



## The Wheel Spins (RosettaBooks Into Film Book 9)

*Ethel Lina White*

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Best known as the basis for Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *The Lady Vanishes*, Ethel White's book *The Wheel Spins* is a gripping and accomplished work in its own right. The plot is deceptively simple and the premise is classic: a woman meets a mysterious stranger during a long railway journey. It's easy to see in this novel what Hitchcock found so compelling and so well-suited to his particular brand of filmmaking.

The protagonist of the story is Iris Carr, who suffers a blackout just before boarding a train that is traveling across Europe to London. On board the train, the still-woozy Iris befriends a certain Mrs. Froy, a fellow Englishwoman who is perhaps a bit eccentric but seems to be for the most part agreeable and benign. Mrs. Froy is the "vanishing lady" of Hitchcock's title, and it is Mrs. Froy who mysteriously disappears while Iris is napping. Her inexplicable departure throws Iris into a mind-bending mystery that will make her alternately question her sanity and the designs of the people around her. When Iris asks about Mrs. Froy, everyone on board the train denies ever having seen the old woman. Although Iris could perhaps be swayed due to the knock on her head that Mrs. Froy was merely a vivid hallucination, a few stray details suggest that something more sinister is happening, and Iris resolves to get to the bottom of the mystery.

As gripping as the plot is, the novel's true strength is the masterful way in which White builds a brooding and ominous atmosphere that hangs over even the most seemingly ordinary scenes. White has been compared to Edgar Allan Poe, although White also has much in common with Wilkie Collins, Patricia Highsmith, and Mary Higgins Clark. Unlike traditional mystery stories or whodunits which generally open with a crime, White's novels trade on our anticipation of a future transgression and the eventual explanation of unusual events.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Novelist and short story writer Ethel White was born in Great Britain. After trying her hand at several suspense novels it was clear that she had a great talent for it. Her novel *The Spiral Staircase* was made into a film by director Robert Siodmark, but White's best-known and most successful work remains *The Wheel Spins* after which Hitchcock based his film *The Lady Vanishes*. *The Lady Vanishes* was remade in the 1970s and starred Cybil Shepherd. Although the remade film was not very well received, the fact of its being remade testifies to the enduring interest in White's original story. More recently, *The Lady Vanishes* has enjoyed a successful run as a play.

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