



PERSON OR PERSONS UNKNOWN



BRUCE ALEXANDER

"A vibrant historical series."
—The New York Times Book Review
"Evocative." —Chicago Tribune



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John Fielding was famous not only as cofounder of London's first police force, the Bow Street Runners, but also as a magistrate of keen intellect, fairness and uncommon detective ability. When a crime was committed, he often took it upon himself to solve it. What made this all the more remarkable was that he was blind. Now the blind magistrate and his young assistant and ward, Jeremy Proctor, face a series of crimes that hit shockingly close to home. Prostitutes are being murdered around Covent Garden, and there are troubling implications about the identity of the killer. Baffled and frustrated, Fielding devises a daring and desperate plan, but the consequences are unexpected - and more terrible even than he could imagine.

Person or Persons Unknown Details

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Steffi says

Ein Krimi aus der Reihe um die historische verbürgter Person John Fielding, Bruder des Schriftstellers Henry Fielding, Richter und Begründer der so genannten Bow Street Runners, einer zu der Zeit, also der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts, ungewöhnlich modern arbeitenden Polizeieinheit. Es geht um eine Serie von brutalen Morden von Prostituierten, die alle um Coven Garden herum stattfinden und die dem Autor Gelegenheit geben, diese wenigen Straßenzüge genau zu beschreiben: Den Markt bei Covent Garden, auf dem ein Metzger etwas Ungewöhnliches ist, weil diese Zunft sonst nur in Smithfield anzutreffen ist; die Synagoge in der Maiden Lane, die St. Paul Church (nicht zu verwechseln mit der St. Paul Cathedral). Auch der Schriftsteller Oliver Goldsmith spielt eine Nebenrolle in der Geschichte.

Allerdings wurde hier mal wieder ein Titel recht schlampig übersetzt. Das englische „Person or Persons unknown“ bezieht sich auf eine juristische Formel, die Richter Fielding benutzt, wenn eine Verfahren damit abgeschlossen werden muss, das kein Täter überführt werden konnte.

Beth says

The first book I have read in the Sir John Fielding series. Sir John is a blind English magistrate in the 18th century and his 15-year old protégé and ward, Jeremy Proctor, is the book's narrator. Jeremy is mature beyond his years yet has the same hormones of any 15-year old boy. When a series of shocking murders occur in London, it is Jeremy who is the eyes and legs of Sir John as they track down the killer (or killers?). An excellent, gripping read, although some of the language is a challenge to decipher.

Denise Kettering says

While this book is not as strong as the earlier works in the Sir John Fielding mystery series, it is still a solid entry in an engaging series. However, readers should be warned that this book contains some very gruesome details and be prepared for some of the violence and descriptive language. The book contains plot twists that have made this series interesting and make the books such good mysteries. Jeremy Proctor's voice as a narrator does at times grow tiring in his continuous praise for Sir John. These concerns remain relatively minor, however, in the scope of the series.

In this book, Jeremy Proctor, helps Sir John with a series of murders involving prostitutes. The prostitutes are being murdered and mutilated. Jeremy and Sir John have to embark on a plan to try to catch the murderer in the act.

Tracy says

Actually I think I would give this 3.5 stars but that isn't an option. It's the first Sir John Fielding mystery I have read and did like it. A bit gruesome in parts, which I don't really expect in these historical mysteries.

Doing anything to a dead body, besides burying it decently, is a bit hard to take in any time period's language. I expect I'll read others in this series in the future though. The relationship between the narrator and Sir John Fielding keeps your attention.

Dawn says

Jeremy Proctor is growing up. Sir John trusts him with more of the delicate matters of the court investigations and he thinks he's falling in love.

When several prostitutes are murdered, Jeremy, Sir John and a cast of well known and new characters work to solve the mystery.

The author continues to bring the atmosphere of the common mans London to life and his characters are just as good as ever, in other words, this book delivers everything I have come to expect from this series.

Stacie Haden says

Excellent series! Bruce Alexander wrote in such a way that you feel it was written in 1770, without the confusion and archaic language you would find in a book actually written in 1770. He also found that magical key that makes you care for the characters.

