



Pearls Before Swine

Margery Allingham

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Albert Campion returns from three years' work for the War Office in Europe to find that Lugg, his manservant, has brought him an unusual gift from Edna, Dowager Marchioness of Carados: the black silk nightdress-clad body of a dead woman, an apparent suicide, found in her son's bed the night before his wedding.

All the books from Albert Campion series are standalone titles and can be read in any order.

Pearls Before Swine Details

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Author : Margery Allingham

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From Reader Review Pearls Before Swine for online ebook

Marilyn Watson says

Margery Allingham is an exceptional Writer. Her plots are sophisticated, as are her characters. The last one I read- I thought this is my favorite and then I felt the same with the next one. She has the ability to describe characters in a pre-war or post-war setting- in an England none of us knew. Charming, intelligent, people who get themselves in a bad situation and among the group- one is a killer.

Albert Campion has come home from doing intelligence work for the Government and is headed home to his wife and son. He stops off at his London flat for a luxurious soak in the tub- representing beauty, luxury and civilization to him. A body has been brought up the stairs and laid in his bedroom. A Woman, he has never seen, reposes there and has been brought by Lugg, his butler, and the Dowager Marchioness of Carados. The situation is ludicrous and he bows out determined to go home. The Taxi Driver has other plans. He wakes up chloroformed with a Policeman standing over him. His clothes, have been strewn over an empty building and himself drugged. Despite his best intentions of catching the train home he has to solve the mystery.

The characters are stunning in this book... consisting of a group of people collected together by Johnny Carados, Marquess and RAF Pilot. Two of these are Peter Onyer and his wife, Gwenda. Peter, managed his financial affairs and Gwenda, acted as her husband's secretary. Ricky Silva, petulant and artistic, did the flowers. Captain Gold ruled the household servants, and a plump, cheerful Dolly, went about putting everything right. Then there is Eve Snow, Johnny's girlfriend and Susan, who Johnny is to marry despite that fact. Don Evers is in love with Susan.

Allingham is amazing at the way she collects the characters and sews them into a complicated plot but does it in a way in which you stay fascinated. One of the writers from the golden era of mysteries she is equal with Agatha Christie, and Dorothy L. Sayers. I finished this book in one night and it stayed with me for several days. If you like charming and evocative- along with sophisticated people from another Era, then this is for you. I loved it.

Christine Cody says

When Campion comes home from a secret mission towards the end of the war, he finds chaos and a woman's corpse in his London home. His faithful aide, Lugg, is helping an elderly aristocrat and a friendly young woman hide the body. Besides considering herself and all of her class above the law, the aristocrat is the mother of a long-time friend of Campion's, a war hero to boot. But Albert simply wants to get to the country to be with his wife and child... the book consists of all the insanity that prevents his getting there. The police, including his friend Oates, now with a new title and more authority, involve Campion in the events. As Campion learns of more subterfuge, theft, murder, and strange connections, he becomes ever-more fearful that his friend Johnny may be responsible for a series of crimes. As only a great writer can, Allingham keeps us engrossed and, just as Campion is, confused yet invested in discovering who "done it," or in this case, who has been doing all of it! Since the first book in this series, Campion has become more interesting as he matures, always remaining ever outside of and intellectually just a little bit above those around him.

F.R. says

This volume has one of the most cluttered openings of any mystery novel I've ever read. Albert Campian returns from (unspecified, but heroic) war-work to find that his loyal assistant Lugg and a formidable Lady of the aristocracy are moving a dead female body into his apartment. They are swiftly joined by the Lady's caddish son, his long-term lover, his young fiancée and the dutiful family secretary. That's quite a lot of people to introduce in the first fifteen pages or so. A short while later we meet the wild circle which orbits the caddish son, as well as the warring proprietors of one of Soho's best restaurants and a host of other individuals. The first hundred pages then are a whirl of different characters and different motivations, and it really is something of a mess. I'm all for ambition in fiction, but it is possible to be *too* ambitious. It's not until the second half of the book that these characters are really given a chance to breathe and grow into themselves, so that the reader can relax and enjoy the story.

