



Uniform Justice

Donna Leon

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A riveting, pitch-perfect murder mystery—the work of a truly masterful storyteller. Conjuring contemporary Venice in exquisite and alluring detail, this is widely hailed as the finest installment yet of the Commissario Guido Brunetti series.

For over a decade, Donna Leon has topped European bestseller lists and captivated fans throughout the world with her series of mysteries featuring the shrewd, charismatic Commissario Guido Brunetti. Guiding us through contemporary Venice's dark undercurrents of personal politics, corruption, and intrigue, Donna Leon's is "crime writing of the highest order: powerful, relevant and too full of human failings" (The Guardian).

This time, Commissario Brunetti faces an unsettling case that, because he is the father of a young son, hits him especially close to home. The body of a student has been found hanged in Venice's elite, highly cloistered military academy. The young man is the son of a doctor and former politician, a member of Parliament who had an impeccable integrity all too rare in Italian politics. Dr. Moro is clearly devastated by his son's death, but while both he and his apparently estranged wife seem convinced that the boy's death could not have been suicide, neither appears eager to help in the investigation of the mysterious circumstances in which he died. Bolstered by the help the elegant and crafty Signorina Elettra, and the cooking and sympathetic ear of his wife, Paola, Commissario Brunetti sets off on an investigation that gets him caught up in the strange and stormy politics of his country's powerful elite.

When Brunetti plunges into Dr. Moro's political career and the circumstances of the doctor's estrangement from his wife, he discovers unsettling details. How to explain the mysterious hunting accident in which Signora Moro was involved, and the fact that her marriage crumbled so soon after? As he investigates, Brunetti is faced with a wall of silence, because the military, who protects its own, and civilians, even at the cost of their lives, are unwilling to talk. Is this the natural reluctance of Italians to involve themselves with the authorities, or is Brunetti facing something altogether darker?

Uniform Justice, the 12th book about Guido Brunetti, is a riveting, pitch-perfect murder mystery—the work of a truly masterful storyteller. Conjuring contemporary Venice in exquisite and alluring detail, Donna Leon offers what has been widely hailed as the finest installment yet of the Commissario Guido Brunetti series.

Uniform Justice Details

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Janet McGee says

I have thoroughly enjoyed every one of Leon's books I've read to date. Her take on detective fiction is like none other's. Instead of giving you a tidy conclusion, she leaves you hanging, caught, like Commissario Guido Brunetti, in the labyrinthine, malfunctioning, Italian justice system. Yet, Brunetti stays true to his calling and delivers the answers to the crime that you, the reader, seek. Leon lets you feel less like a reader and more like a tourist on an expertly-guided tour through the canals and landmarks of Venice. You'll drool over her descriptions of local food and wish you were there, sharing lunch and good conversation with Brunetti.

Ed says

This, the 12th in the Commissario Brunetti series, is one of the best. A refreshing change from the usual "who dunnit" genre. It is full of well drawn characters and a plot that, while it doesn't keep the reader guessing as to who is guilty, nevertheless does keep the reader guessing as to what is going to happen next right up to the last two or three pages.

The story opens when a young student is found hanging from the ceiling of a bathroom in the San Martino military academy. While it is an apparent suicide, Brunetti is suspicious as the boy is the son of Dottore Moro a doctor and former member of parliament who has a reputation of unimpeachable honesty for uncovering corruption in the Venetian Health Service. In addition, Brunetti is put off by the arrogant, almost hostile attitudes of both the staff and the students. So he sets out to prove that young Moro was murdered.

In the process, we are exposed to the failings of the Italian justice system which Brunetti understands but constantly tries to work around, especially when dealing with his incompetent superior, Vice-Questore Patta.

Brunetti does manage to attract like minded people to help, especially his boss's assistant and computer hacker, Signorina Elettra, who provides him with information he couldn't get any other way. He also depends on his wife Paola, to keep his head straight when he gets frustrated with the system.

Whenever I pick up a Donna Leon book, I anticipate being transported into another world peopled with interesting characters and compelling plots. This volume certainly didn't disappoint.

