



Prince: A John Shakespeare Mystery

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England, 1593. Plague rages, famine is rife, and the city is in revolt. From this bedlam rises the sharpest of sleuths: a man named John Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's brother investigates a series of murders rocking Elizabethan London. He follows the clues, which lead him from horseraces to brothels to an explosive encounter at sea. As he digs deeper, he discovers a plot that threatens not only the kingdom but everything he holds dear. This spellbinding historical thriller will delight fans of *New York Times* bestselling authors Ariana Franklin and Alex Grecian.

Prince: A John Shakespeare Mystery Details

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Author : Rory Clements

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From Reader Review Prince: A John Shakespeare Mystery for online ebook

Lesley says

Historical fiction - #3 in the John Shakespeare series, Elizabethan time period

Elaine says

The third in the excellent Elizabethan murder mystery series, featuring John Shakespeare, brother of Will! An inexplicable murder is linked to a much deeper plot of political dimensions, leading Shakespeare into danger and tragedy. A series of bombings, which appear to be targeting the immigrant population causes huge unrest and fear, and leads to the uncovering of further political dimensions.

Clements' work is improving with each subsequent novel :the first two were good reads, but with this, we see a flourishing and development both in his handling of the plot (which becomes more complex), and characters(in whom we see more emotional and psychological depth). In this latest offering we are treated to the intriguing tale of the systematic targeting of the Dutch immigrant population by dissatisfied apprentices who see their employment prospects threatened. Several mysterious and shadowy characters populate this world-and there is more to them than meets the eye!

This forms one of the main strands of the plot, and is developed very well. The fear and resentment which the apprentices feel, the way in which they manage to band together in an attempt to protect their jobs and their families, gives an interesting insight into the difficulties and challenges of life at the time-and which in fact bears some relevance for this day and age!

There is a wider, even more intriguing, political aspect to the plot-about which I feel I should give no hint, as there is no indication of this in the summary appearing on the dust jacket. In some respects, this is an even more exciting strand-and one which the author could have developed as a separate novel, as there was such depth and potential to do so. The final twist to this sub strand was a complete surprise-a wonderful and imaginative addition to the overall immigrant plot. In some respects, I found the political angle even more exciting-it certainly confirms Clements' ability to surprise and intrigue.

Tragedy of huge proportion strikes Shakespeare early in the novel. At the outset we are given some tantalising insights into Shakespeare's personal and family life-a happy and well rounded household, with Shakespeare showing himself to be a devoted father and husband-and enlightened, supportive and generous employer. However, when tragedy strikes, it shakes the family and community to the core. I suspect that in subsequent novels we may see the protagonist become hardened and embittered due to the events unfolded-not to any great extent, but perhaps enough to add in an additional emotional level-the small, but significant kindnesses he regularly shows (sending ale to those awaiting execution, for example), may become a thing of the past. One would hope not to any great extent, but there is great potential here for significant and moving character development-and I'm confident that Clements won't disappoint.

One of the huge pleasures in the novel, is the gradual emergence of Shakespeare's servant, Boltfoot Cooper.

They form a great duo-reminiscent of some of the detective duos in this century. Cooper is a wonderful creation-a strong and loyal servant and helper, who suffers hugely rather than betray his master. A devoted family man, he has much in common with his master and this relationship is yet another of the joys of the novel. Looking forward too, to learning more about the intriguing Mr Cooper's past.

Underlying all this, we also have insights into the seedier side of Elizabethan life . The obnoxious and horrendous torturer (Richard Topcliffe) and his entourage introduce an element of fear and disgust. However, justice of a kind, comes his way-which once again, gives the author potential for subsequent character development, as Topcliffe appears to be a dangerous and powerful enemy.

The famous Will makes an appearance-rather superfluous to the overall plot, but it introduced a little fun, and was necessary to round off the literary aspect of the novel. A little information was given as to their shared childhood-it didn't add much to the plot nor the characters, but was an interesting strategy nonetheless. At the start of the series, I assumed that this relationship would be central in some way-but John Shakespeare would be an excellent protagonist, with or without his famous brother, so I'm really not sure if this aspect will quietly fade away in subsequent novels, as so far it is adding very little, and it seems almost superfluous. The other "real" characters-from monarch through to her officers-are given much more depth-so perhaps Will will feature in a more central role in due course.

Once again, Clements has given us a wonderfully graphic and descriptive novel. The squalor of the city, the developing countryside, and the extravagance of the Court, are all well depicted, and give the reader a good understanding of life in these times. Indeed, it is good to read of the seedier side of life as opposed to the penchant certain comparable authors have focusing on courtly life, to the exclusion of all other aspects. A good level of background history is given, so even the most unknowledgeable of readers can quickly understand and appreciate the time in which it is set.

