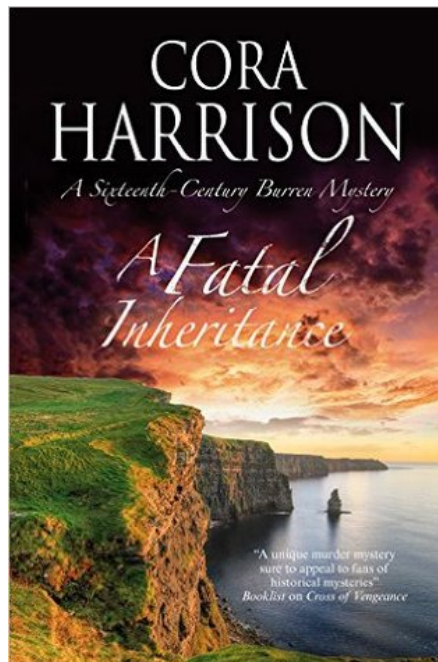




A Fatal Inheritance

Cora Harrison

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A Fatal Inheritance Cora Harrison

Mara, Brehon of the Burren, must battle superstitious beliefs and fears as she sets out to solve a brutal murder.

When a woman's body is discovered, strangled and bound with rope to the stone torso of Far Breige, the ancient stone god which stands sentinel above the haunted caves and ancient fortifications of the Atlantic cliffs, the locals believe it was the god who killed her.

In life, Clodagh O'Lochlainn had been a disgrace to her clan, tormenting her former priestly lover, jeering at her husband, robbing her relatives: but could she really have been slaughtered by a vengeful god, as the local population believes? Abandoning preparations for the celebration of her fiftieth birthday, Mara, Brehon of the Burren, with the assistance of Fachtnan and her scholars, takes up the task of solving the murder.

Ignoring the ancient legends, she concentrates instead on bringing a mortal killer to justice. But it's only when Fachtnan's small daughter is lost in the labyrinth of passages among the caves that the horrifying truth begins to emerge.

A Fatal Inheritance Details

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From Reader Review A Fatal Inheritance for online ebook

Rosemary Miller says

I enjoy this series about Mara, Brehon of Burren. Discusses Celtic laws and medieval rural Irish life .
Well written characters and plot.

Candace says

*The fine for killing a person is fixed at forty-two sets, twenty-one ounces of silver or twenty-one milch cows.
To this is added the honour price of the victim.
An unacknowledged killing is classified as duinethaoide and this doubles the fine to be paid.*

This is book 13 of The Burren Mysteries. Each chapter begins with an ancient tenet/rule of Brehon law. Brehon law is another way of saying Early Irish law. This series explores in a very fun way the legal system in 16th century Ireland. When I first fell in love with the first book in this series, My Lady Judge, Brehon law was foreign but new and interesting. It was fun to learn about a justice system so different than ours and also with a strong female judge.

Now, in A Fatal Inheritance: A Burren Mystery Set in 16th Century Ireland Mara and her students find Clodagh O'Lochlainn bound in rope to the Far Breige, as if embracing the stone god. Mara calls her students over to study the crime scene because they will help her solve the murder. Mara, although a very important Judge and wife of a King, teaches her students to investigate crimes and also trains them in memorizing legal texts, and speaking and debating.

Only ten days previously Mara had issued a verdict giving a large tract of land to Clodagh that had belonged to Clodagh's father. Many people in the community believed the father had given the land to Clodagh's four first cousins, four brothers, who had taken care of their uncle for years as he grew older. However Mara could find no proof that the man had given the land to his nephews and had issued a verdict giving the land to Clodagh. One of the wives of the brothers had cursed Clodagh, "May the curse of the stone god of the old people take the breath from your body."

When Mara and her students begin the investigation they soon learn that the community believes the stone god killed Clodagh for stealing an inheritance from the legal owners. Despite the Irish legends, and the fairies, Mara and her students must focus on facts to solve this crime.

While investigating, I could feel the Irish atmosphere and the Old spirits around me. The writing is so descriptive that you can feel this plot pulling you in and it makes you feel as if you are one of Mara's students. It is wonderful that Mara does not have a sidekick or a police partner, but rather that she works with her students and through her communication with them we are a part of the story; six eager students sharing their learning experiences as they see the crime through different viewpoints and at different ages. A very different mystery from most others and a very enjoyable one!

I received this copy from the publisher and NetGalley.

Constance Maloney says

I never tire of reading the Brehon law citations. I have spent no little amount of time wondering about the effectiveness of our "eye for an eye" system of judicial punishment - and how this part of the world had found a different way to deal with criminal activities. I have enjoyed all of the series, and am saddened, knowing that the Roman order of things is what will bring an end to the kingdoms and more humane existence that is described in these novels.

