



Death's Door

James R. Benn

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In this seventh installment of James R. Benn's hit WWII-era mystery series, Lieutenant Billy Boyle goes undercover in the Vatican.

Lieutenant Billy Boyle could have used a rest after his last case, but when his girlfriend, Diana Seaton, a British spy, goes missing in the Vatican, where she was working undercover, he insists on being assigned to a murder investigation there so he can try to help her.

An American monsignor is found murdered at the foot of Death's Door, one of the five entrances to Saint Peter's Basilica. Wild Bill Donovan, head of the OSS, wants the killing investigated. The fact that the Vatican is neutral territory in German-occupied Rome is only one of the obstacles Billy must overcome. First is a harrowing journey, smuggled into Rome while avoiding the Gestapo and Allied bombs. Then he must navigate Vatican politics and personalities—some are pro-Allied, others pro-Nazi, and the rest steadfastly neutral—to learn the truth about the murdered monsignor. But that's not his only concern; just a short walk from the Vatican border is the infamous Regina Coeli prison, where Diana is being held. Can he dare a rescue, or will a failed attempt alert the Germans to his mission and risk an open violation of Vatican neutrality?

Death's Door Details

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Author : James R. Benn

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From Reader Review Death's Door for online ebook

John Purvis says

“Death’s Door” eBook was published in 2012 and was written by James R. Benn (<http://www.jamesrbenn.com>). Mr. Benn has published 10 novels in his “Billy Boyle World War II Mystery” series. This is the seventh book in the series.

I purchased this novel through Barnes & Nobles for the Nook reader. I categorize this novel as ‘PG’ because it contains scenes of Violence. The story is set in and around Vatican City during 1944. The primary character is Billy Boyle, an American Army Lieutenant.

Rome is occupied by the German army, but the Vatican City has not been invaded. An American monsignor living in the Vatican is murdered. Boyle, along with his sidekick, Polish Baron Lieutenant Piotr “Kaz” Kazimierz, are smuggled into the Vatican under orders to find the murderer. This is a windfall for Boyle, as his girlfriend, Diana Seaton, who had been undercover for the British as a nun at the Vatican, has been arrested. Boyle sees the assignment as an opportunity to rescue her, as well as solve the murder.

Boyle finds the Vatican to be far more complicated than his time as a Catholic altar boy prepared him for. There are many different factions within the Vatican. Not all support the liberation by the Allies. Boyle also finds himself confronted by German agents and old adversaries .

I thoroughly enjoyed the 10+ hours I spent reading this World War II Mystery. I have now read the first seven books in the series and have enjoyed them all. I like the characters of Boyle and Kaz, as well as the other continuing characters in the series. The cover art does give the impression of intrigue between the church and Germany. I give this novel a 5 out of 5.

Further book reviews I have written can be accessed at <https://johnpurvis.wordpress.com/blog/>.

Katherine Nollner says

great series

Donna says

This is my first James R Benn novel and I really enjoyed it. It was a fun little historical fiction mystery. I did the audio and thought the reader did a great job, especially with all the accents.

There were several things I liked about this. I liked the dialog. It was well written and believable for the characters. I also liked the characters. They were fun and purposeful.

The story line was creative. I loved the first half. Somewhere in the middle, though, it got a little jumbled. There were theories galore. However, I liked how it was all reigned in at the end. I will definitely read more by this author.

Mary says

Another solid addition to the series. I love that the author always gives author's notes about the blend of fact and fiction. I am always doing additional research after reading historical fiction and his notes are a big help. I think he does a good job (throughout the series) of dealing with ambiguities and making his characters very human. The Vatican during WWII is quite a challenge and while certainly not delivering a final judgement, he does present the challenges and complexities. Finally, like the rest of the Billy Boyle series, while submerged in war, this book is very entertaining. He entices the reader to face grim realities with humor and hope. Wonderful writing!

Marianne says

Don't know why, but this book just seemed cumbersome to slog through. However, the plots in this series are always well crafted. How many times is poor Billy gonna have to rescue Diane!!!!

Jack says

This latest volume in Benn's Billy Boyle WW II mysteries finds Billy in mourning over Diana's capture in the Vatican by the Gestapo. Despondant, he ignores orders to return to Britain from Italy. Finally orders arrive he can't ignore, and he's sent to the Vatican as a priest to investigate the death of an American member of the Curia. Billy looks on it as a way to save Diana or die trying. He also feels bound to solve the murder, of course.

