



# No Pity For the Dead

*Nancy Herriman*

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Nancy Herriman

**No Pity For the Dead** Nancy Herriman

**The author of *No Comfort for the Lost* returns with a new mystery of Old San Francisco...**

British-born nurse Celia Davies runs a free medical clinic to assist the poor women of San Francisco. Aided in her endeavors by her half-Chinese cousin Barbara and feisty housekeeper Addie, Celia has earned the trust and friendship of many of the city's downtrodden, including a young orphan named Owen—who's just confided to her that he's stumbled upon a corpse.

Owen recently started working for the ruthless real estate and development group, Martin and Company, and discovered a dead body in the office's basement. Celia turns to Detective Nick Greaves for help, only to learn that one of the main suspects—the husband of Celia's dearest friend—is an old enemy of Nick's.

Now, Celia and Nick must put aside their personal feelings about the case—and each other—if they're going to bring a killer to justice...

## No Pity For the Dead Details

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No Pity for the Dead

A Mystery of Old San Francisco, Book #2

By Nancy Herriman

ISBN#9780451474902

Author Website: [Nancyherriamn.com](http://Nancyherriamn.com)

Brought to you by OBS Reviewer Daniele

## Synopsis:

British-born nurse Celia Davies runs a free medical clinic to assist the poor women of San Francisco. Aided in her endeavors by her half-Chinese cousin Barbara and feisty housekeeper Addie, Celia has earned the trust and friendship of many of the city's downtrodden, including a young orphan named Owen—who's just confided to her that he's stumbled upon a corpse.

Owen recently started working for the ruthless real estate and development group, Martin and Company, and discovered a dead body in the office's basement. Celia turns to Detective Nick Greaves for help, only to learn that one of the main suspects—the husband of Celia's dearest friend—is an old enemy of Nick's.

Now, Celia and Nick must put aside their personal feelings about the case—and each other—if they're going to bring a killer to justice... (Goodreads)

## Review:

No Pity for the Dead is the fantastic follow up to the equally well written No Comfort for the Lost by Nancy Herriman, rich with period detail, multifaceted characters, and a compelling murder mystery.

Independent minded Crimean War nurse Celia Davies has her hands full with her free clinic patients and as acting guardian to her sixteen year old half Chinese cousin Barbara. There continues to be racial unrest against the Chinese in San Francisco, and Celia has lost some of her clinic support after investigating the death of a young Chinese woman (see No Comfort for the Lost). Barbara is having a hard time dealing with the discrimination, but at least she has one good friend in Grace Hutchinson. Grace's step-mother Jane is one of Celia's dearest friends and most ardent backers. When scrappy fourteen year old Owen finds a body in a shallow grave in the basement of real estate developers Martin and Company, where Jane's husband Frank is a partner, Celia cannot help but want to get to the bottom of things. Virgil Nash, the victim, was not the most liked man about town, and there are plenty of people who are not sad to see him gone. Detective Nick Greaves is on the case, and, though he is usually an impartial investigator, he cannot help but see Frank Hutchinson as a prime suspect. The two have a shared past and are now enemies. It seems that Celia and Nick are on opposite sides at first, but both do all that they can to see the right person brought to justice.

No Pity for the Dead is a first rate historical mystery. Herriman has penned a story that transports the reader to post Civil War San Francisco. There is great wealth courtesy of the gold rush and other mining, but there

is also much strife between ethnicity and economic classes. The town is experiencing great expansion, and these growing pains only add to the tensions. Virgil Nash's money appears to be the root of all of his problems, whether it be dubious business dealings or others' jealousy of his wealth. There is no shortage of suspects in his death, each with his or her own motives. The mystery is carefully plotted, and clues are revealed in a logical progression. I second guessed the killer's identity with each new revelation. Nick's connection to suspect Frank make the mystery even more compelling.

Herriman's characters are complex and imperfect. Celia is a product of her time as a war nurse and her ill advised marriage. Her husband is missing and presumed dead, but she will not move on until she knows for sure. She is attracted to Nick but does not trust her own heart and is afraid a relationship with him would end up as unsuccessful as her marriage. She is genteel on the surface, yet plucky (stubborn) and opinionated. She does have a tendency to think she knows best and charge into situations without regard for her safety. Though she expresses the reserve of her native British people, I firmly believe there is much passion beneath the surface. Celia's cousin Barbara continues to be my least favorite character. Chock it up to her young age or her circumstances, I find her whiny and immature. I adore Nick. He is a man changed by his experiences in the Civil War, haunted by his best friend's death, his younger sister's suicide, and his estrangement from his father. He is a smart, unbiased investigator, and he shows much more patience than I would with Celia's interference. I look forward to seeing where Herriman takes their relationship, be it romantic or platonic.

