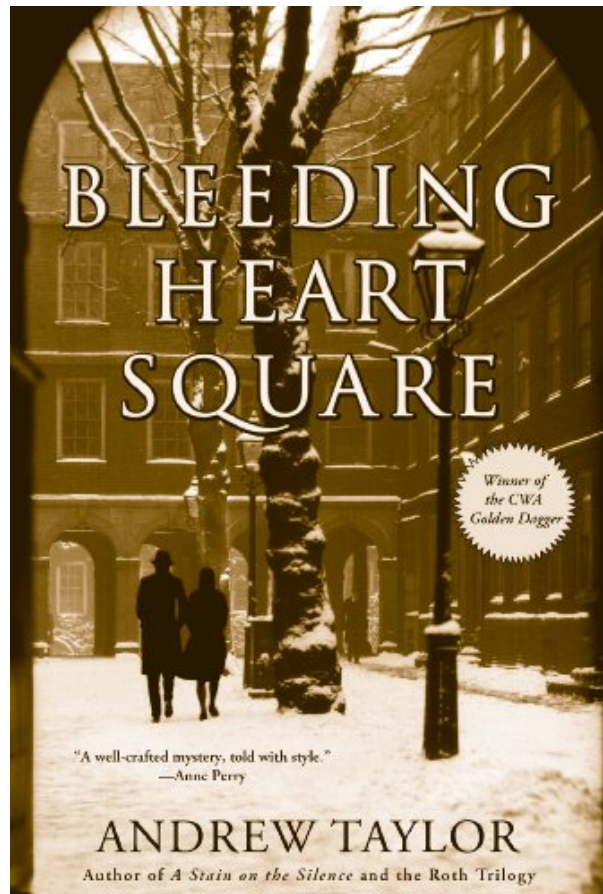
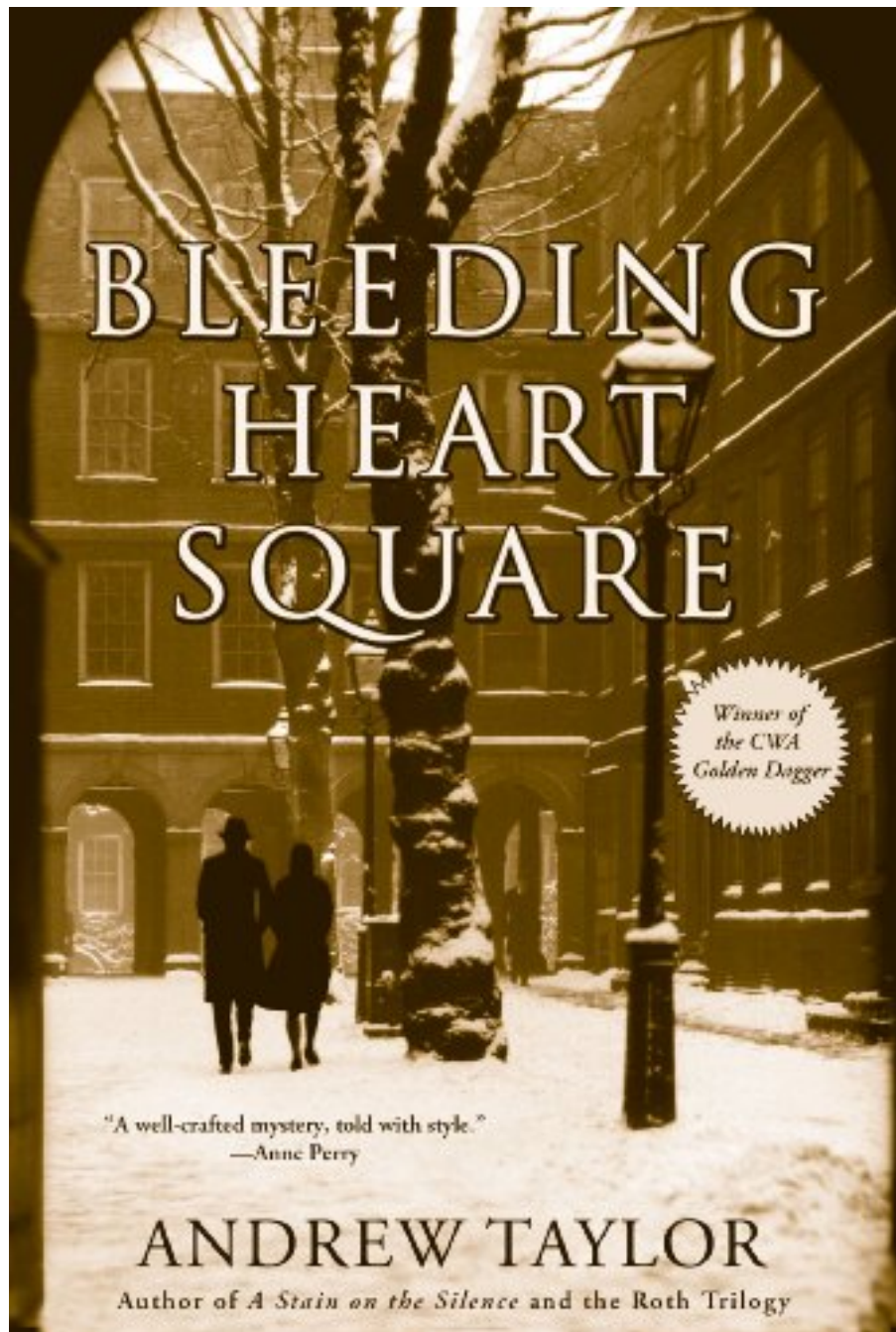


