



A Question of Honor

Charles Todd

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In the latest mystery from *New York Times* bestselling author Charles Todd, World War I nurse and amateur sleuth Bess Crawford investigates an old murder that occurred during her childhood in India, and begins a search for the truth that will transform her and leave her pondering a troubling question: How can facts lie?

In 1908, when a young Bess Crawford lived in India, an unforgettable incident darkened the otherwise happy time. Her father's regiment discovered it had a murderer in its ranks, an officer who killed five people yet was never brought to trial.

A decade later, tending to the wounded on the battlefields of France during World War I, Bess learns from a dying man that the alleged murderer, Lieutenant Wade, is alive and serving at the Front. According to reliable reports, he'd died years before, so how did Wade escape India? What drove a good man to murder in cold blood? Bess uses her leave to investigate. But when she stumbles on the horrific truth, she is shaken to her very core. The facts reveal a reality that could have been her own fate.

A Question of Honor Details

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From Reader Review A Question of Honor for online ebook

Mellena says

The story line has already been described so I won't repeat it. I've been reading this series since its inception, and this is much the same as the previous ones. Always an interesting read, well-written but seemingly hastily edited in a few places. Though obviously formulaic, which I get, the author this time has expanded the involvement of Bess's mother, the "colonel's lady", in the investigation process, which I think added to the story. Funnily enough, her mother sounds like a much livelier and more charming character than Bess, and I found myself wanting to hear more from her than Bess. Bess is spending too much time ironing uniforms, and lo, after all these years, really needs a serious boyfriend. Simon, her long-time "friend" and regimental whatever, needs to step up or move aside.

While I'm allergic to the romance genre and fully appreciate the type of novel which this is, I was hoping for more character and relationship development. With WWI winding down at the end of this story, maybe the author or Bess is moving on.

This was not an ARC, I actually, gasp, PAID for it. I was in between books and desperate and far down the list at the library for this one. I owe reviews on many others I've been reading lately, but this was an easy review as it was likeable, and sometimes easy and likeable is sorely needed. More a 3.5 than less. Maybe. I wish there were more gradient options. Course then folks like me would still equivocate.

Barbara says

In the early 1900's, young teen Bess Crawford lives in India where her father, Colonel Crawford, is in charge of a British regiment. The school-age children of the regiment's soldiers are usually sent to England to be educated, where they live with foster families. When Lieutenant Standish and his wife get word that their youngest daughter died of typhoid in England, Mrs. Standish returns home escorted by the much respected Lieutenant Wade. But when Lt. Wade returns to India he's accused of murdering a family while in England and of killing his parents upon his return to India.

The regiment is shocked, unable to devine a motive for these horrendous crimes. Rather than face the charges Lt. Wade makes a run for it. The military police are unable to capture him and there are reports that Wade died while trying to escape through Afghanistan. This leaves a blot on the honor of the regiment.

Ten years later, during WWI, Bess Crawford is an army nurse. While working at a field clinic in France Bess comes across a dying Indian soldier who tells her that he's seen Lt. Wade. Bess is soon off and running, determined to find Lt. Wade and bring him to justice, thus restoring the honor of her father's regiment.

During her investigations Bess discovers that some foster homes were terrible places, giving her a hint of a possible motive for the murders. The usual characters are on hand in this story, including Beth's parents and her good friend Simon. The book provides an authentic feel for the horrors of combat; the pain and plight of wounded soldiers; and the difficult conditions in field hospitals. The story's resolution seems a little out of left field but believable enough.

A good book for fans of historical mysteries.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

Cynthia says

Immensely Entertaining

I couldn't get enough of this book. The odd thing is I didn't find the writing especially fine, there were multiple repetitions and improbabilities in the plot, and since I hadn't read the other books in the series I found the references to other cases baffling however I couldn't stop reading because I was having so much fun. In fact I found another book in this series on sale in the kindle version and bought it right after finishing "A Question of Honor". What I did like was the realistic portrayal of WWI and the nursing of that era, the fascinating parts about India and the military personal that served there as well as the conditions in England at the time. Bess, the main character, and her family and friends were likeable and I couldn't help rooting for them. I've read several books in this author's Ian Rutledge series and liked them a lot. Looks like I need to add this series to my reading agenda too.

