

The Limits of Enchantment: A Novel

By Graham Joyce

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The Limits of Enchantment: A Novel By Graham Joyce

Everything Fern Cullen knows she's learned from her Mammy -- and none of it's conventional. Taught midwifery at an early age, Fern grows up as Mammy's trusted assistant in a small English village and learns through experience that secrets are precious, men can't be trusted, hippies are filthy and people should generally mind their own business.
But when one of Mammy's patients allegedly dies from a potion prescribed to induce abortion, the town's people rally against her outdated methods, and Mammy ends up hospitalized, due to a bad fall and a broken heart. Now the county is threatening eviction if Fern can't come up with the overdue rent, and a bunch of hippies and a woman with hoop earrings with a mysterious connection to Mammy seem to be the only people with any answers. As Fern struggles to save her home and Mammy's good name, everything around her begins to transform, and she soon uncovers a legacy spotted with magic.
The Limits of Enchantment is at once a story of two women: one with a deep past and one who finds her history in the other. It is a tale of midwifery, alchemy, magic, truth and identity, from an author with the extraordinary ability to blend literature and fantasy with surprising dexterity.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Shaped by reverence for the feminine mystique and leavened with a dash of fantasy, this enthralling novel from British author, Joyce (*The Facts of Life)* offers a poignant appraisal of an English household steeped in folk traditions and its uneasy transition to contemporary times. Although it's 1966, Mammy Cullen, a beloved midwife in rural Hallaton, still dispenses a kind of herbal medicine that women have practiced since time immemorial. But times are changing and prejudices are building. When one of her remedies appears to kill a patient, the locals turn on Mammy. Her practice falls to Fern, her adopted daughter and apprentice, who soon finds herself confronting contemporary reality in several forms: Arthur, an amorous biker with marriage on his mind; an intrusive commune of feckless hippies who settle next door; and a devious landlord who schemes to evict her from her cottage. Fern's dilemma over whether to pack it all in under these pressures or contrive ways to continue with hedgerow medicine invests the tale with both pathos and humor. Joyce tackled some of this story's themes in his 1992 debut, *Dark Sister,* but his treatment here is more seasoned and sensitive. Likewise, his ability to write convincingly from a female point of view only improves, and Fern is one of his best realized characters to date. This novel's old-fashioned sense of values and heartwarming depiction of customs of home and community are sure to charm fans and new readers alike.
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From Booklist
Fern is being raised by Mammy, a midwife and "wise woman" in rural England circa 1960. She is also her apprentice, learning the skills and lore that will enable her to carry on the traditional medicine that Mammy practices. But after Mammy is injured in a personal attack and hospitalized, Fern must fend for herself. She is linked to the past, in which there was a place for Mammy's way of life, but times are changing; and Fern has to cope with modern-day problems, such as the need to earn a living. With naive wisdom, she discovers her own place in the world, using common sense and guile but also a good dose of what can only be called magic. In desperate times she finds strength and good friends who come to her rescue. Joyce's tale is a coming-of-age novel, a fantasy, and a romance filled with charm and enacted by intriguing characters who should appeal to a wide variety of readers. *Danise Hoover*
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Review
"A master storyteller."

-- *Kirkus Reviews*

"Joyce delve[s] deeply into the human soul and examine[s] it with surgical precision, while keeping its magic alive."

-- *Rocky Mountain News*

"[An] enthralling novel...shaped by reverence for the feminine mystique and leavened with a dash of

fantasy."

-- *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

German Montoya:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book called The Limits of Enchantment: A Novel? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have other opinion?

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Judith Duncan:

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