



Death at the Chateau Bremont

M.L. Longworth

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The first installment in a sumptuous new mystery series set in Provence--featuring chief magistrate Antoine Verlaque, who must team up with his old flame Marine Bonnet to solve a mysterious pair of murders

The latest book in the Verlaque & Bonnet Mystery series, *The Curse of La Fontaine*, is available now from Penguin Books!

When local nobleman Etienne de Bremont falls to his death from the family chateau, it sets the historic town of Aix-en-Provence abuzz with rumors. Antoine Verlaque, the charming chief magistrate of Aix, suspects foul play, and when he discovers that Bremont had been a close friend of Marine Bonnet, his on-again off-again girlfriend, Verlaque must turn to her for help.

The once idyllic town suddenly seems filled with people who should have benefited from Bremont's death--including his playboy brother Francois, who's heavily in debt and mixed up with some unsavory characters. But just as Verlaque and Bonnet are narrowing down their list of suspects, another death occurs. And this time, there can be no doubt--it's murder.

A lively mystery steeped in the enticing atmosphere of the south of France and seasoned with romance as rich as the French cuisine that inspires it, this first installment in the acclaimed Verlaque & Bonnet Provencal Mystery series is as addictive and captivating as Provence itself.

"Longworth's voice is like a rich vintage of sparkling Dorothy Sayers and grounded Donna Leon. . . . Bon appetit!" --Booklist

Death at the Chateau Bremont Details

Date : Published June 28th 2011 by Penguin Books (first published June 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780143119524

Author : M.L. Longworth

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cultural, France, Crime, Fiction

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From Reader Review Death at the Chateau Bremont for online ebook

Debbie says

"Death at the Chateau Bremont" is technically a mystery, but it read like a travelogue about Aix, France with a mystery going on in the background. There was no urgency to the mystery, so I felt very little suspense. The characters were varied, complex, and flawed. The story was mainly about how Judge Verlaque (who's not the courtroom type of judge) and his ex-girlfriend are still attracted to each other despite how Verlaque is constantly critical of her. While realistic, I was rooting for them to not get back together.

The story was full of details about Aix, France--both the attractions (sight-seeing areas, famous artwork, etc.), and the daily life. There were a lot of details about cigars, fine food, and wine. If you're a fan of those, then you'll probably enjoy this book.

Unfortunately, I don't care about those three things. The high level of uninteresting-to-me detail slowed the pacing down to a crawl. With so much detail, it was hard to tell what would play a critical role later, so I stopped trying to solve the mystery. While eventually we did get clues that pointed to the whodunit, that part didn't really kick in until near the end. My mom (who also read the story) said she thought the book had so many daily-life details because there was so little to the actual mystery.

There were some words in French, and some of it was obvious from context or explained. There were no graphic sex scenes. There was some explicit and some "he cussed" style bad language. Overall, I didn't find this mystery very interesting, but I suspect mystery-lovers who are cigar-wine-and-fine-food fans would enjoy it.

I received this book as an unrequested review copy from the publisher.

Projekt: ksiazka says

Z okna starego zamku nale??cego od wieków do rodziny Bremont wypada jego dziedzic Étienne de Bremont. Pocz?tkowo jego ?mier? uwa?ana jest za samobójstwo ale Antoine Verlaque, przypisany do sprawy s?dzia szybko dochodzi do wniosku, ?e m??czyzna zosta? celowo wypchni?ty. Dodatkowo na pó?ce w salonie widzi zdj?cie osoby, której si? nie spodziewa?. Okazuje si?, ?e to Marine Bonnet, profesor prawa. Ona i Antoine maj? za sob? wspólny, odrobin? nieudany zwi?zek, jednak teraz b?d? musieli od?o?y? na bok przesz?o?? i razem postara? si? rozwi?za? spraw? morderstwa Étienne. Na jaw powoli wychodz? rodzinne tajemnice i dawne zatargi, a nawet powi?zania mafijne. Komu najbardziej zale?a?o na ?mierci dziedzica? Akcja powie?ci rozgrywa si? w ma?ym, urokliwym miasteczku w Prowansji. Autorka postara?a si? odda? malowniczy klimat i niespieszne ?ycie jego mieszka?ców serwuj?c nam spor? porcj? ciekawostek i opisów. Jak wiadomo, Francuzi uwielbiaj? dobre jedzenie popite jeszcze lepszym winem, wi?c oprócz rozgryzania kolejnych elementów uk?adanki mo?emy si? dowiedzie? co nieco o zwyczajach mieszka?ców Prowansji, ulubionych szczepach win czy nawet odpowiednim przyrz?dzaniu mi?sa. Zdecydowanie mo?na odczu? klimat powie?ci. Warto wspomnie?, ?e “?mier? w Chateau Bremont” to debiut. Pani Longworth, na co dzie? dziennikarka stworzy?a naprawd? ciekaw? i wielow?tkow? powie??. Trzeba napisa?, ?e tempo akcji nie jest zbyt pospieszne, wi?c nie spodziewajcie si? nag?ej lawiny w postaci strzelanin, po?cigów czy

