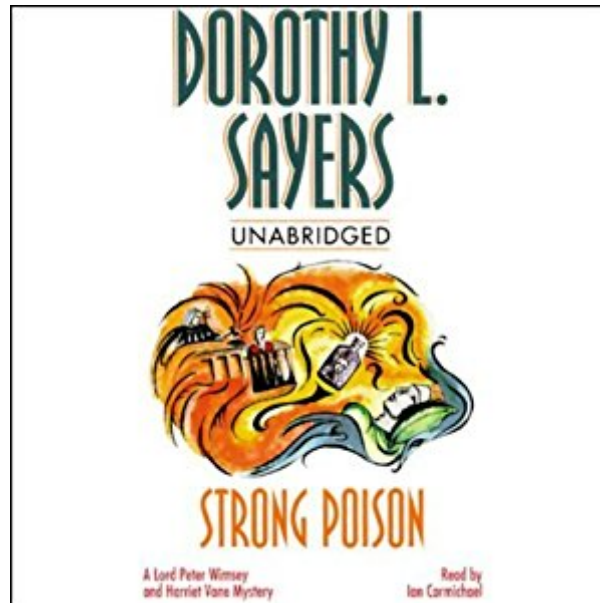


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Strong Poison: A Lord Peter Wimsey And Harriet Vane Mystery



Synopsis

Dashing detective Lord Peter Wimsey is caught up in the murder trial of mystery writer Harriet Vane. Her fiancé has died of poisoning exactly as described in one of Harriet's novels so naturally she is the prime suspect. As Peter looks on, he not only falls in love with the accused but eagerly helps with Harriet's defense when the first trial ends in a hung jury. Will she be convicted and executed for the crime, or can he save her life and win her hand in marriage? "Strong Poison" is the first of a series of Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane mysteries in which their complex romantic relationship is revealed in detail. This superb classic was originally published in 1930. " --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

In public life, Dorothy L. Sayers was a scholar, writer, and woman of impeccable morals. In private life, however, she had a torrid love affair and bore a child out of wedlock. In her literature, Sayers expressed the schism between these aspects of her personality via the character of Harriet Vane, who makes her first appearance in the Lord Peter series in STRONG POISON as a fallen woman on trial for her life. Published in 1930, the novel opens with Harriet Vane in the dock, listening as the judge presiding over trial sums up against her. She is a writer of mildly popular mysteries who has had a liaison with Philip Boyes, a rather pretentious author better known to critics than to the public. Their acrimonious separation is quickly followed by Boyes' death from arsenic--and it seems that Harriet, and Harriet only, had both motive and opportunity. But the judge reckons without juror Miss Climpson, employee of the celebrated Lord Peter Wimsey, who derails what would seem an open

and shut case--and gives Lord Peter the opportunity to unravel the crime. And, not incidentally, to fall in love with the accused. With an infamous actress of the Victorian age lurking in the background and a sizable inheritance on the line, Wimsey rushes to sort out the mystery and save the woman he loves before the case can be retried. STRONG POISON is not really among Sayer's greatest novels, which combine a unique literary style, memorable characters, and complex plots to remarkable effect. The opening description of the trial, with its detailed account of the judge's comments, feels excessive; the solution to the crime is tricky and relies heavily on coincidence; and Harriet Vane stands out less effectively than such supporting characters as Miss Climpson.

Dorothy L. Sayers remains the finest of the early 20th century mystery writers: unusually erudite, she earned one of the first English degrees awarded to a woman at Oxford University. Eclectic enough to have written a definitive translation of Dante's *Divina Comedia*, her detective novels are shot through with quotations from a who's who of English literature. Sayers loved language and her characters display this love with brilliance. In this novel, her favorite sleuth, the curiously human Lord Peter Wimsey, engages himself for the first time with Harriet Vane, whom he discovers on trial for her life for murdering her lover. Convinced at once of her innocence, he sets out to prove it. A hung jury gives him the opportunity, and Sayer's great skill in plotting brings Miss Vane out of prison, but unfortunately for Wimsey not (yet) into his arms. He has, of course, become hopelessly besotted with her. Some reviewers describe Harriet Vane as unlikable -- there's little doubt that Sayers put much of her own sometimes awkward personality into Harriet. However, she is a genuinely interesting and surprisingly real character, and without question an early feminist. The book is entirely satisfying in its own right, with particularly telling passages about spiritualism (an obsession of the time). Sayers' Miss Climpson, another fascinating character, a spinster who aids Wimsey in his detective work and philanthropy, uses spiritualism to elicit the motive for the murder and ultimately the responsible party. It is also noteworthy for introducing the series of novels about Wimsey and Harriet Vane that includes *Have His Carcase* (the least satisfying), *Gaudy Night* (the first great feminist novel of the 20th century) and *Busman's Honeymoon*.

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