



The Floating Lady Murder

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Now You See Her...Now You Don'tIt's difficult to gain the public's attention in turn-of-the-century New York--even if you are the greatest escape artist the world has ever seen. So the young performer who calls himself Harry Houdini must be content, for the time being, working for the internationally renowned Keller, the "Dean of American Magicians." But tragedy strikes at the inaugural performance of the master's most astonishing illusion, the Floating Lady, when Keller's levitating assistant plummets abruptly to the ground, apparently to her death. Yet an investigation soon reveals that it is drowning, and no fatal fall, that has killed the unfortunate young lady. An intriguing impossibility to be sure. And it is the great, albeit unsung, Houdini--with the aid of wife Bess and brother Dash--who must solve the deadly conundrum, leading them all into a maze of twisted schemes, grim deceptions, and bloodletting that is no mere stage fakery.

The Floating Lady Murder Details

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Author : Daniel Stashower

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Tony says

THE FLOATING LADY MURDER. (2000). Daniel Stashower. ***1/2.

This is another adventure in the author's series featuring Harry Houdini and his brothers as the protagonists. It helps that the author is also a magician and knows the history of that performing art and can bring it into the story to add verisimilitude. This mystery is centered around a unique magic performance: The Floating Lady. In this one, a lady is made to float mysteriously up from her table and reach the roof of the theater. Unfortunately, something goes wrong and the lady falls 72-feet to her death. The thing of it is though was that she didn't die from the fall; she died by drowning. There was water found in her lungs during the autopsy. It's a weird one. I got a little lost, however, when Mr. Stashower tried to explain how the illusion worked. I still can't tell you, but the lady is still dead.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Daniel Stashower's Harry Houdini Mysteries are delightful cozies for readers who enjoy quiet but fast-paced mystery, delectable period detail, and excellent prose from an author who is deeply versed in the historical period he chooses. Mr. Stashower sets actual historic individuals into a setting of his own invention, rendering the locale, events, and persons as realistically as if they themselves stepped forward off the pages of history just to entertain contemporary readers.

In this "episode," Harry Houdini, far from the famous (or infamous) stage magician and escape artist he will eventually be, is working for a then-famous magician known as Kellar. Accompanied by wife Bess and younger brother Dash, Harry finds himself the sleuth in a case of unexpected, and unexplained death: Kellar's noted "Floating Lady" trick goes awry, and the levitated assistant is killed-but by drowning, not by falling from a height!

These Mysteries are presented as recollections of Dash Houdini-now in his eighties-who recounts them, rather like a stage raconteur, for newspaper reporters who wish to fill up a column block on the anniversary of Harry Houdini's unexpected and sad demise during a stage act. By doing so, Author Stashower brings to these tales a sense of immediacy not always found in historical suspense, and creates a delightful setting for the reader to indulge in excitement, wonder, and mystery.

Jo Jenner says

Purchased from the works in a 'I need something to read while waiting for the bus' moment and included in a 3 for £5 offer I was not expecting much.

How wrong was I? This is a well written book which takes the times and plays them out. There is a murder and it needs to be solved but why is Harry Houdini involved? The murder happens during an illusion and only Harry and his brother/agent understand the business enough to be able to solve it.

The main character is Harry's brother Dash Hardeen who is telling the story to a journalist on the anniversary

of Harry's death. Harry is very self absorbed, as you would expect, and doesn't really help except he convinces Dash the man arrested can't be the killer.
Fast paced and well written, I will be looking out for more in this series and by this author.

Jim says

The Houdini books are good. This one focuses on magic a bit more than the other two. Harry thinks he is Sherlock Holmes, but Dash is the real detective. Harry's wife Bess, Biggs and Lieutenant Murry are great supporting characters. I hope there are more smart mysteries to come from Mr. Stashower.

Susan B says

Interesting -- Houdini's brother Dash seems to solve the murder faster than Houdini does. This is a small book and it took a hundred pages before the murder was finally committed. Interesting background on how tricks and stunts are developed.