BLEEDING HEART SQUARE BY ANDREW TAYLOR



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Review

"A well crafted mystery, told with style."?Anne Perry

"A compelling and suspenseful evocation of London in that uneasy period before WWII. In Lydia Langstone, Andrew Taylor has created a protagonist of her time, an intelligent woman coming to terms with her growing sense of self. Intricately plotted and beautifully crafted."?Margaret Maron, author of *Death's Half Acre* and *Hard Row*

"Finely drawn period atmosphere, compellingly complex characters, breath-stopping suspense, then twists that will leave you reeling. Taylor is a riveting storyteller, and *Bleeding Heart Square* may be his best work yet. Absolutely bloody brilliant!!!"?Deborah Crombie

"It's easy to see why Andrew Taylor's historical mysteries have won so many accolades. The square itself emerges as a major player in this atmospheric, elegantly told mystery, in which you, the reader, are assigned the role of detective."?Rhys Bowen, *Agatha, Anthony and MacAvity* award-winning author of the *Molly Murphy* and *Royal Spyness* mystery series

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--Margaret Maron, author of Death's Half Acre and Hard Row

It's 1934, and the decaying London cul-de-sac of Bleeding Heart Square is an unlikely place of refuge for aristocratic Lydia Langstone. But as she flees her abusive marriage, there is only one person she can turn to . . . Legend has it that the devil once danced in the square--but is there now a new and sinister presence lurking in its shadows

- Sales Rank: #1232489 in Books
- Published on: 2010-01-19
- Released on: 2010-01-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .0" w x 5.19" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 464 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Compelling, intelligent mystery

By Kristen Hannum

There's nothing better than a good mystery - unless it's a good historical novel, and Andrew Taylor has crafted both in Bleeding Heart Square. The characters are creatures of their era, sometimes maddeningly reserved, not quite modern but with telephones and cars. The two main protagonists evolve wonderfully because of choices each is making, and there are also two wicked villains to compete for your attention, both of them with designs on the heroine.

I was able to guess one of the twists that came clear towards the end - so satisfying, that - and was surprised at the other - also satisfying.

Pay attention here to the negative reviews. If you prefer characters dashing from explosions and shoot-outs to sex every few paragraphs - this probably isn't the one for you.

