



A High Mortality of Doves

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1919. The Derbyshire village of Wenfield is still reeling from four terrible years of war, and now, just when the village is coming to terms with the loss of so many of its sons, the brutal murder of a young girl shatters its hard-won tranquillity.

Myrtle Bligh is found stabbed and left in woodland, her mouth slit to accommodate a dead dove, a bird of peace.

During the war Myrtle worked as a volunteer nurse with Flora Winsmore, the local doctor's daughter, caring for badly wounded soldiers at the nearby big house, Tarnhey Court.

When two more women are found murdered in identical circumstances, Inspector Albert Lincoln is sent up from London, a man not only wounded in war but damaged in peace by the death of his young son and his cold, loveless marriage. Once in Wenfield, Albert begins to investigate the three recent murders and the Cartwright family of Tarnhey Court and their staff fall under suspicion as their hidden lives and secrets are uncovered.

With rumours of a ghostly soldier with a painted face being spotted near the scene of the murders, the village is thrown into a state of panic - and with the killer still on the loose, who will be the next to die at the hands of this vicious angel of death?

A High Mortality of Doves Details

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Author : Kate Ellis

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From Reader Review A High Mortality of Doves for online ebook

Patricia says

This novel is set in 1919, in a small northern village called Wenfield that is still reeling from the loss of most of its young men in World War I. When two women are murdered the local police think they have their man but a third murder soon follows and Scotland Yard are called in.

The story is told in first person by Flora, the daughter of the village doctor whose experience tending to sick soldiers has given her ambitions to become a professional nurse. She's a clever if somewhat naive character. The other side of the story follows Inspector Albert Lincoln of Scotland Yard, a man who has borne the brunt of his own injuries from the war, plus further tragedy at home as he tries to unravel the secrets of Wenfield.

This is an evocatively written story. Even if like me you're not massively familiar with this period of history you quickly get a sense of the era. There is genuine mystery with a great ending....I sort of guessed the ending but more in a "oh wouldn't it be cool if it was *****" way rather than a smug "yeah I guessed it" way. My only small criticism is that it was hard to get a sense of how much time was passing. A quite big plot point concerning Flora seemed unlikely before I realised much more time had passed between chapters than I realised.

An evocative and compelling story, I'd recommend this to any mystery lover. Even if historical fiction isn't your usual choice this is definitely deserving of your attention.

Thank you Netgalley, Little Brown Book and Kate Ellis for this digital ARC for an honest review

Damaskcat says

I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley for review.

A murder is committed in the small village of Wenfield in Derbyshire. A woman is found stabbed in woods just outside the village with a dead dove stuffed into her mouth. The local police are puzzled and call in Scotland Yard when a second identical murder takes place. Inspector Albert Lincoln - disfigured in World War I, with an arid marriage and a wife who has never recovered from losing their only son in the flu epidemic - is sent to investigate.

The events take place in 1919 when everyone in Wenfield has lost someone in the carnage of World War I. Part of it is narrated by the doctor's daughter - Flora and the rest is told from the point of view of Inspector Lincoln. The book is well written and does evoke the atmosphere of the country after the end of World War I and the devastating flu epidemic.

I didn't work out who the murderer was or why the murders were being committed so when it was revealed it was a shock. Looking back over the book, the clues were there but I didn't place the right importance on them. I recommend this book if you enjoy reading crime stories with a historical setting.

Caroline says

WTF! I feel like that is a good enough review.

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

A brilliant historical police procedural set just after World War 1

A woman is found stabbed in woods with a dead dove stuffed into her mouth just outside the small village of Wenfield in the Peak District. The local police are unable to solve the crime and Scotland Yard detective Albert Lincoln, a scarred veteran of World War 1 is called in when a second identical murder takes place.

Kate Ellis has produced a quick flowing book that brilliantly evokes the atmosphere of a small village reeling in the loss of their menfolk in the aftermath of World War I and the devastating flu epidemic that quickly follows.

Most of the book is narrated by the doctor's daughter, Flora and Inspector Lincoln. The character of Flora, a young woman eager to break the bonds of the traditional place of women on this period is excellently portrayed as is Lincoln whose wartime experiences and loss of his child haunt his thoughts and actions.

I found this book really good and would highly recommend it. I'll be looking out for other Kate Ellis books off the back of this one.

I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley for review.

Margaret says

A stand alone novel from Kate Ellis set in the aftermath of WW1.

Women in a small village are being murdered with a bayonet, their mouths slit open and a dove shoved inside.

Who is doing this? What is his motive?

After a third murder occurs when the local police has a suspect in custody, a Scotland Yard detective is despatched to the village. Will he catch the killer before the death toll mounts higher?

Fabulously atmospheric book that conjures the bleak days of 1919, with its trail of broken men, shattered families, and the Spanish Influenza epidemic.

When the killer is unmasked, it comes as a real shock.

A rare 5 stars from me.

Elaine Tomasso says

I would like to thank Netgalley and Little, Brown Book Group UK for a review copy of A High Mortality Of

Doves, an intriguing tale of murder in a remote Derbyshire village, set just after the First World War.

Myrtle Bligh receives a note from the brother she presumed dead in the war asking her to meet him secretly in the local wood to help him out of trouble. Unfortunately Myrtle meets a sadistic death, rather than her brother. When a second woman is killed in the same way the police arrest the local misfit but have to release him when a third body is found. Scotland Yard, in the form of Inspector Albert Lincoln is called in. The case is baffling with plenty of suspects but no firm lines of enquiry.

