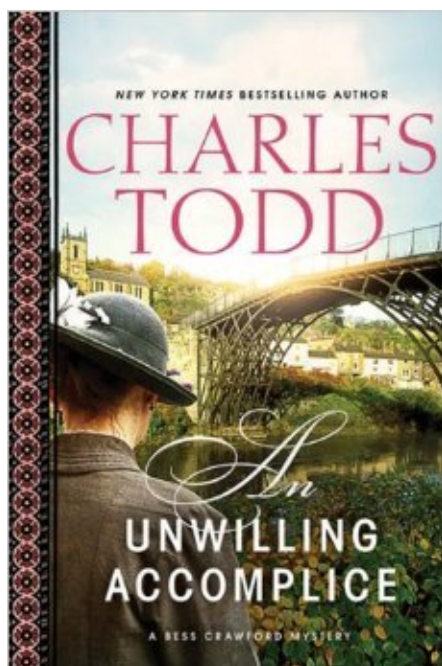




An Unwilling Accomplice

Charles Todd

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World War I Battlefield nurse Bess Crawford's career is in jeopardy when a murder is committed on her watch, in this absorbing and atmospheric historical mystery from New York Times bestselling author Charles Todd

Home on leave, Bess Crawford is asked to accompany a wounded soldier confined to a wheelchair to Buckingham Palace, where he's to be decorated by the King. The next morning when Bess goes to collect Wilkins, he has vanished. Both the Army and the nursing service hold Bess negligent for losing the war hero, and there will be an inquiry.

Then comes disturbing word from the Shropshire police, complicating the already difficult situation: Wilkins has been spotted, and he's killed a man. If Bess is to save her own reputation, she must find Wilkins and uncover the truth. But the elusive soldier has disappeared again and even the Shropshire police have lost him. Suddenly, the moral implications of what has happened—that a patient in her charge has committed murder—become more important to Bess than her own future. She's going to solve this mysterious puzzle, but righting an injustice and saving her honor may just cost Bess her life.

An Unwilling Accomplice Details

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From Reader Review An Unwilling Accomplice for online ebook

Mary says

I found the newest addition to the Bess Crawford series different from the other books. It takes place almost entirely in England. She's been put on leave while an inquiry occurs to determine her part in the disappearance of Wilkins, the war hero she'd been assigned to accompany to Buckingham Palace to receive a medal from the King.

It doesn't take long until Bess's family friend Sergeant-Major Simon Brandon is by her side intent on proving her innocence as well as finding Wilkins. The two travel the countryside trying to solve the mystery.

I enjoyed the setting and the interactions between Bess and Simon but I didn't see their friendship progress much in this book. I'd been hoping :). I guess I'll have to wait for the next book. That aside, I thought the mystery was engaging for a while but I grew a bit bored by the time the actual solution was revealed. So, I liked it but didn't love it as much as I'd hoped to. I recommend An Unwilling Accomplice to fans of the series, historical mysteries, and Charles Todd.

*I received a review copy in exchange for my opinion

Jonathan says

Excellent. For some reason, these books are never my first pick, but once I read them I absolutely love them. Highly recommend!

Leigh says

I adore Bess Crawford. She's smart, respectable, hard-working, and courageous. What more could a reader want?

This book, however, was not the best in the series. The setting was mundane and I quickly lost interest in the descriptions. I would have also like to have seen more interaction between Bess and her family, but it seemed that the entire book was describing Bess and Simon in a car running back and forth between the same people and places.

The writing was wonderful (I didn't expect less from Charles Todd). The characters were as charming as ever, but the plot was not engaging.

I will give the book this: I did not expect the ending. So even if you are not in love with most of the book, read it just to get to the end. It might redeem it in your eyes.

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

One of the things that makes the Bess Crawford series so interesting is the way that Bess manages to get herself into trouble. Naturally, she has to investigate what went wrong in order to get herself out of trouble.

It's clear that Bess has been doing this pretty much all her life, based on the story *The Maharani's Pearls* which has Bess at age 9 investigating an attempted assassination. Well more like making sure that her parents and the indefatigable Simon Brandon pay attention and investigate for her. After all, she's only 9.

But in *An Unwilling Accomplice*, Bess is not the instigator of the particular trouble she has to investigate. Someone else puts her into the soup, and it takes all of Bess' ingenuity and downright pig-headedness to find the answer that gets her out of it.

It was a thundering great honor for a soldier to receive his medal directly from the King. So when a Sergeant Wilkins requests that Bess accompany him to the ceremony, while she's puzzled, she complies with her orders. Sergeant Wilkins is both a hero and an invalid, and her nursing services might be required. And, she gets to extend her leave a few more days.

