

# The House Down the Lane

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The sinister house down the lane, a scene of brutal murders over twenty years ago, has long been avoided by all who know it is rumoured to be haunted. Those that do venture into the lane at night say they can hear the screams of the murdered couple echoing from the house. Late for Night College, twenty-one year-old Jane Ford takes the lane shortcut past the old house in order to arrive at her classes on time. She tries to make light of it when the others in her group find out she took the lane. Eventually they dare her to spend the night in the old house. Emboldened by drinking wine, she rashly accepts the dare, but talks the others into joining her. In the house, she soon realizes that supernatural forces are at work. With the help of three men and a supernatural being, she soon discovers the desire and love that is smouldering in her petite untouched body. It is a tale of one woman's journey from inexperience to full and sensual womanhood where she finds strong love for another. Can Jane nurture that love and find the happiness that has eluded her?

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Chapter One Thick beds of nettles and brambles made the lane almost impassable. Not many used it as a shortcut anymore, not since the brutal murders of the occupants of the old house that stood at the end of the lane some twenty years ago. They were brutally hacked to death and their bodies dismembered by an unknown assailant. The police had never apprehended the killer, or killers, and the murders had gradually slipped into distant memory—or, had become something that people preferred to forget. The turreted house stood at end of the lane where it joined the often muddy dirt path that meandered through the woods until it met the road that led to the college. A thick copse of trees surrounded the house that had lots of ivy climbing the walls. Heavy boards, now faded and heavily weathered, covered the windows and gave the house a blind, faceless look. A curved gravel driveway, long abandoned, led from the lane through broken gates, now rotted and hanging from rusted hinges, to an impressive entrance door. But weeds grew along the drive and yet more were sprouting from cracks in the fine marble steps. The oak door was faded with age, the once glossy varnish now cracked and peeling. Occasionally, lovers—newcomers to the town who did not know of the violent history of the house—would park in the lane to make out, but that soon stopped when screams coming from the house frightened them away. Some said the screams were those