Deborah Moulton says

Things get darker in these later novels as Brunetti grows more cynical about his society, "the men from the south," and the futility of doing good in such a world. An honest politician is scared off publishing an accurate and damning study on the military procurement system when his wife is injured in a deliberate shooting. His son attends an elite military academy in Venice and is found dead of a supposed suicide. Like a biblical tale, the sins of the fathers are extended through the next generation with the transfer of hatred and fear.

Alex is The Romance Fox says

Uniform Justice, the riveting 12th addition to Donna Leon's Commissario Brunetti Series is a complex, thought-provoking and sad story that captures you from the very first page and lingers in your mind long after you finished the last page.

Commissario Guido Brunetti called to the exclusive San Martino Military Academy, where Cadet Ernesto Moro dead, which the academy authorities have very quickly consider as a suicide and are doing everything possible not to co-operate with the Venetian police. But when the victim is revealed to be the son of a former Parliament member who had been forced to retire for an expose on corruption in the military - a man of integrity and honesty, something that is very rare in Italian politics, Brunetti believes that the young man is a victim of homicide and not suicide.

Brunetti, in his continuing quest for justice is once again hampered by the bureaucrat government officials that run on bribes, secrets and corruption and will use whatever means available to retain their position of wealth and power and this is so clearly seen by the senseless death of Ernesto Moro, a young man who did not deserve to die so young.

The humane side of Brunetti is never seen so well as when he contemplates the love for his family and how he would feel if something ever happened to one of his children....

Suddenly he had a vision of what it must have been for the Moros to attempt to remove evidence of Ernesto's presence from their homes, and he thought of the danger that would remain behind: a single, lonely sock found at the back of a closet could break a mother's heart anew; a Spice Girls disc carelessly shoved into the plastic case meant to hold Vivaldi's flute sonatas could shatter any calm. Months, perhaps years, would pass before the house would stop being a minefield, every cabinet or drawer to be opened with silent dread.

How much more important the love for his family is than politics.

Venice at this time is dark and grey, foggy.....menacing....

Outstanding and unforgettable story.

Gerald Sinstadt says

Anyone who buys this book seeking a standard whodunnit will be disappointed, as at least one reviewer has plainly been. How sad to miss the growing depth of Donna Leon's portrayal of Venice, corruption in the Italian way of life, and the effect it has on the people who inhabit it.

Strangely, it seems to me that the crime element of Uniform Justice - an apparent suicide in a military academy - makes for a more interesting and plausible narrative than has been the case in some of the author's

novels. At the same time, the development of Commissario Brunetti's character grows ever more perceptive. This is a detective with flaws, as the genre seems to demand, but here they are not due to drink or drugs. Brunetti procrastinates when a telephone call may not be easy to make. His decision-making at a crucial stage of the suicide investigation is faulty. At the end his reluctance to take what might be seen as the just course is undermined because he can envision what would be the outcome in similar circumstances in his own family.

Donna Leon has created an eminently credible human being in her Commissario. Her view of him is humane but that does not mean that through him she cannot express abhorrence at corruption in public life. It would not have been beyond her to manufacture a 'correct' happy ending; that she does not do so is one of the attributes that set her apart as a crime writer.

Jeanette says

This one was deeper than the average Brunetti. It had a lot of politico slant, most of which I disagree with from at least a partial all the way to a fully opposite degree. But regardless, the interpretation of consequence for the appearance OR for the reality of a committed murder was superb. And also in outcome completely Italian. Not only in logic but in the process.

Corruption reigns. And stats put into category of complete opposition to the reality of truth in occurrences. Brunetti is as duplicitous as the system that causes him to sigh. Is he not?

Nancy says

Donna Leon consistently delivers novels with substance and depth. As other reviewers have indicated, as readers experience several of her books the city of Venice becomes less of a background for the stories and more of a character.

It is clearly the seductive villain in her novels. In many ways they are not so much mysteries, but psychological dramas exploring the complex, multi-layered culture of Venice.

Uniform Justice was darker and less optimistic than some of her other stories. It wasn't just "live and let live" but a fatalistic acceptance of life with a flawed companion, Venice. I enjoyed it because of the fascinating personality of Commissario Brunetti, but I finished the book feeling rather blue.

