

# A Symphony of Echoes

*Jodi Taylor*

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Book Two in the madcap time-travel series based at the St Mary's Institute of Historical Research that seems to be everyone's cup of tea.

In the second book in the Chronicles of St Mary's series, Max and the team visit Victorian London in search of Jack the Ripper, witness the murder of Archbishop Thomas a Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, and discover that dodos make a grockling noise when eating cucumber sandwiches.

But they must also confront an enemy intent on destroying St Mary's - an enemy willing, if necessary, to destroy History itself to do it.

## A Symphony of Echoes Details


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Author : Jodi Taylor

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# From Reader Review A Symphony of Echoes for online ebook

## Robyn says

3.5 stars. This was madcap fun as usual, but with a plot that I found a little too all over the place and an unsettling incident and attitude towards the end around sexual violence that prevented me from rounding up.

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## Bradley says

This second book still reads like an amazingly light-voiced opera of death, time-mystery, and casual sex... in other words, a great time-travel SF. :)

Seriously though, her treatment of cars makes me wonder if they'll wind up going the way of the Dodos. Minus the Cucumber Sandwiches. :)

I preferred this one a lot over the first book for once reason: It stayed in known-history for the majority of the book rather than with the dinos. I'm a sucker for historical mysteries and I'm even more of a sucker for why Shakespeare wrote a play where the Other Mary took over when Elisabeth died. Woaaaa the lead up in the first novel was perfect and I'm super satisfied by seeing a lot more of it here. Jack the Ripper was a treat, of course, and wow was he different from most of the rip-offs, but more than anything, I loved seeing our MC get promoted to her level of incompetence.

It was all too funny. :)

Seriously? A team building exercise of capturing dodos? Seriously?

The dark stuff is also very dark, of course, and I can't quite say whether so much casual death among the Historians ramps up the tension or minimizes it. Maybe in some backwards way it does both, but either way, it really fills the pages. Scarily so. Oh yeah, and time unravelling. That might be bad. But anyway!

This is some very fun stuff, ya'll. Time travel can be clever and wild and fast, yo!

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## Choko says

\*\*\* 3.75 \*\*\*

**A buddy read with the MacHalo Freaks! Let's go back in History!!!**

*"...“In this century, as in any other, men wore the comfortable, practical stuff, and the women wandered round expiring underneath over-decorated tea-cosies and with inadequate footwear.”...”*

I enjoyed the book. Mostly, I love the quirky humor and wacky time jumps. I enjoy the writing style, but

there is something missing. I wish I could put my finger on it, but I can't... Max is a very likable character, but something is not quite right with her love interest and second book in a row him freezing her out with no explanation nor discussion. If it happens once, you can talk it out and learn from the mistake. If it happens twice, there is something wrong and you might want to start rethinking the relationship for real... Chief is cool, but I don't like this bipolar personality of his...

***"...“She picked up a slice of Victoria Sponge, broke it into large pieces and tossed them in their direction. I hadn’t had any yet, and could not suppress a small whimper. ‘It’s for science, Director,’ she said. ‘We must all make sacrifices.’...”***

Loved the different jumps in history and the Dodo birds capture was pure comedic gold! Overall, I am a fan, but not blind to the weaker points to the series. Once again, I am not a Time Traveller's fiction fan to begin with and that might be one of the reasons I am not swooning over the books, but the vignettes when the teams are in the historical locations are my favorite here. It is something to do with the structure of the story that feels off, but it is fascinating and exciting, so I am sticking with Saint Mary's ♥!

***"...“I made a mental note never, ever to set foot in the backyard privy. Or even the backyard itself. I could feel my colon assuming a defensive posture.”...”***

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and many more wonderful books to come!

