



Symptoms of Death

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Nobles gather at the country estate of the Fifth Earl of Dunsford where a killer stalks the gilded halls. Each of the guests has a secret vendetta against the Earl, but when he's found murdered in his bed, the lords and ladies flee, placing the blame on a servant.

The village's lady doctor, Alexandra Gladstone, discovers evidence to the contrary and finds herself trapped in a web of scandal, deceit, and ghostly appearances that could cost her her life.

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Symptoms of Death Details

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From Reader Review Symptoms of Death for online ebook

Dawn Thomas says

The story takes place in Victorian times. Doctor Alexandra Gladstone has replaced her father as the physician for Newton-upon-Sea. While attending a dinner, Elsie, a young kitchen maid runs into the dining room ranting and waving a kitchen knife. She blames Lord of Dunford for killing her lover, George. The next morning, the Lord is found dead and Elsie is to blame.

While investigating the death, Alexandra gets a note to meet Quince, the leader of a bunch of ruffians. The note says she is to meet him at the pier after dark. Quince is there waiting for her but soon after she arrives, someone jumps them and Alexandra's dog, Zack is injured. The following morning, two boys arrive at the surgery in need of medical attention for dog bites. Alexandra knows the boys are the same ones involved in the scuffle the night before. She believes they know something that would put them in danger.

The day of Elsie's trial arrives and the murderer still has not been identified. Time is running out for Alexandra to figure it out. This is the first book in the Alexandra Gladstone mystery series. I enjoy the author's writing style. Several times, I thought I knew who did it only to find out I was wrong.

Ms.pegasus says

What better way to relax than to read a good old-fashioned mystery? The setting is a Victorian country estate. Edward Boswick, Fifth Earl of Dunsford (known as Eddie to his friends) invites a small circle of associates up for the weekend. At dinner a hysterical kitchen maid attacks him with a knife. Dr. Gladstone is one of the guests (the obligatory prominent local in attendance), and intervenes while everyone else looks on in paralyzed shock. It's a double violation of decorum, for Dr. Gladstone is a woman. She quiets the girl, disarms her, and after apparently sedating her, discreetly slips away. The next morning, the Earl is found murdered in his bed, and the kitchen maid, Elsie, is the prime suspect. However, it turns out that Eddie's nobility was limited to his title. Blackmail and cheating were only a couple of his vices, and several of his guests had strong motives for murdering him. They are therefore happy to see the blame fall on the hapless Elsie O'Riley (strike 3: not only is she a servant who attacked her master, but she's Irish!)

The charm of this genteel mystery lies with the likeability of the three main characters. Alexandra Gladstone is a physician who has taken over the practice of her late father, who oversaw her education. The advantages of such a life-long internship are obvious. She makes her rounds astride the steady mare Lucy and at home enjoys the companionship of her protective 150 lb. Newfoundland, Zack. Her maid is a jill-of-all-trades named Nancy. Nancy was also her childhood companion, so beneath the contrite "Yes, Miss" responses are strong-willed opinions and shrewd observations about human behavior. She is also not shy about seizing all opportunities for eavesdropping. So strong is Nancy's will that Dr. Gladstone is often forced to sneak around her own house in order to avoid a confrontation with the unreticent Nancy. The third character in this entertaining mix is Nicholas Forsythe, a comfortably well-off London barrister. It goes without saying that he is handsome, but he is also sufficiently curious to be interesting. After the unfortunate dinner party incident, a tableaux of normality proceeds — women exit to exchange social gossip, and men remain for port and a smoke. Nicholas notes: *"Even a mad woman would not deter an English gentleman from the tradition of port and cigars after dinner."* (p.6) He is attracted to Dr. Gladstone by her quick-thinking and

competence. However, this being Victorian England, he makes his initial approach by feigning interest in Dr. Gladstone's ministrations to Elsie. He makes an early morning visit to Dr. Gladstone before anyone is aware that Eddie has been murdered. She is puzzled by the early morning visit in a way that Nancy is not: *"Say what you like, but he didn't come here concerned about a scullery maid. It was you that got him here."* (p.18)

The plot is sufficiently involved to hold the reader's interest and includes a few glimpses into issues such as class distinctions and poverty. Despite only circumstantial evidence, it is clear that Elsie will be found guilty. Meanwhile, as Dr. Gladstone makes her rounds, we learn she is frequently required to render her services on a quasi-charitable basis. Many of the cottagers are reluctant to seek her out even when on the brink of death for fear they cannot pay her modest fees. However, the period setting is supported primarily by vivid descriptions of costume and furnishings.

Although even I figured out 'who dunnit' well before the ending, I anticipate that this is the first book in a promising series. I hope we see much more of Nancy in the stories to follow. I took notice of this book after my husband mentioned he had apparently met the author. I look forward to reading other books in the series.

