



Murder on Black Swan Lane

Andrea Penrose

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In Regency London, an unconventional scientist and a fearless female artist form an unlikely alliance to expose unspeakable evil . . .

The Earl of Wrexford possesses a brilliant scientific mind, but boredom and pride lead him to reckless behavior. He does not suffer fools gladly. So when pompous, pious Reverend Josiah Holworthy publicly condemns him for debauchery, Wrexford unsheathes his rapier-sharp wit and strikes back. As their war of words escalates, London's most popular satirical cartoonist, A.J. Quill, skewers them both. But then the clergyman is found slain in a church—his face burned by chemicals, his throat slashed ear to ear—and Wrexford finds himself the chief suspect.

Murder on Black Swan Lane Details

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From Reader Review Murder on Black Swan Lane for online ebook

Teresa says

This is a murder mystery set in Regency times. It takes place in London from the mansions of Mayfair to some of the less salubrious quarters of that city.

The Earl of Wrexford is another bored aristocrat but he has a brilliant mind and dabbles in scientific experiments.

Charlotte Sloane is a brilliant artist in her own right but she takes over her husbands work secretly when he dies, as a satirical cartoonist who depicts the gossip and scandals of the day in exaggerated fashion. All the ton fear 'his' quill.

When the Earl is suspected of murder, he sets out to prove his innocence and discover who the real murderer is. In the course of his investigation he discovers who Charlotte is. He proposes they join forces as she has ways and means of getting information that is beyond him. In exchange he'll keep her secret.

Helping in the quest are two young brothers. Raven and Hawk, are street urchins Charlotte befriends and tries to, surreptitiously, take care of. Raven is very proud and sees himself as the protector of his younger brother.

There are many more interesting and varied characters peppered throughout the story. Also there is quite a bit about science and experiments which won't be to everyone's taste but it's not overwhelming. I found it all fascinating.

There are also some wonderful descriptive passages and the author's love of art shines through.

Needless to say I loved it. I don't ordinarily read murder mysteries but the blurb for this one just caught me and of course it's in Regency times which I love.

The Earl and Charlotte make a great team and i especially loved the addition of Raven and Hawk.

This is the start of a great series and the only complaint I have is that I have to wait, impatiently, for the next one to come out.

The Lit Bitch says

4.5 stars

While combing through the catalog of titles on Netgalley, I happened to come across this one and admittedly, was captivated by the cover. I am not really sure why, I mean it's not like it's really that new and eye catching....I feel like I've seen a ton of books with similar titles that I was passed by in favor of something more eye catching.

But for some reason I paused on this one long enough to read the summary. Again, nothing terribly fresh but yet it sounded like just the thing I was looking for.....something predictable. I was dying to read another British detective mystery novel and this sounded like just that. So I clicked on request and once it was approved, I started in on what I expected to be a run of the mill detective novel.

So the plot sounds like something you have read before am I right? Rogue-ish lord with a flair for unconventional hobbies gets framed for murder, meets quirky side kick and/or love interest and together they solve the crime. Was this book that? Yes. But yet I felt like I was reading something new and different at the

same time.

For me what made this book was the characters. Wrexford is into chemistry and basically marches to the beat of his own drum. He's smart and has a 'devil may care' attitude about the ton and society. He is familiar with the satirical drawings of A.J. Quill as many of the drawings are of him. What he doesn't expect to learn is that A.J. Quill is in fact Charlotte Sloane.

Charlotte is kind of this mysterious woman. She lives in a working class section of London and is a widow. She takes care of two orphan children and basically educates them which means she herself is educated. She has upper class friends but doesn't move in high society or even middle class circles.

When Wrexford meets her he is surprised to find first Quill is a female, and secondly that she is so educated. He knows she must have a backstory but we don't find that out what that story might be. I love watching them play off each other. Neither one is all "I love you and want to throw caution to the wind to be together" but there is an unmistakable sexual tension slowly burning below the surface. Romance isn't the obvious focus of the story but there is a hint of something that might develop in future novels.