Joyce Lagow says

12th in the Commissario Brunetti series, set in Venice, Italy.[return][return]A young student is found hanging from the ceiling of a bathroom in the military academy of San Martino. It is an apparent suicide. To complicate matters, however, the dead boy is the son of a former politician who rose to fame in Italy for his unimpeachable honesty in investigating corruption in Venetian health services. Brunetti, put off by the hostile attitudes of both Comandante and students at the Academy and tales of arrogance and assumptions of

entitlement among the students and their mostly military parents, begins his own investigation--which leads him to the belief that Young Moro did not commit suicide.[return][return]Thus begins one of Leon's darkest books. It's a classic Brunetti police procedural, which means that the plot unfolds slowly and relentlessly to a typical Leon--and Italian--denouement. The difference in this book from her others, which are unsparing in criticism of the farce of justice in the Venetian system, is that it is so stark, so devoid of hope, so grim in its portrayal of the grip the military has on Italian life.[return][return]It's an excellent installment, with Leon's usual strengths--her characters and sense of humor. She never ceases in developing her main characters--Brunetti, his wife Paola, and to a lesser extent, his children and the recurring members of the Questura, such as that incomparably brilliant computer hacker, Signorina Elettra, the prima dona of illegal entry into the computer systems of international banking and government records. She's even corrupted Vianello, to whom she's promised her own quite adequate computer system because, thanks to Vice-Questore Patta's complaint about office expenses, to save money, she's buying the most up-to-date equipment possible. Brunetti's description of her logic as Jesuitical hardly does her credit.[return][return]There's the usual comic relief in scenes between Paola and her teenage children; Leon captures this family perfectly, and I always wind up wishing, as does Brunetti, that I had had the nerve to raise my own children in a similar manner.[return][return]This is not a pleasant story but it's a good one, and extremely well written. Highly recommended.

Pamela says

Commissario Brunetti investigates the apparent suicide of a young student at Venice's San Martino Military Academy. The dead boy, Ernesto Moro, is the son of a prominent doctor and ex-politician who was known for his integrity. Signor Moro is unwilling to cooperate with the investigation, and it is obvious that his son's classmates are also keeping secrets. Brunetti finds his attempts to penetrate the silence surrounding the case both puzzling and frustrating.

A brilliant and sophisticated plot that shows Leon's extensive knowledge of Italian society and politics, set against the fascinating background of Venice. Brunetti is a sympathetic protagonist, world-weary but honourable, and his family life as always provides an interesting backdrop without intruding too far on the crime investigation.

Brunetti can often be a mouthpiece for the author's views, and usually this enhances the power of the novel. However, on this occasion the rather clumsy portrayal of the military as universally arrogant, corrupt and unprincipled steps over into detracting from what is otherwise a subtle and intriguing plot. Whether one agrees with Leon/Brunetti or not, more balance would have produced an even better novel.

Still, this is an excellent series that always delivers and is often unexpectedly moving.

Melissa McCauley says

To be brutally honest: as a mystery novel, this is sub-par. It flounders around for almost two hundred pages where nothing much happens to advance the plot. As a glimpse into the mindset of Venetians, it was excellent. This is no gleaming Disney fantasy of sunken palazzos and romantic singing gondoliers -

workaday Venice is a cold, gray, cynical place.

Brunetti is struggling to do an honest job as a police investigator despite incompetence and corruption. His world is dominated by a public distrustful of the government, divided by classism, jaded by endless greed and collusion, and surprisingly, with a social stigma toward people with disabilities.

No doubt these books aren't very popular with American readers – there is no Scooby Doo moment at the end where everything is tied up in a neat little bow. More time is spent on socio-political dissatisfaction than the mystery - however, as a lover of Italy, I look forward to reading more by this author.

Kylie H says

I have enjoyed earlier books in this series, but this one and particularly the ending left me feeling there was unfinished business.

There is a lot of political rambling in this book and in the end I skipped over some of these paragraphs just to find out where the plot was going.

Mary says

"Uniform Justice" is my first Donna Leon/Commissario Brunetti book. I listened to the audio version read by David Colacci. Colacci's reading is excellent, distinguishing between characters with a good variety of voices and intonation. I will probably read/listen to a few more Brunetti stories.