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## **Kelly says**

Also fun for most of the proceedings. I liked the back 40% or so the best. It's sort of clear that partly the issue Taylor's plotting is kind of just happening as the story happens and things occur to her. Which makes everything feel fairly gloriously spontaneous, but also means she doesn't consider things until she does because she's distracted by some other shiny thing she's interested in at the moment and we've all already thought of the thing because we're not quite as distracted with her obsession, so we're skeptical. I felt like my reading experience was fairly give and take- going great- then issues- then great again- then more issues, etc. I was surprised into laughing several times because Taylor does throwaway dialogue better than most, but I was also disappointed because the book regularly skips over the sort of human moments that make us all attach to characters or goes at them at such a high volume that it renders them unbelievable, particularly after she's sounded that note a few times. She's great at thinking of wonderful scenarios at which to point her characters, and does it with the childlike glee that only someone with a truly deep passion for a subject would be capable for evoking. But the game and individual fun scenes can sometimes come at the expense of plot coherence. It's good episodic fare (right down to the "Curses, foiled again!" movie of the week end set up), but can't really rise above that.

Oh also, I'm sorry but the romantic interest has gone over the line into piece of shit/abusive relationship territory to me with no adequate explanation. Their weirdly distant, not-like-actual people relationship was odd enough to begin with- partially a function of Taylor deciding to foreground their relationship only when it suits her, partially due to the fact that some of her characters gain and lose character traits as she finds useful for a scene. (view spoiler) I would like to think Taylor is playing a long game to have Max figure this out, but I very much doubt it.

Overall a fun sandbox, still, though. Mostly great energy, enjoyable scenarios to geek out at and pretend

you're a part of. I think I'll save the rest of the series for the next time I'm sick, though. I'd have wound up watching a bunch of Friends reruns anyway. Might as well do it with a version with more explosions and historical wish fulfillment.

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### **Wealththeow says**

After surviving numerous murder attempts, foiling a coup, and dropping T Rexes on her enemies' heads (literally), Max has been promoted to Chief Operations Officer at St.Mary's. Using time travel pods, she and her colleagues can actually visit the periods they study, making them the luckiest historians ever. Of course, they also have a much higher mortality rate than most historians...

The book begins with a truly creepy investigation into Jack the Ripper--I actually shuddered at my desk while reading. After barely scraping away from that misadventure, her partner leaves St Mary's but Max remains, devoted to history and her service to it. This particular volume of her adventures includes a visit to the Hanging Gardens and an interview with Mary Queen of Scots herself! Lest my excited punctuation mislead you, let me mention that this series is not as inherently sweet as, say, Connie Willis's time traveling Oxford stories. The characters swear a great deal, and several of them go through torture, rape, severe bodily harm, or death. Max is a wonderfully drawn main character, unique and precise in her bloody-minded, stubborn, off-kilter mindset and methods, but she's gone through a great deal and her mind isn't always a pleasant place to be. The dangers aren't gratuitous, however, but feel like a part of seeing gone-by wonders and being the nearly sole-owners of coveted advanced tech. And the grasp of history is good--I totally bought Queen Mary's court, and the details Max notices while there were exactly what I'd have wanted to figure out, where I there myself.

I can't wait for the next installment of Max's adventures through time and space!

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### **Emma says**

This series is very funny and often a literal riot! They are cleverly plotted and the world of St Mary's is well conceived. In fact for me, St Mary's is the main character. In fact I think I want to live and work there. It seems like a cross between Hogwarts, Mallory Towers, and barrack life circa WWII variety. You could even add Carry On films to the mix.

Very much enjoyed this. Looking forward to the next. This isn't the place to start with this series. Read the first one before attempting this!

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### **Roslyn says**

I found this St Mary's instalment as compellingly readable as 'One Damned Thing After Another'. And like that book, it also needs an editor's hand. Actually there are probably fewer of the sentence structure/punctuation issues in this one, but I sometimes had the feeling that I'd missed something - that something had been rushed or glossed over or not explained properly. There is also a sense of disjointedness about the plot. The first bit of plot concerns Jack the Ripper and this was far more creepy and disturbing than I expected. That part of the plot was resolved, but, coming as it did right at the beginning, I kept waiting for it to come up again and become part of a larger plot arc. It never did. It will be interesting to see if it appears

in a later book - I would be really surprised if it doesn't - but as it is, it was left dangling a bit, unconnected to the rest of the plot.

Max is as semi-insane and funny as ever, and despite its glitches and imperfections I found it thoroughly enjoyable and extremely difficult to put down.