Apart from anything else the novel has a first rate plot with plenty of turns and a spectacular twist at the end. Normally I can have a good guess at the perpetrator but I was clueless right up until the end and found myself eagerly following all Ms Ellis's hints up all the blind alleys she constructed. It is masterful plotting.

Told alternately in the third person from Albert's point of view and in the first from Flora Winsmore, the doctor's daughter the novel seems intimate and has a very readable style. Albert's narrative concentrates on the investigation and Flora's on the wider impact on the village and the way the war has changed the fabric of their lives. These are rounded characters, however, so their hopes, aspirations and feelings are included. Albert is a lonely man because his wife turned her back on life when their young son died and now barely exists. It is no wonder he falls for the lively Flora. Flora is also lonely. Her mother left years ago, her brother died in the trenches and her father is intent on keeping her at home. An auxiliary nurse during the war she longs to go to Manchester and study nursing professionally but her father doesn't see it as the done thing.

The historical detail is fascinating and Ms Ellis does a tremendous job of seeing the issues of heroism and cowardice from the era's point of view, except perhaps Flora who is rather more progressive in her outlook. We shudder nowadays at the way so many young men were sent to certain death but at the time they were seen as heroes and anyone not on the front line was a shirker at best and mostly regarded as a coward to be sent white feathers. The attitude seemed to be if you could walk you could fight.

A High Mortality Of Doves is an amazing mixture of great plotting, well developed characters and interesting historical detail all woven together seamlessly into a compulsive read. I have no hesitation in recommending it as an excellent read.

Martine Bailey says

After hearing the author speak at a crime conference I looked out for this cleverly written novel set in Derbyshire, England, in the aftermath of the first world war. A small village setting reveals a hotbed of gossip and jealousy when a series of women are found murdered along with dead doves, the symbol of peace. The story is told from a number of viewpoints, chiefly Flora, the village doctor's sensitive but frustrated daughter, and Albert, a troubled detective from London. A fascinating theme is the use of sinister painted masks created for soldiers who returned with facial injuries. This is a great read for its sensitive exploration of an unusual moment in history, its clever braiding of themes and an unusual final twist. Recommended.

Zoe says

Thanks netgalley for this ARC.

It's never too late and early for us to forgive, love, and let go. I think that's what this novel tries to teach us. Plus much more besides

FittenTrim says

Is this a 4-star book or a 3-star book? Honestly, I can't say. Shortly after purchasing the novel, I was looking at GoodReads reviews and there was a two-word phrase in a review that while not directly spoiling the plot, told me all I needed to know. I tried waiting months to see if I could forget the two-word phrase, but nope, I remembered it and knew from the first page where the narrative twist was headed. I'm positive that I would've figured the twist out myself (it is the only solution); but I never had that opportunity. I believe most people will enjoy this very thoughtful murder mystery, pick it up and tell me your thoughts.

Helen says

Interesting! Seemed very different from her other books to begin with. Particularly good at the post-war atmosphere (1919 onwards) - traumatised communities coping with the aftermath of war, with the influenza epidemic and the influence of spiritualism. There are also some interesting historical details such as the use of masks for injured soldiers. The denouement and the identity of the murderer was maybe a little bit too much of a twist, though, and the ending is really sad. So many people with sad secrets!

Donna Irwin says

3.5 stars. A well written stand alone historical murder mystery from the author of the Wesley Peterson detective novels. Set just after WW1 and told through the eyes of doctors daughter, Flora, it winds it way nicely to a dramatic conclusion.

I found the present tense narration quite difficult at first but soon got into the character of Flora but was surprised at some of her actions given the time period.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for a review copy.

Nooilforpacifists says

Excellent mystery that gradually becomes a police procedural. It's set in a bucolic village in the north of England, just after the Great War. An array of suspects are paraded; my two guesses were wrong. But the ending is so surprising that I couldn't have figured out the plot in a million years.

Which means, of course, it's a tremendous read.

Vishaka Rajan says

This was definitely an interesting novel. The author did a good job of creating a realistic impression of the historical time period, replete with examples of the social issues and prejudices that were prevalent in those days. The writing style was interesting, flitting between different characters. Flora had her own designated chapters that read more like diary entries, and Albert's chapters were in 3rd perspective. At first, I didn't really enjoy this style but it stopped mattering as I focused more on the story. The plot was intriguing and there were many avenues of investigation that the author explored. The ending definitely took me aback, as I wasn't suspecting this direction; however, it wasn't satisfactory for me and felt more like the author chose to do this just to add a thrill element. In other words, it wasn't as well thought out as it could have been. The relationship between the two main characters was also not something I enjoyed; I don't usually like novels where infidelity is accepted and I also felt as if the romance was not too well developed. Overall, a nice historical fiction with an interesting crime twist. This novel didn't wow me but it wasn't terrible, so I would give this a 3/5 stars.

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Lorraine Baker says

919. The Derbyshire village of Wenfield is still reeling from four terrible years of war, and now, just when the village is coming to terms with the loss of so many of its sons, the brutal murder of a young girl shatters its hard-won tranquillity.

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Deliciously brilliant - just as all Kate Ellis books are.

Alma says

This is a very easy book to read, nothing too complicated and characters easily identifiable . It is easy to imagine the location as it is set in a very small northern village in England during the first year after the First World War. Although this is not an era I usually read about, i found I became easily engrossed in the story line. I don't think the writing was particularly great and the author did tend to repeat herself on various occasions and dragged the story out when it could have easily been condensed. A good holiday read which doesn't require much thinking about and the ending wasn't that surprising especially if you are an avid crime reader.