The Mysteries of Old San Francisco series is firmly placed on my "must read" list. Highly recommended.

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### **Alyssa Maxwell says**

In this followup to NO COMFORT FOR THE LOST, midwife Celia Davies finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation whose suspects include the husband of a very good friend (who is also the father of her young cousin's best friend as well), the brother-in-law of one of her patients, and several powerful real estate moguls, all of whom have a motive to commit murder. In fact, motives extend back years to the Silver Rush in Nevada. Although rough-around-the-edges Detective Nick Greaves tells her repeatedly not to become involved, Celia feels obligated to find justice and try to clear her friend's husband. Through her efforts the reader is treated to a fascinating historical view of San Francisco, with insights into what shaped the city and why. If I ever get to San Francisco, I'm going to reread these books before I go.

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### **Virginia says**

Really enjoyed this sequel in the Old San Francisco Mystery series! I am looking forward to a 3rd book in the series - hope there is one in the works!!

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### **Amy Reade says**

I received an ARC of No Pity for the Dead in exchange for a honest review, and I can honestly say this book was a fantastic read!

Celia Davies' adventures continue in this second Mystery of Old San Francisco as she sets herself the task of proving her friend's husband innocent of the murder of Virgil Nash, a citizen of San Francisco who seems to have made a lot of enemies during his life. In doing so, she takes it upon herself to attempt to find the real killer, much to the consternation of Nick Greaves, the handsome and troubled detective whom readers met in *No Comfort for the Lost*, Ms. Herriman's first Mystery of Old San Francisco.

Celia's young friend Owen finds the body of Mr. Nash in the basement of a building where Owen has been working- a building owned by certain men who have had heated arguments with Mr. Nash over the development of parts of San Francisco.

When Celia accompanies Owen to view the body, the two of them interrupt a mysterious person attempting to inter the body. The person runs off, leaving Celia with more questions than answers. In her efforts to find the killer, Celia puts herself and her young charge, Barbara, in mortal danger by someone who will go to any lengths to remain hidden in the shadows.

*No Pity for the Dead* isn't just about murder- it also touches on the prejudice faced by certain minority groups in old San Francisco and especially the Chinese, a group in which Barbara is included.

I loved this book because Ms. Herriman kept me guessing until the end. I imagined the killer to be almost every character she introduced, and she kept any number of plates spinning while she wove her tale. When an author can surprise me, as Ms. Herriman did in both this book and in *No Comfort for the Lost*, I am an avid fan.

I am struck by the amount of research that obviously went into the writing of this book. Ms. Herriman is able to transport the reader to the streets of old San Francisco- to smell the smells, to feel the dust rising from the streets, to hear the sounds of the city- with aplomb. I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in historical fiction and mystery!

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### **Miriam says**

Who murdered the man found below the basement floor of Martin & Company, a real estate company that is developing old San Francisco? Nurse Celia Davies and Detective Nick Greaves join forces to find the murderer and to exonerate all others.

Herriman provides a birds-eye view of old San Francisco as the city is booming in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Well written and thoroughly engaging, readers will learn more about San Francisco urban history while following the convoluted mystery.

Look for a longer review in the *Ohioana Quarterly* <http://www.ohioana.org>

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### **Pat says**

Nancy Herriman has done it again with the latest in her historical mystery series. Set in San Francisco in 1867, nurse Celia Davies once again finds herself accidentally on the trail of a killer, along with will-she-

won't-she possible romantic interest, Detective Nick Greaves.

This novel falls squarely in the cozy mystery genre—murder happens “off page”, there’s no swearing or anything vulgar, and there’s a bit of romantic tension between Celia and Nick. But I also find it unique and much more interesting than the average cozy mystery. To begin with, Celia is not the usual nosy, curious heroine who inserts herself where she shouldn’t be and gets herself into dangerous situations by her own stupidity like so many other heroines I find annoying. Celia is a nurse, at a time when that was a difficult profession for a woman, who offers a free clinic to poor women and children, particularly those who are rejected by San Francisco society of the times—the Chinese (in spite of rampant “anti-coolie” sentiments), the hated Irish, and other struggling immigrants. Celia thinks she destroyed her own marriage because she has a heart of stone. The reader will quickly learn that the opposite is true, even if Celia doesn’t see it herself—she actually cares almost too much for her friends and patients.

