



A Promise of Ruin

Cuyler Overholt

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To stop the trafficking ring plaguing her city, Dr. Genevieve Summerford must dive into New York's underworld

In early 1900s New York, the formidable crime syndicate known as the Black Hand has been terrorizing the city's Italian community with bombings and kidnappings. When a young Italian girl is found drowned and sexually defiled, Dr. Genevieve Summerford suspects the organization has expanded into forced prostitution, and she won't rest until the trafficking ring is brought to justice.

A Promise of Ruin Details

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From Reader Review A Promise of Ruin for online ebook

nikkia neil says

Thanks Edelweiss for this ARC.

Cuyler Overholt cranks up the danger, passion, and fiery wit in the sequel to A Deadly Affection.

Terri M. says

I first met Dr. Genevieve Summerford on July 31, 2016. When I met her in the pages of A Deadly Affection I became enchanted with her drive to help people, her struggle with classism and her struggle to prevent herself from falling in love, a prospect that rarely ever works in books like this, much to the delight of this reader.

I was looking forward to catching up with Dr. Summerford again this summer between the covers of A Promise of Ruin, the latest mystery in the Summerford Mystery series by Cuyler Overholt. Genevieve, or maybe by this point I can call her Gennie as Simon does, is full that same fire and determination that won me over in A Deadly Affection.

The topics touched on in A Promise of Ruin may walk a fine line for readers—sex abuse, child abuse and sex trafficking. These are not easy topics to read and Overholt doesn't shy away from affects of the mental and physical abuse and the cultural implications of the time period which still resonate today. Although I suspect that Overholt just scratched the surface of all that could be touched on in relation to these topics. View Spoiler »

As in book one, the other characters that populate Genevieve's world are just as real and tenacious as she is. Simon, Genevieve's love interest, struggles with his own masculinity as Genevieve strives to forward her position and ideas in a world that traditionally does not allow women to be so outspoken. Pauline and Angela, who run a home for 'fallen' women, help Genevieve out immensely and show Genevieve she is not alone in trying to make the world a better place. Fo me, it was nice for Genevieve to have a connection with other women bucking tradition as sometimes it feels she is awfully alone in her crusade.

I definitely enjoyed this second installment in the Dr. Genevieve Summerford Mystery series. Overholt continues to write historical mysteries that resonate into twenty-first century. I can't wait for my next meeting with Dr. Summerford!

This review was originally posted on Second Run Reviews

Leona says

I thoroughly enjoyed the first in the series, "A Deadly Affection". However, I struggled with "A Promise of Ruin". The topic was compelling, but it was poorly executed. I found the first half of the book to be a delightful 5 star read, but things went down hill quickly once the protagonist was captured.

From that point forward, I felt the book not only lost steam, but veered away from the time period it was written. The mystery also had too many side stories and therefore just brushed lightly on the overall challenges of these poor victims. The author missed an opportunity to keep the reader vested in the story. I would have loved more time with Teresa, her issues, and her journey back. This lack of depth weakened the overall story.

5 stars for the first half, 1 star for the second half, which rounds it to 3 stars overall.

Kate says

I received this ARC from the publisher at ALA Annual conference.

Dr. Genevieve Summerford is finding her place in turn-of-the-century New York and in a relationship with a former servant, Simon Shaw. A dead body leads to a plea from a young girl that she find a missing immigrant, and that leads to learning much about the seedier parts of life, including the Black Hand, prostitution, and crusaders against venereal disease. This is a mystery a bit in the Victoria Thompson Sarah Brandt vein, perhaps even derivative but it stands pretty well on its own, although I felt like I was missing something starting with the second volume. I wish I had been spared the annoying book discussion questions, but ARC-readers cannot be choosers. The history isn't as artfully dropped in as I prefer, and I'm not totally sold on the research process - again, this is suffering by comparison to other series. There is a bit more romance feel here than usual but this is decidedly a mystery series and not a romance. I'm not entirely sure how our heroine fixed on the villain being a psychopath so easily...nor (you will excuse me) am I sure that a rapists' victims would really be able to notice that he only had one testicle (perhaps this is a failure of my imagination). Worth borrowing from the library and even keeping up with the series to see if the writing improves as the author builds experience.

