



Death of a Squire

Maureen Ash

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When a squire's body is found hanging from a tree, Templar Bascot de Marins is given the task of unearthing the truth before an unprecedented meeting of kings at Lincoln Castle.

Death of a Squire Details

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Morgiana says

This author doesn't disappoint - I really liked this book starting from the story to the characters. Sir Bascot de Marin's second investigation was a helluva ride, and I enjoyed it wholeheartedly. Learned so much again about how the forest was used, what (or who) is a wolf's head, how the outlaws lived (believe me they have nothing to do with Hollywood movies;))). Enjoyed the recurring characters as the new ones, the plot was really interesting, so enjoy this book if you are interested in medieval history and crime stories.

Alexandra says

This is the second mystery in the Templar Knight series. These are fun to read because the author has obviously done her research with regards to the era and is good at dropping in historical details without creating a big clunking sound in the middle of the story. I had a conversation with a regular customer at work who has been reading these too and she wasn't sure she liked them because of the light characterization but I think that might be what makes them work for me. It's almost like reading historical nonfiction where the author didn't want to read too much into things if that makes sense.

There was a bit at the end of this one that didn't quite make sense to me but I'm not sure if I just misunderstood something.

Joyce says

Noting that others may feel very differently about the style of this book, I personally didn't enjoy the mostly omniscient POV of this story. I felt it separated me too much from the characters, so that I never really bonded with any of them. I couldn't keep track of the endless number of characters, the pacing was extremely slow, with awkwardly placed flashback scenes and too much "stopping" to show off the author's research. The dialogue also felt stiff and unwieldy to me, even allowing a greater formality of "medieval" speech. Frankly, if I hadn't been reading this book for a 2009 book challenge, I wouldn't have bothered to finish it.

Scot says

Second in a new series set in Lincolnshire, 1200 A.D. Our detective is a one-eyed Templar knight who cares for a mute servant boy he brought home from Italy as he returned from the Crusades. This installment is even stronger than the first with regard to plot, and makes interesting connections to the well-founded fear that King John had concerning conspiracies to replace him and the outlaw life of crafty hunters in Sherwood Forest. Conveys social history, clarifies medieval laws about rights and obligations for different people at various levels in the class hierarchy, and enriches vocabulary without slowing down plot. Not demanding yet rewarding, a good summer read.

Lori says

Another reviewer summed up the story as rewarding not demanding. I'm not sure about rewarding, but I would buy enjoyable. It was definitely not demanding which is exactly what I was looking for after reading the first five installments of George R. R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series and before attacking Sharon Kay Penman's Lionheart.

The author does use a bit too much telling, not showing for the books to be among my favorite medieval mysteries, but the historical tidbits are well researched. Being a character driven reader primarily, I would like additional details in the characterizations of Bascot, Gianni, Nicolaa and her husband and son, Ernulf and Roget at the very least, as they seem to be the characters the series is to be built about. The mystery plots are not stellar, but offer enough intrigue to keep me reading for the few hours it takes me to finish one of these books.

Spuddie says

#2 Bascot de Marins "Templar" mystery set in 1200 Lincoln. King John is coming to Lincoln so the whole town, and most certainly the castle, is astir with preparations. When the squire of Nicolaa de la Haye's brother-in-law is found hanged in the nearby forest, she is concerned that her brother-in-law is somehow involved and that a plot to overthrow the King might be involved--and she needs to know the score before the King's arrival. Bascot de Marins, a Templar knight who is for now a temporary retainer of Nicolaa and her husband Gerard Camville, sheriff of Lincoln, helped her earlier in the year with another investigation, so she asks him once again to investigate and get to the bottom of the squire's death. Hubert de Tournay was not well-liked, being a nosy braggart who was always ferreting out secrets, and also tended to coerce young women to have assignations with him. Was his death the result of a political plot, or was there a more personal motive?

I enjoyed this second entry in the series more than the first, as we get to know the main character and his supporting cast better. I've read quite a few books set in this time period and this is the first one I recall where there was actually a supporter of King John among the major cast of characters--Nicolaa de la Haye was staunchly in favor of the King. On a personal level, Bascot struggles with decisions in his own life--whether to rejoin the Templars now that his body and soul are somewhat healed after his years-long captivity in the Holy Land, or permanently become a knight of Nicolaa's household? And what of Gianni, his mute servant whom he rescued from a life of poverty and starvation? Looking forward very much to the next in the series.