NOTES:

Interview with the author can be found on <http://www.southwestwriters.com/an-in...>

Lawanda says

Audiobook performed by Jessica Osbourne

Jodi says

I was pleasantly surprised by this Kindle freebie. A light, cozy historical mystery first published in 2002, now re-issued as an ebook by the author. There isn't much in historical setup or background. In fact at times it felt I was reading an episode of Dr. Quinn, set in the English countryside instead of the American West and with a mix of aristocrats, servants and thugs instead of indians and pionieers. Sully, the mountain men is Nicholas, the barrister who teams up with female doctor Alexandra Gladstone to solve the murder of the Earl of Dunsford. There is a hint of a developing romance, but to see if I'm right about that I'll have to read book 2 in the series and I am tempted to do just that.

All in all a quick and easy read.

Pat says

I wouldn't really want to have lived in the Victorian Age, but If I had I would certainly have wanted Dr. Gladstone as a friend. The series is off to a great start; can't wait to read more.

Shea says

I enjoyed this first novel in a series following Dr. Alexandra Gladstone, a fictional pioneering female

physician. I got the fourth novel on an e-book deal and was then compelled to read the first three. Dr. Gladstone was taught by her physician father in a time when women were not allowed to go to school to become physicians. Upon his death she has become the town doctor with mixed reception. In this story a murder has taken place and through her medical knowledge Dr. Gladstone knows the case is not as cut and dried as many would like to believe. With the help of Nicholas Forsythe, a barrister and houseguest of the deceased, Alexandra must find the murderer, track down a ghost, and save the young scullery maid accused of the crime. The plot was twisty enough to keep me interested and I would like to get to know Alexandra and Nick better. I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

Angie says

This works easily as a standalone novel. The author has done an excellent job in crafting the characters. The plot is compelling with the right amount of twists and turns to keep the reader turning the pages. The author blended historical facts of the difficulties a woman doctor would have come across during that time period. The author does an excellent job of writing Dr. Gladstone as a woman of her time experiencing those difficulties because of her gender, yet strong and determined enough to weather through them regardless.

There is a bit of humor mixed in with the seriousness of murder to make this story enjoyable and the characters very likeable. Though the characters and their relationships are still a work in progress they are developed enough at this point that readers can easily connect. I have to say that I really liked Nicholas a lot and hope that Alexandra will give into the attraction between them in spite of the difference in their social status.

The writing well done and I am interested in reading the other novels in this series. I recommend this for those who like historical mysteries. It was a quick yet thoroughly enjoyable read.

Ana T. says

December is always a busy month and there's nothing better than a light, entertaining historical read to pass the time. The abundance of mysteries of the cosy variety that has appeared recently have made that one of my favourite genres for when I want to be entertained but not think too much. This time my choice was the first in the Dra Alexandra Gladstone Mysteries by Paula Paul.

The book is set, I believe, in Victorian England during a house party at the Earl of Dunsford's country estate. Dra Alexandra Gladstone is called upon to attend to a young maid who has apparently tried to murder the Earl believing him to be the killer of her lover. Alexandra tends to the girl and makes her go to her room believing her to be harmless but the next morning the Earl is dead and the girl, Elsie, has disappeared.

Alexandra is somewhat of a rarity, a female doctor when females weren't allowed to study medicine. Paul explains that by having her been taught at home by her father and well accepted in the village because everyone knows since she was a girl. To tell the truth Alexandra sounds a bit too sensible to be true in a Victorian heroine but I could deal with that.

Earl Dunsford's guests don't waste time in blaming the doctor for not having drugged the girl, and stopped her from murder, but Alexandra quickly realises that the earl was not stabbed, as the girl was threatening, but strangled which would imply someone stronger. With the help of Mr. Forsythe, one of the Earl's guests, Alexandra decides to try to find out what really happened. Soon it is apparent that the earl wasn't exactly a nice person and that more than one of his guests could have a motive for murder.

The appearance of several "ghosts", and walks in the foggy night, does give the story a bit of a gothic look and I couldn't help thinking that sometimes Alexandra was a bit too daring. In one of those I was so engaged in the story and waiting for something to happen that I immediately deduced who the murderer was... and in the end I was proven right.

So if you are in the mood for something light, fast paced and with a bit of a gothic feel this might just be the book for you!

Grade: 4/5

Joan Roman Pavlick says

This period murder mystery set in the Victorian period in a small English Community really sets the mark! From the story line to the narration done in true British prompt and circumstance. This book by Paula Paul is a start to a strong character of Dr. Alexandra Gladstone the town's doctor.

The story starts out as those typical end of the season English dinner parties put on by the fifth Earl of Dunsford, Edward Boswick. A young kitchen maid comes screaming out after the Earl accusing him of killing her friend. Dr. Gladstone a guest reaches out to calm the girl down. However, the next morning the earl is found dead in his bed. The kitchen maid is missing. Now the mystery is now set.

