



A Spider on the Stairs

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Best friends Phillip Bethancourt, a wealthy man-about-town, and Scotland Yard Detective Sergeant Jack Gibbons are each on their way to Yorkshire over Christmas, though not together, and neither of them are looking forward to their respective trips. While Phillip is returning to his family's estate to spend the holiday with relatives---a dreaded task---Jack must determine whether a particular murder is the work of a serial killer. It looks like it most likely is. As it turns out, Jack isn't on the case for more than a day before the understaffed locals ask him to look in to another.

Jodie Farrady, a former bookshop employee who disappeared about a year ago, is found strangled in that same shop Christmas morning. The modus operandi is similar to the serial killer's, but not exactly the same. It could be a copycat. It could be a coincidence. Either way, Jack could certainly use his good friend's help as he investigates the citizens of a Yorkshire that has suddenly turned quite deadly. Luckily, Phillip is all too eager to escape his own holiday and join the hunt.

A Spider on the Stairs---Cassandra Chan's contemporary reimagining of the classic English mystery---is not only a tale that is every bit as delightful and charming as the luminaries in this beloved tradition, but by far its most worthy heir.

A Spider on the Stairs Details

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Author : Cassandra Chan

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From Reader Review A Spider on the Stairs for online ebook

Grey853 says

I've read all four books in the series and I must say I really enjoy the two main characters of Gibbons and Bethancourt. I love how they seem like such good friends. You don't see that a lot in many police procedural novels. Those are usually all cut and dry, whereas these books have a bit more personal flavor.

I really looked forward to reading this fourth book, especially when I saw that it was set at Christmas. I would've been in heaven if the whole mystery had happened at Bethancourt's manor, but that was not to be. Still, it was in his hometown instead of London.

This isn't a cozy mystery at all. There's a serial killer on the loose and Gibbons is helping with the investigation on his return from sick leave from the gunshot wounds he suffered in the third book.

One of the people killed doesn't fit the pattern of the killer, so Gibbons is left to investigate separately from the team. Once again, he works with Bethancourt who's from the area to track her murderer.

There's a lot of footwork done, lots of interviews, and going over the clues. All in all, it's a solid mystery that comes together in the end.

Diane says

Probably a 3.5. I liked it a lot! I read a lot of reviews where people described it as a "cozy" book. Not quite sure what they meant by that, but it is the sort of book that would be fun to read on a sick day or curled up on the couch in bad weather. It's not super graphic, which I really appreciated, but you still definitely get the idea of the murder scene. No profanity that I can recall, very fun read. Starting "Village Affairs" next.

8/30/14. Forgot that I read this before, and just read it in sequence. Liked and understood it so much better! A good 4.5 stars this time! Just one loose end that wasn't explained, but not too terribly distracting. So glad there will be a book 5!

Rhonda Gilmour says

This modern British whodunnit is a bit slow, but I stuck with it because the murder was so intriguing. The author switches POV between her two sleuths: a wealthy playboy dabbling in police work, and his friend - an actual Scotland Yard investigator. Perhaps a bit low on suspense, the plot does chug along toward a satisfying conclusion. I did enjoy Chan's portrayal of a miserable, rainy Christmastide in York.

T says

I enjoyed reading it. I did not see a great tie-in with the Spider on the stairs and the French proverb.

Merand says

This was a random pick off the library shelf. I was looking for a cozy mystery and the cover appealed to me. I was running out of time so after a very brief look at the jacket description I took it. I was so pleasantly surprised. It's a British mystery, always a plus in my book, and kept up a good pace. The two main characters changing viewpoint kept things interesting. The mystery wasn't one I was able to solve early on and when the bad guy was revealed, it was totally plausible with an excellent setup that gave you all the pieces but didn't give away the answer. Not formulaic at all. But what I liked best about this mystery was the lack of gore and violent description. And the book was about a serial killer! But whenever a crime scene was discussed it was very simple without too much details. It was enough to let you know what was going on, without getting into the nitty-gritty of it all. And yet nothing felt lacking. It still held an element of drama and suspense without having to be nasty. I was impressed because it's a hard mystery to find nowadays that isn't too gross or too cheesy. Hats off to Chan for towing that fine line! I look forward to reading more of her mysteries.

Susan says

It's the worst December that anyone in York can remember, and half the police force is down with the flu. Jack Gibbons is sent up from Scotland Yard, just barely recovered from gunshot wounds, to determine if a death is linked to a serial killer. He doesn't think so, but he's asked to stay and help the York police. Meanwhile, his best friend, amateur detective Phillip Bethancourt, is in Yorkshire reluctantly celebrating Christmas with his wealthy family. Phillip would much rather be helping Jack, who is disturbed by what seem to be links between the serial killer and the case he's working on. A terrific new book by Chan.

Barbara says

df

Emma (Miss Print) says

Christmas in England this year is dismal. The foul weather in Yorkshire does little to help Phillip Bethancourt's mood as he faces the prospect of poor weather and poor company in the form of his stodgy relatives. Happily, for Bethancourt at least, his holiday is soon sidetracked by his friend's investigation of a suspicious murder.

Detective Sergeant Jack Gibbons is sorry to miss Christmas with his family but after weeks recovering from gunshot wounds at his childhood home, Jack is also eager to get back to work and his own flat in London. Although Gibbons does finally get back to Scotland Yard, his time in London is cut short when he is dispatched to York to determine the connection, if any, between a body found in a York shop and a serial killer who has been striking throughout Southern England.