This review is based on an advance reader's copy provided by the publisher.
(Disclaimer given as required by the FTC.)

Allison Tebo says

That was . . . odd.

I have to admit, it's been a while since I've read a book quite like this. I'm afraid the only way to describe it is that it is utterly devoid of soul. To my recollection, I can't remember a book as soulless and "stripped" as this one.

It was rather like trying to dehydrated, vacuum- packed food. All tone, all personality, all voice, all style was completely distilled from it to reach an end result that read much more like an official report than a book. Usually I find the first person narratives inject more personality into their narrator, I've seen quite a few first person narratives "save" a bad story or bad writer – but in this case the attempt not only failed, it felt worse. I literally had difficulty even recognizing that the narrator was female. It was difficult to tell how any of characters felt or how they related to each other. The official report style worked for the prologue – which was supposed to sound like someone relating a long ago crime – but it ruined the rest of the book and I ended up skimming a lot.

The author tried at various points to insert emotion, but somehow, in a way I can't quite articulate, the attempt failed utterly. They also tried to insert something extra into the driest of dry narratives and it became quite awkward. In the middle of this official report, suddenly a character would say: "Looks like rain—see those clouds?" or "Look there's a woman selling kittens." Not quite like that, but very similar, and the result was somehow worsened.

I will admit, I'm not a mystery person – but the story line and especially the settings (beginning in India during the time of the British Raj and fast forwarding to when our MC is a nurse on the front lines of WW2) would have been wonderful. Unfortunately, nothing ever seemed to work for me. The setting began to feel more like an inconvenience than an enhancement in the hands of this particular writing approach.

The mystery – or what I saw of it as I began skimming – seemed interesting enough, but perhaps a little dark (as well as head-scratching at points) but perhaps it only felt dark because no one seemed to react to it with the proper amount of emotion, but it's difficult to tell.

I picked this one up for a dollar at a library sale and I'm putting it in my giveaway pile.

Aerykah says

I think this may be my favorite Bess Crawford book so far. :)

Lauren says

A Question of Honor

4 Stars

WWI nurse, Bess Crawford, becomes involved in a decade old murder investigation when, moments before his death, an Indian Subedar informs her that he has seen a killer from the past. During her childhood in India, an officer from her father's regiment was accused of murdering five people, but disappeared before he could be brought to trial. This incident left a profound mark on the Colonel and his men for whom honor and duty are paramount. Now Bess has an opportunity to look into the case and discovers that all is not as it seems and perhaps the officer is innocent after all.

Despite the numerous coincidences that move the plot forward and enable Bess to solve the case, this is still a significant improvement on the previous book. The mystery is interesting with well-fleshed out suspects, a logical motive and an appropriate perpetrator.

The information on the fostering of English children born in India is very compelling and demonstrates that little about human nature has changed over time. Moreover, the descriptions of the conditions in the trenches and the injuries sustained by the soldiers add an excellent sense of realism to the narrative and immerse the reader into the wartime situation.

The one minor issue with the book is that the romance between Bess and Simon is taking too long to get going. It is time to shape up or ship out!

Susan Ash hanson says

Good, I'm about ready for that war to be over

Maggie Boyd says

A completely engrossing read. The story starts in India, where a young Bess Crawford is home with her parents when she hears the news of a young girl's death. The little lass had been sent to England for schooling and died of typhoid. The devastated mother goes back to Britain, wanting to comfort her eldest daughter (also at the same home for schooling). Since there are constant skirmishes at this moment on the subcontinent and the father can't leave, the lady is accompanied by another soldier, a Lt. Wade everyone holds in high regard.

The grieving mum stays in England but Wade returns to India. Within weeks it is learned that he killed three people while in England and then murdered his parents while visiting them at another point in India. Before he can be brought to justice he escapes into a dangerous portion of the country.

