



A Death in the Small Hours

Charles Finch

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From the critically acclaimed author of *A Beautiful Blue Death* and *A Burial at Sea* comes an intriguing new mystery in what *The New York Times* calls "a beguiling series"

Charles Lenox is at the pinnacle of his political career and is a delighted new father. His days of regularly investigating the crimes of Victorian London now some years behind him, he plans a trip to his uncle's estate, Somerset, in the expectation of a few calm weeks to write an important speech. When he arrives in the quiet village of Plumley, however, what greets him is a series of strange vandalisms upon the local shops: broken windows, minor thefts, threatening scrawls.

Only when a far more serious crime is committed does he begin to understand the great stakes of those events, and the complex and sinister mind that is wreaking fear and suspicion in Plumley. Now, with his protege, John Dallington, at his side, the race is on for Lenox to find the culprit before he strikes again. And this time his victim may be someone that Lenox loves.

A Death in the Small Hours Details

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From Reader Review A Death in the Small Hours for online ebook

Jeanette says

Charles and Lady Jane spend some time away from London and Parliament. They are in Somerset with Charles' cousin Freddy.

This was a scrumptious adventure, filled with precise traditions, town peoples' foibles, all kinds of vandalism and misplaced loot or evidence. And yet it was at the same time, extremely warm. The Lenox baby daughter, Sophia, making it even more so. Adjusting to a baby, little quarrels, and the conflicts of work. Even in the Victorian period, the town versus country argument also enticing to the answers. Or who gets more time-the family or the career?

This series was somewhat cozy and I thought super mild, possibly overly so? But the more I've read of it, the better I like it. Not so much simplicity in parsing to both the best of family or community, but rather that point is set in the primary. Secondary being the mystery angle or crux of oppositions or "the worst"- the criminal, cruel or merely non-fit for their own purposes or enhancements.

This #6 was entirely enjoyable, it never dragged. And the length was needed, because there are really duo plots and layers of reveal beyond the original crimes. So many tidbits I never knew told along the way. Like the tradition of leaving buns wrapped in brown paper sealed with black wax, left in the pews for the villagers upon the funeral service of a lord or master of the manor/lodge. And the magistrate/ judge structure for the small towns. Who was held for inquiry or trial and for what. Especially for the local teenage "bad" boys! Consequence- the sentences of punishments for their expensive pranks or foolishness? Send them out to muck the gardens! And who is second in command as a kind of under sheriff? Of course the head gardener.

I'll be reading more of these, for sure. Charles and Jane really fit for the era. They are Victorians.

Tom Melcior says

The lead character, Charles Lenox, is faced with a seemingly harmless bit of village tomfoolery that turns deadly. His unraveling of the mystery, while effectively managed, is not what made me keep turning the pages.

Lenox's sedate world of upper-class English Victorian privilege, his loving, uncomplicated relationship with his wife, his secure social status, his success in Parliament, his untroubled state of mind and his oft-stated complete satisfaction with every aspect of his life, should add up to be the very definition of a stuffy snore of a fellow! But I like him.

Where are his inner conflict, demons, or anger? No where! In fact, his deep enjoyment of the simple pleasure, like a tottering octogenarian, of tea and more tea and yet more tea by a warm hearth, warms me too instead of boring me.

I recommend Finch's hero as a welcome and refreshing respite from the anti-social, glowering, desperate, unloved, driven heroes of so much of mystery fiction.

LJ says

First Sentence: Charles Lenox sat in the study of his town house at Hampden Lane—that small, shop-lined street off Grosvenor Place where he had passed most of his adult life—and sifted through the papers that had accumulated upon his desk, as they would, inevitably, when one became a Member of Parliament.

Charles Lenox, Victorian gentleman, former private investigator, is now married, a new father and a Member of Parliament. He has been given the huge honor of giving the upcoming session's opening speech. To prepare, he takes the family off for a few quiet weeks at his uncle's estate in Somerset. The stay is less restful than planned when he is asked to help investigate a couple strange cases of vandalism. Calm is truly shattered when a murder occurs.

Mr. Finch does an wonderful job of conveying the Victorian period of 1874 through details of social customs, such as soul-caking, and the formality of speech..."It's an eligible sort of room" Even though Jane Austen wrote during the Regency Period, Finch's voice has a very similar feel to it. The historical details are seamlessly woven into the story and provide a look at the changes wrought by the Reform Act of 1832. Yet, in spite of a conversation related to the appropriate sherry, the story is not exclusively set in the drawing room of a wealthy. Finch incorporates people and places of every level of the social strata, from large cities to a small village, and to the back-alley taverns of the lost.

The character, Charles, is intelligent and a good judge of the best way in which to approach various suspects. He respects the new scientific and procedural methods now being used by the police. However, he fears they're relying too much on those methods and becoming less flexible and intuitive. He cares about those around him, particularly John Dallington, a young man he trained in investigation who became lost to drink. I also appreciated that he questions his new role in politics and admits to missing his old role as an investigator. It's that introspectiveness that makes him a very human character.

