



# The Beloved Dead

*Tony Hays*

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## **The Beloved Dead** Tony Hays

Malgwyn ap Cuneglas was one of King Arthur's earliest companions and now is his most trusted counselor.

Despite the malice of his enemies, who fear Arthur's power, and the machinations of the still powerful druids who mightily resist him, Malgwyn knows that Arthur will stop at nothing in his efforts to lead his people to Christ and help to bring civil law and justice to a people who have known little such.

To consolidate his power, Arthur decides that it is time to take a noble wife. But in this Malgwyn knows not only his lord's ambition but his personal grief, because in order to take a queen Arthur must set aside his love Guinevere, because he believes that the scandal surrounding their affair has tainted her for the crown.

Malgwyn is sent north to fetch the young woman who is to be Arthur's bride. The way is fraught with tension and disaster for there are forces who would not see the king wed. When Malgwyn discovers a string of killings involving young virginal women who are slaughtered in a horrific manner—not unlike a ritual sacrifice—he is left with a question that he must answer quickly.

Are these murders portents of the gods taking vengeance on the intrusion of a new faith?

Or mortal men plotting to unseat the king?

## **The Beloved Dead Details**

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Author : Tony Hays

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## **From Reader Review The Beloved Dead for online ebook**

### **Harvee says**

4.5/5 stars! Excellent medieval mystery and romance! Loved the spinoff on the Arthurian legends. Full review and author's guest post.

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### **Sara says**

I won this in a firstreads giveaway.

I found this book to be a quick enjoyable read. I'm only somewhat familiar with Arthurian tales but was able to easily follow this story (which seems to be set fairly early in Arthur's reign?)

The main character, Malgwyn, is a friend of Arthur and has a knack for thinking about things differently which enables him to solve mysteries. There weren't too many suspects so it was somewhat easy to narrow it down and yet the author still kept it interesting and left the reader wondering how everything would be resolved.

I would recommend this to others looking for a good read and look forward to checking out the other books in the series.

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### **Lbaker says**

I've never read an Arthurian mystery before, and I enjoyed the setting and the "history".

The male characters were engaging, the female ones a little stereotypical.

The mystery itself was easily narrowed down to three possible suspects, one seemed too obvious which left two possibilities and midway through the book I guessed which of the two, and was correct. However, it was not too obvious and I did need to wait until the end to confirm.

The relationship between the hero and King Arthur did not seem realistic, if one had to worry constantly about the monarch putting them to death, I can't believe one would ever relax around the monarch, can you?

The description of the Druid ceremony at the end was vivid and horrific.

I will probably look for another book by this author to read, before I truly decide if I like this series or not.

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### **Eh?Eh! says**

Hmm. I signed up for this giveaway because I have loveloveloved some very fine takes on the Arthurian

legend over the years and they make my ears (eyes?) perk up. I vaguely noted that the blurb seemed odd, and when I received it I realized the problem: the subtitle is *An Arthurian Mystery*. Nooooooooo! Mystery is one of the genres that make my eyes glaze over. I notice the gr title wasn't updated for this series name until about a week after I won it...call it a lesson learned. Thoroughly research the book before taking the plunge. Sigh. So here I have this admittedly very handsome book, in a setting that I do like, but with a format that I don't find compelling. I'm sorry to the author! You deserve a different reader for this!

I've begun reading it but after some recent reads that have blown my little head off, it feels lacking. The dialogue is simple, the characters uncomplicated, the descriptions unadorned. Not like purposeful clean lines but like a very earnest effort. I'll keep plugging along. I'm just not the right one for it.

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## **Lyndsay says**

When I first started this book, after I won it through First reads, (yay for First reads!) I wondered if I would really be able to get into it or get involved enough to be really interested. After the first few chapters, that wasn't a problem. I think this is a Sherlock Holmes-esque medieval mystery. I really enjoyed the book, and the suspense was great. It kept me turning the pages until I finished the majority of the book in an evening. I liked that the main character was smart and strong, but he was not infallible. He definitely has his flaws which are seen throughout the story. I had not read the first book, but I didn't get too confused. I also liked how Arthur is not the perfect king he is often made out to be. He is still a great man and great king, but he also makes mistakes, especially when it comes to women. :) The one thing I disliked about this book were the pretty graphic descriptions when the young girls were found after they were murdered. Just a warning out there for the more sensitive: they are pretty disturbing. All in all, however, I really enjoyed this book and would consider reading others in the series.

