

A very vivid French review of **THE HOUSE OF A HUNDRED WHISPERS:**

In life, some days are more significant than others. They can even go so far as to sweep everything in their path.

There will be a before and an after.

A marriage, a birth, read your first Graham Masterton, a death, an amputation, read your second Masterton.

Falling in love, falling off a cliff, devouring your tenth Masterton, your twentieth, your thirtieth-second, having your baccalaureate, your first job, your first unemployment, reveling in your forty-fifth Masterton.

The end of the world, my birthday, my half birthday, my quarter birthday, finally reading my fifty-eighth Masterton (titled the house of a hundred whispers), having your children baptized.

Yes, yes, baptize them, coat them with holy water without further delay if it hasn't already been done!

"There are still people who think Old Dewer goes hunting in the middle of the night. He's looking for unbaptized babies."

And Old Dewer, he's not a very nice guy. This old-timer is even the devil in scales and bones. Moreover, he is accompanied by his pack of mastiffs who devour the lungs of those cherubim who do not yet live in the love of God.

And it is these same infant-hungry beasts that will bring Arthur Conan Doyle's famous Hound of the Baskervilles to life.

Graham Masterton has ventured into all the legends of the world to revive the most misunderstood and the most abject, the most cruel and original mythologies, writing as many varied, amusing and horrible novels (no, no, that is not contradictory, quite the contrary!). This time, it is the folklore closer to the county of Devon, in the South West of England, which will be honored.

"There are so many legends and fantastical stories about fairies, ghosts, demons and witches." It will notably be about pixies, little fairies who, when they are in a bad mood, mislead travelers and attract children by taking on the appearance of a rag doll.

And the author is never short of very real examples to give consistency to these myths, and let us consider that they are authentic. Shakespeare and William Blake, for example, will legitimize the most improbable beliefs here.

If the first death takes place from the second page ("Before he had time to turn around, he received a blow in the center of his baldness, with what looked like a hammer."), The house of the hundred whispers, however, stands out from a large majority of the Scottish author's bibliography. Indeed, if you're expecting a surge of haemoglobin and guts strewn all over the place in highly visual descriptions, a snorkeling in absolute and ever-renewed horror, you're not going to break even.

Well, not right away.

This time Masterton takes his time. Mysteries and anxiety rise crescendo. We are immediately caught up in this story with multiple ramifications - family secrets, police investigations and of course irrational events. But compared to Ghost Virus or Forgotten Angels previously published by Livr's editions, the author favors here an icy, scary, oppressive atmosphere.

"The colour had left her cheeks and her teeth were chattering like the keys of an old typewriter."

It must be said that the decor lends itself particularly well.

On the death of their father, the entire Russell family (six adults and a little boy) join the mansion of Allhallallows Hall in order to discover the last wishes of the deceased.

This sixteenth century Tudor building is completely isolated except for an old church and a cemetery nearby.

"This house terrifies and freezes me and I wish I would never set foot here again."

And then there's that fire that takes on the appearance of a nightmarish face for a fraction of a second, that wind, those claps of thunder, and all that creaking and creaking.

As if the house were an entity in its own right, capable of moaning or getting angry.

Or are these whispers human whispers?

"It was so muffled and indistinct it could have been a fox howling somewhere outside, or a door creaking in a draft."

"The sound of their conversation sounded like a bunch of sad children making their way through piles of autumn leaves."

So you are going to tell me that every time the house is haunted and that it is better to clear off before the ghosts are very angry, to which I would answer you two things:

- It is indeed possible that supernatural forces are at work but if you think of diaphanous creatures, it would be underestimating the limitless imagination of this writer. If you've read *Dementia* you already know what I'm talking about.

- little Timmy, five years old, disappears as soon as he arrives and you have to search the house and the surroundings to have a chance of finding him-. Even if it means finding faith first.

"Who are you going to pray to? You don't believe in God.

- I just converted. At least until we find Timmy."

We do not say it enough but it is quite traumatic to lose a child. And also for a kid to lose his parents.

We were on vacation my sister and I, maybe seven and four years old, looking at postcards displayed outside a gift shop. Barely two minutes had passed when we saw that our parents had disappeared. Had they decided to abandon us? Had they been kidnapped by Old Dewer? Had a Pixie misplaced them? No other solution being rational, my little sister started crying loudly and me, older, I tried to remain courageous but I was in no hurry. When a lady saw our distress, we forgot all the lessons taught (never talk to strangers, stay where we got lost and stop moving) and, trusting her blindly, we accompanied her. at the tourist office, a refuge for lost children where our parents would know how to find us.

In reality our parents had just entered the shop without being seen entering and we had disappeared from their field of vision when they left. A fraction of a second during which their world also collapsed (my sister it was okay, but losing me, can you imagine the panic?). Going to the tourist office hadn't even touched them, but our rescuer, still there, finally brought our tribe together.

All that to say that I didn't understand why the Russell family was looking for Timmy in every corner of the house or by hunting in the moor when all they had to do was go to the nearest tourist office. , maybe in Tavistock.

Chance or coincidence, in the eighteenth century the Marquess of Tavistock - a Devon township - was called Francis Russell.

Same surname as our protagonists who, if they had read more Masterton novels, would have quickly run away from this house, with or without their son!

The House of a Hundred Whispers may be less incisive and more treacherous than other novels by the Manitou author, but his style is still as recognisable as ever.

Since the collection of short stories *Dark Gates of Madness*, published by Selma (another Belgian publisher), it is Christophe Corhouts who has taken over the reins of a translation long carried out in France by François Truchaud.

But whoever relays Masterton's writing is inimitable anyway.

His scathing humor in all circumstances always hits the mark.

"I don't understand why the railways don't provide a special line for those who want to screw up so as not to disturb the users."

And then he has this unique gift of playing with the reader's five senses. Events come to life all the more because he does not just describe them to us: He makes us touch them, feel them, listen to them. He gives them this extra dimension as if to make us participate in a more concrete way in what his characters are going through, even if they are at the heart of an insane situation.

"A feeling of cold air blowing from a hand dryer, rather than the touch of a warm hand."

"Cigarettes, old sweat, and another oddly metallic smell too, like chicken meat left in the back of a fridge for too long."

Less bloody, more terrifying, still just as insane, the author confirms once again that he has many imitators but no equal.