The next day the doctor is called upon the Barrister and distant relative of the Earl, Nicholas Forsythe the man to whom helped with the deterring the maid from stabbing the Earl and himself as he is thanking her. The constable has sent his man to have them both to the murder scene. Based on the evidence before him is convinced that the maid has done it. Upon examination of the scene Dr. Gladstone is determine the cause of death was not done by the maid. It looked as if the Earl was killed by a knife however the knife just misses the heart. So the knife that the maid wheeled the night before was not the murder weapon. She notices that the Earl was strangled first and then stab as an afterthought to make it look like the maid did it. Feeling strongly that she is right puts herself in detective mode when Constable Snow is not convinced she is right. Throughout the story you will also meet other characters that play an important role and Dr. Gladstone's dog Zack, an Irish Wolfhound that is her constant companion and protector.

Dr. Gladstones' maid Nancy who is strongly opinionated and a good friend tells her that she is completely against her doing any hunting about on her own after being attacked. Nick agrees with her maid has agreed to take her on her rounds as her protection. On one of her rounds her one client makes a comment to her, "That even the dead still walk among the living". What does this mean? Until she is told repeatedly by others seeing the ghost of both decease. The Dr. Gladstone sees the ghost herself. Or was it? The maid who is

finally found and arrested. Before her hearing and time runs out Dr. Gladstone and Nick really step up the pace to find the killer.

Who is out to get Dr. Gladstone out of the way? Is she on the right track? Who is the surprising killer? The Maid? One of the guest? This mystery will keep you guessing all the way to the end and when the mystery is solved during the maids hearing the answer comes to Dr. Gladstone. Leaving the hearing and placing herself in contempt for leaving when it was her turn for testifying. She puts herself back into danger till the truth is revealed and she is rescued by Nick.

The narrator Jessica Osbourne did a lovely job of the voices throughout the novel. I really enjoyed the British accent and her change up between female and male parts. I feel the tone throughout match the scene that was going on. I would listen to other books that she is narrating with confidence that she would do a good job. I feel that the production by Siren Audio Studios of this book performance was dead on! (Sorry for the pun). It held my attention from start to finish! I assure you will be as well!

The cover I felt really did not portray what is a mystery look. It is nice and not sure how I would change it. Maybe the addition of the knife wrapped with the strangulation item used. Typeface I do like it and feels it does fit the time period.

Note: This review was posted to Audio Book Reviewer, Goodreads, Amazon, Audible, BN.com and iTunes. The Book was provided for review by Audio Book Reviewer. All views are strictly mine and not in any way influenced by others. Thank you for your time reading this and comments are always welcome about my review of this book!

Marie Shirley Griffin says

Great fun with a tad of romance

Marie Shirley Griffin

This is the first of the Dr. Alexandra Gladstone mysteries. Set in England's early 1800's in a small village outside London, Dr. Gladstone, trained by her father (no real medical license required to practice at this time in history - most cures were holistic in nature, so a female doctor, although rare, is believable) and residing with her maid, a childhood friend. There's a very large breed of dog that resembles a bear (Newfoundland), named Zack, living with the doctor for comfort and protection.

There's been a murder up at the Earl's castle whilst he has been giving a weekend party.

The doctor is hot on the trail.

I'm planning on reading the next one. I belong to the KINDLE UNLIMITED Club, so it's free for me.

Kay says

First of a promising series

A female doctor is a novelty for a historical mystery series, and Dr. Alexandra Gladstone doesn't disappoint the reader by being too anachronistic for the time frame.

The mystery is solid and would be classified as a cozy if set in contemporary times.

I quite enjoyed the book and look forward to reading more of the series.

Carol says

The author should probably be told that poison ivy does not grow in England and never has....

Rusty says

This is the beginning of what may be an interesting series based during the Victorian era in England. Dr. Alexandra Gladstone follows in her father's footsteps as a doctor in a small English community. Of course, it is unlikely that a woman could be a doctor during this era but she has been trained by her father who was well respected in the community. Her assistant and best friend is Nancy, with whom she grew up, and her faithful companion is Zack, a Newfoundland dog, who protects the doctor.

The scenario is this: A wealthy man is murdered in his home after a maid crashes his party waving and knife and vowing to kill him. Of course, she is arrested and charged with his murder. However, as the author unfolds events it appears that at least three people have motives which could propel any one of them to kill their host. Dr. Gladstone seeks to discover the truth and save the young maid. The story is well written, easy to read and suggests romance may be found in future novels of the series. However, my favorite character was Zack.

My rating of mysteries is based on whether or not I can determine the murderer before the author reveals her/his identity. Since I was able to do so in this novel it rated only three stars for me. Perhaps I've read too many mysteries!

Janna says

Loved the dog.

Sheryl says

This was a quite enjoyable historical mystery. With good characters and no shortage of suspects of possible suspects, I wasn't able to figure out "who done it" (which is nice). This was a quick, easy read, or in my case, listen. The narrator of the audiobook was excellent and did a great job varying her voices. The only issue I had with the audio was the production itself; it was very "cheesy"- playing music between chapter sections

and between the chapters themselves. They also played background music during one scene when the characters are dancing. Other than those oddities, the audio was very good. Oddly enough, I couldn't find it on Audible (at least in the U.S.), but was able to find it through my library in e-audio format. (Try Hoopla through your local library for any U.S. readers interested in the audio.) This is the only book in the series on audio. The series is promising though, so would be worth pursuing in print format.
