



High Marks for Murder

Rebecca Kent (pseudonym) , Kate Kingsbury

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Meet Headmistress--and sometime sleuth--Meredith Llewellyn of Bellehaven House, a finishing school for girls.

It's the height of elegance, the seat of sophistication, the scene of...murder?

Teacher Kathleen Duncan was killed in the school garden at night. Judging by a bloody branch, Miss Meredith Llewellyn assumes it was an accident, until she learns that the limb didn't break off--it was neatly sawn.

But as she searches for a killer, Meredith wonders if her eyes are playing tricks on her. How else can she explain her foggy images of Kathleen pointing to the flowerbeds? Without the help of the lazy constable or her petrified teachers, Meredith will have to find a link between flowers and the killing, take heed of her own safety, and get an education--in murder.

High Marks for Murder Details

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From Reader Review High Marks for Murder for online ebook

Timothy VanderWall says

Kate Kingsbury, writing as Rebecca Kent, starts a new series - the Bellehaven House Mysteries. High Marks for Murder takes place in the Cotswolds in a time not long before women's suffrage in England. Meredith Llewellyn is the headmistress of a school for young ladies. One of the tutors at the school is brutally murdered and the local constabulary is quick to write it off as having been committed by a passing stranger. The ghost of the murdered teacher confronts Mrs. Llewellyn, who then decides that she will find the perpetrator if the police constable won't.

This story just isn't up to the standards of Ms. Kingsbury's Pennyfoot Hotel and Manor House mysteries. Not very much detecting; lots of stumbling around trying to make sense of things. Also too much involvement of the ghost for my tastes.

I will read the next in the series in case this was just a fluke. However if it is the same formula, I'll put the rest of the series on the bottom of my reading list.

Drebbles says

When the gardener at Bellehaven Finishing School finds the body of Home Management teacher Kathleen Duncan, the police and headmistress Meredith Llewellyn initially think it was a tragic accident. But Meredith soon discovers that the tree limb that hit Kathleen on the head did not accidentally fall off the tree - it was sawed off and Meredith thinks it may have been used as a murder weapon. The police still say it was an accident so Meredith decides to investigate Kathleen's death without their help. But she won't be alone - Kathleen's ghost is eager to help her.

"High Marks for Murder" is the delightful first mystery in the new Bellehaven House cozy mystery series. Author Rebecca Kent previously wrote two cozy mystery series under the name Kate Kingsbury and this book is as good as any of the Kingsbury books. The mystery is set in England in 1905 and Meredith will remind readers of a typical Kingsbury heroine - a feminist who struggles to conform to the times. Kent does a good job of capturing that period of time, especially with the students and the maids who aren't as willing as their elders to give in to the constrictions of that time. The book is filled with great characters including Meredith and her fellow teachers Felicity and Essie; Tom, the elderly gardener; Mrs. Wilkins the cook; and maids Grace and Olivia. The ghost of Kathleen added a nice supernatural atmosphere to the book that I really enjoyed and I also liked the gentle sense of humor throughout the book. The mystery elements were well done, although I felt a bit let down when the killer was revealed. I also didn't care for the romance that is hinted at between Kathleen and Stuart Hamilton, owner of Bellehaven, but perhaps it will grow on me in further books.

"High Marks for Murder" is a good cozy mystery and I look forward to reading more in this series.

Casey says

I can't even get into this book, which is sad because it sounded interesting

Maud says

High marks??? No marks, you mean!!!

I don't quite know what to say of the book. My impression was that the idea was to quickly write a story using as few pages as possible. The ending was like: oh right, almost forgot, there is a murder to solve, let's just pick a culprit and think of a motive, no matter how incredible.

Not worth the paper it was printed on, and a waste of my time.

Sorry...

Julie says

This is a nice light read for those days when you want to drift back in time and spend a few days with interesting characters. As a historical novel it intrigued me. As a mystery it was fairly simplistic.

For roughly half the book I thought I'd like to try more in the series, but I feel it might be heading towards a relationship between the head-mistress and another character I dislike. I've had that problem with another series by this author. That said I think many may appreciate this lighted look at a finishing school in Edwardian England.

Cece says

Stock characters: the old and slightly dotty gardener, the round cook who mothers the rebellious maids, the snotty aristocratic daughters, the standoffish yet troublingly handsome property owner, the misogynist village bobby-all wandering confusedly in a tired plot with a flat denouement. Cozy mysteries are meant to be light and entertaining, but this was a slog.