I can highly commend this series for all these reasons-but would suggest starting at the beginning with the first one ("Martyr"). Whether your preference is for historical or murder mystery, there is plenty to be found which will please the reader, and Clements richly deserves the accolade on the cover:

"Real quality....faster moving than C.J Sansom"

Mieczysław Kasprzyk says

At the very opening we are present in a room where a murder has just taken place; Christopher Marlow has been stabbed in the eye. From that moment on we are pulled into a tale of intrigue and murder that keeps us gripped throughout. There's a lot of grumbling about asylum seekers coming over here and taking our jobs.

the gutter press is heating up the climate of hate. A bomb goes off... Shakespeare is initially sent off on the trail of the bombers but then leaves that to his sidekick, Boltfoot, as he is diverted into another investigation. Rory Clements has just got better and better as he's grown confident in this dirty, dangerous Tudor world. He paints his heroes and nasty, twisted characters well, sends us down paths of investigation through mud, murder, outrage and politics (oh the politics are so important) and then draws the strands in during the thrilling climax.

This is a really good read!

Nick Phillips says

A thoroughly enjoyable entry into the John Shakespeare series which really creates a sense of the time period and the concerns of the people of late Elizabethan England, even if they are almost exactly the same as those of our own late Elizabethan Britain. There is a real feel for the characters and situations and when a tragedy occurs part way through one really feels for those left behind.

What marks these novels out from the other great Tudor detective stories which are out there is that they are actually spy stories rather than straight forward crime thrillers and as such feel more like an episode of Spooks than they do Midsomer Murders. Shakespeare and his fellow intelligencers are effectively inventing spy-craft as they go along (though I'm sure Medieval Europe, the Normans, the Saxons and the Romans all had their own versions of the modern spy) and it is interesting to wonder how many of Shakespeare's activities would fit into modern day MI5.

And it is here that the novel falls down slightly in that Shakespeare's beliefs and behaviours belong far more in the 21st century than they do in the 16th; but most definitely do not belong in even a modern MI5 operative making him appear far too sensitive to actually get the job done, always balking at taking the final step. This is an essential conundrum for any writer who chooses to make their lead character successful in the murky world of espionage, either they get drawn into that world and end up being less than sympathetic to the reader or they remain sympathetic but at the expense of realism. Clements doesn't quite get the balance right but the overall quality of the story allow him to sidestep the issue quite neatly.

For a historical novel it has also turned out to be quite prescient. For a novel written in 2011 it seems to be far more about events of 2016 than it does of 1593 which actually just goes to show that not only does history continually repeat itself but that in the past 423 years we've not learned a damn thing. Historically the best bit comes after the main action in a (I assume) imagined scene in which the great and the good of the Elizabethan theatre scene gather to present a lost play by Christopher Marlowe which adds an air of threat and menace to our usual understanding of the world of (William) Shakespeare but which on closer inspection appears to be an accurate portrayal of how it actually was.

Janet Message says

Great story

I couldn't put this book down. As with the previous two I really enjoyed the story and history mix! Brilliant.

Julie says

Prince by Rory Clements is an Witness Impulse publication, an imprint of Harper Collins. This book was published originally in 2011. I received a copy of this book from the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

This the third installment in the John Shakespeare historical mystery series.

Set in the 1500's, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the political atmosphere is volatile. The Spaniards are lurking, there is a backlash against "strangers" (foreigners, mainly Dutch) and some rather disturbing rumors regarding Mary, Queen of Scots.

For John, a man's murder begins his investigation that connects loads of powder kegs moving into the area, a royal secret, and an unfathomable conspiracy.

This is the third book in the series, but the first one for me. If you are like me and have not read the first two, I don't think it will hinder your enjoyment of this one. The main character, John Shakespeare, is Will's brother. He finds himself tangled up the a web of lies, prejudices, power struggles, and on a personal front, John gets sucker punched in the worst possible way, leaving the reader feeling like they were kicked in the stomach.

It will be interesting to see how this case effects John in the future. He learns shocking secrets, and his life had forever been changed the events that take place in the this installment.

This is a very dark and atmospheric historical novel, very rich in details and the dialogue is understandable, yet authentic.

There are several stories going on a once, but they all get brought together in the end.

I think it would be hard to write a historical mystery, especially set back this far in time. So many things hinged on rumor or word of mouth. Cause and time of death were difficult to determine. The laws were so different back then. It would also be hard to maintain this level of detail all throughout the book and not slip in a modern phrase or technique in there without thinking. The author did a great job of putting the reader into the past and letting us experience it through his eyes.

Overall this one gets an A.

Amy says

As a fan of the series, I was looking forward to becoming immersed in Shakespeare's world once again. Unfortunately, it was slow going in the beginning and the pace didn't really pick up until the middle of the book. Once the story got interesting, it was just as gripping as the previous 2 books and I found myself devouring the last 20ish chapters. Ultimately, I liked it, but it wasn't as good as the last 2.

Daniel Weston says

The book was another solid entry in the John Shakespeare series, however I felt it was slightly weaker than the previous stories. The plotline didn't seem as gripping and the inclusion of Topcliffe started to wear on me, despite him being one of the series strongest characters throughout the books. John Shakespeare's sections were exciting, but I often found the sections for Boltfoot to be a bit of a drag.