Sara says

Superbly done! I look forward to more of Dr. Genevieve Summerford's adventures.

Shelley says

Source Edelweiss

Genre Mystery, Historical Fiction

Rating 3.5

My Thoughts

A Promise of Ruin, by author Cuyler Overholt, is the second installment in the Dr. Genevieve Summerford Mystery series. This is a series that is set in 1907 New York City. Dr. Genevieve is a specialist in neurology and mental therapy (psychotherapy). She is the first woman to practice in this advanced field, which we now take for granted. Unlike other psychiatrists, Genna specializes in healing the brain, not just the body. Genevieve is a young woman marked by her past.

Full Review @ Gizmos Reviews

<http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...>

Carolien says

I thoroughly enjoyed the first book of the series and was very happy to see the second one in print. Once again, it is well-written with interesting characters and a solid plot. The author's love for New York and the time period shines through and it is well-researched. Highly recommend this series for those who love turn of the century New York and historical crime.

Laurie • The Baking Bookworm says

3.5 stars -- Set in early 1900's New York City, A Promise of Ruin is the second book in the Dr Genevieve Summerford historical mystery series. Genna is a young psychologist and continues to struggle to make a name for herself especially since some people think her profession is not something a woman should strive for.

Central to the plot is the plight of Italian immigrants who flooded New York City at the time but the strength of this book is in its historical information and the blatant prejudice against these immigrants. The Blackhand, a group of Italians who preyed on their fellow countrymen with abuse, threats and extortion as well as sex-trafficking, kidnapping, sex abuse etc are important and eye-opening parts of the plot.

One of the aspects that I enjoyed from the first book was a look at the psychiatric profession through the eyes of a woman in the early 20th century. That struggle is focused on less in this book and readers who dive right into this book (which could be read as a standalone) will miss out on much of that important aspect of the series.

The mystery itself was good but lacked the energy of the first book and I felt that the romance between Genna and Simon ran a little lukewarm. While it took me a bit to get back into the characters lives, the plot ramps up with a solid ending. I look forward to more books featuring Dr Summerford.

Larry says

Great book! Rich in historical detail and atmosphere, and also very emotionally involving. The writing flows smoothly and creates an increasing sense of danger and urgency. I read this after A Deadly Affection, which I highly recommend, but it could be read as a standalone. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series!

SS says

4 1/2 stars This book is part of a series but can be read alone, with no problem understanding the characters, their interactions, or the story as it develops.

This is a beautifully written and edited book. Given that this is an advanced reader copy of it, the worst I can say about it is that I found one repeated word. In my estimation, that's remarkable. The words that swirl around in my head about the writing are that it's high quality and precise. There isn't a wasted word. Do have a dictionary nearby as you read. You will likely find it useful.

This is the fictional story of a young female doctor and how she became involved in helping to discover those behind kidnapping and enslaving young immigrant women into a life of prostitution. It's a great topic, and I learned some things I hadn't know before reading this book. I did think that some of the things that Genna did were more contemporary than historical, and there is a fair degree of predictability in the plot, but there are also some surprises. Still, I enjoyed reading it, more to watch the development of the characters relationships than the story itself. There are a couple of romances involved in the novel, but, to me, they seemed secondary to the bringing to justice of the white slavers. At the end, there is also a dose of religion in relation to one of the characters. It brings about a resolution to a problem, but it's a little too out of the blue and contrived for my taste. Still, I enjoyed this book a great deal.

If you enjoy historical fiction but can suspend disbelief to some degree, I can recommend this book to you.

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway. My thanks to the author and publisher for allowing me the chance to read this book prior to publication.

Melliane says

Mon avis en Français

My English review

I really loved the first book and I was looking forward to this new story! It must be said that the whole context that the author has chosen is fascinating!

So we find Genevieve ready for new adventures. In fact, as she tries to know exactly what she wants to do with her feelings towards Simon and to understand what she wants, our dear psychiatrist will have to face new problems. The author plunges us into the world of forced prostitution in the Italian community of a New York in the 1900s. It is a really interesting and terrible subject especially when we know that it still exists today.