The murder was likely the work of the Ashdon Killer. But then another murder is discovered at a well-respected York bookshop. As Gibbons and Bethancourt investigate the bookshop killing it seems less and less likely the murder has any connection to Ashdon though the case does raise its own fair share of questions. Bringing the murderer to justice might not catch the Ashdon Killer, but it is still a murder and one both Gibbons and Bethancourt would like very much to see solved in *A Spider on the Stairs* (2010) by Cassandra Chan.

A Spider on the Stairs is Chan's fourth book featuring Gibbons and Bethancourt (preceeded, in publication order, by *The Young Widow*, *Village Affairs* and *Trick of the Mind*) and possibly the best so far.*

Chan manages to keep the plot fresh and original without departing completely from the aspects that regular readers already find so appealing. Of particular interest is the emphasis on Jack and Phillip's friendship--a theme often lacking in other traditional mysteries. *A Spider on the Stairs* presents readers with the perfect blend of murder, intrigue, humor, and plain old good characters in a thoroughly enjoyable and well-developed story.

*Now might be a good time to mention that, insofar as a traditional mystery with no romance whatsoever can have teams, I am Team Gibbons. My mother is Team Bethancourt. I loved this book. She did not. We suspect this had to do with the fact that Gibbons featured more prominently and, in my view, is more awesome. Anyway, draw your own conclusions.

Jo says

This is the 4th book in the series? I didn't know that. Now I'll have to find the first three, even though I kept feeling throughout the first half of this that I'd read it before. I think now I either had it cross-switched with a fantasy book I read once (I kept expecting the fae to appear in the stacks of the bookstore) or it's a close tribute to the old English cozy mysteries I used to read (Christie, Sayers, etc.) only with modern trappings (computers, cell phones, etc.). Either way around I quite enjoyed it. Jack Gibbons is a detective at Scotland Yard. His best friend is independently wealthy, man-about-town Phillip Bethancourt, who is allowed to unofficially assist on some of Jack's assignments. This story takes place just after Christmas and involves two separate murder investigations. A nice book to read when you're home sick. I'll find the first three, and hope there's a fifth, sixth, etc..

Ashley says

What a great book! It's a classic British mystery in the vain of Midsomer Murders or Inspector Morse complete with quaint sounding towns but with no foolish American fed stereotypes. In true Agatha Christie style Chan gives the reader all of the info and lets us flounder for a bit before spelling out the conclusion. I

love it when the author doesn't feel the need to trick the reader by leaving out crucial information or misdirecting us. That shows a confidence and skill of storytelling that is hard to find these days.

Well done! I will be looking closely at the her other books.

Jill Hutchinson says

I like this series of books because they remind me of the Lord Peter Wimsey stories, updated to the 21st century.....the wealthy, effete amateur detective with a friend in Scotland Yard. In this entry, Bethancourt and Gibbons are investigating the murder of the former employee of a bookstore which may be tied to a serial killer haunting southern England. Lots of red herrings and coincidences which finally lead to an interesting conclusion. This series is definitely light reading, not classic mystery.....but it is a fun read which can be finished in one sitting.

Bryce says

I got this book for free, so it seemed like a good idea to give it a shot. Apparently it's the fourth book in the series, but you don't need to have read any of the preceding books to follow along (some references to previous events aren't clear, but that's okay).

The detectives (and sidekick) are on the trail of a serial killer when another murder takes place. They must put their minds to the task and determine whether the incidents are connected.

This was a fairly standard crime mystery, I thought. Everything tied together nicely and not too neatly either. The characters weren't terribly compelling, but it was still a good, quick, easy read.

Ruth Feathers says

Serial killings and Christmas.

Brook says

I think a good mystery should intrigue you, give you clues, but not tell you the answer, stringing you along for the storyline. It helps if characters are believable and if you get to learn a little something of the region along the way. This mystery, centered around a serial killer and a seemingly unlinked bookshop murder, does all the aforementioned things. Great read to relax with.

Angela says

If you would like to get into the Bethancourt-Gibbons mysteries by Cassandra Chan--an activity I'd highly

recommend--then Book 4, *A Spider on the Stairs*, is probably not the place to do it. On the one hand, Chan does a good job of making each story self-contained, and it's not a huge detriment if you come in at this point of the series. But on the other hand, events in the earlier books do influence the ones in this one, and I certainly found my ability to enjoy this story enhanced by knowing what had come before.

In this particular installment of the series, "what had come before" is Jack Gibbons' getting shot in Book 3. *A Spider on the Stairs* is the first we see of him after he's returned to active duty, trying to nail down whether a particular recent murder is the work of a serial killer at large. Meanwhile, Bethancourt has to deal with a trial of his own: his family over the Christmas holidays. Fortunately for these lucky boys, a new case quickly distracts them both: whether a bookshop employee found strangled on Christmas morning is the work of that same killer.

Overall I liked this one quite a bit. The bookshop murder is (for reasons that ought to be obvious) strongly Relevant to My Interests, but just as fun is getting to see Bethancourt having to deal with his family. On a somewhat more serious note, it's also good strong character development to see both Bethancourt and Gibbons needing to regain their footing now that the latter is back on active duty. As with previous books in the series, there are several nicely portrayed side characters to populate the list of suspects--and of course, this being a mystery novel, the employees of the bookshop have far more drama in their backstories than meets the immediate eye. So yeah, good fun. Four stars.