I loved that Charlotte was kind of obscure. Wrexford was a very open character. He basically doesn't care what people think of him and the audience feels like they know him from the beginning whereas Charlotte has more hidden facets. She isn't as open about herself and when we read her perspective the audience gets the sense that we don't have the full story which makes her intriguing. I also love that Wrexford doesn't try to control her and keep her 'safe'. In many detective novels there is the overwhelming sense of protection from the male lead and it often borders on irritating. I love that Wrexford respected her enough and understood that she wouldn't be placated by staying at home while he did all the foot work.

The mystery itself had a lot of interesting elements and I loved the science aspect. There were enough twists and turns to keep me interested in the story but ultimately it was the relationship between Wrexford and Charlotte that kept me reading. Though mismatched, I think they make a great pair and I look forward to seeing how they evolve in future books. I was way more into this book than I expected to be, so much so, that I downloaded another book by Penrose because I loved her story telling style.

See my full review [here](#)

Keri says

If you like the Sebastian St. Cyr series or the Lady Darby Mysteries, then you will like this one. It was really well done and has that dark, gothic feel to it. I did figure out who done it pretty early in the book, but I was ok with that. It was the relationship that was forming between Charlotte and Wreford that kept me reading. I hope that AP is going somewhere with Wrexford and Charlotte as a couple, as I loved the intensity of these two. Our story starts out with Wrexford being accused of killing a religious figure that he had been feuding with. Charlotte is a widow who is making a barely getting by living as a satirist who happened to get to the murder scene first and had a good memory what was actually there. She may have adlibbed just a little bit. She had been roasting Wrexford pretty heavily lately and this was no different. But once she realized that she may have made it look like an innocent man guilty, she sets out with Wrexford's help (with two little street toughs, Raven and Hawk along for the ride) to find the real killer. There is a lot of history for these two that we didn't get in this book, so I am looking forward to the next one. I need to know their secrets. :-)

Lyuda says

A decent murder mystery set in Regency London. It's well written and I especially liked the female protagonist.

As for the male character...he left me curiously incurious. As one of the reviewers mentioned, the author makes a strategic decision not to delve too deeply into the pasts of her protagonists. She seems to be setting the hook to encourage the readers to pick up future books in the series to learn more about them, but that choice led to a paper-thin characterization. I felt disconnected, especially from the hero.

The strategy also leads to more telling than showing and encyclopedic info dump.

Having recently read C. S. Harris's Sebastian St. Cyr mysteries set at the same time and place, I couldn't help but compare the two. And I have to say that in terms of characterization and richness of the historical setting, St. Cyr is a winner.

Fred says

Murder On Swan Lane is the first in the Wrexford and Sloane Mystery series.

Andrea Penrose once again provides readers with very exciting Regency period mystery.

This series follows the activities of an unlikely duo. Charlotte Sloane has taken on her late husband's persona of A. J. Quinn and has been making satirical cartoons like drawings, poking fun at the aristocracy and her most recent had taken Lord Wrexford to the task. Lord Wrexford is known for his scientific prowess but in recent times has become bored and has started experimenting with medieval chemistry.

When the body of brutality murdered Reverend Holworthy, Lord Wrexford is thought to be the guilty person. When Lord Wrexford finds that he is the focal point of Quinn's next piece of work, he endeavors to find the identity of Quinn. When he meets with Sloane and after some negotiations, they agree to work together to find the murderer. Sloane is in need of additional funds that Wrexford has agreed to pay her and he needs her help to escape the hangman's noose.

Wrexford with the help of Sloane and her two minions, Hawk and Raven, two young lads that she has taken into her home, soon find themselves looking at underhanded dealings of members of the aristocracy. Sloane and Wrexford need to develop their trust in each other so they can find the murder before Wrexford has to meet the hangman.

A well-plotted story with an interesting cast of characters. I particularly enjoyed the characters of Raven and Hawk with all their spunk.