of the victims of the killers, while others said it was nothing but the wind in the trees and moaning round the turrets. Jane Ford did not actually believe in ghosts, but all the rumours and lurid tales left her with a feeling that there had to be some truth in them. She hurried down the lane, the brambles catching at her skirt. Normally she would not come this way, but she was running late for her night classes at the local college and did not want to be tardy. The house loomed up out of the dusk, dark and forbidding, and she hesitated, her heart beating fiercely in her breast. She had to admit to herself that it certainly looked scary, and she almost turned back. After taking a deep breath, she hurried past, and then, unable to help it, she broke into a run, in a hurry to leave the menacing structure behind. She did not dare to look at the spooky boarded-up windows that stared outward like a pair of eyes, as though challenging her to stop and look. "I didn't think you were going to make it—you're late," said Wendy Matheson, looking at her watch. Jane sighed heavily. "Yeah, I know, Wendy, but Mom gave me some extra chores and that held me back a bit." Wendy frowned in sympathy. "You should have told her you had some classes. You can't afford to miss any, and you know that the exams are coming up soon." "I know, I know, but ever since Dad died, she needs all the help I can give her. Anyway, I took the lane shortcut, and that made up the time I'd lost. It takes me at least thirty minutes less if I go down past the old house." Wendy's eyes widened. "You went down there? God, I'd never have the nerve to do that. It's far too spooky." Embarrassed, Jane grinned and shrugged. "Yeah, it was pretty scary. I ran past as fast as I could. I don't believe in all those rumours, but I won't go that way again in a hurry, not if I can help it." With another glance at her watch, Wendy said. "We'd better get into class. Mr. Benson gets bent out of shape if we're late." "Yeah, don't I know it?" Jane envied the lush figure of twenty-year-old Wendy. Jane knew that boys loved Wendy's five foot eight figure laden with big breasts, curvy hips, blond hair, and deep blue eyes. She wished her own petite shape was more voluptuous. If it was, she might be able to attract someone instead of feeling as lonely as she did. "Hi, Wendy, Jane," Barry Jones called as they walked into the college entrance. "What have you two been up to?" Wendy, seemingly unable to hold back the information she had that no one else did, burst out excitedly. "Guess what, Barry. Jane took the shortcut past the old house on the way here tonight." Barry turned his eyes toward Jane and raised his eyebrows as though in disbelief. "Really? You actually went past the old house, the one down the lane?" With a small nod, Jane shrugged and glared at Wendy. She was embarrassed at the attention and annoyed that her friend had revealed that she had used the shortcut. "Yeah, yeah I did. But it's nothing to get excited about." "Yeah," Barry agreed with a small, hesitant, grin. "I've been there a few times myself." Jane thought he was lying. She didn't know any of the boys who would pluck up enough courage to go anywhere near the old house. In fact, she would not have had the guts herself had she not been late for class. "Yeah, right," she muttered almost under her breath. Barry turned to Wendy. "I'm having a party later at my place. Mom and Dad are away for a few days, so I've got the place to myself. Want to come?" Wendy giggled. "Gosh, yes, I'd love to. What time?" "Straight after night school. You can come as well, Jane. But you have to bring a bottle." Jane thought that he had only asked her because she was standing there with Wendy. She had a reputation for being a bit of a prude and did not get many invitations to any party the guys were having. She shook her head. "Nah, thanks Barry, but I gotta do some chores for my mom." Barry gave an unsympathetic smile. "Still tied to the old gals apron strings huh?" "I value my parent, Barry, unlike you," she retorted angrily. "You should do more to help yours out." She was annoyed because she seemed to be the only one who did home stuff when everyone else seemed to have lots of spare time to party and do their own thing. "Yeah, right," Barry muttered. When the class was over, Wendy said. "Why don't you come to the party, Jane? I'm sure your mom won't mind, just this once and it'll do you good. You don't seem to go out much anymore." Jane thought about it. It was true she no longer had much fun with the others, not since her dad had died. And it would be nice to party. Even if just occasionally. "Alright, I'll come. I just need to let Mom know where I am—she worries about me if I'm late home." There were about twenty of the old gang at Barry's, and beer and booze was flowing freely. Jane put the bottle of wine she had bought from the supermarket on the table and poured herself a glass of white wine from an open bottle. Gin, whisky, brandy—there seemed to be just about everything there. Someone put on a CD and a few couples were dancing to the music. A boy she did not know