In fact, while she meets with Simon, she attends the draft of a young Italian who seems to have suffered a lot of vices and that is how she meets Rosa who begs her to find one of her friends Italian too, which seems to have disappeared. Intrigued by these events, Genevieve won't be able to prevent herself from mingling with this sordid story to understand exactly what is going on. But this story is much more complex than she thought, and the slave trade does not particularly like when someone takes a closer look at the business.

I found the story really exciting. I was waiting impatiently to find out what was going to happen. It must be said that our heroine has the chic to end up in compromising situations. This novel is a bit different from the first one but I found that the turn that the author had taken was just as well!

This is not a simple story and it is sad to see what these girls have suffered but I confess that I did not expect at all the culprit of the story. It must be said that we easily follow the hypotheses of Genevieve without ever questioning them!

A very good new novel

Annette says

In my review for *A Deadly Affection*, I commented that I was thoroughly entertained by the main character. I continue my affection for Dr. Genevieve Summerford in this second book, *A Promise of Ruin*.

Genevieve is a doctor of psychiatry in the early 1900s. So, she's a woman doctor, which is almost unheard of. And her specialty is psychiatry, which is not a very respected specialty, even among male doctors. *A Promise of Ruin* doesn't focus too much on her role as a physician, but once again, she's involved in the investigation of a crime, or in this case many crimes. It seems women are being kidnapped as they arrive in this country, expecting to marry their sweetheart. Instead, they are kidnapped and forced into prostitution.

I do like that Genevieve keeps the police in the loop about what she finds out in her investigation. And at least some of the police believe her and try to look into these disappearances. Her relationship with Simon has not progressed, and Genevieve is disappointed that he doesn't seem interested.

She's determined to find out what is going on, and of course, ends up putting herself in harm's way. I did think that *A Promise of Ruin* took a bit longer to get going, but by the halfway point, I had to finish. I couldn't put it down. I appreciate her determination to find the truth and her manipulation of a society that isn't very conducive to women doing anything of any importance.

Being a fan of historical fiction and mysteries, these books just hit the right spot for me. I know at times Genevieve is a bit lucky, but that's part of the fun. I hope Overholt continues this series because I'm in! If you have teens that enjoy these genres, the Dr. Genevieve Summerford Mysteries Series is totally appropriate for them.

Rachel says

A Promise of Ruin is the second installment of the Genevieve Summerford series and my goodness, I loved it even better than the first.

Summary:

Genevieve (or Genna) is a rare breed. Not only is she a woman of society, being raised by her wealthy parents, she is also a licensed psychologist (one of the first in the field) with a mind as quick as a whip. In this installment, she and Simon Shaw, Genevieve's love interest, come across the dead and drowned body of a mystery woman. In the chaos, Genevieve is stopped by a young Italian immigrant frantically asking for the whereabouts of her friend who had arrived in America as an immigrant herself and disappeared without a trace. While there are several ideas as to where this missing woman went, Genna finds herself unable to ignore the distraught request and sets it upon herself to locate where the woman was.

Doing so, Genevieve finds herself in a world of trouble, from which—she worries—she may never escape.

My Review:

After giving the first installment 3 stars (again, I enjoyed it, but there were issues), I set my expectations at a fair level. This book exceeded them. The mystery was, in my opinion, a challenge, but not much so as to be frustrating and not so easy that this could be labeled as a cozy mystery. The subject matter is harsh and even I

had to pause a few times while reading this (this focuses on rape and prostitution. Reader beware.)

The author's writing is wonderful and their attention to detail is a breath of fresh air. You could almost feel the sensations that were written, smell the aroma of the city and of the food, sense the anxiety and fear as you delved deeper into the mystery.

I loved the settings, the characters (especially our sassy protagonist) and how they were written (yes, even the criminals). All of it. Even if I found the subject matter horrifying (as one should.) It made my heart race several times and that, my friends, is how you write a mystery.

Would I recommend this book? Absolutely.

Linda says

"I walked blindly down the sidewalk, reeling from the day's discoveries. Was there no end to the cruelty in the world?"

No matter how much time unravels from the spool of life, some things just never change. This evil has resided in the hearts of the corrupt since the beginning of time much like a depraved force-field that refuses to be consumed by its own flames.

