



The Chatter of the Maidens

Alys Clare

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The serenity of Hawkenlye Abbey has been disturbed by the arrival of a new nun and her two young sisters. Recently orphaned, Alba has left her convent in Ely to take her grieving sisters from the scene of their sorrow. Abbess Helewise is not convinced of her selflessness. Sister Alba is a mean-spirited and turbulent presence. Her anxieties grow when her friend Josse d Acquin is brought to Hawkenlye, half-dead from blood poisoning. Then a body is discovered, and one of the sisters goes missing. In order to discover the truth behind Alba's flight to Hawkenlye, Helewise sets off for Ely, where she uncovers a clever and chilling network of lies."

The Chatter of the Maidens Details

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Author : Alys Clare

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From Reader Review The Chatter of the Maidens for online ebook

Carre Gardner says

Not a bad read if you're looking for a light mystery. I really like the main character (detective?) Helewise, the Mother Superior of an 11th-century abbey. The story picks up too much momentum 3/4 of the way through, and the whole denouement feels rushed. I won't seek out any more of this author's books, but if one happens to come my way I'll give it a try.

Taksya says

Quarta avventura della serie, con protagonista quasi assoluta la Badessa Helewise. La vicenda gialla si stempera moltissimo nella descrizione degli avvenimenti vissuti dai protagonisti e sembra solo un pretesto per presentare nuovi personaggi e approfondire la conoscenza di quelli già comparsi nei precedenti. Senza scendere troppo nei dettagli, si portano avanti anche riferimenti alle prime tre avventure, lasciando campo libero ad un eventuale ritorno dei temi lascianti per il momento in sospeso. Non è la lettura adatta per chi cerca un thriller mozzafiato, ma è veloce e gradevole per trascorrere un pomeriggio in tranquillità.

Alissa McCarthy says

A bit rushed towards the end, but still a good installment in the series. Engaging and interesting, with plenty of good characters from all generations, which is great. A lovely, quick, and easy read.

Bron says

picked this up at Manchester BookCrossing meeting today - nice size for lunch-time reading and I like medieval mysteries. 26th May 2012.

I'm not sure if this really is on a par with any of the Cadfael stories as the cover suggests, but Abbess Helewise makes a likeable detective, and the story is well-paced even though the "mystery" doesn't feel all that mysterious!

I do find odd details niggles at the back of the mind though. Surely rose bay willow herb wouldn't have been growing in profusion in an English village in 1190? I seem to remember that it's an American import, not a native....

kerry arnold says

Entertaining

This book kept me entertained throughout so, 5 stars. If you enjoy historical fantasy this book is a good bet for a few hours escape from the humdrum.

Labijose says

La cuarta entrega de la serie de la abadía. Otra novela sencilla, sin complicaciones en la trama. Esto puede ser positivo o no, en función del tipo de lector,a. A mí estas novelas me sirven para “desconectar” de otro tipo de lecturas. La autora no se calienta los cascos en exceso, y si te gusta la temática medieval, puedes pasar un rato agradable. Además, el inglés utilizado, aunque más o menos adaptado a la época, no es nada complicado.

En esta entrega el caballero Josse d'Acquin permanece casi toda la novela convaleciente en la Abadía. Aún así, podrá prestar su ayuda a la abadesa Helewise con sus sabias reflexiones. Me gusta el “rollito” que se llevan estos dos. Espero que al final de la serie su relación se acreciente y haya “más madera”.
3 estrellas. A este tipo de novelas tampoco le pido más.

Mary Beth says

This series keeps getting better. I really like the character development along with the historical aspects of the story. Each story brings in another part of social history of the times.

LJ says

THE CHATTER OF THE MAIDENS (Hist Myst-a Hawkenlye Mystery-England-1190) – G+
Clare, Alys – 4th in series
Hodder & Stoughton, 2001, UK Hardcover – ISBN:0340793279

First Sentence: The fire took hold quickly.

Josse d'Acquin lies ill in the infirmary at Hawkenlye Abby leaving Abbess Helewise to deal with a new nun and her sisters, all recently orphaned. Alba left her convent at Ely so she, and her sisters, could start in a new place.

A stranger is found murdered, one sister disappears and Alba's actions belie her calling, forcing Helewise to sequester Alba in a locked chamber. In order to decide what action to take, Helewise must travel to Ely and the girl's home in order to learn of their past and determine their future.

The Hawkenlye books remind me a bit of S.J. Rozen's series in that the Abbess and Josse take turns as lead protagonist in each book. This story belongs to the Abbess.

It's a classic traditional mystery set in a medieval time where the church play a predominate role in the

characters' lives but there is a touch of the ancient druid as well. The Abbess and Josse are wonderful characters—the nun and the warrior—and an excellent balance to each other, each with their own strengths.