I enjoy the way that the mysteries in this series never have obvious answers, but also never use the "pull a rabbit out of the hat" approach, of surprising the reader with answers that have no basis whatsoever in the earlier text. While there is typically some information not previously disclosed involved in the final sleuthing, I never feel that I have been tricked at the end of the story.

I am a big fan of a historical notes section in historical novels - that can include brief explanations of the true people and events on which the stories are based. I wish this book had such a section.

Judy says

Good story with Mara, Brehon of Burren.

Judy Lesley says

The body of Clodagh O'Lochlainn is found in the early afternoon tied to the stone god Far Breige with a noose around her neck and the key to her recently attained cottage dangling from her hand. Why is it that no person will admit to seeing this crime committed even though the stone is visible from a fair number of houses? Mara, the Brehon (judge) of the kingdom of Burren investigates the crime along with the students attending her law school. In Ireland in the 16th century the Brehon held the power to investigate and then to assign the required fine to the person found guilty of any crime. But Irish law did not demand imprisonment or death of a person deemed guilty of any crime, even murder.

I absolutely love reading novels in this series because of the historical information covering the legal system of Ireland before the country came under the rule of the English. Children from about eight years of age were placed with a Brehon where they learned all aspects of the Irish legal system and investigated crimes, large or small, under the watchful eye of the judge of the kingdom they represented. In this series Mara is the wife of the king of this specific kingdom but they live apart almost all the time. He is a warrior king, she is a judge and teaches law students. As you read through these novels you learn all kinds of interesting facts about how advanced Irish law was and how well the system worked. You also get to watch her students mature in age and their understanding of the legal system and how to investigate crimes. One of her students is her son, another is her grandson. One is going to make an outstanding lawyer someday, the other still can move in many directions. Mara has full authority to go to any place within her specific kingdom territory and ask any of the citizens to answer the questions she requires to decide guilt or innocence.

In some ways this system of justice feels almost naïve when I think about it from the standpoint of modern times. However, author Cora Harrison does an outstanding job of placing the reader very firmly in the time period of the rule of the English king, Henry VIII. You can certainly begin reading this series with this novel, there isn't any reason you won't enjoy the novel if you pick up the story here. I have to say, though, that I'm

glad to have had the opportunity to watch Mara mature (she's going to be celebrating her 50th birthday) and her students grow more adept in their learning and understanding. The characters are deeply developed and the descriptions of the Irish landscape are simply marvelous.

I received an e-ARC of this novel through NetGalley.

Nancy says

Mara of the Burren always entertains.

Judith says

The cover to this book is stunning and, like this and her past mysteries, makes me want to go to Ireland. As usual Harrison plots a mystery well and the plot evolves because of character and personality. In retrospect I can see where she laid her clues, but these were not so obvious that I included the perpetrator as one of the suspects. The glimpses of Irish life at this time bring the period to life and the extracts from Irish law impress me again with its subtlety and its serious intent to repair the rents that crime has caused in the social fabric. So much more humane than our law and much more effective, I think. I highly recommend a reader new to this series, however, to begin with the first book and see how Harrison evolves her characters.

Clemens Schoonderwoert says

This delightful little mystery by this fine lady author is already the 13th volume, and hopefully it won't be the last, of the beautiful Burren series.

Storytelling is once again of a really excellent and endearing quality, for the author has the ability to take you along this Burren landscape in a most compelling fashion, and this landscape is situated in the West of Ireland with all its beautiful and dangerous spots.

The main characters of the book are, Mara who's Brehon of the Burren, her assistant Fachtnan, and her scholars, and it's they who are always ready to solve mysteries in 16th Century Ireland, and finally it will be up to Mara to speak justice and punishment of all the cases, and thus also in this murder case, which fall under the Irish Brehon Law system.

Once more all the characters involved in this tale come all vividly to life within this lovely and gripping mystery, simply because all of them take part in their own kind of way in this part of Ireland by sharing each others lives, hardships and deaths.

The time has moved on somewhat, for we find ourselves now in the year AD 1523, and it follows the adventures of "Condemned to Death", where Mara, Fachtnan and the scholars are up to their next assignment to unravel the threads that will lead to the solution of this deadly mystery.

The story itself is about Clodagh O'Lochlainn, who has been a disgrace to her clan, but who's now found dead, strangled and bound with rope to the stone torso of Far Breige, the ancient Stone God from the Old Irish Faith.

While superstition is ruling the lives of the locals and while Mara's fiftieth birthday is fast approaching, it's Mara herself, assisted by Fachtnan and her scholars who will once again take up the task to solve this crime, and what will follow is a suspenseful tale where the guilty person will be brought to justice in the end.