London, 1770

Sandy Shin says

The fourth Sir John Fielding book has two vicious killers prowling London and we get a better picture of life in and around Convent Garden and discover the Fleet River. The mix of mystery and human interactions is riveting and the hint of Jack the Ripper is enticing

Argum says

In this installment, Jeremy is reflecting upon when to trust especially after it has been betrayed. As a 15 year old, he fell half in love with a prostitute whom he had first encountered as part of a family acrobat troop. Her pimp offers to sell her on to Jeremy. Meanwhile, prostitutes are being killed the first with a stiletto to the heart very exact, the second a more brutal affair with organs strewn about. Are they connected or is more than one psycho running about? Do they know the killer? I suspected part of the solution almost from the beginning, but not all of it. A great surprise of a killer. The usual interesting bits about making the law fit the crime to best serve justice. Interesting Bow Street Runner interactions and street urchin friends

Linda says

It seems strange that a book about the murder and mutilation of prostitutes can be a book one can enjoy or recommend, but that in fact is true. This is the fourth book in Alexander's series about Sir John Fielding, a magistrate and social reformer in 18th century England who with his brother, novelist Henry Fielding, organized the Bow Street Runners, Britain's first police force. The main fictional character in these novels is Jeremy Proctor, a teen-ager who Fielding had taken in to his home and trained as an errand boy and "eyes" for Fielding, who was blind. In a scheme to try and catch the murderer red-handed, Jeremy puts himself in real danger but manages to capture the killer. Or did he? The background of life in London in those times is one of the aspects that make this series so enjoyable.

Brandy Painter says

I didn't like this book nearly as much as I have the others in the series. Jeremy's voice is starting to grate on my nerves and his hero worship for Sir John is beginning to get tedious. This is a personal preference objection. I prefer anti-heroes or at least heroes who flirt with being anti, and Jeremy is just far too well behaved. I also felt in this novel that the historical integrity was being sacrificed for twentieth century political correctness and thought.

Mark Bruce says

The fourth in the series of Sir John Fielding books. Someone is killing the prostitutes of London, but the killer is not being consistent. Why is that?

This is a charming series in which the narrator begins as a street urchin, taken in by Sir John. He tells you in the beginning that he grows to be a barrister, but the fun and excitement of this book is in seeing how the narrator grows. The late Mr. Alexander also had a taste for the atmosphere and personalities of 18th Century London.

Truly, an enjoyable series to read.

Jina Howell-Forbes says

This book is the continuation of a series of fictionalized accounts of Sir John Fielding, Magistrate of the Bow Street Court in London in the 1760's and 70's, as told through the eyes of his fictional teen-age ward, Jeremy Proctor. John fielding was blinded in an accident at the age of 19 while in the Royal Navy, so he was blind during his career as a judge.

This series is filled with historical detail of the time and place, the adventure of crime and the legal system, and the relationships of all the regular characters as they change and grow.

I love this series. I highly recommend it. I do feel strongly that the books be read in order.

Carl says

Another thrilling page turner; "Person or Persons Unknown" is the fourth book in Bruce Alexander's mystery series centering on Sir John Fielding and young Jeremy Proctor. Although I recognize some folks did not like this one quite as well, I think it was one of his best; regardless, I love this series and I especially enjoy watching the evolving relationship between Sir John and Jeremy and many of the other characters. Therefore, I do recommend that one reads the books in order to fully appreciate the characters and some of the flashbacks; it is not necessary, but one can appreciate the series better. (FYI – the first book in the series is "Blind Justice".)

In this book, someone is killing the prostitutes of London, which makes it a bit reminiscent of Jack the Ripper and the infamous Whitechapel murders. Still Alexander has his plot twists and the stories are well written. His depiction of London's life in the late 1700's is very realistic, and his local color allows one to see and to hear the street life of the times. The realism is enhanced since our main character really did exist, and his brother was the author Henry Fielding. Additionally, there always seems to be another historical personage or two woven into the story, such as meeting the Irish author Oliver Goldsmith, who lived during the time period when this book was set.

Bruce Alexander is a good story teller, and his plots are clever and provide enough twists to satisfy most readers as we try to solve the mystery. Readers should be aware that there are some disturbing details relating to some of the murders, especially the mutilation of some of the murdered prostitutes. Still, I highly recommend this series to anyone who enjoys well written historical mysteries, and, as mentioned before, I would recommend beginning with the first book.

Tara says

I freely admit that I disliked (okay, hated!) the conclusion of the 3rd book in this series -- so much so that it was over a year before I could convince myself to give the fourth book a chance.

I'm happy to say that I appreciated this book a great deal more. A very good thriller, and I continue to really like most of the characters in this series (and for all that I appreciate a good mystery, I find that for most books it's the characters that keep me hooked). I like youthful Jeremy, and I really enjoy his growing friendship with one of the Bow Street Runners. Fielding is more distant in this book, but still has the sharpness and fairness that makes him a compelling magistrate (and now, on a temporary basis, coroner).

I'll admit that it was more than a bit jarring to read a book which essentially extracted Jack the Ripper (and more than a few details of his crimes) from the pages of Victorian history and inserted it into the fictional 1770s, but other than a few minutes of feeling, "wait, really?" it didn't really detract from my enjoyment of the story.

All in all, a fun read -- so it won't be another year till I read the next book.