Jennifer says

Not bad but not great, just okay. It was a fast paced read and fairly enjoyable, but I think my expectations were a little high and that the story could not meet them. I do not like Olivia and Grace needs to start standing up to her, but as characters it was a little unnecessary to spend as much time on them as the story did. I do not like the new teacher, Sylvia, and agree that she is a spy for Mr. Hamilton. I am curious as to Essie's background and hope she plays a larger role in future books. Felicity was a little one dimensional, but has promise to grow in the future. Meredith was okay, not a very strong character but it is the first book in the series and that can change. I was not really surprised that one of the students ended up being the killer, but I was more curious about ghost sightings than I was invested in who did the killing. Still, not bad and I would be willing to give this series another shot.

Kaye says

In this first book in the Bellehaven House mystery series, we are introduced to Meredith Llewellyn, headmistress of Bellehaven House, a finishing school set in Edwardian England. Tom, the head gardener, has just led Meredith out to the garden to show her his grisly discovery; the body of Kathleen Duncan, one of Bellehaven's tutors. As Meredith immediately thinks some accident has befallen Kathleen, Tom disabuses her of that notion. It's murder, plain and simple. Kathleen was bashed in the head with a large neatly sawn off tree branch.

When the local constable is called in, he is quick to assume it was a passing vagrant and quickly writes off the case. He actually has the gall to suggest it was Kathleen's fault for being out by herself at night. When Meredith first sees Kathleen's ghost she thinks Kathleen is trying to communicate who killed her and why. The ghost just keeps vaguely pointing in the direction of the flower garden. Along with the school's other two tutors, Essie and Felicity, they try to figure out the mystery so Kathleen's spirit can rest easy. Not an easy task since there are really no tangible clues.

All during the book I could not get a clear picture in my mind of any of these characters. This tells me the author did a poor job of fleshing them out. It was reasonably easy to guess who murdered Kathleen and the means of getting the person to confess was inane and totally unbelievable. The only promising aspects of the book were the two maids' interest in being suffragettes but unfortunately, this was not pursued. I felt the Edwardian atmosphere could have been much more delved into and would have made for an interesting subplot.

Would I read the next book in the series? Due to the weakness in this one, no I would not. There are plenty of better developed mysteries out there to be read. 2** is a generous rating.

Susan says

Save your time and money and pass on this one. This story was merely fluff and lightness and had nothing solid for the reader to grasp onto. The characters were one-dimensional. The head mistress was quite dense at times, one of her co-workers squeaked at everything that happened (which got old really fast) and the author introduced situations which had nothing to do with the mystery and were used merely as filler. I also found the ending anti-climatic. What a let down after slogging through this story.

Not recommended.

Susan says

It's 1905 at the Bellehave House school and the headmistress Mrs Meredith Llewellyn wakes up one morning to discover that one of her teachers is dead.

A light quick read that involves the ghost of the dead teacher pointing Meredith to the guilty party.

H Lynnea says

An overall enjoyable read, but the short length made for a rather abrupt ending.

Grey853 says

This is a new series by Rebecca Kent who also writes as Kate Kingsbury. I like the Pennyfoot mysteries, so I thought I'd give this a try. However, while her other series has some flair and interesting characters, this one is very dry and boring. It doesn't even read like the same author.

I was very disappointed.

Katie says

Started off as a very fun cozy mystery that includes a ghost!!! However, it got a bit bulked down with many peripheral characters that didn't add anything to the plot, only served to keep the reader wondering if there was more to the story. It is the first in a series, so I am guessing that these characters will build the next story's plot line; but in this book, they just served to drag down the pace of a quick read. That being said, I will read the second one if I happen across it.

Monica says

This book reminds me of a meringue cookie. In concept it sounds good. It looks appealing, but there really isn't much there but sugar and air. It's a good book if you have time to spare and don't need anything taxing. It takes place in England during the suffrage movement, so that is part of the back drop. There's a murder at a school for young women and the "insufferable" men are so dismissive about the death of a female teacher who was "asking for it" since she was out walking in the garden at night, that the headmistress must solve the crime. But she does so with the help of the ghost of the victim who spends most of the book appearing as a floating mist, unable to do anything but point at flowers. So there's not much going on as far as the mystery is concerned.

Barbra says

Couldn't get into this mystery, although I have read almost all of Kate Kingsbury mysteries. This series I probably will skip.