The plot is very solid, in spite of a couple completely unnecessary portents. There's good suspense and a break-neck ride I particularly liked. What I most appreciated was that you know the outcome of each of the characters; good, bad and peripheral.

"A Death in the Small Hours" is a near-excellent (points off for the portents) read and a likewise wonderful series whose characters have grown and developed with each book.

A DEATH IN THE SMALL HOURS (Hist/Mys-Charles Lenox-England-1874) – VG+
Finch, Charles
Minotaur Books, 2012

Sharon says

I enjoy this series a lot. It got off to a great start, but one or two in the middle were a little weaker. The one before this was better, and this one is back to being as good as the original. The character development is stronger in this one than in the weaker ones. In this story, Charles Lenox's political career is taking off, and

to escape from London for a while, he visits a relative out in the country. While there, he gets pulled into a local mystery, which turns, ultimately, into murder. One of my complaints of the earlier books in this series is that the character development of the women in particular was very weak. In this book, the women come more to life, and participate in life more. I would still enjoy seeing them engage their minds more. Women of that era did, in fact, do so. Look at Queen Victoria herself! One of my favorite women of history is Jane Adams. She was certainly no angry feminist, but she was a thoughtful, informed woman who engaged her husband intellectually, as well as emotionally. Lady Jane appears to be of a similar mindset, and yet, all she does is plan parties and ask her husband if he is feeling alright. I would like to see this author expand and grow his female characters. His male characters tend to be well-rounded. I find this is a frequent problem with many male authors, though not all. They tend to not understand women, or how their minds work. Even women in that gentler time, had active and inquisitive brains.

Cherie says

I think the mystery in this book is my favorite part of the series, so far. I loved the setting, out in the country at Uncle Freddy's estate. Charles had been elected to give the opening speech in Parliament when it started up, and Charles spent time writing his speech in between trying to solve the robberies and then a murder that happens in the small town near his Uncle's estate. He was much more the detective in this one, and much more active - riding each day and taking long walks around the countryside pursuing clues and interviewing people. I missed Graham - he had stayed in London, but baby Sophie was too cute. It was interesting how Lady Jane and Charles both tiptoed around trying not to make the Nanny upset. How they gave her so much power over the baby.

There was a cricket match played and I loved hearing about the long standing feud between the two towns over which pub would win and who had the best batters. The wives of the players all came together to provide food and tea - gallons of it for the players when the first team finally batted out. I did not understand it all, but it was fun to listen to.

Another surprise ending, and not the one I had thought all along. Even a little temper shown by Lady Jane. McConnell and his wife Toto have been separated again, but we did not get to see much of them. Even John Dallington was mostly missing.

I am looking forward to hearing the next story. So much has happened over the last four years. Where is it all going to go?

Deb says

Charles Lenox is now a well-regarded member of Parliament, and has just been asked to deliver the keynote address at the opening of Parliament, an extremely great honor. When his uncle Frederick invites him to Everley to look into some reports of vandalism in the village, Lenox and his wife jump at the chance of a few days in the country. Lenox knows that he will be able to concentrate on writing his speech away from the hustle and bustle of London. Of course, the village vandalism is just the tip of the iceberg, and before

long a villager is murdered. As is the case in previous books, Lenox manages to untangle quite a web of deceit and criminal activity. Throughout the book, Lenox is also wrestling within himself; he knows he is an effective legislator but his heart is in the detective work he has largely given up. I'm looking forward to the next in the series as I think a decision may be looming.

Nente says

As in so many other stylized period mysteries, the atmosphere takes precedence over the crime and its resolution, and I'm fine with that. But it is nothing out of the ordinary, just a way to pass the time pleasantly. Sometimes the prose sounded awkward - not so much out of period as displaying an unaccustomed word usage or grammar. Was that also a stylistic effect, I wonder? It made me trip over the sentences, anyway, and that spoiled the fun a little.

Laurie Ann Silberman says

Didn't enjoy this book as much as previous books. There is a continuing theme that the main character misses his detective work but continues down the path of Parliament because he feels he owes it to his friend, family and country. Sometimes I get impatient with the character. He's rich and a gentleman; and he has a gift he is squandering. It feels like he is constantly in mourning for 'what used to be.'

This overshadowed the plot for me and I was disappointed that in the end he elected to continue down the path he has created based on the expectations of others.

Judy says

I want half stars!!! This is one of a series of books about Englishman Charles Lennox, now a member of Parliament and a new father. I have not read any of the others in the series, but might check out the library for one. It was a pleasant read about Victorian England after the Queen's jubilee. Charles would be someone my mother would have liked; the plot holds twists and turns. The characters are never evil, but some are bad and many are humorous. If you're a fan of gentle English mysteries, this is a book for you.

Kirsten says

After the lead up in this book, I was wondering if Charles, Jane, et al, had to leave town because they ran out of scones!!

This is another great mystery starring everyone's favorite MP, Charles Lenox. He has to go out of town to prepare a speech - apparently all the other MPs show up at his house with ideas to go in the speech - and, of course, murder ensues. What's a retired (semi) detective to do?

So, off he goes to Somerset, complete with wife, infant daughter, 2 dogs, a governess, and probably a ladies maid and a valet (who knows)?