A really commendable Irish mystery by this lady author, and that's why I would like to call this book "A Wonderful Inheritance"!

Susan says

The birthday party has to go!

I have some trouble keeping all of the characters straight.

eyes.2c says

engrossing Irish Middle Ages mystery!

The building of tension coupled with the eeriness of the murder itself, the inclusion of the haunts of the old gods, all held my attention completely. The centre piece is the stone God, the Far Breige, to which the murder victim was Bound in a macabre lovers knot, the scene all hidden by the secretive mists, until the clarity of the sun cuts through, exposing all.

As Mara, Brehon of the Burren, goes persistently and quietly about her business as the Brehon we are also treated to her canny observations about the people around her, her scholars and those she must interview to get to the truth.

And that truth is in danger of being lost amongst the community's legends and beliefs in relation to the old gods.

Mara is indeed a woman to be admired. Her mind is swift. She is reflective and powerful in her understandings, yet always lovingly heeding the situations of the people involved. Her teaching of her students is outstanding. She sees to their hearts and leads them into the art of asking the right questions and viewing each step of the investigation from a multifaceted perspective. She encourages their opinions and listens to their input.

Another engrossing novel set in the late Middle Ages in Ireland, reflecting a rich heritage of law and Justice attuned to the peoples of the land, a sophisticated and often compassionate system to be admired, more communal than adversarial.

A NetGalley ARC

Violet says

This one is not as much of a story as others ... just a matter of interrogation and investigation of all possibilities. There is a bit of the old gods, beliefs, etc. and a lot of description of the land along the coastal region with its rocks and caves, and even a lead mine. It is interesting. I do like the way the author gives us a lot of the old Irish law ... penalties and fines and such. Fun reading.

Kathy says

I have now read the first and last (to date) books in this series featuring Mara, Brehon and wife of a king in the West Ireland of 16th Century. The king is a somewhat jolly side character, so that is amusing in itself. The pacing and flow of action in the two books I have read so far is sedate, emphasizing always what Brehon

law is being relied on as Mara walks through her investigations of murder.

The lady murdered in this case was beyond unpopular, murdered in a dramatically grotesque display attached to a statue, and there were many suspects Mara was required to consider carefully. The victim had just won a case, inheriting the property of her father, thus the title of the book.

I must say that the liveliest character in these books is a giant dog, Ug. I just might like him enough to read another down the road.

It's a quick respectable read and fills my medieval mystery need.

Kathleen says

"In life, Clodagh O Lochlainn had been a disgrace to her clan, tormenting her former priestly lover, jeering at her husband, robbing her relatives.. Abandoning preparations for the celebration of her fiftieth birthday, Mara, Brehon of the Burren, takes up the task of solving the murder"

Satisfyingly complicated, with a poignancy that was arresting, a very fine tale by a talented author. Mara is a favorite character and this period in time is pivotal for many reasons.

English law was at odds with but parallel with Brehon law, in this place especially. Mara herself weighs the two constantly to see which is fairer or more humane. So very telling that in this case Mara is thinking about Thomas More's book Utopia, for more than one reason.

Education of all eventually plays a place in the dispensing of the verdicts fines. The reader can clearly see why Mara is thinking about which children should be educated and how as she watches Fachtnan with his daughter Orla.

The story ends with Mara thinking that this Utopian educational facility would be a memorial to Turlough Donn O'Brien someday.

To weave a satisfactory mystery in with the history of the O'Davoren clan of law scholars and the O'Briens of Thomand, Corcomroe and the Burren is masterful indeed. I recommend you start at the beginning of this fine series. Cora Harrison's historical detail and her perspective on the period never fails and the characters are vivid and memorable

The pre-order link is up for this one so put it on your Christmas Wish list.

Jill says

So I love this series, but this was not my favorite! I did not care for the resolution, and I don't feel like we're getting to know the students well. Just OK for me.

Bettie? says

Description: *When a woman's body is discovered, strangled and bound with rope to the stone torso of Fár Breige, the ancient stone god which stands sentinel above the haunted caves and ancient fortifications of the Atlantic cliffs, the locals believe it was the god who killed her.*

In life, Clodagh O'Lochlainn had been a disgrace to her clan, tormenting her former priestly lover, jeering at her husband, robbing her relatives: but could she really have been slaughtered by a vengeful god, as the local population believes? Abandoning preparations for the celebration of her fiftieth birthday, Mara, Brehon of the Burren, with the assistance of Fachtnan and her scholars, takes up the task of solving the murder. Ignoring the ancient legends, she concentrates instead on bringing a mortal killer to justice. But it's only when Fachtnan's small daughter is lost in the labyrinth of passages among the caves that the horrifying truth begins to emerge.

(view spoiler)