If, on the other hand, you enjoy intelligent, complex characters and meticulous plotting, then Bleeding Heart Square is a winner.

21 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

I Couldn't Put It Down!

By fiber farmer

Using the diary of a woman who disappeared 4 years prior, the author sets up a mystery that keeps the reader guessing right up until the very end. Bleeding Heart Square is a dreary cul-de-sac in London that is home to a

collection of seedy and vile characters. The superstitions and legends concerning Bleeding Heart Square create a climate of suspicion and violence among the residents.

The heroine is Lydia Langstone, an "almost 30" lady of the manor who flees an abusive husband to live with her estranged and alcoholic father. The hero is Rory Wentwood, a jilted and unemployed journalist turned private detective. These two people examine the disappearance of P.M. Penhow, who disappeared four years earlier and was the previous owner of the building in Bleeding Heart Square, in which they both live. Their efforts begin independent of each other, but as the story progresses, they work together to try to find out what happened. The villain is Joseph Serridge, landlord to both of our heroes and an imposing and powerful figure, both physically and politically.

I must say that I was completely surprised by the ending. While the main characters uncover a lot of information and learn more than they bargained for in other areas, they never do find out what happened to Miss Penhow. The reader does, however, and in a very unexpected way.

There are several story lines at work throughout the book. The personal stories of each character are woven into the whole of the story, but the appearance of the Fascist Party in England and the relationships of characters both past and present keep the reader on his toes and guessing at what will happen next. Each chapter begins with an excerpt from P.M. Penhow's diary with comments made by in the second person to "you." Not until the end does the reader find out who "you" is.

I was so impressed with this book that I couldn't put it down. It wasn't a fast read for me. I've read a lot of mysteries, but this one is completely different from anything I've read. There was some confusion in the first couple of chapters as the story sets itself up, but if the reader will just keep reading, it will all become clear. It's a complicated story with a raft of characters and many different plots coming and going. Through all of that, it never lost its focus on the original premise. I will be looking for more by this author.

17 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

Too Slow and Too Little Mystery

By Jojoleb

I really wanted to like this book more than I did. Sadly, there wasn't nearly enough mystery and the novel didn't start to pick up steam until page 300 or so. At first, I thought the stagnating plot might be a clever device. That Taylor was winding down a spring, building up tension that would inevitably explode into a fast paced novel. But, sadly, that was not the case. Taylor kept winding and winding. And the not-quite-big-enough explosion when it occurred waited until the very end of the book.

Perhaps Taylor simply wound things up too much and the spring snapped. Most readers probably do not have the patience to wade through all this prose or have the fishing boots to wade for that long. And by the time you get to the end, the impending danger didn't seem dangerous enough and the mystery seemed somewhat predictable and not all that mysterious.

And that's a pity. Taylor is really quite a gifted writer. His writing is rich and his prose is elegant. He has a keen eye for detail and fleshing out believable characters. The descriptions are never forced, but really add incredible dimension. When Lydia Langstone enters her house at the beginning of the novel he describes it as a 'dirty wedding cake.' In one simile he gives us a visual image of the building, insight into the state of Lydia's marriage, and conveys Lydia's feelings about coming home. This is potent stuff and Taylor writes this way throughout the book.

He also has a knack for creating a solid cast of characters and an unexpected, convoluted web that joins their

lives together. He even hits the setting, spot on, for a mystery novel. He describes a dreary, 1930s, pre-World War II London with incredible aplomb. He even sets his characters within their various social classes and within the political turmoil of the times.

But in spite of the writing, the characters, the tangled web, and the dreary setting very little happens of significance until the bitter end. The feelings of impending doom are not impending enough to propel the reader along. And by the climax, the various characters end up appearing to be simply who they are; they do seem to get what they deserve in the end but in a somewhat too tidy and predictable fashion.

If I were a betting man, I'd put my money on Taylor. I have not read the rest of his oeuvre, but he seems to have the raw talent. If he hasn't already penned a great mystery novel he most certainly will. Unfortunately, this was not it.

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