



The Malice of Unnatural Death

Michael Jecks

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1324. The kingdom is in an uproar. Roger Mortimer—once the king's most able commander, now his most hated enemy—has escaped from the Tower and hired an assassin to murder the monarch. Others have the same idea. In Coventry, a special assassin has been hired: a necromancer by the name of John. But just as his plan begins to succeed, the plot is uncovered. John must escape to a smaller city: Exeter. And when the bodies of a local craftsman and the king's messenger are found in Exeter's streets, Sir Baldwin Furnshill and Bailiff Simon Puttock, are asked by the Bishop to find the murderer. The dead messenger was carrying a dangerous secret, and the Bishop is desperate that it not be discovered. Baldwin and Simon are reluctant to get involved, but political pressures are growing, and the two must find the murderer before he strikes again. But when murderers use magic, no one is safe.

The Malice of Unnatural Death Details

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Author : Michael Jecks

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From Reader Review The Malice of Unnatural Death for online ebook

Micki Levin says

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Bob says

Set in 1300s England its a mystery involving a plot to kill the king and his advisors using a necromancer to do the job. In the town of Exeter a number of bodies have been turning up and the coroner and Kings Keeper of the Peace are trying to find the killer or killers.

The setting is interesting and well described, and although I find I had a little keeping all the characters straight I enjoyed the book.

Ginger Jane says

Two dimensional characters, and so many of them that it was almost impossible to work out who I was reading about. If this is the 22nd book in an apparently popular series, perhaps I should give the dude the benefit of the doubt and say that he's become lazy. But since I've never read any of the other books and now have no intention of doing so, I figure I'll never be able to say. Quelle surprise that it was in the library clearance bin.

Puzzle Doctor says

Full review at classicmystery.wordpress.com

Carol says

I loved this book the plot was devious and brilliantly written so many little sub plots to fool the reader. Read it and you will not be sorry.

Wysteria says

When I read books, I tend to check the reviews on Goodreads to see what other people have said about a book. I don't really base my opinions on their thoughts, but I like to know the overall consensus of something. Especially the 22nd book in a series I have never read before and is totally outside my normal range of reading material.

Read the rest of the review here: <http://antiquestar.blogspot.com/2012/...>

Valeska Kiloh says

Having read all the templar books in order ai can honestly say that this is just about the best one so far

Pdamon says

I have read and enjoyed other books in this series, but I just don't seem to have long enough blocks of time to read this successfully. The book itself has a huge cast of characters and is written in little snippets that jumps from character to character and plot to subplot. Combined with my picking it up for only a few minutes here and there and the whole thing is a chopped up mess. Just not enjoying it. Maybe I will try to read it another time.

Kelley Wickham-Crowley says

Another of Jecks' better ones following a former Templar Knight Sir Baldwin and his friend Simon Puttock. The author is learning to control the urge to create too many subplots--I don't mind something cleverly intricate, and this qualifies. (I fuss over those where he gets carried away and loses control of showing why or how it all was necessary or fit together.) As with many books today, he starts with the list of his characters (annoyingly, not all) at the front, which helps when he barrels on in the plot thinking we'll be able to sort out a series of minor but sometimes useful characters who unfortunately often sound the same when we get to hear them think or speak. With Jecks it sometimes functions as a bit of a crutch: you lean on it when you can't tell people apart or when he simply hasn't set up a reappearance with enough clues or context to jog your memory as to when or where you met them before. The books aren't that long! (No Game of Thrones or War and Peace density here.)

Having said all this, I enjoyed the relationship of the one-off characters who had served the king as messenger or assassin, the latest coroner once again (Sir Richard de Welles) and the use of John of Nottingham's attempt to kill the king and others by magical wax figures. As always, Jecks looks for an historical context for his plots, and faced with a gap with no major events between his last book and the next historical development of 1325, he usefully incorporated the magical threats to deepen the sense of paranoia and fear in England on all sides during the reign of Edward II and the Despensers.

And now I turn to a commentary on biased attitudes, so if that sort of thing isn't your cup of tea, stop reading here. Jecks also used a subplot about a maidservant who mistakenly believes her master loves her and will be rid of his wife so they can be married. On the face of it, a tale featuring a lower/working class female sounds like a good enrichment of the story. But this was badly done and clumsy, even though based on seeds of a real event. The poor girl sounded less mad/mentally ill/delusional and more like a bad (or teen magazine/emag?) romance stereotype. The need to be loved and to indulge in a fantasy that cures the parts of life you want to change are common hopes for teenagers but also not uncommon in adults. (Midlife crisis, anyone? Jecks in his intro also makes what I consider a rather stupid comment that suggests to me why this element of the book worked so poorly. He said he believes "young girls, young women, call them what you will, can occasionally form these intense bonds with the concept of a man or a future" (p.xvii) and adds that it is something he's "never seen in a male of a similar age. Perhaps it's a gender thing." Really? The story suffers from Jecks' blind spots about age and gender, and more egregiously, conflation of delusion/mental

illness, something he's sympathetic about, with some imagined romantic predilection of girls/women! We've never seen "young boys, young men, call them what you will" who are overly possessive or jealous, to a point where they become controlling or even violent? Who picture a future with a girl or dream of some macho act that will change her mind about him once and for all, and everything will fall into place? Sure, sometimes it's harmless, just as it is for females. But I see too many news stories the world over about males (and women, but I'm making a counterargument here) where the infatuation or delusion consists of a female that is "mine" even if she's an ex or someone never involved. Hinckley shot Reagan so Jodie Foster would love him, at age 26--but years before that, he wrote to his parents about a girlfriend who turns out never to have existed anywhere but in his head, and he was 21 when he first saw Foster in Taxi Driver. Unrequited longings are common to us all. Some people take them too far, and act on them. Mr. Jecks, some gender study and self-examination would do wonders, as would talking to troubled teens--For now, this episode badly weakened the overall book.

Madz says

i enjoy mysteries and this book from my perspective is very good.

Michael Jecks says

Well, if you like murders by necromancy, this is for you.

Again, this is a genuine case. There was an attempt to kill the King and his friends by use of sorcery. A known performer of the magical arts was hired to shape wax into the likeness of the King and the other victims, and to try to use sorcery to kill them. Of course, as soon as I heard of this, I was forced to start researching the history.

The court records exist still, and the story of John of Nottingham is there, if you wish to look. For me, it was just a fascinating insight into not only medieval times, but more recent ones too.

For we all know, don't we, that making wax idols and sticking pins in them comes from the Voodoo rites? Except they don't. Over-zealous missionaries trying to convert slaves to Christianity wanted funding to go and preach to the heathens, and needed to show how necessary was their task. They wanted money - so they began a campaign of disinformation, telling people in England how the heathens resorted to witchcraft and sorcery, even performing magic with waxen images, just like the witches were known to do across Europe! Yes, the whole idea was a medieval one that was exported to Voodoo by missionaries!
