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A female Navy cryptographer seeks to save lives...and uncover her father's killers. In 1915, German sympathizers escalated acts of sabotage in the United States to keep the nation from joining in the war. Following the mysterious murder of Emma Shuster's father, Lt. John Patterson invites Emma to become a Navy cryptographer because of the expertise she gained in helping her father develop a cipher system. Emma finds new strength in her faith as she strives to outwit her adversary, known only as Kobold - German for goblin. Can Emma and John find love in the midst of turmoil as America plunges toward war?

Crimson Cipher Details

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From Reader Review Crimson Cipher for online ebook

Robin says

I found this to be a very well written book. The story line, characters, and suspense throughout meshed nicely to make a smooth read. Highly recommend. I received a copy from the author. Opinions are my own.

Riccarla Roman says

I liked this book. Although it was an espionage book, it's also an inspirational that reminded me of Grace Livingston Hill.

Emma Shuster works with her father in the area of cryptology, which is decoding coded messages. Her father was working on a machine that could encrypt messages for the military. The really interesting concept is that this is set in the U.S. during WWI. The U.S. is not in the war but are aiding the Allies. Germany wanted to keep the U.S. and Canada from aiding Britain, so they were actively engaged in the sabotage of factories and ships. After Emma's father is murdered, she meets John Patterson, a naval officer who brings her to the attention of his superiors. She ends up in D.C. working as a code-breaker for the U.S. But she's still in danger. There is a criminal known as Kobold (German for goblin) who is masterminding many of the attacks, but his main objective is to get the machine her father was working on.

There are great moments when they can crack the code and prevent a disaster and others where the bad guys manage to escape capture. The romance is sweet and the historical information was fascinating. I knew there was a lot of code-breaking in WWII, but this earlier era has been somewhat ignored.

The inspirational aspect of the book is present but not preachy or overt. It is simply a part of the lives of some of the characters.

This is a really good book and I hope she writes more about this period of history.

Sue says

Emma Shuster is on the campus of Bowdoin College to drop off some papers to her father who is a math professor. As she is about to go up to his office, a Navy Lieutenant, John Patterson, asks her for directions to Professor Shuster so she escorts him up. So John is with her when she discovers the body of her murdered father on the floor of his office. Over the next few days, John is present at the funeral and then helps her pack up her father's office. John is instrumental in Emma being offered, and accepting, a position in Washington with a group of cryptographers working to solve messages and thwart attacks by the Germans ahead of the U.S. entry into World War I. Before his death, Emma's father had been working on an encryption machine. It seems that someone wants to get their hands on it and will go to great lengths. Can Emma remain safe and help with the war effort? And what about the developing friendship between Emma and John?

I don't remember how I first found out about this - it's available from a neighboring county library system. It pulled me in from the very beginning and I didn't want to put it down. Although classified as fiction, there's a bit of mystery to it in terms of who killed her father and why. The action is set in the context of actual

historic events, although she says she took a few liberties with sequence. Didn't bother me in the least. Excellent!

Martic says

I loved this book! A combination of suspense, intrigue, danger, murder, and romance set in 1915 pre-WW I Maine and Washington, D.C. Thrilling story written with tremendous attention to historic detail. As an added bonus there is a coded message at the end of the book for us to figure out. I'm going to give it the old college-try. I recommend this book to history lovers. Fans of Susan Page Davis won't be disappointed.

Amy says

"I appreciate you, Emma. You are practical, and yet you've got a sweet, romantic side that always leaves me feeling uplifted."

As he bent towards her, Emma's heart raced. How long had she waited for this moment? John's lips touched hers, and she laid her head on his shoulders.

Um, WHAT. That might be one of the most unromantic first-kiss scenes I've ever read. Excuse me while I go gag.

This is one of those books that has been on my to-read list forever so when I picked it up and discovered it was a Christian novel with romance, I silently groaned but kept reading anyway. Thankfully, both the Christian part and the Romance part take a subtle backseat to the action. (Or as subtle as one can expect under the circumstances.)