I'm anxiously awaiting the next book in this new series to see what adventures are in store for Sloane and Wrexford.

Linda says

The Earl of Wrexford was bored. Gambling and women offered little *new* excitement. Even his hypotheses and scientific experiments lacked immediate answers. And then **he** was accused of murder.

Someone had set him up. It became a matter of expedience to solve the mystery. It gave him purpose which he hadn't felt in a long time.

'The crime was now like a thorn rubbing against raw skin.'

Wrexford appreciated coherent patterns and logical explanations. A.J. Quill, aka the widow Mrs. Charlotte Sloane, used her experience to draw uncannily accurate pen and ink drawings. The two people formed an odd friendship of sorts.

Just as important to the mystery was Tyler- Wrexford's patient and knowledgeable valet-, his friend Kit (I wanted to know more of his past!), Henning -the gruff Scottish man of medicine- and Charlotte's scamps: Raven and Hawk. I loved the way these characters were written.

There was a secret society and stolen objects. The storyline included an obscure medieval fantasy: something that was illegal to practice both in England and on the Continent. Lastly, a persistent bow-street runner that rounded out the plot.

Murder on Black Swan Lane was a wonderful beginning to a new historical mystery series. It contained quirky bits of delicious history. I'm hooked; I can't wait for the second story. Andrea Penrose, aka the Regency author Andrea Pickens and historical writer Cara Elliott, has found her niche.

Barbara Rogers says

Series: A Wrexford and Sloane Mystery #1

Publication Date: June 27, 2017

An impeccably written, exciting, intriguing, engrossingly tangled and twisted regency mystery. I couldn't put it down once I started reading it. The characters are fully developed and deep with flaws and secrets I'm sure we'll learn more about as the series goes on. I am so very excited that this is a series and we will get to know them all better. If you are a fan of Sebastian St. Cyr mysteries, you will absolutely LOVE this one.

This is the first book I have read by Andrea Penrose or any of her other pen names -- Cara Elliott for Grand Central and Andrea Pickens for NAL, but I can't wait to read more of this series and to also check out her other Regency mystery series.

I have to admit that my two favorite characters in the book are the two street urchins -- Raven and Hawk.

They are intelligent and wise beyond their years and even though they have lived their lives, alone, in the stews of St. Giles, they still have sweet and innocent hearts. It will be interesting to see if, over time, they give up being street urchins and let Charlotte care for them.

Since the series is named Quill Mystery, I assume that the main character will be Charlotte Sloane, also known as A. J. Quill. She is the most popular satirical cartoonist in England, but she must guard her identity and gender. She is very intelligent, feisty and not afraid of anything – at least she thinks she isn't. One of the facts that is uncovered in this mystery is the facts behind the death of her talented artist husband Anthony. She also has another, even bigger, secret in her past and it is hinted at, but not revealed in this book.

The Earl of Wrexford has a brilliant, logical scientific mind and thinks he is incapable of any of the softer feelings. He is also a brilliant chemist – although he keeps that part of his life well hidden. All is logic with Wrexford. So, when everyone thinks he's the person who murdered a Reverend he's been publicly feuding with, he decides that he must solve the murder in order to save himself. His first order of business is to uncover the identity of A. J. Quill who has been skewering him in cartoons. The drawings are absolutely too accurate and therefore the artist must know something. There is also some hinted mystery with the death of Wrexford's brother and I came to feel as if that was what caused Wrexford to close himself off from the softer feelings in life.

Although there is no romance in this book between Charlotte and Wrexford, they do develop a friendship and I hope it will develop into a romance over the course of the series. We do see a bit of 'softening' in Wrexford over the course of the book.

The secondary characters in the book are also great and it will be fun to watch their growth over the course of the series. There is Wrexford's valet cum lab assistant who is smart and sassy. Then, there is Wrexford's friend who is always short of funds and isn't thought to be particularly intelligent. We also have a Scot doctor who does the autopsies and is gifted at interpreting what he is finding – Oh shades of St. Cyr Mysteries with their Scot anatomist.