It’s one of those castoffs she’s taken under her wing who gets her into trouble in this latest mystery, when the young man stumbles over a dead body. Celia, unlike so many cozy mystery heroines, doesn’t dig around entirely on her own, wandering into dark alleys without telling someone where she’s going, although she takes enough chances to give Nick Greaves heartburn. Which is half the fun of this series, and one of the things that sets it apart: Nick genuinely worries about her, but he also respects her. He never treats her like an idiot, he shares information with her, and he respects her intelligence and insights on the suspects.

And oh, there are so many suspects, including a man with whom Nick has a past—a past that has caused much bitterness between them. Nick would love to find a reason to hang the murder on this man; Celia, however, is friends with him. I loved the way Ms. Herriman gave both points of view. I constantly found myself changing my mind as to his guilt or innocence.

As in the first book, Ms. Herriman’s secondary characters are well worth watching as well. Nobody is there just to fill in the scenery—from Celia’s adorable housekeeper, Addie, to her troubled and troublesome half-Chinese cousin. Every single one is fully fleshed out, with their own stories to tell. And the small, telling details the author uses are so delicious. In describing one character, the man props his elbows on a desk, and shows that the undersides of his sleeves are shiny with wear. Nick notes that this is not because the man is poor and can’t afford a new suit—he’s quite wealthy. He’s also quite scrawny, as if he refuses to spend money on food, either. What a perfect way to demonstrate that the man is a cheapskate, unwilling to buy a better suit. Those tiny details told me a lot about this particular character and cemented him firmly in my mind’s eye as I read. Ms. Herriman does that kind of thing with all the characters.

What I found utterly captivating was the way Ms. Herriman sets the scene. While you’re rushing through to find out “who-done-it”, pause and take time to appreciate the richness of the historical setting. The author describes the sights and odors and sounds of a street car ride (drawn by horses, of course) in such a way that I felt like I was right there, seeing shopkeepers sweeping the street, hearing church bells, or smelling the mud and manure of the streets. I felt like I could use this book as a walking guide to find every run-down warehouse or stately mansion in the book.

I loved going along with Celia and Nick as they unraveled this mystery in old San Francisco. I’m especially grateful, as such a tremendous fan of Ms. Herriman’s work, that I was offered an advance reading copy in exchange for a fair and honest review.

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## **Christin says**

This book wasn't terrible but it wasn't amazing either. Just kinda boring. I'll keep an eye out for a third book but this one was far too easy to put down for me to be overly anxious to read the next. Pros? Not too gruesome and no inappropriate sexual content. Cons? Slow-moving.

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## **Linda Smatzny says**

This book is set in San Francisco in 1867 and features nurse Celia Davies and detective Nicholas Greaves. A body is discovered in the basement of a building and both Celia and Nicholas are trying to discover the killer. Celia is trying to help her friend Jane and her husband, Frank, since he is a partner in the business where the body was found. Nicholas has issues with Frank because of the war. I enjoyed the book especially the historical view points. The book was a quick easy read.

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## **Melodie says**

Another great adventure for Celia Davies in old San Francisco. Celia is a nurse who runs a free clinic for women. She's lost some of her backing from the wealthy women in town due to her support of the Chinese. In this one Owen Cassidy, a young boy who survives on the streets, has discovered a body hidden in the basement of the business he's working for. He lets Celia know what they've found and once again she's working with Officer Nick Greaves to find a murderer. When one of the main suspects turns out to be the husband of one of Celia's dearest friends, and an enemy of Greaves', things get interesting. Recommend!

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## **Michele says**

This book is set in San Francisco in 1867, and our heroine, nurse Celia Davies once again finds herself accidentally on the trail of a killer, along with her possible romantic interest, Detective Nick Greaves.

This novel falls squarely in the cozy mystery genre. The murder happens "off page", there's no swearing or anything vulgar.

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## **Sue says**

[ I really need two things to happen in the next book, though. Barbara needs to disappear and Patrick needs to appear. The first is needed because she is a albatross around the neck of the narrative and the second because he got too much page time to be unimportant but too little to have his tale to be over. (hide spoiler)]

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## **Daniele says**

Smartly written sophomore entry in the Old San Francisco Mystery series with period details that make the story feel authentic. Celia and Nick are endearing characters even though I find their romance (or lack thereof) a bit frustrating. The mystery within is interesting, and there are lots of suspects to choose from. One of the suspect's ties to Nick made it particularly compelling. This is quickly becoming a must read series for me...bring on the next book ASAP.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This did not influence my opinions expressed here.

