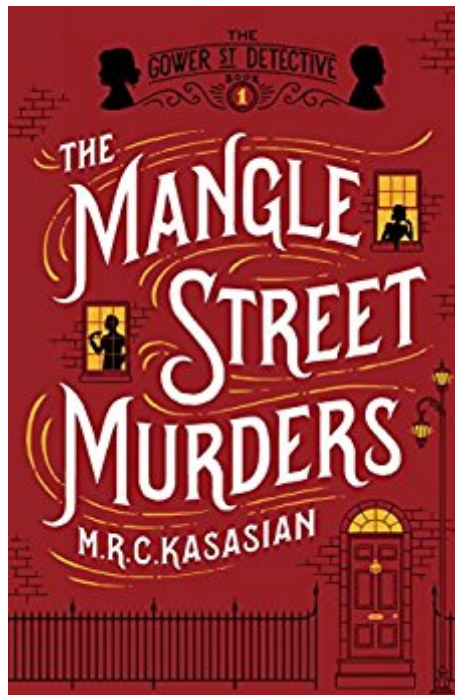




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The Mangle Street Murders (The Gower Street Detective Book 1)



Synopsis

Two crime solvers venture into Victorian London's East End to investigate a murder in this "excellent first novel by a British author who has a bright future" (Mystery Scene Magazine). March Middleton has moved to Gower Street to live with her curmudgeonly guardian, Sidney Grice, London's most famous personal detective. She is intelligent, witty, and talkative. He thinks young women should be seen and not heard. But he grudgingly allows her to join his latest murder case: A young woman is dead and her loving husband is the only suspect. Their investigations lead the pair to the darkest alleys of the East End: Every twist leads Sidney Grice to think the husband guilty, but March is convinced that he is innocent. And as the case threatens to foment civil unrest, Sidney Grice finds his reputation is not the only thing in mortal danger . . .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Okay as a quick read, but the Kindle version makes it difficult at times to determine who's speaking. I won't purchase more.

How do I love this book? Let me count the ways. I love its sharp, witty voice. Its brisk pace. Its mordant humor. Its vision of 1880s London, a place of huge energy and just as huge contrast. Its echoes of the penny dreadfuls of the Victorian period, and its marriage of them with a sensibility that is entirely satisfying to a modern reader. Its perfectly matched pair of sleuths, who spar constantly yet share a genuine affection. Its wonderful secondary characters, notably Harriet Fitzgerald and Inspector Pond. Its sardonic homage to Doyle (who makes a cameo appearance) and Holmes (who is modeled, the book posts, on its own detective, Sidney Grice). Its unexpected plot twists and its evolving backstory. I could go on, but you get the point. I read an awful lot of 19th century mystery novels in my roles as both book reviewer and editor of an online journal focused on contemporary authors writing about that century. This book is one of those that stood out from the "crowd" immediately, leaving me remembering myriad moments in the story and genuinely eager for the next installment. If you enjoy clever mysteries, Victorian era puzzles, or just good writing, this is definitely a book to read.

I must admit that I do enjoy novels that are destined to become series. I must also admit that I am not all that much into 'historical novels,' although I dearly love history books, in particular those dealing with Victorian England. I also admit that I love a good detection novel. I spotted this one at the local library and plucked it from the shelf on pure chance as I was in need of a change of pace in my reading. I am so grateful that I did. This is one of the best first novels of the beginning of a series I have read in a long, long time. Now to clear up a moot point...this is NOT a Victorian detection novel...i.e. one that was written during the Victorian era, but rather a modern novel ABOUT Victorian London and it just so happens that it is a detection novel. A young woman, the narrator of the story, has lost her family and has been taken as a ward by a leading London detective. This young lady has ideas and attitudes far, far more advanced than her contemporaries and are, and she is quite quick to voice her opinion. She talks her new caretaker (that is part of the story so no spoilers here) to let her work on his most current case and together - the older detective and the very bright young lady set about solving the crime of murder...or is it multiple murders? Now I notice that several reviewers have stated that the writing is chopping in places. I read the hardback version of this and I am either slow on the uptake, or there is a problem with the Kindle edition of this book because I encountered absolutely no difficulties in following the story what so ever. As a matter of fact, I found this book to be very well written in every sense of the word. The strongest part of this work is the wonderful dialog between the young girl and the older detective and indeed, between quite a number of the characters in this story. It was actually quite funny at times and I found my self

smiling a lot and chuckling from time to time. Now I do not consider myself an 'expert' when it comes to this era by any means; no, far from it. But with that being said I can tell you that I have been reading books about this era at a pretty steady pace for around 60 years now and I was unable to find anything too critical of as to the author's research and facts. Hey, some of those hundreds of books were bound to rub off on me on some level. If there were errors they are probably errors of perception and folks, you will have to dig pretty deep to even find those. Now the detective for whom the young girl is a ward is, as others have pointed out, an extremely unlikeable character. If I find fault with the author's portrayal of him it would be the fact that she has used every stereotype of the upper class snobbish Englishman of that time and wrapped them all into one very remarkably unlikable passage. There is hope for him though...we see hints of this throughout the book via careful reading and I have a feeling that in future novels we will see this character evolve even more. The plot flows nicely and is easy to follow and the twists and turns as to the 'mystery' are adequate and well executed. I suppose that when all is said and done, like every book ever written, it all boils down to the reading taste of the individual reader. I personally loved this thing and cannot wait to get to the next offering. This was a library find. Don Blankenship

The Mangle Street Murders by MRC Kasasian
With the death of her father, Miss March Middleton leaves the family estate and travels to London to meet her new Guardian, Personal Detective Sidney Grice. He insists on the word 'personal' rather than 'private' detective. As Miss Middleton soon discovers, Grice is rude, fussy, arrogant, self-centered, and greedy. In taking a case it is not the thrill of the chase but the thrill of money he craves. So when Mrs. Grace Dillinger comes to call at 125 Gower Street to plea for an investigation into her daughter's murder and her son-in-law's arrest, Grice bluntly tells her if she cannot pay, he is not interested. He further expresses his view that the man is guilty. Miss Middleton believes otherwise, and using her own money, she hires him on the case. His investigation, to say the least, is unorthodox. But unlike, say, Sherlock Holmes, he appears to make the evidence fit his version of the crime. He then haughtily refuses to hear anything else. He has problems with Miss Middleton because she is highly educated, she is a free spirit, and she refuses to bow to anyone, least of all him! After the young man is hanged on Grice's evidence, to his infinite glee, word gets out that Grice and Inspector Pound have coached a witness. Not only that, but Grice bought him clothing and meals, and even put him up at a hotel. There is also the fact that two other women were murdered in the area prior to the death of Sarah Ashby. And they are killed in a similar manner, by vicious attack with a knife. Also a

test for bloodstains that was the nail in the coffin for young William Ashby, is called into question. The police had borrowed a bowl from the slaughterhouse next door. Chances that the bowl itself was tainted with blood rather than the knife are strong. But Grice refutes any mention of cross contamination. More evidence appears that seems to suggest that Grice had an innocent man hanged. But the more evidence that surfaces, the more Grice insists that he is right, that Ashby was guilty and rightfully hanged. The story moves very quickly, with the characters complex and interacting as smoothly as an oiled key. The various layers of evidence are revealed little by little, kind of like an archeologist sifting soil for the minutest clues. And misdirection as clever as any stage magician if displayed from first chapter to last. I note that this is to be the first in a new series, and all I can say is *Yes, please! Encore! Encore!* This has been one of the best mysteries I have read recently. Five plus stars are awarded this book by the Raven!

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