Dr. Genevieve (Genna) Summerford has continually inserted her persistent foot onto ground reserved solely for males. It's the turn of the century and women were a rarity in the medical field. Even more unusual, Genna has pursued a career in psychiatry which supported few females at the time. Female patients in need of care were plentiful, but access to these women was almost impossible in a male dominated world. Male doctors refused to address specific female symptoms and relegated them to the catch-all diagnosis of "hysteria".

The story opens with Dr. Summerford attending an Independence Day celebration at the East River in New York City. The tone of the festivities changes abruptly when the body of a young Italian woman is pulled from the river. Who was she? The condition of her body leads Genna to believe that something more sinister has taken place.

When another Italian woman is reported missing as she arrived at Ellis Island, Genna promises the young woman's friend that she will do everything possible to find her. Her investigation leads her down avenues perhaps shaded by the Black Hand or by local procurers of young women into prostitution. As aforementioned, time passes, but the debased and immoral crime still finds its way into this world's society in an even more devious and sophisticated high-tech manner. The parallels are uncanny with the degenerates still preying upon the innocent.

A Promise of Ruin is the second book in this series, but it can be read as a standalone. Cuyler Overholt has created a very demonstrative female lead who uses her sharp female instincts along with her medical credentials to be of service. Overholt has done some mighty fine research into the budding field of psychiatry and how it relates to the history of the time period. Her character of Genna reflects the uphill climb of women and how it plays out in the uneven ground of class and relationships.

A Promise of Ruin, though a period piece, will give pause as to the state of human corruption played out in modern times. If you get a chance, you may want to reach back and read the first book in this series to follow the journey of Dr. Summerford from its beginnings. A very well-crafted read.

Heather says

While *A Deadly Affection* (book 1) very much had its roots in the medical field that Genevieve was making inroads into, in *A Promise of Ruin* it plays second string to the kidnapping and trafficking storyline. Genevieve still attends to her clients and uses the knowledge to help some of the other characters cope with things they are dealing with, but it was not the focus here. Genevieve actually struggles with the fact that her psychiatry practice is not taking off and she is spending more time providing actual physical medical assistance, which felt very real. While this was something that I enjoyed in the first book, the characters held my rapt attention here and I didn't miss it.

And oh the characters! I love the Genevieve and Simon back and forth. Their relationship is full of fun banter and tension between them that keeps the reader on their toes. We also get to know more about the retainers in the Summerford household who worry about Genevieve as one of their own; Katey is quite the spitfire and I loved how she helped resolve the mystery. Even the men and boys who are a part of the world Simon moves in were well fleshed out and entertaining. You gotta love those little boys!

There is much more focus on the police investigation (and Genevieve's meddling in it), but it felt very well set in the time period and not out of place at all. I'm a huge fan of police procedurals and this worked here, although I hope the books to come to not all feature this. I have done some studying of the Black Hand and the Italian Camorra and I enjoyed how these elements were seamlessly woven into the fabric of the story here. Additionally, a lot more of this novel is committed to Genevieve helping those from the lower classes, whereas previously we were more set in the upper class – it was very different.

I really enjoyed spending time with Genevieve and friends again and look forward to seeing where the next book take her – especially in terms of her relationship and her medical profession.

Audiobook Discussion:

My opinions on the narration are very much in line with my thoughts on book 1, as they are both narrated by the same person, Carly Robins. Robins was able to relay the author's pacing well in this audiobook presentation. There is an interplay between slow or fast reading based on the need of the scene. I appreciated the appropriate pause length between sentences – just the right amount of time. Robbins imbues her Genevieve with an earnestness, but also demonstrates fear or hesitation when appropriate. It certainly feels like she spent some time getting to know the characters before recording the passages. There is some voice work here to make characters unique, and this is one of the few times I have found myself feeling comfortable with a narration of characters of the opposite sex from the narrator. Additionally, I feel that she handled the variety of accents well as we have American, Irish, and Italian among the characters. An admirable job that never felt jarring or out of place.

This review was previously posted at The Maiden's Court blog and a copy of the book was received for review consideration.