niekonwencjonalnych metod śledczych. Akcja rozwija się powoli, co może niektórym nie przypaść do gustu ale z czasem fabuła zaczyna się rozkręcać. W każdym razie przy lekturze powieści na pewno nie będziecie się nudzić. Jest intryga, zwroty akcji i dobry klimat.

“Siwa kobieta siedziała sama przy sąsiednim stoliku i z apetytem jadła ostrygi. Uśmiechnęła się do Marine, a ona odpowiedziała jej tym samym. Uwielbiała patrzeć na ludzi, którzy jedli samotnie, nie okazując przy tym zakłopotania czy wstydu.”

Antoine jest dość charakterystyczną postacią. Dokładny, wręcz irytującyco przewrażliwiony na punkcie etykiety i przestrzeganiu zasad przy jedzeniu, czy też doborze wina do dań. Jeździ drogim ale starym samochodem i absolutnie kocha swój przestronny apartament. Nie robi to z niego kiepskiego śdziego. Wręcz przeciwnie. Potrafi logicznie myśleć i wyciągać odpowiednie wnioski. Towarzyszy mu Marie Bonnet, jego dawna miłość, która w przeszłości przyjaźniła się z rodziną Bremont. Z początku wydała mi się dość paskudną postacią, która nie do końca potrafiła zapanować nad emocjami ale wraz z rozwojem fabuły pokazała na co jej stać. W pewnych momentach sama przejmuje inicjatywę co popchnęło śledztwo do przodu. Jestem wdzięczna autorce, że w tekście miłośnicy miłośnicy Antoine, a Marie nie przesłoniła zagadki morderstwa. Wątek obyczajowy i tak jest dość mocno rozwinięty, a infantylne westchnienia i spojrzenia pomiędzy bohaterami mogłyby być już lekką przesadą.

“-Gdyby monica Bellucci usiadła obok mnie w jakimś ciemnym barze w paryżu i zaczęła ze mną flirtować, a potem by mi powiedziała, że tak naprawdę jedzenie jej nie interesuje i że nie pija wina, natychmiast przeszłaby mi na nią ochota.”

Gdybym miała jednym słowem podsumować “Śmierć w Chateau Bremont” napisałabym: uroczy. Ten lekki i sympatyczny kryminał z pewnością ci spodoba się miłośnikom tego gatunku. Jest w nim odrobinę z niespiesznej prozy Agathy Christie. Z niecierpliwością czekam na kolejną część przygód charyzmatycznej pary ‘detektywów’, a kontynuacja już w czerwcu.
Bises!

Zapraszam -> blog-projektsiazka.blogspot.com

Rebecca says

I always think it's funny when a first book in a series says "A _____ Mystery," on the cover, as it seems so cheeky. It's THE _____ Mystery at the moment, folks! Death at the Chateau Bremont says "A Verlaque and Bonnet Mystery" on its cover, and that's about it--there's a paragraph about the author and a Booklist review excerpt that compares Longworth's writing to Sayers and Leon--a stretch, I'd say. Penguin Mystery Originals is clearly trying to Launch Longworth with a capital L!