But Bess doesn't remember Wilkins, nor can she figure out why he'd ask specifically for her. In the cold light of morning, it unfortunately looks like Wilkins picked her specifically because she didn't know him. During the night, he tossed off all his bandages and walked out of his hotel under his own steam.

In other words, a decorated war hero goes AWOL on her watch. Bess is under suspicion as his accomplice, and her nursing career is in extreme jeopardy.

Just like *Caesar's Wife*, the Nursing Sisters of Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service must be above reproach. And Bess suddenly isn't.

As if things couldn't get worse, while Bess is still under house arrest and waiting for a verdict on her own future, Scotland Yard is presented with evidence that her deserter went north and committed a murder. The mystery gets murkier, but Bess is seen as a bit less culpable--based on witness statements, she wasn't present at the murder and hasn't been further involved.

Whatever this is, it is way more than a simple case of dereliction of duty, either Bess' or Wilkins'.

So what is it? That's what Bess is determined to uncover. Until she can find Sergeant Wilkins and either turn him in or get him to make a clear statement to the police and the Army, there will always be the shadow of suspicion on her otherwise clean record.

With the assistance of Sergeant-Major Simon Brandon, her friend and her father's attache, Bess sets out to trace the route that Sergeant Wilkins seems to have traveled across country. Along the way she finds deceived nurses, irreproachable eye-witnesses, and a multiplicity of closed-mouth villages protecting too many men who seem to be temporarily on leave from their senses or the Army, or possibly both.

At the end, she has more than enough motives for murder; and too many potential suspects.

Escape Rating B+: The Bess Crawford series does a terrific job of letting readers experience English life in the World War I period. Yes, there is a slight resemblance to *Downton Abbey* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*, but only because of the period setting. Bess Crawford is no debutante, she's an Army nurse and the daughter of a career officer. She works, and she works hard.

As the daughter of a serving officer, she also has had experience living in India. Her perspective is more cosmopolitan than most gently-bred women of her time. Sybil Crawley she isn't.

But there are tons of interesting commentaries on how much life has changed for young women since the war. Bess is still subject to some of the strictures, especially while she's on leave, but at the same time she is a professional who expects to perform up to, and even past, her capacity.

This is still a time when young ladies' reputations were expected to be protected at all costs in order to save them for marriage. The contrasts between Bess' nursing practice on the field and the behavior required of her at home can sometimes be jarring, but feels real.

The action of this particular story takes place entirely in England, so Bess often feels those differences. And the impetus for the quest that is the heart of the story exists because her reputation must be spotless for her to serve as a nurse; a restriction that didn't apply to officers or doctors.

Bess sets off on a cross-country journey to find the man who put her under so much suspicion. She needs to have her name cleared, but equally, she needs to find out why he deserted and why he committed murder.

As Bess hunts down her quarry, she is faced with all the changes that have occurred in England. The war is nearly over, but as a battlefield nurse, she hasn't yet experienced that for sure. There are still plenty of wounded men. But she will have to come home when peace breaks out, and so much has changed.

While it is definitely interesting to follow Bess along, the journey did double-back on itself several times, especially as Bess and Simon found themselves chasing more than one man and following up more than one red herring. It will be part of Bess' ongoing development to see how she handles peacetime, but this story rambled a bit while Bess did.

Her relationship with Simon Brandon is hard to pin down. They are friends, and they rely on each other. Without Simon's assistance, Bess' journey would not have been possible, and would have also been more dangerous.

They are so very comfortable with each other.

The reader can't help but wonder if their relationship will evolve into something else after the war. They get closer with each adventure!

Ariel says

I started out with such love for this series, a love that is waning with each successive novel. Nothing every progresses for Bess. She is exactly the same as she was five books ago. Compare this series to a similar one featuring Maisie Dobs. Since the start of the series she has had different love interests, she has changed jobs, she has allowed new people into her circle, and the mysteries are intriguing and thought provoking. I don't always like what Maisie is doing but at least she is doing something. In six books Bess and Simon haven't even had one kiss. Come on you have to give the readers something!

As far as the mystery goes it was pretty boring. Bess is asked to escort Sergeant Jason Wilkins to receive an award and after doing so he disappears on her watch reflecting badly on her. The rest of the novel has Simon and Bess traveling from one boring English town to the next looking for the elusive Wilkins. The most exciting thing that happens between Bess and Simon is their constant discussions on what they are going to eat. Should we get lunch, have dinner, go on a picnic, have tea? They talk about what they are going to eat ad nauseam. Since I didn't really care about the characters I was not invested in the outcome. It was a relief to finish the book.

If I sound harsh it's because I loved this series so much. If Bess was allowed the least little progression I would love it again. Once I start a series it is hard for me to give it up. I stuck with Stephanie Plum through twenty books before I had to face the fact that she was never going to chose between Joe and Ranger. This is probably not my last Bess Crawford novel but I long for the excitement that was in evidence in the beginning of the series.