The mystery is full of twists and turns and people with intertwining plots. You'll have a time figuring out who murderer is and how all of the plots fit together.

"I requested and received this book at no cost to me and volunteered to read it; my review is my honest opinion and given without any influence by the author or publisher."

K.J. Charles says

Very much written in the way of Americans writing British historical genre fiction, which may or may not ring your bell. eg random use of "bloody/bloody hell" in a Regency setting does not imbue text with authentic Britishness and I really wish people would stop doing it. Or just ask someone British "does this sound right?" I also have serious issues with phonetic dialogue for lower class characters for multiple reasons, one of which is that unless you use the phonetic alphabet it *doesn't work* for anyone who doesn't share your pronunciation. London urchins saying "you" as "ye" is not meaningful to me. Unless they're Scottish. Are they Scottish? Plus characters in the early 1800s twice telling each other to "cut to the chase". It refers to making movies, what else could it possibly mean?

None of this may bother other readers, but it got in my way too much for enjoyment and the plot and

characters didn't overcome that so noping out at 19%.

Barb in Maryland says

Very entertaining start to a new series set in Regency England.

I liked our hero, the Earl of Wrexford.

Aside--why doesn't he have a name? Seriously! All we get is his title. Anyway, he's a research chemist who is all logic all the time. Emotions aren't scientific, don't you know. He also leads a visible enough life that he's a target for the satirical cartoonist A.J. Quill. To say that he's not pleased with Quill is rather an understatement, especially when the artist hints that he's guilty of murdering the Rev. Holworthy (with whom Wrexford had been conducting a very public feud).

I also liked our heroine. Charlotte Sloane is a somewhat impoverished widow who makes her living as A.J. Quill. That she is Quill isn't the only secret she is carrying. We get several hints that she is not just an artist's widow. I suspect that we will learn more of her background as the series continues. She is a person full of emotions--a nice foil to Wrexford.

The mystery is a fairly complicated one; the author deftly manages the various strands.

Bow Street runner Griffin has Wrexford pegged as the killer of Holworthy, but no real evidence. That doesn't stop him from dogging Wrexford. When a second murder occurs and Wrexford is implicated, Griffin becomes even more dogged.

The science background was a welcome change of scenery. We get to wander the laboratories of chemists, delve into the arcane subject of alchemy. Scientists such as Humphrey Davy draw large, fashionable crowds to lectures. We also get a not very secret group of scientists called The Ancients. And explosions--I can't forget to mention things going 'boom'.

The author gives us a nice cast of supporting characters. There's the requisite medical man, Henning, who is known to both Wrexford and Mrs Sloane. Wrexford is flanked by Tyler, his valet of many talents, and Christopher Sheffield, a charming scion of good family, who knows just about everyone in society. Mrs Sloane has unofficially adopted two young brothers off the streets. Raven and Hawk (and their fellow guttersnipes) help her stay informed enough to produce Quill's cartoons. The boys also run other errands. She, in turn, feeds them and corrects their grammar. I was quite charmed by the lads.

There is absolutely no hint of romance between Wrexford and Mrs Sloane. Doesn't mean one won't develop further along. And I am fine with that.

I am anxiously awaiting the next book--Murder at Half Moon Gate.

Snooty1 says

An historical mystery during the times of Regency England??? Sign me up!

This is my first time reading Andrea Penrose and her writing is superb. I seriously felt like I was in England, with grime on my shoes and a chill in the air.

Both the heroine and hero in this story are so much more than they appear. Our heroine, Mrs. Sloane, has a secret(s) that she needs to keep, while also feeling drawn to aid in the solving of a murder. The Hero, Wexford, is of course dashing and a Lord, but also a scientist and just so happens to be the lead suspect in previously stated murder...therein you have the background to the story.

Add in some ADORABLE street kids, that really stole the whole book in my eyes and you've got yourself a

Regency Historical Mystery!

