



A Fete Worse Than Death

Dolores Gordon-Smith

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It's 1922 and Jack Haldean, young crime writer and former Royal Flying Corps pilot, is enjoying the local fete on a beautiful summer's day in rural Sussex. But then Jack's fellow officer, Jeremy Boscombe, is found dead in the fortune teller's tent and later the same day Boscombe's shady friend, Reggie Morton, is murdered in the village pub. Jack's search for the truth will lead him back to the Battle of the Somme and an act of terrible betrayal.

A Fete Worse Than Death Details

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Rosie Claverton says

Enjoyable post-WWI tale of mysterious identities, hidden motives, and tense, dramatic moments. I am looking forward to picking up the rest of the series.

Karen says

I bought a copy of this because my public library did not have one, and I like to read series in order.

There is a murder at a country fete and Jack jumps in to determine how someone hidden in a gypsy tent could be shot so accurately while he was nearby and did not hear a thing.

The plot is perfectly set up with misdirection and a lot of eyewitnesses who can or should never be believed.

No swearing and no sex. This is a family rated murder mystery.

Denise Mullins says

Set in the gentrified English countryside after WW I, this entertaining little mystery realistically recreates the nonchalant attitude of the beautiful people as they confront a variety of unsavory dilemmas including blackmail, bigotry, and murder.

Retired RAF pilot and amateur sleuth-crime author Jack Haldean gradually recognizes the connection between the death of a shady former soldier and the complicated betrothal of young Marguerite Vayle to Colonel Whitfield. Of course, the immediate acceptance by the police allowing Jack to assist -and often lead- the investigation stretches credibility, but it's all part of the fun. There are some genuinely suspenseful moments, although the ending's denouement becomes a bit long-winded. However, overall it's an enjoyable story.

Leigh Koonce says

Interesting plot but not the level of character development for which I had hoped.

Julie says

Does a good job capturing the vibe of golden age mysteries, but that also means capturing the golden age penchant for rather flimsy characterizations. Good plot with lots of unexpected developments.

Ariel says

I can't remember who told me this was a light, entertaining, well done British mystery series but it is certainly very engaging and well plotted. A mystery novelist helps solve a mystery in the British countryside that has its roots in WWII. Reminiscent of Dorothy Sayers and P.G. Wodehouse.

Judy says

I enjoyed this a lot - a murder mystery set in the 1920s and written much in the vein of Golden Age writers like Margery Allingham or Dorothy Sayers. Jack Haldean, a First World War pilot turned detective story writer and amateur detective, is an appealing hero, and there is an enjoyably witty flavour to the prose style. I'm now looking forward to reading the second book in this series.

Annette Meier says

Wonderful post-WWI mystery - plenty of great characters, more twists & turns than a country road and it held my attention right to the end.

Beth says

I think this book deserves better than the 2 stars I originally gave it. It did have a pretty good plot and there was a more than decent solution to the murder...it definitely fooled me for an embarrassingly long time. BUT, my problem was with the characters. They seemed to me to be so urbane and languid, and so darned shallow. Even the "hero." Ya, he has a talent for detecting, but he had little empathy or personality. And if he'd called another character "old thing" one more time I'd have thrown the book in a snowbank. There, I feel less guilty about trashing it before, but I still won't be reading the 2nd one any time soon.

Donna says

A fairly new author. This is the first in a new mystery series. The year is 1922. The main character is Jack Haldean, a former WW I pilot who now writes mystery stories. He gets caught up in a series of murders which reach back to the war.

I enjoyed the book, not fabulous, but better than a lot of the run-of-the-mill mysteries being published these days. I like the setting of the 1920's. I will definitely read the next one.

Damaskcat says

Jack Haldean, successful crime author, is staying with some relatives and attends a fete. Someone who was in the RFC during the war approaches him and he is reminded of how much he disliked the man. When

Boscombe, the man concerned is found dead in the fortune teller's tent it soon becomes clear that there is more to the case than meets the eye and the ramifications may involve his own family and put Jack in danger.

The plot involves betrayal during World War I and some very dodgy going on in nineteen twenty one too. The plot is complex and while I had worked out who the murderer was quite early on I still found the untangling the plot of interest to me and there were a couple of twists which I definitely didn't see coming. I thought the characters were well drawn and believable and I liked the nineteen twenties background.

The tension gradually built up to the ending which had me reading faster and faster to find out what happened. This is a well written crime story and I recommend it to anyone who likes Golden Age detective fiction and its modern imitations. It is the first in a series of mysteries featuring Jack Haldean.

Vanessa says

Twisty, turny, thoroughly enjoyable mystery set in the post-WWI countryside. The only drawback is the irritating Maggie Vayles (a ward of the aunt and uncle of our detective) whose selfishness and general teenage dumbness is too easily forgiven by the other characters and drives the plot a bit too much. As I'm definitely in for the series I hope she moves to Australia or gets hit by a car (fingers crossed?). Anyway, this is one to add to the to-read list for sure.

Chris says

I should probably mark this down as two stars, and yet I can't seem to find it in me to be that cruel. I read the sixth book in this series several months ago and really liked it, so I decided to go back to the beginning and see how the series got its start. The excellent prose is still there and I still like our hero, Jack Haldean, just as much as I did in Trouble Brewing. This first book is a complex little mystery, with lots of little side stories going on. So let's just chalk up the shortcomings to first-book-itis.

Jack was a major in the Royal Flying Corps during WWI. Having survived what so many didn't, he is now making a living as a mystery writer and generally enjoying the good life. While attending the local fete near the country home of his aunt and uncle, he runs into a truly detestable man from his military days. By the end of the afternoon, the man will be dead. Not only that, but within a few hours, the man's roommate will also be murdered at a nearby inn. Meanwhile, the ward of Jack's aunt and uncle is determined to marry a war hero significantly older than she is - except her other ward, a Canadian visitor, is dead set against the match. There are a lot of arrows that point to a particular event during the war in which one British soldier emerged a hero and another was branded a traitor.

It's a good set-up, and a good story. I had a couple of problems with it. The answer to one of the main mysteries is as clear as the lit tip of a cigar on a dark night. It does everything but flash on the page. It's so obvious that when the "big reveal" came, I was ready to shout, "About bloody time!" It also wasn't too much of a stretch to figure out who the true villain was - although at least it was interesting to see how Jack and the local constabulary was able to bring the truth to light.

So, as a first outing, it really wasn't all that bad. If I had read it first, I don't know that I'd be itching to read the others, but knowing that at least one of them is significantly better, I am looking forward to the rest.

Janet says

Another fairly straightforward new-to-me series without many twists and turns (at least, not many that I was fooled by). The 1920s slang seems a bit forced at times, but it's entertaining enough I'll try the second book. Many first books in a series, I find, are a bit wobbly until the author finds his/her stride.

Debbie says

It's 1922 and Jack Haldean, young crime writer and former Royal Flying Corps pilot, is enjoying the local fete on a beautiful summer's day in rural Sussex. When his friend is murdered, Jack steps in to solve the crime. I can't remember how the police figured in this one, but I do remember being pleasantly surprised at the quality of the mystery, and that I enjoyed it even though I saw the murderer right away.

I find it amusing that the title of this book works because, although the French pronounce the French word fête fet, the English pronounce it fate. Much like the French word valet (va-lay) which the English say is val-et. (Just going to do it our way.)

4 stars