Ten years later Bess is at a field hospital when an Indian soldier tells her he has spotted Lt. Wade. She is unable to further question him since he quickly expires from his wounds. With the war on Bess sets the issue aside and continues with her nursing duties until she is called out to help a man in a trench, where she sees a glimpse of Lt. Wade for herself. Sent home on leave shortly thereafter Bess begins to look into the background of her hero turned killer and opens a horrible hornet's nest of surprises.

Excellent history and an intriguing mystery make this one of the best Crawford mysteries to date. While I was a bit disappointed with the ending (a touch far fetched) I had enjoyed the book enough that by the time I got there I didn't care. Fans of the series won't be disappointed by this latest episode.

Sheri South says

There's a lot to like about this book: an old house with a dark secret in its past, a look at British Colonial India, and of course the World War I setting. I've read every book in this series, and while I've enjoyed them, there's something that keeps them out of five-star territory for me, something I could never quite put my finger on. Never, that is, until I read the back matter at the end of the book. In it, the author(s) talk about how they enjoyed being able to visit Bess's childhood, and explore a different aspect of a character they've come to know so well. That was the "aha!" moment for me. For in spite of having read all the books, I don't really feel I "know" Bess at all. She seems curiously detached from her war experiences, seemingly unmoved by them even as she describes them to the reader in detail. And while I wait for some hint of a romance to develop between Bess and Simon, she doesn't give the reader any hint as to her feelings toward him, either. Those hoping for their relationship to deepen in this book will be disappointed.

I enjoyed the book's somewhat gothic mystery, as well as a vivid glimpse of a world quickly fading from living memory, but I do wish I could connect on a more personal level with its undeniably resourceful heroine.

Mark Flowers says

Some interesting characters and one intriguing piece of backstory, but the plot is a train wreck. Shall we

count the coincidences? In chronological order(spoilers ahead):

1) The mystery surrounds the murder of a family in Hampshire. On the day in question, Lt. Wade, stationed in India, a former foster child of the family, just happens to be in England, near enough to the family to come to confront them about their abuse of him as a child. He arrives *at the precise moment* that another of the family's foster children is leaving the house, having just murdered the family (the real murderer is given the slimmest of motives and none at all for the murder to have occurred on this particular day). Naturally suspicion falls on Wade.

2) When the Wade returns to India, he just happens to stay with his parents the same night that an entirely unrelated person decides to kill them. Naturally, suspicion falls on Wade.

After having escaped arrest and been on the run for years, Wade enlists in the British army under a phony name to serve in World War I.

3) The brother of the man who actually killed Wade's parents is serving in WWI as well and:

a) sees Wade and recognizes him, 10 years later

b) is able to communicate his discovery to our heroine, Bess (an army nurse), who:

i. speaks his native language of Hindi

ii. is the daughter of Wade's Colonel, and therefore is in a unique situation to confirm the sighting.

4-7) At least 4 separate times through the last year of the war, Bess manages to see Wade, and eventually talk to him, despite the (roughly) 4 million British soldiers who served in 1918.

8) Uncounted number of coincidences as Bess manages to investigate the murder 10 years later, just using her perfectly timed leaves from the army.

Bess begins to realize that she needs to investigate the other foster children of the murdered family.

9) She just happens to run into one of them at a battlefield hospital - again, among the 4 million British troops there.

10) *Another* of the foster children is a man she already knew, her regular ambulance driver

11) Another foster child (the murderer) is a sort of handmaid to Princess Mary, who just happens to visit the hospital in England where Bess has sent Wade (under his assumed name), allowing Bess to confront the murderer, using Wade as bait.

I probably missed a few.

Jeanette says

Barely made the 3 stars. Bess, despite her valiant service and investigative nature, somehow- to me- she just echoes a flat affect. It's not just Simon who lacks moves. They seem so paper cut stereotypes of the heroic WWI figures on a monument- frozen. The plots for Bess Crawford are contrived to the point of close to ridiculous motives for murder, as well, IMHO. Not unreal, but just so highly unlikely- most of it. I enjoyed the part in India, but doubt if I will read any more Crawford. The Ian Rutledge series by Charles Todd are a

bit more plodding, but deeper in locale and in plot and especially in characterizations. This is good if you want a predictable, rather cozy for the era, mystery read. Easy, easy read level.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

In A Question of Honor, we start the story in India, 1908, where Bess as a child learns that Lieutenant Wade, a man in her father's regime has killed both his parents in India and three people in England, but he disappears before they catch him. And, he is presumed dead after a while when no traces of him are found. A decade later Bess learns from a dying man in France that Lieutenant Wade could be still alive...