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## **Robin (Bridge Four) says**

*History is A Symphony of Echoes. Every little action has huge consequences.*

This series is a little bit on the sporadic side. I'm quite a linear thinker and so jumping about in time can be a little discombobulating at times. To jump around from London in the days of Jack the Ripper to sometime in the future and then back to hang out with Mary Queen of Scots, well it seems so patched together sometimes.

I very much enjoy the time jumps and seeing different time periods and how much trouble the historians can get into within them. Whenever you think it is going to be a quick and easy jump to check out some gardens something completely horrible goes wrong and you end up running for your lives in this series.

I'm enjoying all of the different jaunts into history. I like the time traveling bad guys who are working for their own means to and end. I like that being a historian now seems like the most dangerous job one could ever have. But.....the part that is keeping from really loving this is that some time in the book you know the drama llama is going to show up

I hate that dude. Max and her lovely fellow seems to have some sort of catastrophic misunderstanding that basically breaks them up for a part of time and then at some point just as quickly as they were ripped apart they are flung back together. It just seems so completely unnecessary.

There is also something that happened at the end that really made me feel awkward towards the MC. I don't care that history had already happened and that is the way it went down. It is one thing to know the history and another to think that the MC help facilitate in anyway what happened especially when it involved (view spoiler) It really made me dislike Max and the choices she is making 'for the greater good/history'

For the most part it is funny and fun and I really do love the dialogue and how quick on her feet snarky Max is.

*“Dr Maxwell. Why are you wearing a red snake in my office?”*  
*‘Sorry, sir. Whose office should I be wearing it in?’*

Things like this crack me up throughout the book. But the story is just missing something I can't really put my finger on to but it from okay to really great.

Still there is Troy to explore in the next book so I'll tag along on another adventure.

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## **Kaitlin says**

This is book #2 in the series and it's just as bonkers as the first one, but equally just as amusing. We once more follow the St. Mary's organisation of Historians who travel through time to see 'what really happened?' Our main character is called Max, and she's one of the less conventional people in the organisation who always seems to be getting into trouble somehow. Her adventures are often risky, but rewarding, and this book is no exception.

The true British humour of this series really tickles me as I read it and makes me genuinely smile or giggle along. I constantly find myself getting drawn into the story, and then I have moments of rolling my eyes or smiling, along with the characters. It really is so fast-moving and alarming at times that you have to be on the ball and absorbed, and I think Taylor has a great balance here.

In this book we see our brave adventurers facing off against someone who is trying to disrupt St. Mary's and History itself. We follow them back to the time of the Dodo, to a meeting with a Queen (although you'll have to read it to see which one), to discover a dubious Shakespeare play, and to see Thomas Becket. Amongst all the traveling and adventure you wouldn't think there was time for Tea, but in a British Time-Travel company Tea is always the priority :)

Highly recommend this wacky little series. I would give this a 3.5\*s overall, and I will for sure continue on with book number 3.

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## **Lisa says**

More time travel shenanigans - 2nd in the series and I did enjoy it...

...PAUSE FOR VERY MILD SPOILERS...

...but the novelty has worn off a bit and the 'romance' bit was extremely tiresome imo.

I'll have a break and then see if I want to carry on with the series - I'm very torn - it's 50/50 on things I love and things I don't like but I do like the concept and main character so maybe the odds will improve in next one?!?

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## **Steven says**

So far this series is just so much fun!

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## Richard Derus says

Rating: 4\* of five

**The Publisher Says:** Book Two in the madcap time-travel series based at the St Mary's Institute of Historical Research that seems to be everyone's cup of tea.

In the second book in the Chronicles of St Mary's series, Max and the team visit Victorian London in search of Jack the Ripper, witness the murder of Archbishop Thomas a Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, and discover that dodos make a grockling noise when eating cucumber sandwiches.

But they must also confront an enemy intent on destroying St Mary's - an enemy willing, if necessary, to destroy History itself to do it.