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### **Lesya says**

Nancy Herriman's *No Comfort for the Lost* was one of my favorite books last year. Now, she takes us back to San Francisco in 1867 in *No Pity for the Dead*. It's another atmospheric mystery that brings the city, its life and politics, to life.

Celia Davies knows she's a strong-willed, unyielding woman. Those qualities make her an excellent nurse, dedicated to the immigrants and poor women she serves at her Females' Free Clinic. She has lost some of her backing from the wealthy women of the city because of her support of the Chinese at a time of racial unrest. And, Celia's cousin, Barbara, who is half-Chinese, suffers from that same discrimination. Barbara's fortunate to have one dependable friend, Grace Hutchinson. And Celia has a friend in Grace's stepmother, Jane. So, of course Jane and Grace turn to Celia for help when Grace's father becomes a murder suspect.

Ironically, it's Celia and one of the neighborhood young men who find the victim. Owen Cassidy was supposed to be working on a construction project at Martin and Company, where Frank Hutchinson was a partner. Instead, a co-worker convinced the fourteen-year-old to dig for gold in the cellar. They found a body, not gold. And, when Owen brought Celia back to the cellar, they interrupted someone in the process of digging up the body. Police Detective Nicholas Greaves isn't at all happy to find Celia once again involved in his murder investigation. And, since he and Frank Hutchinson are long-time foes, he'll need convincing that Hutchinson wasn't involved.

Herriman's latest historical mystery is a complicated one with a large cast of characters. It's rich in detail of the history of San Francisco, with accounts of plans to flatten the hills in the city, and the mining and shady histories of many of the residents. The stories of the main characters, Celia Davies and Nicholas Greaves, stretch back to the Crimean and Civil Wars. It's not easy to wrap your mind around all the details and characters while reading this book. This is a dense, leisurely paced mystery.

Readers really should go back and read *No Comfort for the Loss* first. Meet Celia Davies and Nicholas Greaves, two people who are dedicated to get justice. They may not always see eye-to-eye, and they find their way to an answer by different routes, but they're strong characters. And, San Francisco in 1867 needed the type of strong-willed characters that stand up for the victims in *No Pity for the Dead*.

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### **Deborah Almada says**

Another good read in an interesting series. Love nurse Cecilia Davies, the settings in 1867 San Francisco and the very good mystery!!!!



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## Sophia says

Post Civil War San Francisco is the colorful and fascinating setting for this series of historical mysteries featuring former Crimean War nurse, Celia Davies, gritty police detective and Civil War veteran, Nick Greaves, and the motley group of mainstay characters that surround them. I was glad to discover this new to me author and series by accident and found the latest story

This is the second installment and was an engaging blend of history and mystery with a dash of romance. It develops slowly and divides the balance between the lives of the characters set in the life of the times and the cunning mystery. There was not a dearth of suspects and there are a few twists that turned my pet theories on their ears.

I read this one out of order and could tell there was a connection and ongoing storyline begun earlier in the first book, but the author caught me up enough on the backdrop and characters so I didn't feel lost.

With a deft touch of historical authenticity, the author helps the reader immerse into the period. The focus is more on the characters than the history or the mystery though there is a good balance so someone looking for a blend of both won't be disappointed.

Celia is an eccentric renaissance woman who has a troubled past and a strong, stubborn character beneath her genteel facade so that she steps out and forges her own path whether it is living in an immigrant neighborhood with her half-Asian cousin, Barbara, struggling to find her place in a world that rejects her, offering a free clinic to poor women and children who may or may not be respectable, or delving into a murder investigation beside the police detective that unsettles her for reasons she won't and can't explore. I confess that she wasn't my favorite person because she does ignore common sense about safety and tends to ride rough shod over other people because she believes she knows best, but she's also a compelling and gutsy character, too.

Nick is also something a little different after his experiences in the war, losing a beloved sister to suicide, estrangement from family when he followed in an uncle's footsteps to become a police detective. He doesn't distinguish when he investigates no matter the status or wealth, he doesn't cut corners with the law, and he works above and beyond which puts him at odds with even his fellow cops. Nick is both annoyed and amused by the presence of the interfering yet helpful Mrs. Celia Davies on his case. I felt a bit sorry for him because he had to be the professional and keep everyone safe even the impulsive Celia, but he also had such pain and anger over one of the suspects and I never felt that situation was resolved. Maybe it continues into a later book.

So, two complex characters and a solid twisting story that gets personal for both of them. Overall, I loved the book. It does have slow moments though it could be argued that it was while things were transitioning and setting up for what was coming after. I would definitely go back for the first story and continue with the series.

I got this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

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