This review may seem overly critical now I'm looking back at it, but this is only because the rest of the series are are such strong, entertaining entries. Despite my few misgivings, this is still a must read title and you will

find yourself gripped to the book in the last few chapters as the twisting tale winds to an exciting climax.

Kay says

Fabulous series, more accessible, in my humble opinion, than the Shardlake books. Rory Clements is a wonderful writer.

Philip Walker says

I have loved the first 2 books in this series, a real contender for the historical fiction crown that Sansom wears. Martyr & Revenger are simply fantastic reads, but sadly Price really doesn't come up to scratch.

For me, it seems almost as if a different person wrote the books, the characters are different including John Shakespeare the main character, it is impossible to relate him to the previous books, the author seems to be writing about someone completely different. there is a complete lack of fluidity from the rest of the series.

Also, and this could well just be me; but in general conversation, how many times do you say the name of the person you are talking to? I am guessing never. But in this book it is never other sentence. It just seems lazy page filling and I was really disappointed and I found it infuriating.

The story is ok, but predictable.

very disappointed, fingers crossed the next one will be back on track.

Karen Brooks says

Prince is the third book in the John Shakespeare series by Rory Clements and, once again, he has crafted a marvellous tale that takes the reader by the scruff of the neck (or scruff of the ruff) and plonks her or him right down in the middle of Elizabethan England.

It is 1593. Elizabeth is sixty years old and losing grip on her glorious empire. Plague is rife in the streets of London as is discontent, poverty and brooding violence. There are plots to rid England of the heretical queen hatching everywhere. Among these are violent plans to disrupt the peace by instilling fear; fear based on xenophobia and a belief that recent Dutch immigrants are stealing the livelihoods of good Englishmen and more.

Before John Shakespeare can start his new investigation, one that will see him embroiled in his brother's world of theatre, with Spanish dignitaries and high-class whores, Richard Topcliffe and his foul practices, personal tragedy strikes.

John's world is literally blown apart and throughout the book he struggles to come to terms with his new life and what his loss means for him and the future.

But just when he thought he could lose no more, a greater threat strikes and unless John can pull himself together and uncover what's happening beneath everyone's noses, then more than a few lives are at stake, but the welfare of the entire realm.

Once again, Clements writes to such a high standard, crafting a wonderful intricate plot, mingling fictional characters with real and bringing to life a period that continues to appal, fascinate and charm.

Fabulous read and, as usual, I went straight to the next one in the series!

PETER says

Another page turner

Another compelling storyline, full of action, suspense, terror and intrigue. This has been a great series and I am looking forward to the next book

Monica says

This is an episode of the John Shakespeare mystery series. Our hero is tasked with solving multiple mysteries in this edition, which may or may not be intertwined.

The multiple mysteries excellently wrap around throughout the tale as they are investigated and both true and false leads are investigated.

At times gritty yet always exceptional in details are the scenery, characters, and seemingly period appropriate descriptions (is. employment, dialogue, etc).

A brief reference at the end of the tale, allows a glimpse into actual history as well.

Overall, an intriguing read!

Jo Barton says

This third book in the series is a rather more complex tale about investigator, John Shakespeare. Set against the machinations of the Elizabethan court, and with a rich array of characters, this story keeps you enthralled from the beginning, and has enough historical integrity to keep the book true to its time and place.

I enjoyed the intricacies of the plot, and look forward to the next instalment in John Shakespeare's eventful life.

<http://jaffareadstoo.blogspot.com/>

Jules says

I actually liked "Prince" very much. I think the mystery was tighter than in "Revenger" in which Essex and McGunn were so obviously the bad guys. I wasn't expecting Ana Cabral to be the mastermind behind the whole plot - I truly thought it was Don Antonio and maybe Essex (I really dislike Essex). I was also expecting Topcliffe to be involved with the xenophobic militia.

Marlowe's play at the end was really effective and a great reminder of the nastier aspect of the intelligencer's world. I am not particularly fond of the hagiography of Robert Southwell but Topcliffe's brutality is so over the top that anyone ends up siding with the priest. (As a side note, in *Revenger* Cecil said that they were cousins and in this one Ellie Bull says she is kin with the Cecils - I'm most interested in those two facts).

Boltfoot's rescue was a bit unbelievable when I was reading it, but then it made all the sense. I wasn't expecting Sarjent to be a traitor. Nice to see that not even Lord Burghley knows it all.

What brings me to the reason I started the series and what gives me all the joy: dear Robert Cecil. I want a book series about him being controlling and neat and bossing spies all around England and the continent to keep the real safe. All while having to put up with Elizabeth's increasingly erratic ways and working to screw Essex. It would be a great book. It would be a book I'd cherish. Meanwhile, I keep collecting books that have a non-villanous Cecil and keep them close to my heart.

So, a very enjoyable book, now to the next one!