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## **Sallee says**

I have always loved stories set in the time of Arthur and Merlin. This mystery's victims are young girls who are brutally assaulted and killed, including Arthur's wife, Gwyneira, Lord Aircol's daughter only hours after the ceremony. Arthur's most trusted councilor, Malgwyn is determined who killed the girls. Guinevere, Arthur's consort and Malgwyn's ladylove are suspected in the murder of the young Queen, Gwyneira. The book showcased Arthurian life well and I hope to see what happens once Guinevere becomes Arthur's queen. Malgwyn is able to bring the true killer to justice with a few surprises thrown in. A great story.

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## **Alan says**

Again, my comments on book one "The Killing Way" hold for this one too.

This book has two main story lines.

In the first Arthur has been convinced by the other members of the alliance that for the sake of Briton he should marry the daughter of one of the leaders from the north. Malgwyn's job here is to negotiate the marriage agreement. Malgwyn is, of course, against the marriage and believes that Arthur should Guinevere (who happens to be Malgwyn's cousin). But Malgwyn negotiates the wedding contract and actually comes to

like the bride to be, agreeing to be a kind of guardian to the girl after the marriage and after her father leaves to go back home.

In the second, there is a curse delivered by a Druid, and a series of gruesome murders of young woman all of which happen around the group of Arthur's men that are traveling with Malgwyn all of which frustrates Malgwyn since he doesn't have enough time to investigate each of these murders and that ends up costing both Malgwyn and Arthur in the end.

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### **Sandi says**

I received this book through Goodreads first-reads giveaway.

I've been a fan of the Arthurian legends ever since I can remember and have read a fair quantity of books and references on it so I was very happy to have won this book. I was, however, surprised to find out it was a mystery. Fortunately I am also a Cadfael fan!

The book was no disappointment when it came to location and information from that time period. The mystery was meshed in nicely with the storyline instead of feeling like an addendum. It was also a little too easy to figure out. At least for me but what kept me reading was how it interwove into the legend.

I found the dialogue a little too simplistic and sometimes quite repetitive in how each character felt about any given situation. Malgwyn's constant misgivings about Arthur's marriage soon seemed like filler instead of reaffirmation.

All in all I liked the book. It was a nice change on the mystery format and learning a little more about the Arthurian era and legend from a fresh perspective is always a bonus.

I am going to read the first two books out of curiosity and will follow this series as I am eager to see how it develops.

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### **Jane Irish Nelson says**

When Arthur and his followers visit Londinium and remove a pagan relic, a Druid cursed Arthur. Shortly thereafter, a girl's body is found, but Malgwyn is not given time to investigate thoroughly. Instead Arthur sends him — along with several others — to treat with Aircol regarding Arthur's proposed marriage with his daughter, Gwyneira. But on the return trip, another girl is found, similarly killed; Malgwyn can't help but believe the two are connected, but how? And why?

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### **E. Sabin says**

This is the third book of a series, and I have not read the first two, yet I had no problem following the action and quickly became familiar with the characters. This is an Arthurian mystery, but if you are looking for a tale of knights of the round table, this is not for you. It places Arthur in a rustic post-Roman, early medieval setting that is historically believable but not the stuff of legend. The plot involves the brutal murders of

young women, and the almost casual way the murders are dismissed by most reflects the brutality of the era. But Malgwyn, advisor and friend to Arthur, is haunted by the senselessness of the murders and is resolved to find the killer. The book sheds light on a mostly unfamiliar period of early British history and reflects a great deal of research on the part of the author. I found it fascinating to read an entirely different take on King Arthur than is found in those tales depending on Mallory.

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### **Carol Gibson says**

This is the third book in Tony Hays Arthurian mystery series. This one dealt more with dealing with a serial killer and less political intrigue than the others. I think we tend to think of serial killers as a rather new crime. Before Jack the Ripper you don't hear as much about them. But knowing that some humans are just broken I have to believe these monsters have always been with us.