My reservations that caused me to give the book 3 stars concern the ending. The setting of Venice is fascinating, showing a side of the city not normally seen by tourists. The suspicious death of a cadet at a prestigious military academy gives Brunetti a chance to reminisce about his past service in the military and his current unease about the power and influence of the military. Since I know little about the Italian system, I can't judge whether Brunetti's opinions are justified and/or common. But the dark influence of power is a common theme of mysteries. Brunetti digs through the lies and deception to reach a probable solution, only to turn away from making an arrest. His decision to punt on the solution leaves the reader in the lurch. After insisting that he be allowed to continue the investigation, how does his decision not to pursue justice affect his career and his conscience?

Larraine says

Uniform Justice is the 12th in the Inspector Brunetti series and was published in 2003. This is one of the darker books in the series. The story centers around the apparent suicide of a 16 yr old cadet at an exclusive military school in Venice. It is largely attended by the children of previous attendees. In this case, the cadet is the son of a prominent oncologist and former member of parliament known for his absolute honesty in a country where political corruption is a foregone conclusion. Neither of the boy's parents are willing to cooperate although both don't believe it is suicide. However, it soon becomes obvious there is much more to this case than meets the eye. It affects Brunetti deeply since he has a son the same age as well as a daughter a bit younger. As a result he feels driven to find out exactly what happened. Leon conveys the emotions of a

loving father who feels the parents' pain probably more deeply than he should. However, there is still plenty of the author's signature wit, irony as well as the deep affection she has for a city in which she has lived for many years.

Pamela McLaren says

A military school closes ranks when it is found that one of their own is hanging in the restroom. They assume that the case will soon be judged a suicide, but Commissario Brunetti isn't sure that that is the correct conclusion. Slowly, he digs through the layers of lies, half truths and the things people turn an eye to and finds himself wondering what is the world and Italy coming to.

A driving, compelling story that fortunately, I was able to read in nearly one sitting, because to do otherwise, was not an option.

Lindsey says

There were several small problems with the book, and this ended up adding up to it not being a very enjoyably novel to read.

First of all, not much happens in the course of the book. This is not a deal-breaker--if the book was well written. I ended up feeling like the characters were just killing time until something happened. Or just wandering around musing about nothing in particular.

There were a lot of comments or events in the book that didn't fit, didn't make sense, or weren't followed through on. There was a big deal made about corruption in the military and a LOT of time spent having Brunetti dwell on this fact. In the end, though, it had nothing to do with what happened and the issue was pretty much dropped.

Also, and probably a problem with my coming in at the 12th in the series, the characters were unaccessible. There seemed to be a lot of subtext going on, but it constantly pointed out but never explained.

There were several obscure references to philosophers or novels within the book. While I do like learning new quote, or learning about new philosophies these ideas/philosophers/quotes seemed to be added in a "look how smart I am" way. It only served to frustrate me and make me feel stupid. I was alienated as a reader.

I felt through the whole novel that Leon was obviously an American trying to write a European novel and not being very successful. I could see that she was trying very hard to make the plot meander and take a slower pace, but that just made her main character completely unlikable. Also, she constantly threw in Italian words and phrases which just seemed to be pointing out that it was set in Italy.

I had been looking forward to really enjoying this series after hearing Leon speak on NPR. I have one more of Leon's books on my shelf. I haven't decided if I'm going to read it or just put it automatically in the donation bin.

Shari says

Political corruption, unyielding military brotherhood, the arrogance and entitlement of the nobility and aristocrats--life as usual, it seems, running roughshod over the ordinary people and taking vengeance on those of their own social strata who dare to think for themselves and get in the way of healthy stock returns. Then murder and conspiratorial subterfuge are just the way things are handled.

Commissario Brunetti runs headlong into an iron wall of silence--even the families of the victims are unwilling to cooperate, and everyone nods and winks at each other behind Brunetti's and his officers' backs to cloud the issues and then to manufacture a complete lie that appears true, beyond which it is impossible to move unless the victim's family cooperates.

How often does this happen in our world where the people in control--whom we depend upon to maintain order and proper government--look the other way because the bullies and liars and power-mad have usurped the leadership roles and dare to weaken freedom and deny dialogue in order to maintain their wealth and presumed superiority?

Emily says

The plot in this book is basically nonexistent and is an excuse for Donna Leon to have Many Opinions on the Military, as well as the inefficiencies of Italian government. This might not work for you if you, you know, care about plot, but luckily for everyone, I would read Brunetti's diary and be perfectly happy with it.

