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The Sans Pareil Mystery: The Detective Lavender Mysteries, Book 2



Synopsis

On a cold February night in Regency London, a dark curtain falls on the Sans Pareil Theatre following the death of April Clare, a promising young actress, whose body is found in mysterious circumstances. Detective Stephen Lavender and his dependable deputy, Constable Woods, quickly discover that nothing is quite as it seems. As successive mysteries unfold, they soon realise that it is not only the actors from the Sans Pareil who are playing a part. With the Napoleonic War looming dangerously across the Channel, this is a time of suspicion and treachery. Following the clues from the seedy back streets of Covent Garden up through the echelons of society, Lavender and Woods begin to fear that the case is much bigger than they'd dared imagine - and worse, that they are at risk of becoming mere players in a master criminal's shadowy drama. It will take all of Lavender's skill and wit, and help from the beautiful Magdalena, to bring the mystery of the Sans Pareil Theatre to a dramatic conclusion in the final act.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Regency London 1810: Bow Street detective Stephen Lavender and his colleague Constable Ned Woods are called to a derelict building about to be demolished. A neighbour insists there's a woman in the building, but when Lavender's men search it, they find no one. The demolition proceeds and when the wall falls down, the corpse of a beautiful young woman is revealed beneath the floorboards. It's not long until she is recognised as one of the actresses at the Sans Pareil theatre...This is a light-hearted romp, as much a romance novel as a crime novel really. In the

beginning it looks as though April Divine has been murdered during a botched attempt to kidnap her and hold her for ransom, but gradually the plot widens out to take in aspects of the ongoing Napoleonic Wars with spy rings and secret documents a-plenty. The plotting is undoubtedly the best bit of the book, though it's not a mystery â “ the reader learns and understands what's going on at the same time as the detectives. I look for a couple of things in historical crime fiction. Firstly, the detection element must be in line with the time it's set in â “ no amazing foresight to 20th century science, for instance. Secondly, the time period must feel right â “ the characters should either fit in to the contemporary rules of society or they should be obviously misfits and seen as such by the other characters. Sadly this book fails fairly spectacularly on both of these requirements. I stuck it out for about 70% and then couldn't take any more, so skipped ahead to the end... I was interested enough in the plot to want to know who the baddies were, hence my generous 1.5 -star rating. The whole thing around the Bow Street runners felt completely inauthentic somehow.

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