Enjoy!

***Thanks to Netgalley and Kensington Books for giving me a copy of this book for my honest review.

Patricia Rice says

I love history and love mysteries and when it comes with a dose of historical science, I'm a happy camper. Andrea gives us all three, plus remarkable characterization. I'm really looking forward to the next one!

Caz says

I've given this a B+ at AAR, so that's 4.5 stars

Murder on Black Swan Lane is the first book in a new series of Regency-era historical mysteries by Andrea Penrose (who also writes as Andrea Pickens and Cara Elliot), which sees a satirical cartoonist teaming up with a scientifically-minded earl to investigate a couple of gruesome murders. The mystery is well-put together and includes some fascinating detail about the chemical sciences as they were understood at the beginning of the 19th century – the author has clearly done her homework – and we're introduced to an engaging set of characters who will, I hope, continue to appear throughout the series.

The Earl of Wrexford (who doesn't appear to have an actual name, just a title) has recently been publicly denounced as the worst kind of dissolute rake by the pompous, puffed-up Reverend Josiah Holworthy. Never one to suffer fools gladly, and the sort of man whom boredom inspires to ever more reckless behaviour, Wrexford responds to his accuser by unleashing his razor-sharp wit in a clever rebuttal, which is printed in the *Morning Gazette*. An increasingly vitriolic and very public argument ensues between the two men which is eagerly documented every step of the way by the popular satirist A.J Quill, whose cartoons persistently skewer those at the highest levels of society, shining a light on the darkest misdeeds on the rich and powerful.

When the Reverend Holworthy is found dead in a church on Black Swan Lane, almost decapitated, his face disfigured by some sort of chemical, suspicion immediately alights upon Wrexford, whose rather eccentric interest in chemistry is widely known. With Quill's uncannily accurate drawings and pithy captions stirring up public opinion against him, Wrexford decides it's time to find out where the cartoonist is getting his information.

A talented artist, Charlotte Sloane picked up her late husband's pen after his death some eight months earlier and has continued to produce satirical cartoons using his pseudonym, A.J Quill. She guards her identity judiciously, knowing that if it's discovered that the scourge of the ton is a woman she will be completely ruined and unable to earn a living. So the last thing she wants or expects is to discover the Earl of Wrexford on her doorstep demanding to see A.J Quill. Charlotte's attempts at deflection become increasingly desperate, at which point the earl realises the truth and offers her a deal. If she will agree to share such information as comes her way regarding the investigation, he will keep her secret and pay for the information. Charlotte is furious at being backed into a corner, but she has no alternative. She is living from

hand to mouth as it is, and can ill afford to turn down the money the earl offers or risk being exposed as A.J. Quill, so she takes the deal.

Thus begins a very fragile relationship in which both protagonists circle each other warily as they gradually develop a strong mutual respect for the other's intellect and skills. Wrexford and Charlotte are similar in some ways – they are both keeping secrets and hiding their true selves behind a public persona – but are completely different in others; Wrexford is all about facts and is bothered when he doesn't have an answer or reason for something whereas Charlotte is far more accepting of the fact that not everything is logical and that sometimes there are no answers.

The murder mystery is intriguing and well-executed; complex enough to grab the reader's interest but not so complicated that it's difficult to follow, and peppered with lots of interesting scientific discussions and detail, in particular relating to the study of alchemy and its bearing on the scientific knowledge of the time. There's larceny, espionage and the discovery of some painful truths, as Charlotte and Wrexford uncover links between her husband's untimely death and the mysterious Ancients Club, things she had suspected but been unable to prove until now.

There is a small but colourful cast of secondary characters who I hope we'll see more of in future books; Henning, the dour, Scots surgeon, Tyler, Wrexford's valet and fellow chemist, Raven and Hawk, the two street urchins Charlotte has taken under her wing and Kit Sheffield, Wrexford's closest friend who is, at first glance, somewhat of an empty-headed fribble, but who is far from being as stupid as he seems. The two principals are flawed, yet likeable and hopefully, the author plans to reveal more about them in future stories as it's clear from the hints she drops here that there is much more to both of them than we've seen so far.