This book is a little disjointed, with two distantly related plot threads, and a surprise third thread introduced late in the story. There's also a foreshadowing of the possible limitations of Billy and Diana's romance.

The seemingly random linkage of all the threads and the dependence on coincidence for the progress of the plot is a little straining, but it's still a very good book. Benn has created sympathetic but not saccharine characters in this series.

Patricia M. says

This is the best in this series and is a fascinating look at the Vatican in this time period. I am a Catholic Canon Lawyer, who spent two years studying in Rome and is there frequently each year. The details about this book and Vatican City are excellent. I am especially intrigued by the fairness and insights it offers, ever so subtly, of the tightrope that the Catholic Church, its Pope and its Curia, were all trying to walk during the Second World War. Beyond all of that great stuff, this story is one of Benn's best. In it, he shows a true development of his series characters, warts and all. Along with my very favorite book, Morris West's "Devil's Advocate", I will read this book over and over.

In case, you did not get it yet, I love this book, and so will you.

Michael Rhode says

This fictional look inside the Vatican during the War was pretty interesting and a suspenseful read.

Eloise says

James R. Benn is a master storyteller. Billy Boyle is a wonderful character. Sharing WWII history is never boring.

Rebecca Mulligan says

Church Intrigue

Book Seven in the Billy Boyle World War II mystery series is one of my favorite books in it. Billy's love, Diana Seaton has been captured and is being held in Rome. General Eisenhower directs Billy and Kaz to go to the Vatican to find out who murdered monsignor Corrigan. For Billy, of course, this is a heaven-sent opportunity to attempt to rescue Diana. He and Kaz immediately become imbroiled in Vatican politics. As Billy points out, the Vatican is a microcosm of society in general, good priests, bad priests, those striving for good combined with those striving for evil. Death's Door is a fascinating look at Church politics, combined with an excellent mystery and heart-stopping suspense.

Caroline says

Angels and Demons

Jim Benn has written a page-turner, a "who dun it" taking place in the Vatican toward the end of WWII in Europe. The descriptions of the buildings reminded me of my visit there. They felt real. There was the usual love intrigues and spurts of violence. In the spirit of full disclosure, I officiated at Jim and his wife's wedding 35 years ago. This is the first Billy Boyle mystery I have read.

Sue says

Another solid outing in this excellent series.

In this episode, as the war slowly progresses and the Allied Armies continue their difficult progress up the boot of Italy, Billy receives an assignment that will send him virtually into the Lion's Den. He is to be transported by partisans to Vatican City to investigate the death of an American Monsignor. While Vatican City itself is neutral territory, all of Rome around it is controlled by the German army who are looking for an

excuse to take over The Vatican also.

This will be a tricky assignment, complicated by the disappearance of Billy's love Diana who has been stationed in Rome, posing as a nun. Too many things can go wrong or right among these people stranded at the Vatican from all over the world since the start of the war...along with all the priestly usual suspects. The Vatican politics reflect those of the world at the time.

A recommended episode in a recommended series.

Joni says

Rome

Mark Wilson says

A rousing tale based on real events - and people!

This entry in the Billy Boyle series continues the masterful depiction of one man's journey through WW2, through events famous and little-known. In Vatican City, Billy searches for a killer - and a way to rescue Diana. The fictional elements intertwine with reality, and the notes at the end must be read to fully appreciate how many of the characters moved through our world before they ended up in Billy's. The writing, as always, is solid, with occasional flashes of poetry and pathos. Highly recommended, as is the entire series.

Rachel says

I have to admit I have never been a big fan of military history, at least beyond a social history standpoint, and that position has extended to my choice of books- including mysteries. However the Billy Boyle series is the exception to that rule- I have devoured the entire series and the moment I finish one book I begin immediately waiting impatiently for the next in the series. I typically find historical novels have some inaccuracies that I find annoying to learn about after the fact or that I latch on while reading the book which makes enjoying it difficult, however the series is well researched and I always come out feeling more educated on the subject yet never feeling force fed. Also, I have to give huge credit to any series that my father (a military history buff), my mother (a mystery buff) and a me (a sometimes murder mystery readers) all love.

Now when does the next book come out?