**My Review:** You know how, as you're watching *Star Trek* in any of its incarnations, you end up wondering pretty darn quick what the heck they keep talking about this Prime Directive for since they seem not to have any intention of following it? Yeah, that. The whole book is that. The St Mary's tea-soppers are set the one really big intervention that will make History match itself. It is a matter of the survival of St Mary's, so we're told, so it's okay to monkey with History. Kleio will approve.

Getting to the magic moment is, however, quite entertaining, and the key discovery made at the end of the first book is called into play very frequently. Pay attention to the details in this book, and I assume you'll want to read it after the delirious romp of #1, because some things are larded in to the chat and background that will cause a veritable street light to go on over your head when you read #3. Which I also assume you'll want to read after the sobering and still very fun events of this book.

So you've read #1, have you? Then click here: (view spoiler) Needless to say, the task is accomplished, but it brought up two issues for me. One I dealt with in the opener. The other is the nagging problem of all time-travel books, to wit the competing and mutually exclusive notions of A History, one divinely ordained way for Kleio to design and her sisters the Fates to weave; the other is the Eastern philosophical and string theory-supported proposition that we live in a many-dimensional multiverse where all things that can happen have happened are happening will happen. (English is a titanicly flexible tool, and ever willing to bow to Queen Norma Loquendi, but time travel is gonna bugger the prescriptive grammarians HARD. Come to think of it, Douglas Adams mined that vein for some laughs in *Hitchhiker's Guide*, didn't he.)

It would seem Ma Taylor plumped for the "One True History" solution, based on the events in this book. The Timeline must be restored!

Go with it. Even if you don't think that's the case, go with it. I promise you it will pay off.

And why the hell should dodos say "grockle"? Well, why the hell not.

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## **Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says**

I didn't like this one half as much as the one before. It was just so disjointed and ... meh. It actually left me not really wanting to read book three.

The issues here are mostly the plot and all the filler stuff that happens for no reason. And there are some underlying world building problems.

It starts out good but after that, it really, really slows down. That first part seemed to mainly be one example of a later "problem" but it really didn't make sense. I actually forgot about that, which should tell you how important the beginning is to this book (that it's the best part of the book and one is apt to forget it because it has nothing to do with the book afterward.)

There are a bunch of characters that pop up for no real reason. They just pop up, run a tiny muck (or, hell, don't run amok at all), and then are either gone or die. The doctor that shows up and does a little damage, then he's dispatched quickly (this after touting the doctor up as being ubber evil.) One of the villains from book 1 reappears (when she's supposedly dead) and does absolutely nothing except die. Seriously. She just stands there with her back to the MC. Ronan isn't just in this book at all. Her partner, whom seemed so angsty and stuff, goes away rather sooner than later.

All these people have very little to do with this actual "plot" of this book. It was more filler. The author knew she had to write a certain amount of words and so she filled the book with all these stupid, boring scenes.

Hell, I have no idea why she went to Elizabethan England. Or maybe that's better put that I don't think the reason why was all that good and there was no real climax to it.

Paradox is a term used in this book every other paragraph yet I find the excuse the author gives for why History hasn't slapped Ronan down is extremely weak and ridiculous. If History can materialize a huge rock out of the sky, and most of the people working at St. Mary's die horrifying deaths because they try to push a child out of the way, I have an incredibly hard time with the idea that History just can't handle Ronan so she's letting St. Mary's deal with it.

Seriously. That's the reason the author gives for letting Ronan goes run amok. It's because History needs Max to fix it. It apparently can't do anything.

I mean, really? That's the shittiest excuse I've heard.

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## **Trish says**

So after a good night's sleep and a big hot mug of tea (yeah, I prefer mugs to St. Mary's typical nice and flowery china), I have now sorted my thoughts. This second volume was very interesting and fast-paced again, the characters amicable as ever and the events laced with wonderful historical tidbits. However, it did not get me to care as much as the first.

The first volume was a rollercoaster that jerked me this way and that way and left me completely breathless. This second one? Not so much.

The central question of the series? If you had the technology to jump through time, what would you do?! Thankfully, the people in this story (well, not all of them but "our" St. Mary's anyway) are sensible enough to only use this technology for historical research. It does help that any historian trying to change history usually gets crushed by "accidentally" falling heavy objects. History protects itself. However, there are loopholes and although I usually don't like that, Jodi Taylor manages to once again make it plausible and explain it in a logic science-like way.