That whirlwind opening means that this isn't as good as the last Campian novel I read ('Police at the Funeral'), but once it finds its feet it does have a great deal of charm. Allingham's prose remains masterful and as well as a clever mystery, this is a really sharp evocation of lives changed by wartime (as well as an examination of the place of the aristocracy in English culture). In particular I liked that the character of Campian is not fixed in the way Poirot or Holmes are, but is instead getting older and feeling nostalgia for the world he once inhabited, which he realises has been smashed apart forever. It's not a question actually asked, but it is there between the lines - what on Earth is his place in this new world?

The first few chapters are head-spinning, but this one is worth persevering with.

Nancy says

Albert Campion is one of my favorite fictional characters and this is one book in the series that I missed in my initial binge of Allingham's classic detective series.

In some ways this novel is right on point with the others in the series:

. . . . we get a touch of the high life;
. . . . we get a detective who is far brighter than he appears to be;
. . . . and we get an armchair tour of London.

But, this volume differed from other books in the series in that it was very much seeped in wartime London. Campion and most of the other men in the story were actively engaged in the war (as airmen, as soldiers, etc.) and the plot hinted at treason or other nefarious crimes against the homeland. There was a tension and a patriotic undertone that is not present in other Allingham stories (this reminded me of one of the vintage Sherlock Holmes B-movies with Basil Rathbone defending the realm) --- it didn't detract from the story, but it set it apart a bit from Campion's usual outings which dance between his Society friends and family and his more colorful connections "across the tracks."

I enjoyed it very much for what it was, but missed his adventures and repartee with his "man" Lugg, who was in hiding for most of this book.

Sarah says

I'm not sure why this entry in Allingham's *Campion* series isn't a little bit better known. After almost ten years and a couple of novels that try to pull the series in new directions - sometimes feeling as if *Campion* himself is only included as a necessary marketing measure - Allingham manages to fuse her darker, wartime sensibility with both a plot and a set of characters who are more recognizably of a classic caliber. In fact, one might even be tempted to accuse Allingham of stepping backward if it didn't work so well: *Albert Campion* is distinctly *Albert Campion*, but older, more hesitant, and with less of a spring in his step; he and Chief Inspector Oates are growing old together and a little more tired of the "game" they play as talented amateur and established professional. It's probably unforgivable that Lugg appears basically unchanged, there mostly to provide light entertainment, but nobody really minds. *Campion's* wife, Amanda, is kept at bay until the final page - and that's intentional. This is a book about the old order going grey.

I wouldn't be surprised if this is the last time we see a "traditional" *Campion*. It's obvious that Allingham sees the war as a turning point, and the time of *Bright Young Things* has now passed. *Campion* spends the entire novel trying to abandon the responsibility thrust upon him and get home on his leave, but it becomes clear by the end that (although he does get back to Amanda) there's no escape. Something has changed, and there's no turning back.

Joanne Sheppard says

Margery Allingham was a contemporary of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers during the 'golden age' of detective fiction and I read lots of her books as a teenager, although I don't think I'd read *Coroner's Pidgin* before. It's one of Allingham's later books, taking place towards the end of the Second World War. Her detective hero, *Albert Campion*, has been overseas for most of the war but has returned briefly to his flat at Piccadilly simply to wash and change before catching a train for a mysteriously urgent but unspecified reason not revealed until the end of the novel. While he's there, he's suddenly interrupted by his servant Lugg and Lady Carados, the dowager of a local aristocratic family, carrying the dead body of a woman into *Campion's* bedroom. Who is this unfortunate victim, and how did she die?

There's a great deal of wit in Margery Allingham's writing, far more than you'll find in most crime fiction of her period, and although *Campion* is, like Lord Peter Wimsey, a maverick aristocrat with a seemingly limitless supply of leisure time, I find him far more likeable and entertaining as a character. *Campion*, thankfully, lacks Wimsey's snobbery (intellectual and otherwise) and appears far more at ease in the company of people outside his social class. His relationship with former burglar Lugg is more that of a pair of old friends than master and servant and he enjoys something of a love-hate relationship with his old sparring partner Inspector Oates of Scotland Yard.

