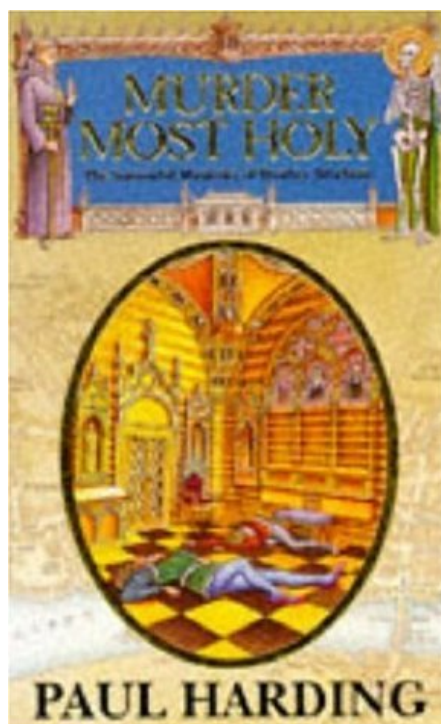




Murder Most Holy

Paul Doherty , P. Harding

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In the early summer of 1379 in London, Sir John Cranston, Coroner of the city, is trapped into a wager with Signior Gian Galeazzo, Lord of Cremona, who challenges him to resolve a certain murder mystery within two weeks. Men have been found dead in the scarlet chamber of one of Cremona's manors. They have no mark upon them; they have neither drunk nor eaten poison; there are no secret passageways or entrances to the room. And they all have awful expressions of terror upon their faces.

Realising that his reputation and future wealth now rest upon the solving of this mystery, Cranston seeks the help of his faithful secretarius Brother Athelstan.

Murder Most Holy Details

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Author : Paul Doherty , P. Harding

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From Reader Review Murder Most Holy for online ebook

Diana Hockley says

Never having read the books of Paul Doherty, I was attracted at first by the splendid cover of the paperback which I bought. The background is a soft golden map of medieval London and in the middle of the cover there is an oval inset outlined in shiny gold. Inside the inset is a section of a church depicting the altar, screened wall and outline of an ornate door. Lying on the black and yellow paving stones are two bodies dressed in bright blue hose, one with a green jerkin, the other with red. The title is printed in embossed gold letters against a blue background, under which is a border of an ecclesiastical pattern frequently seen in church pews. A monk clad in a purple gown stands on the left hand side of the title, a skeleton on the right. Most intriguing!

Brother Athelstan, friar of St Erconwald's, is beset by problems - namely one monk missing and another dead and - once the altar stone is lifted in the church during restoration work - the skeleton of what appears to be a young woman.

Sir John Cranston, the King's Coroner and Brother A's friend, is invited to a banquet given at the Regent's Palace by John Of Gaunt, where he is trapped into a wager by a visiting dignitary. The wager is that he will - or will not - come up with a solution to a "locked room" murder mystery. Sir John is forced to accept, however, if he loses Sir John will pay a thousand gold crowns on his behalf, thereby binding him to John Of Gaunt forever. If he wins, he will gain the thousand gold crowns for himself.

Paul Doherty has presented the reader with an interesting cast of characters. At St Erconwald there is a delegation of two from the Inquisition, who are there to judge the young and ambitious Brother Henry's controversial treatise on God. Brother Athelstan is surrounded by his cat - Bonaventure and his old warhorse, Philomena - and a small group of lay brothers.

The story centres around two plots: Sir John's desperation for Brother A to come up with a solution to the locked room mystery, his fear of his tiny wife, Maude and love for his twin sons. The other is what turns out to be the murder of one Brother, the disappearance of the other and then... well, you need to read this excellent and thoroughly enjoyable mystery for yourself!

Doherty weaves three irresistible murder mysteries against a seething, colourful and sometimes brutal backdrop of medieval London, not the least of which is the young King Richard, who true nature flashes out from behind his boyish demeanour- a portent of things to come.

Francis says

A kind hearted Priest and his friend the Coroner of London a loutish braggart with a big heart and an even bigger appetite run around medieval London solving mysterious deaths with a bit of humour and lots of empathy for the poorer citizens of the realm. A light hearted and entertaining series.

Kayleigh Williams says

An easy read. Three murder mysteries in one. The characters were well thought-out and developed and although the plot was intriguing it felt lacking. All three mysteries are solved very suddenly at the end with little indication that the solution was being uncovered.

The plot would have been better served if Doherty took the time and effort to develop it further.

Sumeet says

Great read

The usual characters return.

An insight into life in London some centuries ago.

Read with a cup of peppermint tea.

