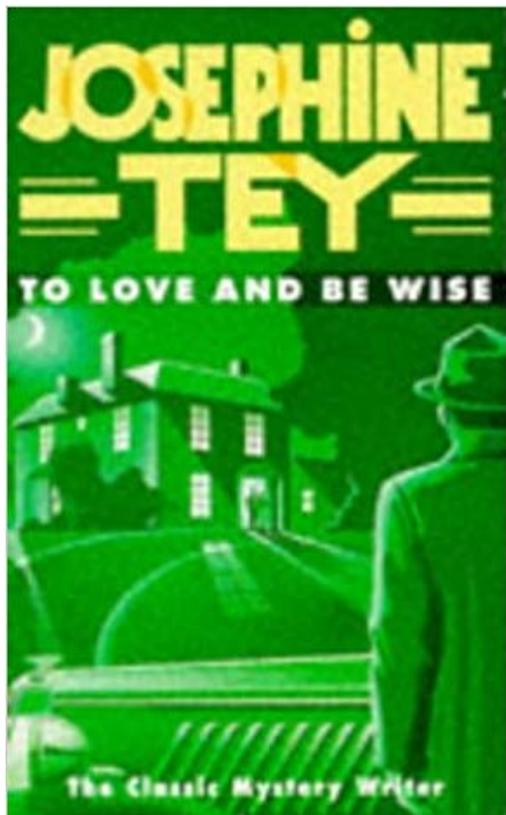


## To Love and Be Wise *by* Josephine Tey



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One of the Detective Inspector Grant novels. It was said that all Hollywood would have gone down on its knees to be photographed by Leslie Searle. So why should he suddenly disappear in an English village? If a crime was committed, was it murder, fraud, or merely some macabre practical joke?



## Reviews of the *To Love and Be Wise* *by* Josephine Tey

Kesalard

ALERT: This is a review of TO LOVE AND BE WISE. For some reason, it also shows up as a review of MISS PYM DISPOSES. It isn't!

Agatha Christie believed that when a mystery gets boring, the solution is to bring on another body. Josephine Tey felt confident that the fans of her quirky, character-driven novels would be content with NO body if the story line was good. This is one of her later books (it was published two years before her death) and I think one of her best.

The scene is the small village of Salcott St. Mary, where best-selling romance novelist Lavinia Fitch has settled into a huge garish mansion called Trimmings. Her household consists of her stern older sister, the sister's grown stepdaughter (who serves as Lavinia's secretary) and her pompous windbag of a nephew, who's a popular radio broadcaster. The nephew has recently escaped an entanglement with a neurotic actress and seems content to settle down and marry his aunt's stepdaughter. All is well.

Into this happy scene comes a beautiful blonde young man who turns EVERYONE'S heads. Leslie Searle is a well-known Hollywood photographer who wants to do a book on the English countryside. It's soon decided that he will supply the pictures and Nephew will write the text. The problem is that Searle is a strangely unsettling creature with some indefinable quality that causes everyone around him to behave oddly. And then he disappears.

When Inspector Alan Grant is called into the case, he finds a village that has been "discovered" (i.e. over-run) by a variety of celebrities and near-celebrities. Tey is at her brilliant best describing the vanities and silliness of this bizarre bunch, which includes a egotistical playwright, a volatile "Russian" ballet dancer, a morose novelist, and Grant's old friend, actress Marta Hallard. Instead of figuring out whodunit, the good Inspector must decide what exactly WAS done. It's a delightful book with a surprise ending. At least, it surprised me. One of my favorites.

Seven of Josephine Tey's eight mysteries (including this one) are compiled in ELIZABETH MACKINTOSH, COLLECTION NOVELS. It's oddly named, but a real deal for a lover of classic British mysteries.

breakingthesystem

This quiet crime novel from Britain's Golden Age of mystery writing is an engrossing suspense story, and a very good book. I first read (and loved) Josephine Tey in my youth. Returning after fifty years, I was afraid that she wouldn't be as good as I remembered, or that the age of the novels would translate into datedness. Not so! "To Love and Be Wise" poses an ingenious puzzle in the context of a literary hamlet, full of interesting and/or outrageous and/or really difficult personalities. Inspector Grant of Scotland Yard enters into this milieu to solve the aforesaid puzzle (which I will not reveal, no risk of spoilers in this review). In the process, the author gives a strong sense of rural England, literary life, and various other subtopics, while maintaining the suspense of the central story. Her style is delicate and polite, which may seem dated but also seems nice. Now to go reread the rest of her (unfortunately small) oeuvre.

Dusho

Josephine Tey continues to be about the only "Golden Age" mystery writer that I care for (although I have begun making inroads on Dorothy L. Sayers), and To Love and Be Wise continues my admiration of her writing.

The cast of characters sparkles. The celebrities are all eccentric in their own little ways. Some of them make you laugh, some of them make you shake your head, and some just make you want to slap them. The excellent working relationship of Grant and the trusty Detective Sergeant Williams is further explained. And that disappearance of Leslie Searle is truly puzzling-- although Tey plants a vital clue to its solution at the very beginning of the story.

More than anything else-- especially with Williams being pulled away to conclude a case in London-- the pace is slow and deliberate, as though Grant is taking a leisurely stroll through the suspect pool and trying the noose on each of them for size. And as he's sizing them up, the reader is allowed to do much the same. I found To Love and Be Wise quite refreshing. No electronics to fuss with. No serial killers to be in fear of. Just a very real puzzle: what on earth really happened to Leslie Searle? And... why didn't I pay more attention to that clue at the very beginning of the book? At the rate I'm going, I may actually become a fan of these classic mysteries!

Drelalak

Ms. Tey was the mistress of the slow moving mystery: there are invariably parts of her books where not much happens, but the reader continues engrossed. It is a combination of fine writing, original plotting and interesting characters that make her novels so appealing. In this case, a handsome and intriguing stranger is introduced into a group with upsetting consequences. Then, he mysteriously disappears into the night. The author's civilized, educated and compassionate detective, Alan Grant, is charged with finding out what happened. For all of her originality, Ms. Tey does pull one pair of stock characters from the Agatha Christie box of useful cliches. This is the clever young woman happy to accept a secondary position to stay with the good natured idiot she is attached to. This, more than anything else, dates the story. Today, the woman would be a high flying professional or executive. Aside from being an excellent mystery, this book demonstrates what an alien world the mid-twentieth century seems today.

Enila

It had been a while since reading a novel written in the 1940's so the first page or so it took a bit to readjust to the writing style. However, once I was used to the writing, I absolutely fell in love. The story is intriguing and the characters are interesting; I wanted to know what happened the whole way through. She has a style that is wonderfully enchanting, straightforward and descriptive all at the same time. I also can typically predict the end to detective stories fairly early on, but this one I was not able to figure out until right before she revealed the truth, which was just so great!

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