The book, though no Sayers and Leon in my view, is a pleasant read. It has the slightly halting diction of a book in translation (which I happen to like), though Longworth is apparently not native French. While the cultural background and detail is interesting, the plot is a tad slow, and the character development strains a bit at the seams--Verlaque and Bonnet's relationship is a bit too portentously developed. All the same, I kept reading despite Christmas and other competing books and the like, so there was a draw there. I'm giving my copy (found on our library's little "on-going booksale" shelf for 50 cents) to my Francophone sister-in-law at New Year's. We'll see what she says! Still: if I find Verlaque and Bonnet #2 on a booksale shelf, even if a dollar, I'd buy it--hence the 3 stars.

Cathy Cole says

First Line: The attic light was burnt out.

Antoine Verlaque, chief magistrate of Aix-en-Provence, France, is called upon to check into the death of a local nobleman, who fell to his death from an attic window in his château. Although it looks like a simple case of accidental death, Verlaque suspects foul play and asks Marine Bonnet, professor of law at the local university, to help him with his investigation since she grew up with the dead man and his brother.

They've barely begun their investigation, however, when the nobleman's brother also dies at the château. This second death is most definitely murder, and the magistrate and the professor must work fast before anyone else can come to harm. What makes the investigation a bit uncomfortable for them both is the fact that-- until six months ago-- Verlaque and Bonnet had been lovers.

Author M.L. Longworth moved to Aix-en-Provence in 1997 and began writing articles about the region. After a few years the restrictions of writing non-fiction began to chafe, and she turned to crime fiction. According to her website, her primary aim is to have the reader "experience Aix-en-Provence the way I do, as if they were beside me." Longworth accomplishes that quite well in this book. The countryside, the city of Aix itself, the people and their customs are all extremely well-drawn, and I did feel as though I were there.

Unfortunately the author concentrates so much on the land, people and customs that the mystery often appears to take a backseat. The investigation takes a long time to unfold then rushes to its conclusion in the last quarter of the book. It's a shame because the deaths of the two brothers are intriguing, and I would've appreciated a bit more detail before the race to the end.

Verlaque and Bonnet are an interesting pair. Marine is the likable one of the two. I enjoyed seeing how her mind works, and even a small habit like saying "Merci, les garçons" each time she passes the war memorial let me know what type of person she is. Verlaque is an entirely different story. Raised by parents who would've loved to buy themselves a title, he's close to neither and only feels real love and affection for his recently deceased English grandmother. Verlaque is handsome, educated, well-traveled, and finds it very easy to seduce women. He's also a terrible snob. Yes, Verlaque is very easy to dislike, but there is a real attraction, even love, between the magistrate and Marine.

I enjoyed *Death at the Château Bremont* for its depiction of life in Aix-en-Provence, and for its mystery. Although I don't care for Antoine Verlaque, a few clues toward the end of the book led me to believe that he may realize that he needs to change a few things about himself to make him worthy of someone like Marine. The second book in the series, *Murder in the Rue Dumas*, is now available. I may find myself in the south of France again to see what happens next in the relationship of this very interesting pair.

LJ says

First Sentence: The attic light was burnt out.

When Étienne de Bremont is found dead having fallen from an attic window in his family's chateau, it is thought to be a suicide. Or was it an accident? Or was it murder as even the broom in the attic contains no finger prints and a once-heavy suitcase is now empty. When the decidedly murdered body of Etienne's brother, François, is found in the château's fountain, the case becomes much more complex for Magistrate Verlaque as he also needs the help of his former lover and the brother's friend, law professor Marine Bonnet

Ms. Longworth does a very good job of setting the opening scene with both wonderful and horrific descriptions. But it is the characters who drive this story.

We are quickly intrigued by Magistrate Antoine Verlaque. The author provides bits of his background and his character. However, just as one of the characters comments, we never really get to know him. He works well with his teams, realizes some of his own shortcomings and has a complex relationship with Marine. You feel the attraction between the two characters even in the classic scene of couples who are not together but take a small satisfaction in each other's imperfections. There is also an interesting passage where we see Verlaque through Marine's eyes, and a delightful observation about Americans. Although it is stated, a bit too many times, that Verlaque has the ability to seduce all those he meets, he is also smart; he knows it is more effective to interview people in their own environment.

