



Death of a Dutchman

Magdalen Nabb

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There was enough trouble around to keep the police busy for months. All over Florence tourists were being robbed, cars stolen, and somewhere in the city terrorists were quietly at work. So the suicide of a Dutch jeweller looked like an open and shut case. Certainly there were some slight discrepancies. But the only witnesses were a blind man, and an old woman given to vicious lying. Yet the Marshal felt uneasy - it was all so conveniently simple...

Death of a Dutchman Details

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Author : Magdalen Nabb

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From Reader Review Death of a Dutchman for online ebook

Karmen says

2d Marshal Guarnaccia mystery. Unfortunately, I recognized the murder's identity much too quickly.

Babette says

This book was a satisfying sequel to the first in the series, but it did not have quite the impact on me as the first. The view into Marshal Guarnaccia's tumultuous and sensitive mind is well-done and his character remains sympathetic, but the plot was a bit frustrating for me. I suppose that serves to underscore Guarnaccia's own frustration with the case and with his lot. Through the characters, Nabb continues to provide a look into life in Italy - the importance of family, place and tradition.

Joyce Lagow says

The 2nd book in the Marshall Guarnaccia series, set in Florence. [return][return]The plodding beginning is set in a torridly hot period of time in Florence. Among reports of an Instamatic camera stolen in Pisa and various Fiat 500s, the Marshall responds to a call from a 91 year old woman about a potential problem in the flat next door. This turns out to be the death of a "Dutchman"--so-called because his father was Dutch, even though his mother was Italian, and the boy was born and raised in Florence. The death is considered a suicide, except that there are certain anomalies that bother the Marshall, who quietly begins to investigate on his own.[return][return]The pace picks up considerably in the middle of the book and in the last third, becomes a real page turner. The plot is excellent; the subplot involving Digos, the secret police, is not very prominent in the story but becomes well-integrated into the main plot line.[return][return]Nabb slowly and carefully develops a fascinating plot that is typical of the series; a series of seemingly unimportant details but loose ends in a satisfactorily complicated plot: the marshal himself, an inarticulate man who, once he fully engages in a case hangs on like a bulldog; a cast of lively, well-drawn characters; quiet, understated but highly effective writing; and a marvelous evocation of Florence itself the Florence of its residents, not of tourists.[return][return]An excellent book. Highly recommended.

LJ says

DEATH OF A DUTCHMAN (Pol Proc-Marshall Salva Guarnaccia-Florence, Italy-Cont) - VG
Nabb, Magdalen – 2nd in series
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982, US Hardcover – ISBN: 0684178478

First Sentence: 'Signora Giusti!' protested Lorenzini, holding the receiver away from his ear and throwing open his free hand in despair.

An elderly woman is known for calling the carabiniere station to complain. This time Marshall Salva Guarnaccia agrees to go in person. She heard an argument in the next door apartment, then silence. After

talking with her for awhile, and learning she has keys to the apartment in question, he agrees to investigate, only to find a young man at the point of death, whose dying whisper is "It wasn't her."

Nabb doesn't provide as strong a sense of place as some writers; her style reminds me more of someone so familiar with a place, they forget its significance.

Where she does excel is with her characters and observations of people—the elderly woman afraid of dying alone, the blind man who can "see" through his other senses, the other policemen who work with the Marshall—these are all brought vividly to life.

Marshall Guarnaccia is a wonderful character. He is a Sicilian stationed in Florence living without his wife and sons, as they are caring for his incapacitated mother. Because of that, he lives at the station barracks. He is dedicated, empathetic and caring, with subtle humor.

Although this is only the second book in the series, as well as the second I've read, I've learned a bit more about the character with each book, and it makes me want to continue to learn more still.

My criticisms are that there was an incidence of foreshadowing, which was irritating and unnecessary, and the conclusion was definitely unusual and a bit odd.

I only recently discovered Nabb's Guarnaccia series, am loving it and delighted to know I've many more books in the series ahead of me.