My one criticism of the book is with the way in which the story is set up. Holsworthy holds Wrexford up as an example of the worst kind of wickedness and denounces him as a rakehell, yet there isn't much evidence of this debauched lifestyle on the page; in fact Wrexford himself says at one point that the reality of his life doesn't live up to his scandalous reputation. The man I read about is irascible and highly intelligent with an unusual (for a member of the aristocracy) interest in science, a man who puts logic ahead of emotion and disdains sentimentality. There are a few references to his unsavoury reputation throughout the book, but unless his reputation is for being a man with a hot temper who prefers to go his own way, the idea of a cleric using him as an example of immorality doesn't really make sense.

I'll also add a word of caution for anyone looking for a Lady Julia or Lady Darby type of romantic frisson – you won't find it here. Wrexford and Charlotte develop a strong working relationship which gradually turns into friendship and have developed an almost grudging admiration and respect for each other's abilities by the end of the book. That's not to say there is no potential for development in a more romantic direction in future, but for now, this is a solid historical mystery in which the emphasis is firmly on tracking down the killer and proving Wrexford's innocence.

I enjoyed the story and the characters and am eager to read more of Charlotte and Wrexford's adventures together. **Murder on Black Swan Lane** is recommended for anyone in the mood for a well-written historical mystery featuring a moody aristocratic hero and a heroine who knows how to cut him down to size.

Sherry says

2.5 stars

This book should have been a slam-dunk for me. Historical mystery? Great. Set in the Regency period? Even better. A dark, intelligent, sardonic hero with potential hidden depths? My favorite kind. A courageous, independent heroine? Bring it!

And yet, in spite of being the sort of thing I should love, the book didn't pull me in like it should have.

I think what kept me from fully engaging with the book is that the main characters didn't completely come alive for me. The author makes the strategic decision not to delve too deeply into the pasts of her hero and heroine, so that the reader only gets a partial view of what has shaped them into the people they are. She seems to be setting the hook to encourage the readers to pick up future books in the series to learn more about them, but that choice left me feeling a bit disconnected from the two of them. (Particularly Wrexford; Penrose gives a little more insight into what makes Charlotte tick.)

To make up for the light characterization, the book needed to have an engrossing plot. The mystery was reasonably well constructed, with a few red herrings, but it wasn't very complex. It wasn't until the last third of the book, when Wrexford and Charlotte start to actively confront their suspects, that I really got drawn into the story. I finished the novel because I wanted to find out what happened, but it certainly wasn't the kind of book I couldn't put down.

For me, this book was just OK. People who are looking for a new historical mystery series to read might want to give it a try, though. I may have been spoiled by C. S. Harris's terrific Sebastian St. Cyr mysteries. The comparison to that series in the book's description is appropriate in terms of the setting, but Harris's novels are much richer in terms of character and plot.

An eARC of this novel was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Myra says

I really was not sure how I would feel about this read, thankfully, I was pleasantly surprised!

I am grateful to Kensington, for choosing me as a GoodReads Giveaway winner!

I do love most Historical Brit Lit, so I was attracted to the fact that this book takes place in Regency London. What I was most surprised by was how fantastic these characters are. I feel they would even be a grand time on their own, even without a murder mystery to spice things up!

I am eagerly awaiting the second round, Murder at Half Moon Gate, unfortunately for me, it will not be released until March 27th!

Martha says

I'm giving up on this one for now. Although I really like the premise, the language is bothering me. Some of it is anachronistic (for example, the author keeps using "awfully," which was not recorded as an intensifier until some 20 years later than this book purports to take place), some just feels very stilted and unnatural (they said this in the Regency period, so I'll put it in!). And the hero just feels too stereotypically bad-boy hero-ish.

