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Farrier's Lane (Charlotte & Thomas Pitt Novels (Audio))



Synopsis

When the distinguished Mr. Justice Stafford dies of opium poisoning, his shocking demise resurrects one of the most sensational cases ever to inflame England: the murder five years before of Kingsley Blaine, whose body was found crucified in Farriers Lane. Amid the public hysteria for revenge, the police had arrested a Jewish actor who was soon condemned to hang. Police Inspector Thomas Pitt, investigating Stafford's death, is drawn into the Farriers Lane murder as well, for it appears that Stafford may have been about to reopen the case. Pitt receives curiously little help from his colleagues on the force, but his wife, Charlotte, gleans from her social engagements startling insights into both cases. And slowly both Thomas and Charlotte begin to reach for the same sinister and deeply dangerous truth."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Even though I'm familiar with Anne Perry's rhythms as a writer, her characters, her fascination with the secrets people keep, and her addiction to slipping messages about today's prejudices into her books on 19th-century England, I thoroughly enjoyed Farrier's Lane, and was baffled until the very end! While Thomas and Charlotte Pitt enjoy a rare night at the theatre, an appeals court judge dies of a seeming heart attack in a nearby box. However, the death is much more suspicious than it seemed at first and opium poisoning is suspected. But who would poison Judge Stafford? There are many suspects: his wife Juniper, his wife's lover, or even people involved in a five-year old case in Farrier's Lane. No matter how hard Thomas Pitt tries to solve the case by exploring more up-to-date

possibilities, Charlotte continues to be preoccupied with a murder and crucifixion in Farrier's Lane. Ugly motives like anti-Semitism and the rush to judgement eventually disclose the murderer of Judge Stafford and the miscarriage of justice that happened five years earlier.

This is the thirteenth outing for Inspector Thomas Pitt of the Metropolitan Police in London of 1890 -- and also his last before being promoted to Superintendent of the Bow Street station. The social theme this time (Perry always includes one) is the superstitious viciousness of Victorian antisemitism and the violence that sometimes resulted. Five years before, a gentleman was not only murdered in a blacksmith's yard at night, he was crucified to the stable door with horseshoe nails. Only a Jew would do that, right? Public horror, combined with a rush to judgment on the part of the police and the courts, results in the hanging of an actor whose sister has been agitating ever since to prove him innocent. Then Pitt nearly witnesses the death by poisoning of one of the appeals court judges at the theatre one evening, and the whole thing has to be reopened, whether anyone likes it or not. His wife, Charlotte, takes part together with her mother, Caroline (sister Emily is off in the country, pregnant) -- who has also developed an unfortunate attachment to another Jewish actor, about which Charlotte is naturally upset. The investigation of what eventually becomes three murders is interestingly done -- and without the *deus ex machina* of the Inner Circle, this time.

This novel is somewhat slow reading, perhaps because there seems to be an excess of extraneous details, e.g., you may learn more than you want about baking fruitcakes. On the other hand, some details related to the case never seem to be fully explained. The plot is somewhat transparent for a whodunit, i.e., you can guess the identity of villains before they are exposed. The setting is London in 1889. Five years earlier a brutal murder had outraged the public. Police were previously criticized for not catching Jack the Ripper. Pressures for an arrest in this case led to the conviction and hanging of a Jewish actor. Anti-semitism had run high with attacks on Jews and Jewish owned businesses. Now questions have been raised. A Justice who had served on the appeals court for the case is looking into it again. When he dies during a theatre performance, Inspector Thomas Pitt is assigned to investigate, and he re-examines the old case the Justice was reviewing. There is strong pressure not to rock the boat. A reversal in the five-year old case would embarrass many people from individual policemen to Justices of the appeals court. Some surprising facts are revealed as the case draws to its conclusion. As a sidelight, Charlotte's maid Gracie acquires a young admirer. Like other novels in this series, we are provided with a picture of Victorian era society in London. The novel has some amount of violence and some references to sexual encounters.

I have been reading Anne Perry since she started many years ago. As each Pitt or Monk or WWI or Christmas book was released, I bought and devoured it. Her characters and plotting are generally excellent, and Farrier's Lane is no exception. Now that I am in Kindle land, I find it fun to re-read some of her older books like this. They are just as much fun now as they were years ago. The original books were donated by me long ago, and if I am not careful I will end up re-purchasing all of Perry's works. What makes her so good is the charm of her characters, the feeling of London in the 1880's, and her fine plots. Generally, I guess the villain about two-thirds of the way through, but the stories are so much fun it doesn't matter. You really are transported to Victorian England through Anne Perry's books.

Detective Thomas Pitt and his wife Charlotte are at the theater when an appeals court judge, Justice Stafford, is murdered in his box. Seems Stafford may have been planning to look into the conviction and hanging of Aaron Godman five years before. Godman was accused of killing married playboy Kingsley Blaine who was dallying with his sister. Blaine had been stabbed and crucified and Godman was Jewish - all of which inflamed the public and may have led to a hasty judgment. Could it be that Godman was innocent and someone doesn't want Stafford to rake the case up? Detective Pitt investigates Stafford's death (with the help of his wife Charlotte as usual). Pitt questions persons of interest, makes observations, consults with relevant lawyers and judges, and so on. My problem with the book is that too many characters repeat the same evidence/story ad infinitum which becomes long and tedious. The book could have been edited to be a third shorter without losing any important threads. Also, a number of characters spout anti-Semitic sentiments, which I found offensive but is probably authentic for the time period. Overall, it's a decent mystery with plenty of memorable (if not particularly likable) characters. The book's resolution was surprising but believable. In any case it's always fun to read the author's depiction of the rigid customs, foibles, and hoity-toity attitudes of the British 'upper classes' of the 1800s.

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