That's not to say that this isn't, essentially, a book about ridiculous posh people - that is in fact exactly what it is. However, one thing I found interesting about this book was the way that Allingham explores the effects of the war on the characters and their status. The dead woman was one of a group of 'bright young things' whose way of life has effectively been curtailed by war. Lady Carados and cockney servant Lugg, a former burglar, are volunteer fire wardens together with equal status. Lord Carados is now an RAF officer whose equally well-to-do fiancée's head has been turned by an American GI. *Campion* himself, it's heavily hinted, has had his former career as a sort of gentleman adventurer curtailed by a stint working as a spy. The frivolous parties and society gossip that once occupied the Carados family and their circle of friends are now

very much over, their favourite exclusive restaurants and glittering parties have been hit by either bombs or rationing, their country homes are being requisitioned and there's a strong sense that things will never quite be the same for these people again.

In terms of plot this is a straightforward who (and why) dunnit, with multiple suspects and various potential motives, although in common with a lot of Allingham's novels it's as much an adventure story as a mystery and the reader isn't really given enough clues to have a chance of working out who the murderer is for themselves, so if you treat your detective stories as puzzles to be solved, you might find this tiresome. I generally don't, so I was happy to enjoy the somewhat improbable plot and eccentric characters and to be reminded of just how good Allingham really is.

David says

Great read, really one of the best classic British mysteries I've ever read! Definitely going to read more of this author, since I now see that this the 12th Albert Campion book. Started off brilliantly, and just kept getting more compelling to the end. Very British, but in a fun way, I think. They didn't call it the golden age of mystery fiction for nothing, that's for sure. Enjoy!

Andrea says

After three years of service overseas during World War II, Campion returns home to enjoy two precious weeks of leave, and immediately gets drawn into murder.

This is a novel of change, of the wreck of the old world, and the formation of a new one, as the madcap attitudes of the 20s-30s generation give way to one coming of age during a time of bombing and deprivation. Also a solid mystery - though with the police a little inclined to fix on one suspect above all others.

Terra says

Definitely my least favorite of the Campion books so far. The plot and pacing sort of dragged for me, and the solution was not particularly satisfying. Still a cut above most mysteries, but I expect only great things from Allingham and this was just so-so.

Julie says

Albert Campion has just returned from WWII and is on his way home. When his servant, Lugg, appears with a dead body and a lady in tow. This brings in more people. Then he is hit over the head when he leaves the house. His story is not matching the story told by the lady and he sets about trying to figure out what is going on.

Good story and writing.

Michele bookloverforever says

If you enjoy Dorothy Sayers, you'll enjoy this classic mystery. it's set in war torn England and involves nobility and commoners. very British and somewhat dated...but intriguing characters. the villain surprised me.

Audrey says

A well-written window into the shakeup the war caused to all classes in British society, seen through the eyes of a war-weary detective. He'd like to go on vacation now that he's home from the front, but somehow someone has deposited a corpse in his bed while he was soaking in the tub. It only gets better from there. Even after I've finished the mystery, I'm still not very sure how it all unraveled, but that's not really why I read these anyway.

tom bomp says

Good mystery book, nothing special. From like 1/3 of the way through the plot moves along at a very good pace and it was very "just one more page". But by the end I felt kind of confused. There's a *lot* of elements introduced and most of them tie together but it's not completely neat and I felt there were some things unexplained, and I feel like there's no way it's a "fair play" mystery (although that might just be me not being very smart). Ending spoilers re what I didn't understand (view spoiler)

Otherwise pretty solid - nothing special to recommend it, although the setting of near the end of the war was pretty interesting and I liked the period details a lot.

Maia says

maybe my second-favourite, for writing, and ace plotting, you'll enjoy sleuthing it. Palinodes a bit silly, but very period i suppose. Charlie Luke very misogynist i thought, hope he doesn't get Clytie.

Brian Clegg says

One of the best things about Margery Allingham's Campion series is that pretty much uniquely we follow his life from bright young thing in the 1920s to older and wiser in the 60s. In this book, set and written around 1944/5 he is on leave in a battered London and war weary.

The Campion books also have an impressive range of plots from straight crime to treasure hunt. This book is

the purest kind of mystery in that for over half the book the reader doesn't know what's going on as odd events accumulate - both brilliant and ahead of its time.

What we have here is also an interesting examination of the class system in a state of change. An aristocratic central character is considered by some to be above investigation - but should he be?

All told, a classic of the genre.