Debbie says

All though in fact, Bess is still her old busy body self, the plot this time kind of camouflaged that fact. And, please, what is it with her and Simon? Bess still seems to have the emotional maturity of a 13 year old when it comes to men. And all those damaged war veterans running around in the countryside seemed too coincidental for believability, except that I once had a similar experience with stray cats in the middle of the night at my mom's house in the country, so I guess anything is possible.

Lori says

This book just made me tired. If Bess and Simon drove back and forth one more time between Upper Dysoe, Middle Dysoe, and Lower Dysoe, I was going to scream. Major back tracking going on here. And explain to me why Bess refused to alert Scotland Yard?? Because her explanations never made sense. And if she left the car one more time when Simon told her to stay put (Sergeant-Major Simon Brandon who has years of stealth military experience under his belt as opposed to Bess tripping around in the dark in either, take-your-pick, Upper, Middle, or Lower Dysoe in her nurses's uniform) I really was going to scream.

Moonlight Reader says

NBRC WOBBLE challenge: Battleship Round 1

Jim Graham says

At the beginning, a very interesting situation - when a war hero, honored by the King, deserts and leaves Bess under suspicion of being derelict or worse. But then we're off into something the reader has no way of getting hold of. And the melodramatic solution is reached simply by happenchance, after driving back and forth and making herself a nuisance. The weakest book in an otherwise good series.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

Actual rating: 2.5 stars.

Here a wounded soldier, there a wounded soldier, everywhere a wounded soldier. Too many random wounded soldiers! If I ever hear "Lower Dysoe," "Middle Dysoe," or "Upper Dysoe" again, it will be too

soon.

Charles Todd, you're better than this. Do better next time.

Diane Challenor says

I enjoy listening to this series because it's a cozy read. Interesting enough to turn the page without requiring too much effort. It's a series I'll continued to follow.

Raven Haired Girl says

I'm a huge Charles Todd fan, I love the writing the characters and of course, the always stimulating mystery. However, this particular installment was below par.

The writing wasn't the high calibre Todd produces, the mystery was a big fat bore. Sadly, Bess was more meddlesome than amateur sleuth. Simon failed to add much needed excitement with his presence. All these two did was drive from one English hamlet to the next searching for the intriguing Wilkins. The discovery of a few more 'misplaced' soldiers is ridiculous only making the entire narrative more of a struggle to slog through. I had to dig deep to reach the end, a few close calls with raising my white flag in surrender to the agony of boredom.

I'm still a Todd fan despite the disappointment in this book, with such a successful series en toto you're bound to find a bump in the reading road on occasion. Looking forward to more from Bess next time fingers crossed I will be drowning in excitement as her previous exploits provided.

<http://ravenhairedgirl.com>

Anne says

I really like the Bess Crawford series and was anxious to reading this one. I was disappointed in it, though -- I don't feel that it was as good as the others in the series.

Though the initial plot set-up was interesting and the resolution was action-filled, the chapters in between were less so. The plot revolved around Bess and Simon, with just cameo appearances by other recurring characters, and there was little or no additional character development in those two. The bulk of the book was spent with Bess and Simon driving from one place to another in the same region, checking into and out of inns and wandering the countryside searching for an elusive soldier. It became repetitive and, at times, hard to follow. Eventually, I reached the dreaded point of not really caring how the book turned out and only finished it because I was nearer the end than the beginning.

I felt that the development of the additional characters, along with their story lines and motivations, was not complete or even, at times, plausible.

I hope that this is just a low point in the Bess series and that future ones will be better -- I'll still look foward to the next one.

Miki says

A disappointing addition to this series. The plot is heavy and slow, there are way too many red herrings, and Simon, who does all the dirty work, is constantly pushed to the background while Bess calls the shots, disobeys him so that she can "see for herself". in spite of Simon being her father's go-to guy for dangerous missions. He did make several blunders that were surprising. considering his supposed intelligence and experience. Overall, Simon is by far more interesting than Bess, but he is never fully realized as a character. Although it's emphasized often that he has been a part of the family for most of Bess' life, at one point, after returning to the Front, she muses that she had spent so much time with him in the last few days, she "rather missed" him. Poor Simon. If she doesn't want him, I'll take him.

I also have my own doubts about the frequency of Bess' many furloughs in the midst of war. This one will not be joining the Inspector Ian Rutledge books on my desert island.

Mary says

[Also, in this particular story I had a hard time keeping all the people Bess encountered straight - several of the women seemed very much alike & likewise for several of the men. Perhaps this was intentional, but about 2/3