The previous book, **An Unmarked Grave**, was the first book in this series that I didn't find as excellent as the rest so I was hopeful that the next one would be better. And it was. The story in this book is more interesting and I found it hard to put the book down.

The book is really intriguing to read. Bess is trying to find out if Lieutenant Wade still alive, and if he is what is he doing fighting in the front and was he really guilty of the crimes in India and England? Bess and Simon Brandon (he works for her father) are working together trying to find out the truth without involving Bess father, Colonel Crawford because the killing is still a stain on the Colonels regiment's reputation and Bess doesn't want to involve her father if it turns out that Wade isn't alive. So, she travels to the village where the killing of a family took place and tries to find out more about the murdered family and the connection to Lieutenant Wade. But, that's not that easy, some people there are even quite hostile towards her. But, Bess won't give up.

What I love about this book is that it's like a puzzle, you have to be patient, piece after piece is revealed during the progress of the story until the truth is revealed in the end. I also loved that my favorite Aussie, Sergeant Larimore made a cameo, although I wish he had a bigger part in the book. But still I love every mention of him in the books, like this one where she met him in France as she tends to wounded soldiers:

I was always happy to see this cheeky Australian. He had helped me once when I needed help desperately and I was fond of him. Dangerous to care about anyone in wartime, but still...

Looks like Bess is quite fond of Larimore as well! I must admit that I hope they will end up together. I just love every scene with them together.

I recommend this series to anyone that likes to read historical mysteries, especially books that take place during WW1. I enjoy these books very much and every book can be read as a stand-alone.

Read this review and others on A Bookaholic Swede

Cathy Cole says

I first became acquainted with the mother-son writing team known as Charles Todd through their series featuring World War I veteran (and victim of shell shock), Inspector Ian Rutledge. Although that series is excellent, after awhile Rutledge's depression and angst became wearing. In the Bess Crawford series we get to see the horrors of World War I through the eyes of a nurse at the front lines-- someone risking her own life

daily in an attempt to save men like Ian Rutledge. This series has continued to get better with each book, and *A Question of Honor* is the best one yet.

In previous books we've learned bits and pieces about Bess's childhood in India where her father was stationed. Now we get to learn even more with this unsolved murder case from 1908 when she was a teenager. I'm fairly well versed in the topic of nurses at the front during World War I (one book I can't recommend highly enough is Lyn Macdonald's *The Roses of No Man's Land*), and sometimes I have to forcibly keep my disbelief under tight wraps when reading about this character's travels during war time. I don't think any other nurse throughout the history of mankind could rack up more frequent flier miles than Bess. She always seems to be getting leave or hopping aboard a hospital ship to transport the wounded across the Channel to various hospitals in England. All the other nurses must be green with envy!

That said and out of my system, the mystery in *A Question of Honor* is the best yet-- and there's the added bonus of Bess's mother having a role in solving it. This series is populated with several secondary characters that I'd love to learn more about. Since Mrs. Crawford steps up to the plate in this book, I'm hoping this paves the way in future books for more to be divulged about Colonel Crawford and Simon.

The plot is a complicated one that must unfold slowly, due in part to so many people denying knowledge of certain events and places because of their traumatic childhoods. In Jacqueline Winspear's *Leaving Everything Most Loved*, the reader learns about Indian nannies and governesses who were taken to England and then abandoned when the children they were caring for grew up and went to school. In *A Question of Honor*, we learn what could happen to children whose parents, stationed in India, sent them to England for schooling and to shield them from tropical diseases. Once again, secrets prove deadly, and this latest Bess Crawford mystery proves to be an engrossing read.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

Some series need to die a graceful end, this is not one of them.