The mystery is compelling and as much psychological as it is physical. I am always fascinated by details of medieval life. Highly recommended for lovers of historical mysteries, I am pleased to know I have many more books ahead of me in this series.

Karen says

I enjoyed the first two books in this series, but the second two have lacked the character chemistry, period detail and plotting that kept me reading, relying instead on angst, secondary characters and ah-ha moments. Not bad books but disappointing. I have several more on the shelf, hopefully the pendulum will swing back.

Kelly Martin says

This was my purse book. I read it only while waiting for taxies or if I forgot my regular book.

Susan in NC says

I'm reading this series in order, along with the other favorite medieval series (Brother Athelstan, Catherine Levendeur, Abbess Hildegard, Prioress Eleanor, etc.) - I became hooked on Ellis Peters' wonderful Brother Cadfael series many years ago and have been on the hunt ever since for well-researched, intelligently written, character-driven historical mysteries ever since!

I won't bother with a summary, as that is handled above; I'd rather tell potential readers who haven't discovered this wonderful series why I enjoy them and why they should give them a try. Alys Clare's Hawkenlye series featuring Abbess Helewise and Josse D'Acquin have everything I enjoy - strong characters, well-written dialogue and evocative atmosphere that really brings England of 1190 to life. The king and Church are all-powerful, but there are abundant remnants in the countryside of the nature-based old religion, with the Forest Folk living deep in the woodlands surrounding Hawkenlye Abbey and the other-worldly atmosphere of the Fens to the north adding a mystical element in this series (and the Fens are the setting of Clare's other excellent Aelf Fen series, starring Lassair, a young healer and budding wise woman). I love that both of Clare's series feature strong women who have great gifts and are accorded the respect they deserve, but are very human, multi-faceted characters who stumble occasionally and rely on a wonderful community of friends/fellow religious to solve the mysteries they are drawn into - Sir Josse is a knight and local landowner and old friend of the abbess. Their warm, respectful relationship is a highlight of this series, but they are also only human and obviously attracted to each other; I'm glad to see looking ahead at book summaries that as the series develops the widowed Helewise and Josse's relationship will develop along interesting lines! I look forward to reading the rest of the series and highly recommend it to fans of Brother Cadfael, Brother Athelstan, Dame Frevisse, Abbess Hildegard and Prioress Eleanor.

Vickie says

I have been a fan of Ellis Peters' Brother Cadfael series forever it seems and when I saw this on the cozy mystery list my favorite homebased bookseller, Our Lady of the Books Pamala, I wanted to try this new to me series.

Abbess Helewise is wise, kind, takes wonderful care of the nuns and people in her charge. I'm not sure of her history yet, but it seems as though she was married at one point and has a history with Josse d'Acquin, the knight brought to Hawkenlye. The abbey is known for its care of the sick and injured and Josse is in good hands with the nuns.

Then the three orphaned sisters arrive on the doorstep of Hawkenlye and the whole abbey is in an uproar. The younger sisters, Berthe and Meriel, are docile and sweet. The eldest, Alba, is completely the opposite with a disruptive arrogant nature. She goes so far as to attack Helewise and getting put in solitary confinement until Helewise can get to the bottom of the fractured story the sisters tell.

Murder and characters who aren't all who they appear..perfect mystery fodder. Set it in medieval times in an abbey, have some herblore, travels across England, forest dwellers, disturbed minds, and Knights Templar...it's a ye olde humdinger!

It will definitely not be my last foray into the world of Abbess Helewise. There are 12 books in the series, this is number 4, and I am going to do my best to find and read each one.

Five ye olde cozy mystery beans....

Ingrid says

I know, it's sheer indulgence this series and reading the books doesn't involve much thinking, but I still love each and everyone of them.

Sue says

Abbess Helewise and the other nuns are dealing with a troublesome nun, Alba, who had come with her two younger sisters seeking admittance. Alba had indicated that they were recently orphaned and so she had brought her two sisters in order to help them make a fresh start in a new area. The problem was that Alba was not settling in to life at Hawkenlye in spite of saying she'd been a fully professed nun for 5 years. At about the same time, Josse D'Acquin is gravely ill and is brought to the Abbey with the hopes that they'll be able to care for him. Helewise seeks to unravel the past of the three women and finds a complicated web of lies. Can she and the recovering Joss sort it out?

I'm enjoying this series more and more the further I get in to it. Josse and Helewise make a good pair and the

other nuns are an enjoyable mix of characters. References are made in this one to people and situations in previous books so I feel like I'm seeing a progression instead of frozen moments in time. I look forward to going on.

Katie Bee says

Feels a bit rushed towards the end, but still a good installment in the series. While I wouldn't call the Hawkenlye mysteries *light*, exactly - there's death and murder aplenty - they're definitely easy, quick reads. Engaging and interesting, with plenty of good characters (from all generations, which is great).

In this book Helewise gets to go on a road trip as well. :)
