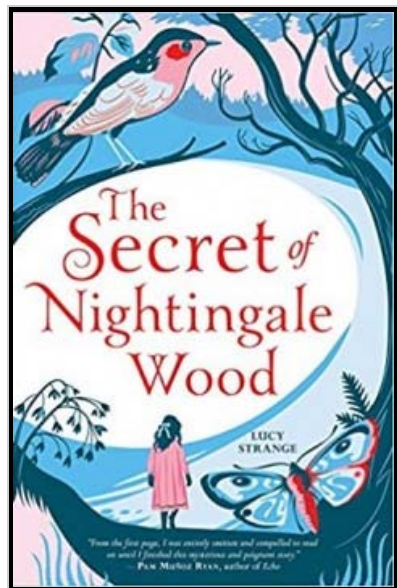




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# The Secret of Nightingale Wood

by Lucy Strange

Price: \$16.99(Hardcover)

Published: October 31, 2017



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**From the Publisher:** 1919. Mama is ill. Father has taken a job abroad. Nanny Jane is too busy to pay any attention to Henrietta and the things she sees -- or thinks she sees -- in the shadows of their new home, Hope House. All alone, with only stories for company, Henry discovers that Hope House is full of strange secrets: a forgotten attic, ghostly figures, mysterious firelight that flickers in the trees beyond the garden. One night she ventures into the darkness of Nightingale Wood. What she finds there will change her whole world...

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## About The Author

Lucy Strange

Lucy Strange worked as an actor, singer, and storyteller before becoming a secondary school English teacher. She lives in Kent, England. The Secret of Nightingale Wood is her first novel.

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## What We Say

This children's book is set in 1919, just after the Great War. I intend a high compliment when I say one could easily believe it was written in 1919 or 1929 or 1939 for Lucy Strange's debut has a timeless quality. If it feels a little neat and tidy at the very end, well one must admit it was quite a harrowing journey to get there. Our heroine is a little girl christened Henrietta but called Henry by one and all. Her story begins in sorrow and gets worse. Henry's family is escaping from a tragedy in London, finding refuge at a small village in the country. We piece together the clues: fire, a dead older brother named Robert, a mother overwhelmed by sorrow, a father seemingly latching onto work. This would be hard enough but

matters darken. The father seems to abandon the family for "work" out of the country. A pushy local doctor keeps the mother half-drugged all the time, insists the daughter be kept away from her and further demands the newborn baby come home with him and his cold, grasping wife. Henry is devastated. What harm could there be in her sitting by the side of her mother, reading her stories or holding her hand? And is the nanny on her side or the doctor's? And who is the mysterious woman in the forest? A figment of Henry's imagination, just like her chats with the brother she knows is no longer there? And is her mother sick or mad or just sad? And most frightening of all, is Henry imaginative or a little bit mad herself? Author Lucy Strange (what a fun name!) tells the story from Henry's perspective and she does an excellent job of capturing the frustration of a 12 year old girl who is old enough to know what's going on (sort of) but young enough to be dismissed by even well-intentioned adults. The character are vivid, from her Nanny Jones to the hateful doctor so eager to experiment on her mother to the local lawyer, one of the rare folk to treat Henry with friendly respect. Strange has peppered this book with references to any number of classic children's books like "The Secret Garden," "Treasure Island" and so many more. It's to her credit that this finely crafted novel damn near deserves comparison. The young might enjoy the neat wrapping up of all the threads. But next time I hope her fine ending is just as complex and shot through with complicated reality as the beginning and middle. It's a modest reservation about a very strong debut. -- Michael Giltz

## What Others Say

\* "In an imaginative, compelling first-person narration, Henry wraps her story in fairy tales, exposing her guilt, grief, isolation, and fear as she unravels the stunning secrets of Nightingale Wood." -- Kirkus, starred review \* "A brave heroine propels this strong and richly layered novel, a memorable portrait of grief, resilience, and rebirth." -- Publisher's Weekly, starred review A Telegraph Top 50 Book of the Year A Waterstones Book of the Month Pick "From the first page, I was entirely smitten and compelled to read on until I finished this mysterious and poignant story." -- Pam Munoz Ryan, author of Newbery Honor Book Echo and Esperanza Rising "Superbly balanced between readability and poetry... this is an assured debut." -- The Guardian (UK) "Rich with nods to classics...this outstanding debut explores family, grief and mental illness with great skill." -- The Bookseller (UK) "A gripping novel in Secret Garden mode... Bliss for passionate readers aged nine and older." -- The New Statesman (UK) "Strange's writing is luminous, and she has created a story about friendship, love and family that is wonderfully involving." -- Literary Review (UK) "Friendships, family, love and loss all come together in this beautiful debut." -- The Sunday Express (UK) "Tender, funny, devastating and just about word perfect, I loved every page of this extraordinary book." -- Natasha Farrant, author of The Secret Diary of Lydia Bennet "A beautifully told story about loss, grief and the restorative power of the imagination." -- M.G. Leonard, author of Beetle Boy

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