Danielle Gonzalez says

This was another intriguing mystery for Charles Lenox. He is asked to deliver the opening speech for the House of Commons. While he struggles to determine what he wants to say, he receives an invitation to visit his Uncle in the country. He decides that would be the perfect place to relax and clear his mind for his speech writing. However, once he arrives, he finds there have been strange vandalisms that then lead to murder. Charles is able to put together all of the random pieces to find the connection. I enjoyed meeting the character of his Uncle, and perhaps he will show up a little more in the future. However, as I've mentioned in previous reviews, I miss some of the previous characters. This did not really include Graham, or even his best friend Thomas. But, still interesting characters and good mystery.

Edward says

Another great book about gentleman and member of Parliament Charles Lennox, whose real calling is detective work. The crime is of course solved, but then suddenly it is not, and the book is a cliffhanger to the end. All of this is painted against the backdrop of Victorian England, including the rich, the poor, city scenes and country vistas. This is the sixth book in the series and all are richly entertaining.

Sophia says

In this installment of the series, time has jumped forward a bit and Lennox is now a proud father, loving husband, settled MP and mentor to John Dallington's amateur detecting. He feels very blessed, but yet he can't help looking at John Dallington with envy as the younger man pursues his amateur detecting and Scotland Yard calls Dallington now. Politics is a career that he does from duty, but detecting was his true vocation. He muses quietly about his life now and looks back on other times.

Then things change when Charles is given the task to write the opening speech for the House. Accepting his Uncle Freddie's invitation, Charles moves the family to Freddie's estate in the country where he can work with no distractions. Freddie offers Lennox a very welcome distraction when he presents him with a series of perplexing vandalisms in the village which escalate to murder. The case has turned dangerous and Charles with the help of the local police and John Dallington work hard to find the solution. Things turn fast and furious as the villains feel Lennox drawing ever closer, but there are also a few domestic surprises too.

Like most books in the series, the story meanders along gently as through the set up and early investigation, but then takes off near the end to a more furious pace before settling into a satisfying denouement. The mystery is set well against the backdrop of rural England and balanced well against the ongoing story of Lennox's private life that include the always welcome recurring secondary characters and some new characters to love too. I enjoyed putting my mind to the mystery and was happy to figure out a great deal of it, but I still got some delightful surprises with some of the twists.

All in all, it was an engaging read and leads me eagerly forward to the next book in the series.

Arianna says

www.shelfnotes.com

Dear Reader,

I was thoroughly charmed by this quintessentially English book. I don't often read books which are part of a series, particularly not books which are several into a series, but this mystery novel stood quite well on its own. Apart from a few allusions which I believe were inserted for the series' loyal followers, I didn't feel like I was missing out on anything by starting on book six of the Charles Lenox mysteries.

Perhaps that had to do with the setting of the book, which took place largely away from Lenox's London home. I enjoyed the English countryside mystery novel; the whole thing recalled to me the feeling I had when reading *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. I enjoyed the small town characters which Finch painted in vivid colors. Everyone had a strikingly unique personality, while also being quite immersed in village life.

One of my favorite aspects of the book was, oddly, the relationship which Lenox had with Sadie. Who was Sadie, you ask? Why, his cousin's horse, of course! Seriously, though, you could tell Finch had a fondness for Sadie as he wrote quite at length about her. And she was, in many ways, one of the heroes of the story!

Learning the true identity of the murderer in the middle of the book really threw me for a loop; I am so used to detective stories which present the Big Reveal, and thus the denouement. And yet this story felt like it should have been finished halfway through! However, Finch wasn't nearly done yet. And I thought that wonderful, because there WAS so much more to reveal - many small mysteries played themselves out during the rest of the book (and some big ones, as well!).

All in all, a very enjoyable diversion of a book. Highly recommended for those who are Sherlock Holmes fans. Oh, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, scary about this book. Not in the least. (For those who might shy from spooky murder mysteries.) It's all quite pleasant and civil and upbeat! Despite the murder...

Yours,
Arianna

Villager says

I remain a fan of this unique detective series featuring a culture and a hero that has absolutely nothing to do with my experiences as a Black man in America. The hero of these mystery novels is Charles Lenox ... member of Parliament in England's Victorian era. This particular episode has our hero in one of his favorite childhood estates (...think *Downton Abbey* setting...) trying to get some quiet time to right an important speech and trying to solve a local village series of crimes that ends up resulting in murder, kidnapping and other villainy.

Goes without saying that our hero finds a way to solve the mystery. And that probably explains why I enjoy the series so much. The plots are intriguing and keep you turning the pages to see what happens. Also, when

you read a series you become connected to the various recurring characters ... and we see more development of some of these characters.

Finally, the biggest thing I got from this book? It explained the European game of 'cricket'. I've NEVER understood that game until reading this book. I guess I may actually watch a cricket match (are they called matches?) one day. Adding it to my bucket list!

I recommend this book if you enjoy mystery ... or if you enjoy learning more about Victorian era in England ... or if you wonder what the heck is up with that cricket game!