Amy Bradley says

I read this faster than the first. A lot of the story seemed to be more peripherally rather than the central whodunnit - but was still an interesting read. I liked the bits with the outlaws in the forest in terms of social group interactions - refreshing break from courtly mannerisms.

Tory Wagner says

Death of a Squire by Maureen Ash is the second in a series entitled A Templar Knight Mystery. Bascot de Marin's is a Templar Knight who is called upon to solve the mystery of the murder of a young squire. Previously he had successfully solved another mystery and finds himself again called upon by his patroness Nicolaa de la Haye. Complicating his task is the coming visit by King John and some intrigue concerning John's cousin Arthur. Ash does a good job of researching the time period so the mystery feels authentic.

Andrew Doohan says

Another wonderful tale from the pen of Maureen Ash set in medieval Lincoln during the reign of King John (who actually features in this particular story). In the presence of secret murder and mystery, the knight, Sir Bascot de Marins, a Templar knight facing anguish over whether his future lies within the folds of that Order or not, is tasked to investigate the murder of a squire in the retinue of a baron currently visiting the castle in which he currently finds a home.

Although not his normal field of expertise, de Marins undertakes the task he has been assigned with the commitment and devotion to duty that was indicative of the Knights Templar, and with the assistance of those who are fast becoming good friends and colleagues uncovers the culprit and the reason behind the gruesome murders that take place during the course of the novel.

The setting of the narrative - medieval Lincoln - is in keeping with the accepted history of the town at the time, and this level of authenticity adds to the overall effectiveness of the author's efforts. Very highly recommended.

Mister Jones says

Well, it started out promising: tortured knight with demons attempting to solve case of youth with a hang-up; well written and intelligent; however, somewhere between my interest and my consciousness, I surrendered to the dark forces of "WTF." In effect, it just didn't retain my interest. I hate to see a book with so much potential become a agonizingly dull read.

Ann says

This is a good mystery series. In the year 1200, Bascot de Marins is a Knight Templar who is staying in Lincoln at the service of Lady Nicolaa de la Haye. The town is preparing for a royal visit when a young squire is found hanged. Nicolaa asks Bascot to find out who has done the murder and why. Bascot and Gianni, his young servant travel throughout the area and find that the victim was hated by just about everyone and there are plenty of suspects. No one seems to mourn the youth but Bascot must find the answers before the king arrives. This is a well written series with a suspenseful mystery. The characters are very well written and it kept my interest from the very beginning.

Lynne Tull says

It looks like I have now added 'Medieval' stories to my preferred genres. I think this is the 4th series I enjoy reading. I really like the story that Maureen Ash tells. There are times when I feel the 21st Century creeping into the story. I was thinking these stories take place in 1200 over 900 years ago. Very few people could read and write; most did not. I am enamored with Bascot de Marins and his protegee, Gianni. No, I did not guess the murderer. Bascot had to solve it for me. Of course, there is a teaser at the end to keep me coming back for more. Recommend!

Gerry Burnie says

Discovering this work by Maureen Ash, i.e. *Death of a Squire* [Prime Crime MM, 2007], was a happy conjunction of accidents. As mentioned above the first was not having received my book order from Amazon.ca, and because of this I resorted to browsing a bargain table of paper backs. *Death of a Squire* is the second of a four-part series (so far) called "Templar Knight." I must admit that I haven't read the other three, but I hope to remedy that omission in the near future.

The story takes place in the late autumn of 1200 AD. King John—of Robin Hood fame—is on the throne, and he is about to meet the King of Scotland in Lincoln. Therefore, the townspeople are busy preparing for this momentous occasion when the body of young Hubert de Tournay, an unpopular squire, is found hanging from a limb deep in the forest (adjacent to Sherwood Forest—once again of Robin Hood fame). Lady Nicolaa de la Haye, Castellan of Lincoln Castle, calls upon Templar Bascot de Marins with his young, mute servant Gianni to find the killer—something he has successfully done in *Ale House Murders*, the first of the series.