Nikki says

I've been reading very slowly and sporadically of late because of a non-book project I've been spending time at, so it took me a while to get through this book. It's the fourth in Alexander's series about Sir John Fielding, who began the Bow Street Runners, the forerunners of the British bobby. The tales are told by Jeremy Proctor, a young orphan who's taken under Sir John's wing. In this book they deal with a series of murders of prostitutes a la Jack the Ripper, but of course with even fewer resources for investigation than in Victorian times. Occasional appearances by well-known literary figures are a feature of the series, and in this one it's Oliver Goldsmith. A fine example of the series; I'm not sure whether it was really a little slow-moving or whether it was just me!

Judy says

I love the civility and elegance of language in these history-packed mysteries. Each main character is admirable.

Paula Dembeck says

This is book 4 in the Sir John Fielding Mystery Series.

Once again we join Sir John Fielding's assistant Jeremy Proctor, who has been living with Sir John for two years and is now fifteen. We are reintroduced to the core characters and brought up to date. Annie is now the cook in the kitchen at the Fielding home and has replaced Mrs. Gredge. Lady Fielding, Sir John's second wife is busy overseeing the operations of the Magdalene Home for Penitent Prostitutes, and Sir John has recently taken on the temporary position of coroner. Dr Gabriel Donnelly, who nursed Sir John's first wife in her last days and left to follow a widow in Lancashire, has returned to London to try to set up a practice. He was ultimately rejected by the widow because he lacked a personal fortune and his inability to attract paying customers in that rural setting has forced his return to the city. Sir John has now hired him to perform autopsies, a service required for the temporary role of coroner which Sir John has agreed to take on.

As the story begins, the body of a murdered prostitute is discovered near Covent Garden. A few days later another body is found near the same location, although the manner of death is somewhat different. As more bodies of dead prostitutes appear, it becomes evident that these women have been murdered in two different ways. Are two different killers carrying out these crimes? Or is one murderer changing his methods to confound the police? Sir John, the Bow Street Runners and Jeremy are all involved in trying to solve the crimes.

Jeremy goes through some predictable changes during this story. As a fifteen year old, he is beginning to think about his future which remains obscure. His goal is to read the law with Sir John, but it has been a long time since they discussed it, and Jeremy is not sure where he stands. Is he an assistant, a domestic helper, or

a messenger and errand boy who delivers mail and does odd jobs? He is hoping one day to join the Bow Street Runners and begins to prepare himself in the event such an opportunity presents himself. As a short and slight young lad, he must be able to take care of himself on the nastier London streets, alleys and court yards. And so he begins a period of training which helps him immeasurably when he is confronted by opportunities to prove himself.

Alexander continues this enjoyable series in his very readable style. It is slow moving and there are many predictable events, but it is still an enjoyable read. The books are best read in order as the characters change and develop over time.

Waverly Fitzgerald says

Reading my way slowly and with great delight through the Bruce Alexander series about Sir John Fielding, the "Blind Beak," judge, and in this book, temporary coroner, who organized the Bow Street runners. The series is narrated by Jeremy Proctor, a young boy who was adopted by Feilding in the first book in the series, who is eager to "read law." He serves both as "eyes" for Feilding and eyes for the reader, since he's an outsider, just learning about the law and about how to weigh evidence and testimony. And since Feilding is a judge, it's only natural that he's called to investigate any murders that happen in London in the 18th century thus avoiding the Cabot Cove syndrome. I was a bit confused at the start of this book when Jeremy is suddenly practising law, but it turns out that is only a frame and he's actually looking back on this particular case. Unlike most of the series, in this book a vicious serial killer appears to be at work killing prostitutes in grotesque ways. But unlike most authors, Alexander doesn't use this premise to indulge in a lot of gore and perversion (there is some of each), but as an opportunity to teach young Jeremy about the problems inherent in making assumptions too early in an investigation. I've already ordered the next book in the series.

Rena Sherwood says

It was a good mystery. It showed character development of not only our fearless/fearful narrator Jeremy Proctor, but of Sir John Fielding. I do recommend this, provided you have read at least one of the previous books in the series, but there does seem to be a little juice lacking here this time around.

This is basically Jack the Ripper set in 1770. Since there was a lack of trying to find the killer(s) in the text, it is mostly taken up with Jeremy's struggles to woo a whore and learn self-defense. At least this one is different from the previous three but there is still something missing that made the first three so vital. I'm still going to continue reading the series, though.

Meggie says

I really enjoy Jeremy's path in this series, mostly because we can feel how young he is and how naive, too.

Anyway Jeremy is an intelligent boy with a good heart. In his future, Jeremy will become a fine, young lawyer, as we can tell. I'm glad I found this series, because so far I loved every book. The mysterious case in the main storyline was well developed, complex enough and had good dialogues.

RECOMMENDED SERIES SO FAR!