This was a first rate mystery with the clues laid out. The author did not cheat and spring the killer on us out of no where.

I have now read all four books in this series, I read the fourth book first and I eagerly await a the next adventure of Smiling Malgwyn.

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### **Caroline says**

So far just as good as the first two books in the series.

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### **LaLine says**

I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

Not a bad read. Followed a similar storytelling path that good mysteries generally follow and keeps you wondering about who the murderer is until you fit the pieces together. However, there were some things that made it harder for to get into and stay engaged.

I had a hard time really caring about the main character (or any of them, really) - perhaps because I haven't read the first two books in the series. I was a little frustrated by the way the women were treated. Sometimes it felt like the author was being true to how women were treated during the time period he was writing about, and sometimes it felt different. Can't really put a finger on the exact moments when it frustrated me, but it made it hard to keep going sometimes because of the inconsistencies.

Object rape is not a new phenomenon to our time, nor is having serial killers. Both can be very shocking and emotional topics. However, I found it odd that the author brought object rape (and a serial rapist) into the story with such detail when he says his focus was on the phenomenon of serial killers. If he truly wanted to focus on the aspect of serial killers, then he should not have brought in object rape as part of the murders. It distracted from the point he was trying to make and made it look like object rape was much less of a big deal than it is.

There seemed to be a lot of dialogue around politics that did not really move the story along. The political points that were relevant were pretty much given during the first couple of chapters. There was no need to continue pounding on them over and over throughout the book.

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## **Joan says**

Hays is improving as a series writer. There was a little unnecessary repetition of some details but not as much as in his second novel of the series. The conclusion could have been a bit more concise but overall it was an engaging story with interesting characters.

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## **Judy says**

I am always intrigued by any version of the King Arthur tale. The Beloved Dead is the third in the Arthurian Mysteries series by Tony Hays. Each volume entwines King Arthur's life and ascension to High King with a murder mystery. Of course a murder needs a detective and sure enough Arthur had his own private investigator, Malgwyn, who was also his most trusted adviser.

Also true to murder mystery form, Malgwyn had personal troubles: deep grief over the slaughter of his beloved wife by Saxons and a weakness for alcohol. Because Arthur saved the man's life, though not his right arm, Malgwyn pulled himself out of a suicidal depression to assist this King for whom he had a deep love.

I have not read the two earlier volumes in the series, The Killing Way and The Divine Sacrifice, but this volume has convinced me to do so. In The Beloved Dead, Malgwyn is up against a serial killer who violates and mutilates the bodies of maidens as part of the murders. Truly gruesome descriptions of the murderer's signature mutilation not to mention continuous scenes of mayhem bring to life the brutal level of violence that characterized daily life in fifth century Britain.

I liked the way Hays made use of the political situation to anchor his story. Ever since the Romans had pulled out of Britain because of the barbarian invasions into Rome, Britannia lost their civilizing force, devolving into internal battles between various tribal lords. Arthur rose to power because of his ability to unite these tribes against their common enemy, the Saxons. It was however an uneasy alliance.

As The Beloved Dead opens, Arthur has recently been crowned the Rigotamos, High King of all Britannia. Due to religious conflicts between traditional Druids and followers of "the Christ" in addition to rivalries always ready to erupt, Arthur has decided to deliver a blow to Druid superstition while at the same time entering into a politically strengthening marriage. Ever the idealist who cared deeply for the "people" and dreamed of peace for his land, Arthur is also portrayed as somewhat pig-headed and impetuous when it comes to political moves. The murders began immediately following Arthur's announcement of his marriage and his perceived desecration of a Druid burial ground.

At first I was put off by Tony Hays' writing style which eschews elegance for a down-to-earth tone. He is compelled to repeat himself every fifty pages or so, hammering in his themes about male/female relations and the mentality of a serial killer. But in the end I was impressed by the strength of his story and the

historical depth he brings to the Arthurian legends.

After all, for those of us compelled to read any story we can get our hands on when it comes to Arthur, Guinevere, Merlin and the rest, comparing the myriad tellings of the tale is at least half the fun.

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