Was the squire's death a vengeance killing by peasants angry at the assault of one of their own? Or was it one of his fellow squires who hated him and might have secrets that Hubert would have been only too pleased to exploit? Or was his end perpetrated by one of the women he coerced by force or blackmail to comply with his advances? Complicating matters is King John who, sensitive to any slight real or imagined, has recently heard innuendos of a covert plan to depose him in favour of his rival Arthur. Therefore, was de Tournay's murder the result of knowing too much about the wayward ambitions of some highborn nobles?

As de Marins goes about solving the crime we meet a colourful cast of characters, wonderfully developed, and learn more about the history of the time and place. In fact, for me this aspect was one of the real highlights of Ash's writing; her in-depth knowledge of Medieval life, and the seamless manner in which she wove this into the story. The only quibble I have is that she unfortunately chose the climax of the story to introduce the backgrounds of several characters; i.e. Green Jack and Fulcher, which slowed the pace at an inappropriate stage. Moreover, although the ending is certainly unpredictable, it is perhaps a bit too unpredictable without any prior build-up. Nonetheless, it is a great read for the for the summer and for the whole family. I highly recommend this series by Maureen Ash.

Liisa says

Oh to write a mystery series that takes place in Medieval England... all under the shadow of Ellis Peters and Brother Cadfael. Not that all the Cadfael stories were 5-star, but they seem to have set the benchmark, haven't they? In Maureen Ash's tales, we have a Templar back from Crusade (so, a fighting monk in place of a Benedictine), Lincoln instead of Shrewsbury, and Ernulf/Roget together playing the part of Hugh Beringar.

So, why do these stories feel more empty than the Cadfael tales? The backdrop, for one. While the height of the Plantagenets is my favorite period, it lacks the oomph (technical term) of the Civil War between Maude and Stephen. The War gave the Cadfael stories extra plot points: ways of temporarily removing characters, opportunities for Cadfael to get away from Shrewsbury, or actual murder motives. So far -- and I'm only 2 books into the series -- King John's reign is only circumspectly part of the plot. Cadfael can not exist in any other time. I'm not sure I feel the same about Bascot de Marins.

Of course how I feel about these characters is just lukewarm. From the outset, I loved Cadfael, I despised Jerome, I felt warmly toward Hugh. With the Templar mysteries, I like Gianni, but I don't really feel strongly about anyone. Emotional commitment seems a requirement if you are asking me to follow these characters through half a dozen or so books.

Why don't I feel more for them? Another reviewer brought up one problem: omniscient point of view. If I know more than the detective, then I am not really solving it with him/her, and I'm not invested in their success or failure. This particular book compounded this problem by letting the reader in on secret conversations that all ended similarly, with "Let me tell you the most shocking part," and then cutting away. One dangling thread is fine; 4 or 5 is obnoxious. Another barrier keeping these characters distant is their 2-dimensionality. Roget is a hard-drinking, wench-loving mercenary; ok, but he must have a dark, unlikable side, so where is it? Gerard Camville is angry... all the time. And, for someone who has gone through as much horridness as Bascot has, my god, he is so boring! Cadfael had fought and loved and then became a monk; his internal struggles focused around missing his former life. Bascot became a Templar, fought a lot, and now he's in a weird purgatory, neither Templar nor civilian. You assume he'll finally leave the Order for good, but it doesn't seem the right outcome. He is not outstanding in any way, no special skills, no particular insight unique to his life experience.

He misses killing people in the name of God. It's hard to feel an emotional connection to someone who has defined themselves as a joyless, chaste killer of "infidels". Is his character historically accurate? Probably, but this is fiction, and we are allowed a bit of suspension of disbelief. Cadfael, the enlightened monk who loves playing Cupid, is not especially believable in his historical context, but he is entertaining. All Bascot seems to be missing is a hair shirt. Good lord, please get this guy drunk or laid, because his only outlet is a fondness for candy.

I am definitely going to read Book 3, because I want to see how Ash resolves this issue of "Will he stay or will he go?" with Bascot, but he needs to lighten up considerably. Even Sister Frevisse knows how to have some fun in Margaret Frazer's series, and Frevisse is a firecracker sometimes. Here's hoping Bascot gets into a bit of trouble or tells someone off or at least learns a skill.

Mary says

Just my speed. Good characters, reasonably good representation of medieval life, some good twists to the mystery. The best part is the relationship between Gascot and Gianni. Very endearing.