sidled up to her, a hand rolled cigarette pinched between thumb and forefinger, the sweet smell of the hash coming from his clothes. He held the cigarette out, smoke curling from the end. "Wanna drag, doll?" he said, blowing a cloud of smoke over her. She coughed as the sweet smoke got into her lungs and firmly shook her head. "No thank you. I don't touch the stuff, and you shouldn't either." "Suit yourself," he muttered with a shrug and walked away. She drained her glass and went to the table for a refill. She took another drink then she became bored and drained her glass before refilling it yet again. "Hi Jane, want to dance?" A voice said in her ear. She turned and her tummy gave a flip. *Oh God, it was Johnny Ainsworth.* Her heart began a fierce tattoo in her breast and a sweet pain of idolization swept through it, rendering her speechless. She had always had a crush on Johnny Ainsworth, almost since forever, it seemed. And, as she got older, it hadn't diminished. His handsome six-foot two-inch muscular frame towered over her and his dark brown eyes twinkled as he looked down into hers. He was such a gorgeous hunk that he made her heart rate increase painfully. She felt faint. Johnny Ainsworth actually wanted to dance with *her*. How amazing was *that*? Johnny was the most sought after guy in night college, as he had been at school, and he was definitely the most handsome. With his clean-cut looks, he could be mistaken for James Dean. She knew that all the other girls desperately wanted him. God, how jealous were they going to be when they saw her dancing with him. She nodded, almost afraid to speak in case she started to stammer. They bounced around to the beat until the end of the song. Then a slow number came on and he pulled her into his arms, folded them about her, and held her close. She was in heaven as she laid her head on his chest. They barely moved as the soft music washed over them. Across the room, she saw one of the girls looking enviously at her and was proud she was the one in Johnny's arms, pleased that he had chosen her. Johnny was from a well to do family in the better part of town, and she always wondered why he wasn't in a private college or at university somewhere. But he wasn't, he was here, and she was here in his arms. She was too short to lay her head on his shoulder, so she pressed her cheek against his chest. Even over the beat of the music, she thought she could feel and hear his heart beating against her ear and she sighed as she imagined it was beating faster because he was holding her in his arms. He bent his head and whispered something in her ear, his warm breath sending little shivers running down her spine. Any moment she expected to wake up and realize that it was all a dream. "Let's find an empty room upstairs," he was saying. "We can make out." Dumbly she nodded, not daring to say no in case he'd lose interest in her. That would be something she would never live down. He led her by the hand up the stairs and opened the first door they came to. A youth's bare white buttocks shone in the light from the hall, his trousers around his ankles. He was grunting as they rose and fell. A head peered over his shoulder and Jane recognised Wendy. Trust Wendy to not waste any time, she thought. Johnny closed the door and opened the next. The room was vacant and evidently was a child's bedroom—a young boy, she guessed, because of the racing car bedspread on the single bed and toy cars and soldiers in a box in a corner. Johnny ushered her in and her heart started beating more fiercely. She knew what he wanted and her legs trembled, threatening to let her down at the thought. Unlike most of her friends, Jane was still a virgin. She wondered if it would hurt when he entered her—she had heard so many tales. Would she be brave enough to go through with it, dare she let him make love to her? Part of her wanted to lose the stigma of being a virgin, although as far as she was aware, only Wendy knew. She began to feel dizzy and sick, and began to worry that she was going to throw up. Johnny closed the door and wedged a chair under the handle so they wouldn't be disturbed. He sat on the bed and patted the covers beside him. "Sit here, Jane, sit next to me." She was glad he asked her to sit for she doubted that her legs would have supported her for many more minutes. He put an arm about her shoulders and with his free hand tilted her face up toward him with a finger under her chin. Then her heart stopped as he kissed her. Oh God, she wondered if she was going to faint. Johnny Ainsworth was kissing her. She shivered. They were *actually* kissing and he was tonguing her. Tentatively, she tongued him back and gasped when he sucked it deeply into his mouth. Her heart almost stopped beating when his hand pressed her breasts through her blouse and bra. Her breath became faster as she struggled for air and the little pulse in her temple banged in her ears like a drum. She gave a gasp when his fingers began to unfasten her blouse buttons. Heat rose to her face and she gulped nervously. She

held his fingers in her hand stopping him. "Johnny..." she murmured. "Hush," he said against her lips, twisting his hand away from hers and back to her blouse. His breath, with the lingering smell of hash, was warm on her face. Her lips tingled where his touched hers, almost like putting her lips to battery terminals. He said softly, persuasively, insistently. "It'll be alright, I'll be gentle. I promise."

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perfect mix of books to keep you covered this Christmas. Loading. Herself Alone by Charles Moore (Allen Lane £35) is the final part of the his life in the Cotswolds – these are the transcriptions: Down In The Valley: A A Guide To Giving Free Christmas Gifts - A trip down a worrying memory lane as grinning Esther McVey skips She told the House of Commons: "In the UK it is right that, you know, The Gym Group - Filnders Lane Pubs, Restaurant Tom brinkworth properties - United Volleyball - It has been many years since I first read 'The House of God' by Samuel Shem, back before I even started medical school. Is the book still relevant? Donowitz reached down and twisted the skin on the patient's forearm.

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