 6 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Book Dripping in Creepy Atmosphere!Von Donald MitchellMany people like their mysteries well balanced: Great plot; wonderful characters; terrific character development; almost indecipherable mystery; not too much blood; and

outstanding writing. If that's your goal, this book isn't the best choice for you. But if you like your mysteries to be focused in creepy circumstances with deeply flawed characters, *The Skull Beneath the Skin* will probably serve your purposes quite well. I have both read this book and listened to the Books on Tape unabridged version read by Penelope Dellaporta. I strongly prefer the recording, which better captures the book's mood. This is the second and last (for more than 25 years so far) mystery featuring Cordelia Gray who starred in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. Since that novel, Cordelia has carved out a living running the detective agency that her ex-partner Bernie established, which agency now specializes in recovering lost pets thanks to the help of two part-time employees from Cordelia's old typing agency. Cordelia's still having a hard time making a go of the agency. She's putting up a new plaque (that's hung crookedly) when her prospective client arrives, the husband of the fading actress Clarissa Lisle. Clarissa had observed Cordelia concluding one of her pet detective forays and saw something undefined that she liked. As a result, Clarissa has sent her husband to hire Cordelia to protect Clarissa from receiving any more death threats while Clarissa tries to resurrect her career with an amateur production of *The Duchess of Malfi* on secluded Courcy Island. Cordelia is soon being stone-walled by Clarissa . . . but does succeed in intercepting several nasty notes. Also Clarissa turns out to be a pretty self-centered, unpleasant woman. As the stories are related to Cordelia, she's finding it hard to be professional about her responsibilities. The last straw comes when Cordelia is ordered not to guard Clarissa's door just before the performance. As you can imagine, someone kills Clarissa just then . . . and Cordelia feels totally embarrassed professionally. Despite a warning to "keep out" by the local police, Cordelia finds herself unraveling the twisted motives of those on the island and checking on their access to Clarissa's room at the key moment. The suspects make all of this harder by showing a preference to create a cover up. All the time, you feel like even more of an outsider than Cordelia looking on at most unpleasant sights. Cordelia does unravel the mystery . . . and finds herself challenged to avoid a great wrong. That crisis brings the book to a height of emotion and to a delightfully ambiguous conclusion. Cordelia has a lot to learn about detection. Stopping murders is harder than finding wandering cats. But she has a keen intelligence and devotion to duty that serve her well. But the real star in this book is the mood of decay, dissipation and collapse that Baroness James creates. It's very creepy! If you were to gauge the book on the appeal of the plot alone, this would be a 2-3 star book . . . so if that's what you're looking for, keep looking. The plot is also sub-par compared to *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. Cordelia's role also isn't quite as interesting as that book. For reasonably long sections of this book, Cordelia all but disappears into the woodwork. Watch out for the many allusions to the skull beneath the skin. It's a masterful use of imagery to set a truly appropriate mood for many dastardly deeds.

3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. P.D. James makes an unwelcome departure  
Von Ein Kunde  
Cordelia Gray, the brave and endearing young private investigator who made her debut in P.D. James' *AN UNSUITABLE JOB FOR A WOMAN*, returns in the author's eighth whodunit, *THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN*. The title's from Webster, and it's a fitting one; the story literally reeks of the theater. Clarissa Lisle is a bitchy, fading actress determined to salvage her career as the star of an amateur production of Webster's "*The Duchess of Malfi*," staged in a restored Victorian theater on Courcy Island, just off the coast of Dorset. Lisle has been receiving mysterious poison-pen letters, death notes in the form of quotations from Shakespeare and Webster, and has hired Cordelia to discover their source. The castle on Courcy Island becomes the stage for a tense gathering of Clarissa's friends, relatives, and guests--each of whom, we learn, has excellent motive for killing the actress. When the death does inevitably occur, Cordelia finds herself left with a case of murder that she fully intends to--and does--unravel. *THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN* may be the most stylish, lavishly mounted novel that James has written. It's an overflowing mixture of the elements of the detective/horror tale at its most clichéd--the closed circle of suspects in a Victorian castle on a small island serviced by a spooky, tight-lipped butler and his wife, a crypt filled with skulls, a collection of memorabilia from past murders, frightening knick-knacks in the shapes of human appendages...it's all gloriously entertaining, never for a minute even coming close to realism. And therein lies the fatal flaw of the novel. P.D. James' novels are seldom been anything but realistic, but she seems to have broken the rule in *THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN*. The Gothic horror, portrayed in a darkly comic manner, clashes painfully with her finely drawn, introspective characters (except Clarissa Lisle, one of the few two-dimensional stereotypes who pop up in James' fiction) and flawlessly crafted prose. It's as if she's written two completely different novels, one a brilliant character study, the other a conventional ghost story, and meshed them together with little regard for the coherence of the result. Until now, James has done a marvelous job proving that the English mystery can make an extraordinarily fine mainstream novel; unfortunately, she's also shown that the magic combination can work only when her settings are serious and controlled. *THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN* is not serious. It's not too far from out-and-out comedy, and James' admirable but vain attempts to weave her fantastic set pieces and excessively necrophilic atmosphere into a profound work of fiction makes it even more funny. Not that most readers will care. This is still an absorbing entertainment--substantial, cunningly plotted, and beautifully written. More discriminating readers will conclude that either *THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN* is a parody written by a skilled impersonator, or P.D. James has seen one *Dracula* movie too many.