Kathy says

I may have read this before as the puzzle of what killed a series of people in a closed room rang familiar. But...long ago...before I began checking off books in goodreads so I wouldn't have this happen. I'm afraid there are thousands of books I read before I joined, so this system will never be perfect for me. But it helps. I like historical fiction set during the 1300's so I will gravitate to subjects I enjoy. This was the third in the series of Brother Athelstan mysteries. It contains a great deal of interesting information about life in London and the stark contrast between Southwark and the royal household where John of Gaunt "watches over" his nephew King Richard II. There are murders to be solved at the Blackfriars priory of the Dominican order in London, and Athelstan makes a good clerk to Cranston, London's coroner. This book was a very enjoyable read, filled with colorful characters and language as well as astute analysis on the part of Athelstan.

Christy says

Really liked this book. Gave it to my brother to read , which is high praise for me.

Dawn says

Brother Athelstan has three mysteries to solve in this book. A riddle for Sir John to save him from a ruinous wager, the skeleton under the flagstones before it turns his parish into mayhem and the murders of his Dominican brothers.

I thought that there was a bit too much going on for such a short book but every mystery was handily resolved.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in January 1999.

One of the disadvantages to attempting to read a series of novels from a public library is that it is extremely difficult to read them in the correct order. This is why I have only just made it to reading the third of Paul Harding's "Sorrowful Mysteries of Brother Athelstan", even though I have already read several later novels in the series.

Murder Most Holy is in fact three separate murder mysteries, which simultaneously test the abilities of the London coroner Sir John Cranston and his friend, the Dominican friar Athelstan. One is theoretical, a puzzle set Cranston by the Lord of Cremona, visiting London, as a bet; it is a locked room mystery. One involves a skeleton dug up during renovation at Athelstan's Southwark church, St Erconwalds, in danger of being thought to be the miracle-working remains of the saint himself. The main mystery is set at the friary of Blackfriars, where Athelstan himself had trained. There, a series of senior friars have been killed during the investigation into a thesis in theology presented by one of them which has to be defended against possible heresy charges.

The medieval background is as well done as ever, and the mysteries are interesting; an excellent member of the series.

Winnie says

I love the Brother Athelstan mysteries - he's such a gentle character and yet so successful in his detecting - intriguing!

Alice Lee Smith says

Love this series!

Get a taste of the Middle Ages and its history, and enjoy a terrific tale with turns and twists. More than one mystery, too.

Peter says

Dominican brother Athelstan must help London's coroner Sir John Cranston solve three separate mysteries in 1379 England. The details of courtly intrigue and day-to-day medieval life lead to an enjoyable and involving story, partly a locked room-type mystery, another plotline involving an old skeleton recently unearthed and the third, the killings of several monks connected to possible heresy.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

I enjoyed the last two Brother Athelstan books, but I did find the second one a bit perfunctory at times. This one makes up for that lapse in spades with lots of noisome street scenes, a vast array of supporting characters, three main mysteries and a handful of subplots. Plus, this isn't The Name Of The Rose, but there's something very thrilling about solving murders committed in a medieval monastery - it's such a distant, different and self-contained world. I hope the remaining titles in the series live up to the verve and complexity of this one.

Michael says

Colourful period detail - believable setting on either bank of the Thames. The puzzles were intriguing; the solutions rather a long time coming. But the characters of Sir John and his holy sidekick are appealingly drawn.

I read it in French; excellent translation, with some very obscure archaisms and lots of footnotes from the translators. Chapeau !

Rosalind Hoenig says

They just keep on getting better. The story was riveting. Three mysteries in one. I truly recommend this one!

Rozonda says

Harding/Doherty does a real good job in this novel- he involves Athelstan and Cranston in 3 mysteries at once, and gets the reader through the three of them effortlessly and in a very entertaining way. No doubt, this series is probably the author's best work.

Blücher Bücher Blog says

Ein Krimi, der im 14. Jahrhundert in London spielt. Im Zentrum stehen John Cranston, Untersuchungsrichter des Königs für London, und sein Schreiber, der Benediktiner-Mönch Athelstan. Erster liebt das Essen, den Wein und seine Frau. Der Mönch hingegen tritt nachdenklich und ruhig auf. In dem dritten Buch über das mittelalterliche Ermittlungsduo geht es um 3 Fälle, die es zu lösen gilt. Dieses Buch ist eine kurzweilige Unterhaltung und mal etwas Anderes.

Anna Doma?ska says

Nice early Doherty novel. Very busy considering the short length.

Estelle says

One of the best novels i have read in a long time.

I love the two main characters of the book, Sir John Cranston and Brother Athelstan but there is also a lovely third main character in a form of a stray tom cat, Bonaventure. This combination of the three make for great reading and give a light funny moments in a pretty dark world and storyline.

I truly love this book and will re-read many times more.

Awallens says

There were a lot of mysteries going on in this book. It was actually really good and they were wrapped up nicely. Round up to 3.5

Tom says

Writing was good but the story had a few "huh?" moments. The clues were obvious because they stood out like a beacon. And so much drinking! The book has three mysteries in the plot none connected which I found disappointing. I won't read any more from this author.