Foodies beware – Ms. Longworth's wonderful descriptions of food and wine make you salivate and want to pack your bags so that you may experience these delights personally. The mystery does often become overshadowed by the characters but is still present and interesting enough to hold its own, including a couple very nice twists.

DEATH AT THE CHÂTEAU BREMONT is an enjoyable read with characters intriguing enough to make one want to return for, hopefully, the next book.

DEATH AT THE CHÂTEAU BREMONT (Lic Inv-Magistrate Antoine Verlaque-Aix-en-Provence, France-Cont) – G+

Longworth, M.L. – 1st book

Penguin Books, 2011, US Paperback – ISBN: 978-0143119524

Linniegayl says

I read this for mystery book group and quite enjoyed it. Must pick up the series again.

Betty says

This mystery hit my sweet spot: set in France, lots of local color and food, and good mystery with realistic characters none of whom are alcoholic. I'd definitely read another. Plus I learned about gougeres and am inspired to try to make them.

Virginia Walter says

Maybe my expectations were too high; I read one rave review. While the setting in Provence was interesting, the two lead characters -- a female law professor and her former love, the local juge -- are tiresome, the pacing is slow, and the writing is surprisingly clunky considering that the author has written for a number of magazines. A disappointment.

Siria says

Filmmaker Count Étienne de Bremont takes a fatal fall from the window of his family's château near Aix-en-Provence. Local judge Antoine Verlaque and his ex-girlfriend and law professor, Marine Bonnet, investigate the case. M.L. Longworth clearly has a love for this part of southern France, and succeeds in bringing Aix and its surrounding area to vivid life. I'd happily read a travelogue from her.

Ultimately, though, *Death at the Chateau Bremont* is rather disappointing. The plot's a bit clunky and lacking in actual detection (I guessed the murderer and the motivation quite early on, and I'm normally crap at things like that), as is the prose (omniscient third person that changes point of view from one paragraph to the next is messy and a pet hate of mine) and the dialogue (why repeatedly break what the reader takes as a given—that the characters are "speaking" French and we're just reading an English-language rendition of that—by randomly scattering French words and phrases like *non* and *entendu* and *le juge* throughout? Are we supposed to believe that they're being somehow *more* French here? If Longworth wanted to convey the fact that everyone's really speaking French more forcefully, she could have Gallicised their syntax more, or used direct translations of French idioms).

I could have put up with that if the main characters were charming. Sadly, they're not. They're prime examples of what happens when an author thinks they're producing complicated, flawed protagonists, but fails to let those flaws have any real impact on characterisation or the progress of the narrative. Marine is a law professor who's Not Like Those Other Girls, with a penchant for looking at herself in the mirror and thinking about how she's beautiful in *spite* of her tangle of red curls, oh what a flaw, and who chose to become an academic because of the regular hours (um) and because you get the summers off (what). Marine, however, is much more bearable than Verlaque. He's handsome, well-educated, intelligent, made an investigating magistrate at an unusually early age, from a wealthy family, descended in part from English nobility, a snob, a gourmet, a cigar enthusiast, women constantly fall into his bed because of his Intense Magnetism although he's rude and a chauvinist... Longworth seems to have confused self-satisfied male assholery with a three-dimensional male character, but this reminded me of nothing so much as the BBC's terrible *Sherlock*. There's no chemistry between Marine and Verlaque and by the end of the book I was actively rooting against their getting back together.

(When shelving the book, I noticed that the cover blurb draws comparisons between *Death at the Chateau Bremont* and the work of Dorothy L. Sayers. Wow. That takes some brass ovaries, publishers.)

Mara Pemberton says

I liked the book and the mystery, but I was not overly crazy about the narration. She was just a bit too over the top in voicing many of the characters. Never could really figure of if the Verlaque & Bonnet series is a

serious or a dramedy type of book.

Dorothy says

This series was recommended to me after I recently read one of Martin Walker's mysteries set in France. *Death at the Chateau Bremont* is the first of a series that is set in Aix-en-Provence and features the chief magistrate of Aix, Antoine Verlaque, and law professor Marine Bonnet who was a former lover of his and, it seems, may become a current lover.