Whenever I want a good book, there are certain authors I reach for, certain authors I know will never let me down. The mother/son duo of Charles Todd numbers among those authors. They have written over 20 books, and I have adored every single one. What can I say? There's a reason why I've read everything Charles Todd has ever written, and will continue to do so for as long as they continue to write.

An interesting, compelling mystery. A lot of wartime action, particularly in the nursing stations, caring for the wounded, the dying, the ill. The trauma and urgency is there. **The mystery is intriguing, and constantly manages to surprise me in the twists and turns it took.**

That's the thing about Charles Todd's books. The direction of the mystery never turns out the way you would expect. It is no Agatha Christie. You can never see where a clue will lead you. It is so much more complex than that, such is human nature, and human nature is so eloquently described here.

Bess Crawford is an amazing heroine; she always has been. She is smart, strong, brave, not afraid of getting dirty, despite her social status. Her family is similarly lovable, particularly her strong-willed, iron butterfly mother and loving Colonel Sahib of a father. I can completely understand Bess's need to clear her family's name and maintain their honor and pride.

I love the fact that there is no forced romance, and there has never been any in Charles Todd's series...any of them, be it the Ian Rutledge series or this one. The romance is nonexistent, which is as it should be, given the war time and the gravity of the situation. Ain't nobody got time for romance, and that's the way it should be.

Still, I can't help but hope that one day, the irreplaceable, wonderful, stalwart Simon Brandon would end up with Bess. There is no more fitting match in my eyes.

It's a short review, it's a poor review, in terms of the ones I've written, but I love this series so much that I simply lack the appropriate words.

It's not perfect, people meet happenstance far too many times in the midst of war, but overall, this book is so well-written and the characters so brilliantly portrayed, that I will happily overlook any minor flaws.

LJ says

First Sentence: The letter came for Lieutenant and Mrs. Standish on an afternoon when the heat was at its height, and we had already retired indoors to rest until the evening.

As a child, Bess Crawford lived with her family in India where her father served as a regimental colonel. A sense of dishonor was borne by the regiment when one of his officers, Lieutenant Wade, was accused of murdering his parents and three others while on leave in England. He escaped back to India, disappeared, and was believed dead, before he could be brought to trial. Ten years later, Bess is serving as a nurse on the frontlines, a dying Indian ambulance driver recognized her and said he had seen Lt. Wade. Knowing how painful the incident had been for her father at the time, Bess starts doing a bit of investigation; first to see whether Wade really is alive, and then to find out what really happened as her findings about him conflict with the supposed events.

Normally, prologues seem disconnected and a bit annoying. Not the case here. This prologue was interesting, well-written and critical to the subsequent story. It not only presents the characters and establishes their history, but it is a wonderful contrast in setting to that which follows.

The Todds' have a wonderful way of introducing their characters. Bess is capable, smart, understanding and independent. However, she is also true to her period as she knows her actions could reflect on her parents, who are well known within her circle. Simon, a regimental sergeant-major and aide to Beth's father, is someone she's known all of her life. He is there to help her and protect her; not because she is weak and needful, but because it is appropriate in her position. He is an intriguing character, about whose history we learn a bit as the story progresses, as is the Aussie Sergeant Larrimar, introduced in a previous book but makes a cameo appearance here. Larrimar is someone you'd definitely want as a best friend or big brother. I also very much appreciate that when actual historical figures are included, it is done in a realistic way.

The level of research done by the Todds' is very apparent. To say they create a strong sense of time and place would be an understatement. We experience the numerous trips Bess makes between the front lines, field hospitals, taking patients back to England, and having break time in London and at home. You feel her exhaustion and wonder at the sense of contrast between being in the trenches and being in a lovely English village. What is interesting in their writing style is that, perhaps due to the voice being first person, it is not florid or emotional, but realistic and informative. They neither sugar coat nor make the scenes horrendously brutal, yet all the emotion is there. "...I dealt every day with life and death. I'd watched men die who would

have given everything they owned to live one more week, one more month, one more year. ... It was heartbreaking, it was real, it was impossible sometimes to forget.”