Sian Kerr says

I picked this up for under a fiver at The Works. I enjoy historical novels, especially the era that this is set in. My knowledge of Harry Houdini is limited, all I know is that he an iconic magician. It doesn't matter if you know anything at all about Houdini, this book is perfectly enjoyable all on it's own.
The narrator is Dash, Houdini's brother and manager. The story begins with him as an old man but soon transports us back to 19th century America.
It's clear that Houdini is eccentric and without his brother and wife he would end up getting himself into a lot of trouble. Telling the story from the secondary character reminded me a little of Sherlock Holmes and Houdini is certainly as odd as Conan Doyle's infamous character.
The other characters certainly balance out Houdini although be prepared there is a lot of them! Generally it is easy to keep track of who is who, but there are some difficulties.
The murder mystery centres around a trick called The Floating Lady. This insight into magic has always been something of interest for me having watched Jonathan Creek for years. I was intrigued as to how the trick worked and found the backstage descriptions particularly fascinating.
I must admit, I had no idea who the murderer was and really enjoyed the ride to discovering the culprit. I found myself smiling and laughing at the characters and what they said. I can envisage this as a great BBC1 period drama and look forward to reading more novels bu *Daniel Stashower*.

Heather says

Better than the first one. The story was more interesting and I enjoyed all the details of the magic routines and attempts to figure out different ways to perform the Floating Lady illusion. Houdini is still an arrogant, self-centered jerk, but you come to like him more as the series goes on. Dash is the real draw to the series.

Fred Rauch says

Another (second) adventure of Harry Houdini and his brother, Dash Hardeen. Again Dash is the real sleuth. This one involves noted magician Harry Keller, a real magician, who preceded Houdini as the major magician of the era. It even gets L. Frank Baum in as Keller's biographer (Baum would go on to author "The Wizard of Oz and model his wizard after Keller). The story is well-written; the plot is not too complex but interesting, and the ending is satisfactory. I am going to next read the final book in the trilogy.

Anna Kim says

I think the best part of this book is the portrayal of the relationship between the two brothers. The mystery, with the additional layer of magic, is intriguing and it's fun to read about the illusions from the professional point-of-view.

Nicole says

The Floating Lady Murder is the second book in the Harry Houdini Mysteries.

Struggling to pay the bills Dash and his eccentric brother Harry answer an advertisement for work from the newspaper for a magician. Not just any magician though the famous Kellar magician who has apparently perfected the floating lady trick. With a bit of help from a hungry lion Dash and Harry are quickly hired by Mr. Kellar and they learn that the trick needs a bit more work. After some kinks are taken care of the trick is ready to perform only it goes horribly wrong when the young lady falls to her death or so it would seem.

It took a long time for the murder to actually happen and I kept waiting for but I did like The Floating Lady Murder far more then The Dime Street Murder. I will get around to reading the next book in the series eventually.

Marleen says

The Floating Lady Murder is the second book in the Harry Houdini Mysteries and events in this book take place not too long after those in "The Dime Museum Murders".

Although Harry Houdini enjoyed a short period of notoriety after his adventures in that earlier story, his fame didn't last and he is back to struggling to make a living, never mind his name as an escapologist. Although it isn't quite the break-through he's hoping for, an opportunity for steady and interesting work for Houdini, his wife and his brother appears when Harry Kellar, a world-famous magician, is looking for people to work on his show.

Kellar is working on a new illusion in which he wishes to make a lady float in the air high into the dome of the theatre, and it is thanks to a clever plan by Houdini that a way of achieving this seemingly impossible feat is discovered.

On the first night the act is performed things go horribly wrong though and the beautiful young woman

floating more than 70 feet up in the air plummets down to the floor and her death. What at first appears to be a horrible accident is soon revealed to be a case of murder when it is discovered that the floating lady had water in her lungs; it appears that she managed to drown during her decent. When one of Kellar's assistants is arrested on suspicion of murdering the woman, Houdini and his brother Dash are convinced that he is innocent and decide, once again, to investigate the case themselves. The unveiling of the solution to the mystery takes place during a dramatic performance which puts both Houdini and his wife Bess in grave danger.