Tim says

Death of a Dutchman probably is not a mystery for everyone. It moves, at least until the end, at a languorous pace, like Florence in the summer. It is full of conversation and the Marshal's bewildered searches and sure hunches. He is a beautiful man - in his patience, his sympathy, his acknowledgement of his limitations, and his dogged determination. A fine, sad story told with compassion in its concerns for family relations that it makes it something more than just a mystery.

Bev says

Marshal Salvatore Guarnaccia's superiors are all for calling the death of a Dutch jeweler a suicide. They'd actually like to be able to call it an accident--just to make it easier for the widow. But Guarnaccia, who found the dying man when he was paying a visit to an elderly recluse, doesn't believe it. He can't forget the jeweler's last words, "It wasn't her" and he can't forget the way the room looked and the fact that the elderly woman had heard the jeweler and an unknown woman fighting earlier. The dedicated officer is puzzled and suspicious and must work his way through official red tape, complaining tourists, rumors of terrorists, the oppressive July heat, and the dead man's troubled past in order to discover the truth.

I really want to like Marshal Guarnaccia. I really do. Other reviewers on GoodReads have compared the Marshal to Columbo. I'd say that the Marshal doesn't even have the confidence of Columbo. He has no self-confidence whatsoever--even though he is obviously a much better detective (and far more dedicated to the

truth than some of his counterparts and superiors). He is a likeable character in a Droopy, the cartoon dog, sort of way. He's so self-conscious you feel obligated to like him. But I've finally decided that these books just aren't for me. This is the third Guarnaccia book I've read and I find it hard to want to read a story where you feel like the main character is swimming upstream the entire time. He continually has no confidence in himself and tells us over and over that he doesn't have the authority to investigate. As an author, why in the world would you want to saddle yourself with a "detective" who's a member of the official police force but who really doesn't have the authority to conduct investigations. But does anyway? And solves them--but isn't really recognized for doing so and doesn't get to have authority to solve future ones....

This story seemed particularly convoluted to me and despite the blurb from Kirkus Reviews on the back of my edition, I see no connection to Agatha Christie plots whatsoever and no real evidence of "gentle Italian comedy." Given what happens to one of the younger officers at the end...it's more of an Italian tragedy. McNabb's best quality is still her ability to describe Florence in such an appealing manner and to make the reader feel as though they are there. This would be why I'm giving a ★★ -rating and not just one.

First posted on my blog My Reader's Block. Please request permission before reposting. Thanks.

Karschtl says

This is one of the early Nabb-novels about Constable Guarnaccia. The difference between him and Commissario Brunetti by Donna Leon is, that he is actually not the man in charge of solving the crime. He's just a regular head of a small police department, only in charge of his 3 or 4 younger colleagues and mostly concerned with thefts of a Fiat.

In this novel he finds an almost dead Dutchman, who looks as if he committed suicide. But there is something that doesn't fit into this theory of suicide, Guarnaccia thinks. And so he starts to investigate secretly by himself, with the help of a 91-year-old neighbor, a blind man and old colleagues of the dutchman.

I did guess the outcome of the story several pages before the end, but it was nevertheless a very good story with a very likable main character.

Anders says

Did not finish, couldn't stay interested in it. Page 100.

Desiree says

I like the Marshal Guarnaccia series and, being Dutch, was of course attracted by this title.

The Dutchman from the title is actually half Italian and half Dutch. Although born in Italy he has lived in Amsterdam for over ten years. When he returns to his house in Florence one night without informing any of his neighbours he dies of an overdose of sleeping pills.

Although it looks like a suicide initially the Marshal has his doubts, and not without reason as it turns out. The descriptions of Florence and of the places the Marshal passes on his walks through the city are very nice. Some things are a bit outdated, but then again, the book was written over 30 years ago.

Beth says

Originally published in 1982—probably not worth re-reading. The mystery takes place in Florence and revolves around the apparent suicide of a Dutchman with a ninety-one year old former beauty as the primary witness. Through the tenacity of the Marshal, the mystery is unraveled. Two interesting asides. (1) There are cultures that are more interested in exiting life properly than sustaining it. (2) Due to lack of cemetery space, bodies in Florence are buried for 10 years, but then are dug up, the bones put in a special container, and the grave used by the next person.