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. More than your regular whodunit  
Von Ein Kunde  
Her intricate novels have made P. D. James become globally renown as the Queen of Crime. In *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, she narrates the story of Clarissa Lisle, a comely and capricious actress who is

receiving death threats from an unknown individual. Lisle hires the services of a young private detective, Cordelia Gray, who starts to investigate the case. The setting takes place on the little island of Courcy, off the Dorset coast in England. The actress plans to hold a private play on Courcy for her kindred, which sets out to reside in the Victorian castle dominating the island a week before the grand performance. But on Courcy, Lisle continues to obtain the threatening messages, which arrive in form of quotes, from famous plays, always implying death. Cordelia Gray, snooping around the island, is starting to unveil its terrifying, bloodshed past. This discovery casts the case in a completely new light, yet presents a new, violent danger for her safety and well-being. *The Skull Beneath The Skin*, written in a highly literate style, is by all means recommended for connoisseurs of classical English plays, since the book is overflowing with their excerpts. Yet lovers of traditional crime novels will also find a highly entertaining reading experience in James's work.

**Kurzbeschreibung** From P.D. James, one of the masters of British crime fiction comes the second novel to feature the famous female detective Cordelia Gray of the Pryde Detective Agency. Set on the sinister Courcy Island, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* is a thrilling murder mystery. Clarissa Lisle hopes to make a spectacular comeback in a production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, to be played in Ambrose Gorrings's sinister castle at Courcy Island. Cordelia is there to ensure her safety following the appearance of a number of poison-pen letters. But it soon becomes clear that all are in danger. Trapped within the walls of the Gothic castle, the treacherous past of the island re-emerges, and everyone seems to have a motive for sending Clarissa 'down, down to hell'. Marking the return of the private detective Cordelia Gray, *The Skull beneath the Skin* is the sequel to *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. P.D. James is Britain's pre-eminent crime writer and the author of many bestselling titles including *Death Comes To Pemberley*, *Children of Men* and *Death in Holy Orders*. **Pressestimmen** "A masterly version of the clue-and-alibi game. . . . Five star!" -- "The Guardian" "P.D. James pulls out all the stops ...combining the enclosed setting of the country-house murder with elements of the horror story; an overlay of lust; a collection of relics of Victorian murderers ...midnight apparitions; hairbreadth escapes." -- "New York Magazine"**Kurzbeschreibung** From P.D. James, one of the masters of British crime fiction comes the second novel to feature the famous female detective Cordelia Gray of the Pryde Detective Agency. Set on the sinister Courcy Island, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* is a thrilling murder mystery. Clarissa Lisle hopes to make a spectacular comeback in a production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, to be played in Ambrose Gorrings's sinister castle at Courcy Island. Cordelia is there to ensure her safety following the appearance of a number of poison-pen letters. But it soon becomes clear that all are in danger. Trapped within the walls of the Gothic castle, the treacherous past of the island re-emerges, and everyone seems to have a motive for sending Clarissa 'down, down to hell'. Marking the return of the private detective Cordelia Gray, *The Skull beneath the Skin* is the sequel to *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. P.D. James is Britain's pre-eminent crime writer and the author of many bestselling titles including *Death Comes To Pemberley*, *Children of Men* and *Death in Holy Orders*.