The story in this book, like its prequel, is narrated by Houdini's brother Dash years after the 1898 setting of the book. And, again like it was in *The Dime Museum Murders*, this provides the reader with a wonderful point of view. The brothers are very close yet very different. Harry is still very full of himself and convinced that he is on the verge of breaking into fame and fortune while Dash is far more modest, reluctant to throw himself into dangerous pursuits but always close at hand to keep an eye on his two year older yet in many ways more innocent and impulsive, brother. The differences between the two brothers and the ways in which they interact with each other make them believable and fun characters to read about, while Houdini's fascination with Sherlock Holmes provides a more than a few smiles.

The story is filled with fascinating insights into the world of magicians and theatre during the 1890's and it was very interesting to read about the creation of magical tricks we now take for granted. The theatrical and magical world in which the stories are set also enhances the sense of mystery in the books in this series. Not only are we dealing with murder, we are dealing with seemingly impossible crimes that turn out to have credible yet anything but obvious solutions. It is clear that the author of these books is himself a magician. He shares enough details and knowledge with the reader to make the setting, the crimes as well as the solutions plausible. This is also a well written and easy to read book with characters that are interesting and very likeable. In short, the Harry Houdini Mysteries are wonderful books to spend a relaxing Sunday with.

Julie Failla Earhart says

I wasn't impressed with Book 1 in *The Harry Houdini Mysteries*, but this one is much, much better. The *Floating Lady* is a magic trick that is at the heart of this wonderful novel.

Again, the story is narrated by Harry's younger brother, Dash, and is set a few years around the turn-of-the-century New York City. The book starts out in the same manner as Book 1: Harry has been dead for many years and Dash is an old man. On the anniversary of Harry's death, reporters show up at his door, wanting to glean insight into the infamous magician. Dash vacillates between each story to tell, which will garner the biggest story, and which is the freshest. He decides on the *Floating Lady* murder. He's never talked about it before and as all the players, except himself, are dead, Dash feels he can finally tell the story.

Harry hasn't quite made a name for himself---yet. He and his wife, Bess, are struggling financially and live with his mother on East 69th Street. Dash is somewhat better economically, but barely.

A world re-known magician, Harry Kellar (not a fictional person), is hiring for his show. He's working on a new illusion in which a woman floats through the air, high into the dome of Belasco Theater. It is to be the highlight of his career, as this illusion has never been successfully performed.

Kellar is worried about spies from other magic shows and hires the brothers as they would be able to spot a would-be theft more than someone who does not know the art of illusion. Lots of intrigue follows, most notably the escape of Boris the Lion.

The illusion really goes by two names in the novel, The Levitation of Princess Karnac or the Floating Lady. That doesn't cause any confusion. On opening night, before a packed house, high-wire artist Francesca Moore falls seventy feet from the top of the dome. Seemingly a tragic accident, the coroner soon discovers that Miss Moore did not die on impact. In fact she had water in her lungs and had drowned.

Harry and Dash take it upon themselves to find the real killer. The two have several adventures that make for a great read. Stashower makes one faux pas that jumped off the page at me. On Page 10, he mentions magic performed on television shows. Even if Dash's narration is near the end of his life in 1945, magic on television would be commonplace.

The Floating Lady Murder is much better than Book One, The Dime Museum Murders. It's more of a page-turner than its predecessor. I give Book Two 5 out of 5 stars in Julie's world.

Regina Walker says

Can't get enough Houdini Mysteries

Wonderfully entertaining just like Houdini! A genuine time travel with The Houdini's. Courage, bravado, chivalrous, inventive, mysterious, it is all good fun.

Gigi says

I only recently discovered Daniel Stashower, and am looking forward to reading more.

Riju Ganguly says

Although Daniel Stashower has titled this series as "Harry Houdini Mysteries", I am finding it increasingly unfair, since that totally neglects the fact that Houdini's brother Hardeen had played a very important (as a matter of fact, HE is the detective, while Houdini is the more famous performer who gathers the fame or notoreity) role in solving these mysteries. Yes, he is the narrator, but to think he was only working as Watson is to be grossly unjust towards him. Anyway, this 2nd novel in the series follows the events of the 1st one, but deals with totally different kind of events. The elements of mystery & danger are different in nature, impact as well as in their solution. It was a highly satisfying read, and I am eagerly looking forward towards the opportunity to read the next book in the series. Recommended.