J. says

Difficult to know what happened with this. On the plus side, you have the delicately-rendered atmosphere of Florence, memorable characters that aren't 'mystery story characters', an intriguing dilemma, a surreal set-piece (the pursuit thru the old city), a blind eyewitness, and eventually, a good set of closing plot-points and revelations.

And an interesting appearance of the *Confratelli Misericordia di Fiorenze*, a kind of paramedic catholic brotherhood with a history back to the plague years in Florence.

But it's an upside-down cake of a book, one that just didn't properly reverse itself out of the pan. Many many moments are spent drifting around aimlessly in the middle two-thirds of the story, taking reader and the detective on a confusing, drifting circle thru the plot. That's a strategy that can work nicely if, beneath the surface, unassuming clues are strewn during the 'drifting' period; still waters running deep, etc. But not the vaguest sense of inevitability in these chapters, or even anything like a false solution, crops up to punctuate the narrative.

So a little more maddening that something that just doesn't work, or is just second rate. Ideal ingredients, albeit a meandering recipe, and finally no cake and no eating it either.

Doesn't put me off, though. Mozart had off days too. I'll try another Magdalen Nabb anytime.

Monica says

This was a well thought out mystery with enough twists and turns to keep me guessing until almost the very end, at which point the author, Magdalen Nabb, wrapped everything up very nicely.

After the death of a jeweller in his Florence apartment, Marshal Salvatore Guarnaccia feels that things just aren't right and there is murder in the air...and the chase is on through the streets of this Italian city. "Death of a Dutchman" is a fast-paced read featuring one of my new favourite detectives.

And as mentioned in several of my other book reviews that take place in Florence...it's nice to have a visual of the city, knowing exactly where the Marshal was when he entered the Boboli Gardens and what it was like to smell the bay leaves on the tree. It's a bit like going back on vacation...

Darius Ostrowski says

You can tell this is an earlier book, Ms. Nabb is still learning her craft and the Marshal is still new to the murder game. It also is a bit easier to solve and gets a bit frustrating as you wait for Marshal to figure it out. And the foreshadowing gets a bit heavy handed with a sub-plot.

But I like it nevertheless.

John Lee says

I said in my comments on the previous book in the series, 'Death of an Englishman', that I was eager to read the next in the series but hadn't expected it to be my next book. I am not complaining.

Towards the end of the last book I thought that I was starting to understand a bit about the Italian system. I spoke too soon. I may have grasped some of the differences in the type of police but the intricacies in the legal system, that added to the urgency and excitement in the novel are still a mystery to me.

Here the Marshal is one of the first on the scene of a death but as one of the Carabinieri doesn't have the authority to investigate officially he does so 'off his own bat'. As I knew what sort of story to expect and the differences in the Italian Police force to our own, I was on the look out for clues from the off. Although I didn't collect them all, I managed a couple. I think that it would be difficult for anyone not 'au fait' with Italian customs to have cracked this one.

I think the author paints good pictures of her characters for us and keeps the number of potential suspects down to a minimum to help us. Although I have only been to Florence once, I had no difficulty seeing the venues of the action in my mind's eye, and feeling the oppressive heat of the Italian summer.

I am not sure about the largely unrelated incident at the end of the book and wonder if, perhaps, it would have been best left for the start of the next where it may have some significance. I shall soon see as it is already on my shelf.

Kimberly Ann says

Well, it's a really good thing I didn't read this first book before I read others in the series, or else I just might have never read another book in this series at all.

TMI...TMD.....on & on & on....blah, blah, blah, blah..... It was awful, just plain torturous! Not to mention that the character who was a main part of the plot, Signora Gusti, as a self-centered, self-serving, nasty, manipulative, Old Witch!

Once again, this centers around family and family relationships or lack thereof.....