The author of the series, M.L. Longworth, is a reporter and magazine writer, who has written in - among other venues - *Bon Appetit* magazine. That was certainly evident in this book in which much of the description was devoted to foods and to wines. It seemed that Longworth was eager to show off her knowledge of these things. Maybe she should have stuck to writing for *Bon Appetit*.

The mystery here begins with the death of a nobleman named Etienne de Bremont who took a header out the window of the attic in the family chateau. At first, it appears to have been accidental, but two of his cousins who are lawyers are not so sure and request an inquiry into the circumstances. Thus enters Antoine Verlaque.

Six months before, Verlaque had broken off his long-running romantic relationship with Marine Bonnet - or did she break it off with him? Like many things in this book, that is a bit of a muddle. But Verlaque knows that Bonnet knew the Bremont family and grew up with the man who was killed as her playmate. He contacts her to ask for information about the family and she becomes involved in the investigation.

There is a lot of fairly aimless wandering around Provence with the main purpose seeming to be the tasting of wine rather than the solving of a mystery. We get copious descriptions of the countryside and the wines but not much description of any investigatory action. That all seems quite haphazard and off the cuff. Somehow I don't think this is representative of French police work. (I did watch *The Tunnel* on PBS, so obviously I am something of an expert. At least as much an expert as someone who has spent her career writing for posh foodie magazines.)

Anyway, the plot meanders along and then we have a second death - the brother of the first man who died. There's no doubt about how this one happened; he was strangled.

Even so, this doesn't seem to light a fire under Verlaque. He's still more interested in pursuing a resumption of his relationship with Bonnet and in enjoying fine food and superlative wines in 3-star restaurants and savoring his fine cigars (He belongs to a cigar club!) than in finding out what happened to these two men and who is responsible.

I give up! The plot and the characters in this book are just a big, fat mess!

And that reminds me: At one point, Marine is ruminating on the looks and manners of the tourists that flock into Provence and she expresses her disgust at all the fat American and English women who carry around their gallons of water with them. It was an utterly gratuitous insult which contributed nothing to the plot and just made the "heroine" out to be a pompous jerk.

Finally, we do find out what happened in regard to the first death, but the mystery of who killed the second man and why is never solved unless it was in one of those passages where my eyes glazed over as I was

speed-reading through the last chapters. Maybe the mystery was carried over to be solved in the second entry in the series, but I'm not curious enough to find out.

Eleni says

This book combines two of my favorite genres: mysteries and books about people who drink at lunch in the middle of a workday. And if that second category isn't a real genre, then it should be, because I enjoyed the peephole into contemporary life in Aix as much as I did the whodunit aspect of this book. Also love the complicated, flawed protagonists. I just wish there were a few more books in the series for me to read next; I love a mystery, especially on vacation (and especially one that isn't too bloody, as so many forensic-based modern mystery series are; I like a mystery with a sense of place, like an Agatha Christie, a Barbara Cleverly, or this). My only complaints: it made me so hungry I got up from bed and attacked a 100 calorie roasted almond snack pack. And then felt sad I wasn't eating seafood risotto and drinking local wine on the Cote d'Azur.

Lucille_3 says

More like "Death at the Chataeu MEH-mont", amiright?

Gloria Mccracken says

Such a very, very French mystery! Not surprising, since it took place in the south of France. It had the flavor of a novel written originally in French, but I don't think it was. By this I mean that there was not the sometimes overly studied explanation of the French law enforcement and judicial systems which seems to come up in most novels written for and by English speakers. In fact, although this is the first in the series, one feels a bit like one is somewhere in the middle. The two main characters have a not entirely happy romantic history which keeps coming to the fore. No great pains are taken to delve into their past together, but really this just makes the book better, I think--in some ways more novel than mystery with characters more fleshed out.

Marsha says

More like 2.5 stars...almost. The actual mystery was good, but most of the book didn't even have to do with it. There was a lot about the importance of enjoying good French wine and good French food, and there was also a lot about longing for lost relationships and the French countryside. This is all fine and dandy for a different kind of book, but I wanted a mystery.
