



Hartslove

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Take a family of six unruly children, a drunken father, an absconded mother, an old mansion, add a horse that can run but doesn't look or behave like a racehorse but who has to win the 1861 Derby to save the house and the fortunes of the de Granville family, and there's the basis for **Hartslove**, a read that will have you laughing, perching on the edge of your seat, and swallowing the lump in your throat, all in rapid succession.

When his wife bolts Charles de Granville turns to drink and buying a succession of racehorses, each of which he is convinced is The One who will win the Derby and restore the family's failing fortune and save the house from sale to unsuitable future owners. At least, unsuitable in the eyes of the children whose staging of ghostly happenings aimed at scaring off prospective buyers are hilarious. More serious is Daisy's effort to train the family's last hope, an unwieldy red horse of uncertain temperament. Both Daisy's legs are in callipers, making her determination all the more poignant as she struggles against setbacks, some caused by a scheming groom who tricks Sir Charles into signing his house and winnings over to him should The One be successful on Derby Day. There are other sideplots, such as oldest sister Rose's affection for the assistant vet, and the house itself provides a gothic setting exactly suited to events.

There is a great deal of interesting nineteenth century background here too. But Grant, an accomplished historical novelist, never overplays the detail, leaving readers with a delicious sense of a journey to another time to meet an always entertaining band of characters, including The One.

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