There are many open issues from book 1 that get addressed in this one, like Ronan who got away with Bitchface Barclay and the fact that he must have some sort of plan (it is revealed here and actually quite cunning). So I was quite surprised that our first time-jump (apart from Kal's farewell assignment) was not into the past but into the future, but what are you gonna do if one of the team is snatched?!

This book started off very strong with a unique view of Jack the Ripper, what he was and why he disappeared when he did. There were several very strong moments throughout the book and much hilarity but even the jokes were not as funny as in the first book. For a moment I was afraid the author had already given us all there was until I discovered a pattern: Max is a funny / sarcastic person and it shows. However, the true hilarity only ensues whenever St. Mary's is its quirky self, blundering through the ages, blowing things up accidentally, drinking tea every 5 seconds, catching Dodos as a team-building event (or failing to do so, rather), ... The characters are the main strength of the author and the story, which is why I'm sad Kal left at the beginning.

Or like Mrs. Clio Partridge. Boy, this woman is definitely the true MC of the series and I caught myself hooting several times when she saved the day - and with style! :D Unfortunately, she was alone this time, her sister (Mrs. deWinter) not being present because of "Bolivia". \*grins\*

Negative was that an old pattern occurred once again: (view spoiler) That was a bit too obvious and reminded me too much of the first book. On the other hand, that might just be the modus operandi of the bad guys and them sticking to it could be seen as being consistent.

But then we also had (view spoiler) and it was beyond stupid. I completely understand Max in this situation and LOVE her creative reaction to it, but the reason for the whole catastrophe happening was unbelievably dumb. After all the massive heartbreak in book 1 and what Max had to go through, this was (to me) just a poor way of hooking the reader that fell completely flat for me.

The historical bits, like Mary Stewart's Scotland were fantastic and it was quite impactful how (view spoiler) Just think about that for a second. Watching history, being unable to do anything (like seeing a good monarch getting killed by his beloved children for whatever reason), is one thing - THIS was plain awful (emotionally; the author did a wonderful job writing that sequence).

Moreover, the places the historians went to were wonderfully vivid and realistic and the reader learns quite a lot without realising it at first. In case anyone was wondering: so far, all the historical details that were worked in were accurate (the corner stones I mean, since we always only know a bit).

Last but not least I'd like to address the fact that although I have the ebooks of the entire series, I started listening to the audio version and LOVED what the narrator, Zara Ramm, did with the story. Her British accent was sure to get me hooked anyway, but the way she slightly differentiated in accents between the characters (Clio being relatively bland so as not to give anything away, Max with a "normal" British accent, Dr. Bairstow and Schiller with a more unique accent, ...) was great and I'll make sure to listen to rather than read the rest of the series.

Edit:

I almost forgot: the best passage in the entire book was when the author/Max mentioned that the truly

irreplacable person actually running any institution is not the director but the director's PA! Yay! :D

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### **Sh3lly (grumpybookgrrrl.com) says**

I liked it. You definitely have to have an inclination towards madcap zany predicaments and quirky heroines to enjoy this series. Max is strange and sometimes annoying. The story-telling is all over the place and the book is split up into several plots. One story is (sort of) resolved and then the story moves choppily into the next. Some questions are never answered or plot points ignored.

Jack the Ripper? What was really up with him? We never really find out.

The drama-llama between Max and Farrell. Weird. Annoying. But it didn't take up too much time, so I was able to get over it. They are both kind of immature for their age and really need to work on their communication. The Big Misunderstanding was my "biggest" issue with this. I hope future books don't include other instances like this.

Overall, the first half worked better for me, but it was still just as easy to read as the previous one and I do think these books are fun in their own way. I like the kookiness. The dodo scene was awesome! LOL

But those looking for solid world-building and logical characterization would be frustrated. Still, if you are looking for something goofy and light and don't mind a bit of whiplash from the shifting plots ... look no further. I'm definitely going to check out the next one.

Buddy read with the MacHalo group.

Here are my spoilery thoughts and comments:

(view spoiler)

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