Odd as it sounds, the Todds’ have, in Bess, created a character I respect. She doesn’t make assumptions or fly blindly off, but takes time, requests help when needed, and searches out answers carefully and intelligently. Better yet, she, and they, take you along, step-by-step through the investigation. It makes the journey very satisfying, but not at all without suspense along the way.

“A Question of Honor” is a very good book; possibly my favorite in the series, so far. That’s saying a lot for a series I’ve liked better with each new book.

A QUESTION OF HONOR (Hist Mys-Bess Crawford-France/England-1918) – VG

Todd, Charles – 5th in series

Wm. Morrow, 2013

Bonnie says

A Question of Honor is a Bess Crawford mystery set 1908 during World War I. Bess is a nurse serving during the war in France and has seen terribly wounded men and tries to keep up with patents coming in while war rages just behind the lines. Bess had been raised in India where her father was posted as an officer and Bess's mother refused to let him go alone. She insisted the family stay together. This sets up a contrast with a family widely scattered. Bess was on leave in London when she saw a small shop that had old pictures in the window. She went in and bought some items that had been donated to charity. One was a silver frame with a picture inside, another was a baby's rattle also appearing to be silver, and an old doll. Simon his her friend and plays an important role as an instigator who tries to solve a question about a soldier who goes missing from the Colonel's ranks. He was suspected of killing his mother, father, and brother in a shooting incident. So, there is a desperation to catch the killer. And it is thought to be a man named Wade. Much of the story is taken up with the wounds being treated and the ambulances traveling to pick up the injured and taking them along rutted roads where tanks had churned up the roads. Bess becomes obsessed with the question of what had happened to a good man who had supposedly left his posted position and run away. Wonderful descriptions of London are given while Bess is on leave. Her parents support her and her mother and Bess make trips to visit friends in the area. On one such trip, they discover a house for sale that is surrounded by beautiful flowers and walk around the property where they are accosted by an angry man who thinks they are trying to see the house where the son had killed his family. Now, Bess is determined to find out what happened to the officer Wade who had apparently in the same house. The owners had enjoyed wealth, but the father had played the stock market and lost their money. They take in homeless children to make money and horrible crimes are committed to the helpless children. When Simon and Bess discover what has taken place, they talk to the woman who was hired to take care of them. And, now, the hunt is on to discover what had happened to those children and if the man Wade had been one of them. The book is 500 pages and some of it is repetitive. But, I enjoyed reading about India, the war, and trying to solve the mystery.

Lisa says

A terrific entry in the Bess Crawford mystery series, which seems to get increasingly better with each book-- may they continue indefinitely! The story includes much interesting information about India during the British Raj and about nursing on and near the front lines in World War I, as well as continuing to develop the main characters and having a fine plot.

Shorty says

Much better than the last couple novels in the series.

Tina says

I enjoyed this book - Bess Crawford is, as always, a pleasure. I found some of the coincidences completely unbelievable, however; while Bess is serving in hospitals near French battlefields, somehow people connected to the incidents in question in England continue to appear in Bess's orbit. I see how the author was using these narrative devices to push the plot along, but I found it rather jarring. (I'd stop to ask myself: what's the probability of her running into him HERE?) Nonetheless, I adore Bess Crawford and deliberately decided to ignore it - suspension of disbelief! On the whole, recommended.

David says

Thanks to my friend Carol for passing this along to me! Now I want to read everything by this author (actually a mother-and-son team), the two books I've read so far are so absorbing and engaging. Still, I did notice the perfect plotting required a few convenient coincidences. But that's true of many mysteries, and doesn't really bother me.

One thing I appreciate about the Bess Crawford mysteries is that she's a battlefield nurse in World War One, so there's a lot of description of the awful carnage and the pointlessness of lives lost gaining a little ground only to be pushed back, or just lobbing artillery fire back and forth across the front in efforts to keep the enemy in their trenches. You really get a sense of how awful war is in general and that war in particular, and it adds something, somehow. Makes it more 'real'? Makes me like Bess more? Maybe a bit of both.