Highlights of this installment:

- Brunetti struggling with "unfamiliar" Euro coins as he gets on the traghetto. The Brunettiverse has transitioned off of lire, y'all!
- Comparisons between mother-in-laws and Parliament ("an alien presence that made ever-increasing demands in return for the vain promise of domestic harmony")
- Signora Elettra inventing a son she names "Filiberto," with the second choice name being "Eriprando"
- Vianello chilling with the chickens at the Ruffo country home
- Brunetti asking if the files he needs are on a computer, and then laughing as if he was joking about not knowing where they were stored
- Lunches that are defined as light because Brunetti "only" has a quartino of white wine and a single grappa

I found some of the scenes rather bizarre in terms of investigative strategy. The scene between Brunetti and his old school-friend was extremely strange, in that I wasn't really sure what Brunetti was trying to get out of that meeting or why that was included in the book at all. The other conversations seemed a little off, as well. (Could Donna Leon really be trying to add filler to the twelfth book in a series??!?) But that ending conversation was played perfectly. (view spoiler)

Possibly the most disappointing part of this book is the scene where Brunetti and Paola go out to Sommariva on a whim. Usually Donna Leon spends pages and pages describing the food in minute detail, which is my favorite part! In this case, she goes with:

"I'll meet you there at eight."

Almost three hours later, a lobster-filled Brunetti and his champagne-filled consort climbed the stairs to their apartment, his steps slowed by satisfying fullness, hers by the grappa she'd drunk after dinner.

KNOCKING OFF A FULL STAR FOR THIS ALARMING OMISSION! GIVE ME LOBSTER OR GIVE ME DEATH!!

Sandra says

Se há algo que valorizo num policial é um bom final.

Este final simplesmente matou-me.

Ao virar a última página percebi que perdi tempo ao ler este livro.

Tempo que poderia ter usado para ler outro livro que me poderia ter oferecido algo melhor.

Para quem gosta de ver os criminosos devidamente castigados este não é um livro que aconselharia.

Watchingthewords says

While many books can take you on adventures in new places, give you new ideas to contemplate, and introduce you to new and complex characters, there is comfort in curling up to drop in on old friends. I love a good mystery (OK, even some not-so-good ones) and a good mystery series is even better. I will not bore everyone by carrying on about every book in a series, but I will occasionally highlight the one I've most recently read, hoping it will inspire someone else to check it out!

I just recently finished the 12th installment in Donna Leon's Commissario Guido Brunetti series. The series takes place in Venice and is one of the rare books where the location itself is a main character. In Leon's series it is easy to become absorbed in the descriptions of Venice, the canals, the architecture, the art, the fashion, the food (which all sounds fabulous even when I'm not sure what it is!). Against this backdrop of beauty Leon writes about a corrupt city void of trust in the law, where things get done based on who you know and what you are willing to pay. Commissario Guido Brunetti is a man of honor, struggling within this system, often walking a thin line between pursuing justice and using a corrupt system he abhors in order to do so. Brunetti is surrounded by a cast of vivid characters including both trusted and devious co-workers, an inept boss, a sly and useful secretary, and a loyal, opinionated, out-spoken, and supportive wife. It is against this backdrop that these mysteries become less about who-dun-it and more about why and what to do with the answers. How can justice truly be served? Can justice be found at all?

"Brunetti had no taste for this, not any longer. 'There's no justice here, Dottore,' he said, frightened to realize that he meant not only for this man and his family, but for this city, and this country, and their lives."

The 22nd installment of the series will be release in March of this year, leaving me many more hours to spend curled up on the couch with Brunetti!

Sara says

The saddest ending and the most ironic title.

Re-reading in the age of Trump:

"He turned and looked across the still waters at the disorderly domes of San Marco and the piebald walls of Palazzo Ducale, and thought of the peace their beauty brought him. How strange it was: nothing more than the arrangement of lines and colours, and he felt better than he had before he looked at them."

"A remark Anna Comnena had made about Robert Guiscard: 'Once a man has seized power, his love of money displays exactly the same characteristics as gangrene, for gangrene, once established in a body, never rests until it has invaded and corrupted the whole of it.'"

"'There's no justice here, Dottore,' he said, frightened to realize that he meant not only for this man and his family, but for this city, and this country, and their lives.'"