Babette says

This is the second book in the Templar Knight series by Maureen Ash. I am enjoying these books, even though they are light reading. The details of life in medieval times are interesting, the characters are realistic - both their good and bad traits are shown, and the plots are underpinned by actual historical events or people. I suppose I read these more for a sense of the times than anything else, but if you try them, you will be entertained.

This particular book focuses on a murder that takes place in the forest, so there is extensive focus on the types of people who live and work there as well as the sports that take place there. This is in good contrast to the life in the town (Lincoln). The relationship between Bascot de Marins, the Templar knight, and his mute servant boy Gianni is further developed, the book ending with a question of how it will be in the future.

Read this for fun and for historical perspective.

Cindy says

King John has just married and crushed his foes. Now he's set to meet with the King of Scotland to receive his pledge of loyalty. They're going to meet in the Lincoln castle. But when a squire is found murdered, hanging from a tree a few days before the meeting, there's a rush to get this death resolved before the king shows up. Was he killed by bandits, as the sheriff would like to believe? Or was it a political death, as his wife fears? Templar Bascot de Marins is asked to investigate.

I really enjoyed this book. I forgot that I had read the first in this series, The Alehouse Murders, a couple of years ago. I must have enjoyed it and put this one on the TBR list, but somehow forgot about it. I'm glad this challenge encouraged me to pick it up. King John is not in the book until the end, but he is still a presence in the story, with his coming royal visit. If there is a plot, the king is not known for being even a little forgiving, so the pressure is on to solve the murder in a hurry.

Linda says

A murder and a visit from the king!

Templar Night mysteries #2

Another murder for Templar Bascot de Marins and Gianni his mute servant to solve. This time a young squire is found hung in a tree and rumors abound that he was involved in a treasonous plot against King

John. Bascot is again asked by Lady Nichola de Haye to solve the mystery with a sense of urgency. The rumors of the plot must be resolved quickly as King John is only days away from making a visit to Lincoln castle. There are many twist and turns to the mystery and as always in trying to solve the murder many peoples secrets are exposed. The mystery is well done, I had not guessed the answer but it made sense once it was revealed.

Maureen Ash does a wonderful job in recreating the medieval environment. The feeling of being among the castle's inhabitants exists throughout the story and you can feel their excitement at the arrival of King John. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys historical mysteries. 3.5 stars!

LJ says

DEATH OF A SQUIRE (Hist. Mys-Bascot de Marins-England-1200) – VG

Ash, Maureen – 2nd in series

Berkley, US Paperback, 2008 – ISBN: 0425219593

First Sentence: The trees in the forest were nearly denuded of leaves.

Templar Knight Bascot de Marins is spending time at Lincoln Castle with his young, mute servant, Gianni. He is still recovering from the torture he suffered at the hands of the Saracans during his years of captivity in the Holy Lands.

King John and King William of Scotland are on their way to Lincoln Castle and everything must be perfect to receive them. The body of young Squire Hubert de Tournay is found hands bound and hung from a tree in the forest. The murder doesn't appear to have been done by poachers as the squire has not been stripped of his fine clothing or accessories. As castellan of Lincoln Castle, Lady Nicolaa de la Haye is responsible for the life and ensuring peace within it., thus asking Bascot to uncover the killer.

I found this a much better book than the first, "The Alehouse Murders." While there were a lot of characters, each was distinct and easily identified. Lady Nicolaa is a wonderful, strong woman and it's nice to see that woman did play an important role during the time.

But it is Bascot who really draws me to the story. He is a Templar Knight who, while questioning his future, still honors the commitments he made. His care for Gianni, whom he admits feeling about more as a father than a master, adds a humanity and caring to his obvious intellect and strength.

The story is so well researched and plotted with excellent suspense and twists along the way. It was a wonderful read and I hope a series that will continue on for some time.

Linda Finlayson says

Good plot that keeps the reader guessing. I love all the period detail and getting to know the main characters better. Bascot is a good sleuth, but if I'm being picky, I have to complain about his lack of 'monkness.' Not that he breaks his vows, even though he's still sorting out whether to stay in the Templar Knight order. But for a man brought up in the monastery and at home with his fellow knights/monks, his days should still be

punctuated with the liturgy of the church. Maybe not always attending but at least aware of them. The author tends to put in occasional references more for local color than as part of his character.