The negatives are the ones you might expect from a book like this. The heroine, Emma, is a perfect main character with over-the-top struggles about silly things like if her beau really loves her and if she was too mean in rebuffing her stalker. She then proceeds to handle death, shootings, and super hard codes with a generally unruffled calm. Unruffled, that is, until the hero comes in to play white night. Then she can break down.

The hero, John, is all that is good and noble in the world. I don't think the book presents him with a single flaw - except maybe when he miscalculates a mission and sulks for, like, a paragraph. Otherwise he is a paragon whose love of the heroine falls only slightly below love of country.

God and random Bible verses make cameo appearances as is usual with these books. Lots of church going. It was skimmable and thus survivable.

However, despite falling for many of the Christian novel plot tropes, it maintained an otherwise interesting storyline. The code breaking was interesting and I enjoyed the rush to catch the saboteur. It seemed historically accurate enough and fun. Emma is plagued by a stalkerish suitor who felt only too familiar. I've run into a few too many of them myself. The girl friendships were nice and not too over the top. Overall, I'm giving it 3 stars because I enjoyed it in spite of its genre

Andrea Cox says

by Andrea Renee Cox

Reading this book was like inhaling a warm cup of cocoa on a cold winter's evening. It swiftly soared to the top spot on my favorites list. Thoroughly researched and exquisitely written, this book was filled with mystery, suspense, a dash of romance, and intriguing history. I particularly enjoyed the heavy emphasis on code-breaking during WWI (prior to America joining the Great War). Very interesting stuff. Susan Page Davis remains one of my favorite authors, as her stories continue to amaze me at every turn. Highly recommend!

ACS Book-finder says

About the book: A female Navy cryptographer seeks to save lives...and uncover her father's killers.

In 1915, German sympathizers escalated acts of sabotage in the United States to keep the nation from joining in the war. Following the mysterious murder of Emma Shuster's father, Lt. John Patterson invites Emma to become a Navy cryptographer because of the expertise she gained in helping her father develop a cipher system. Emma finds new strength in her faith as she strives to outwit her adversary, known only as Kobold - German for goblin. Can Emma and John find love in the midst of turmoil as America plunges toward war?

Review: Emma Shuster finds herself face to face with the horrors of Pre-WWI in America in 1915. Her father is murdered, allegedly for his ingenious encryption machine. His expertise in cryptography made him a desirable asset to the United States Navy, but a high-level threat to less friendly factions, mainly those of German descent. As her father's assistant, she had learned and become quite skilled in cracking many types of ciphers and codes, but now she finds herself without parents, home, or job.

Shortly after her father's funeral, Captain Waller of the Signal Corps offers Emma a job in Fairfax, VA as a decoder of encrypted messages from various enemy sources. Her job was to help stop espionage and the destruction of bridges, warehouses, cargo ships and ammunition factories by decoding messages from the enemy. She also donates her father's secret encryption machine to the Navy for its potential use should America ever become directly involved in the war.

Emma settles into her new job. She enjoys the work and feels accomplishment in potentially saving lives and property, but is totally unaware of a new storm brewing in her own life. Unbeknownst to her, her father's killers are still frantically searching for Professor Shuster's encryption machine, and will stop at nothing to find it. Although Emma's employment with the Signal Corps is a high-level, secret position, eventually they do find her. Emma is moved by the Navy to a new location, and is personally guarded by Navy soldiers, but one night, under the blanket of darkness, the enemy attacks....

The Crimson Cipher is an enthralling historical novel that joins history, romance, and Christian faith with real life circumstances and hardships. Although Emma is like a small cog in a giant machine, her work, behind the scenes, is vital to the American people.

The book gave you a real feel of pre-WWI sentiments and the world of cryptography. Excellent book; highly recommended! (reviewed by S.Fincannon)

About the author: SUSAN PAGE DAVIS is an award-winning author of twenty-five novels in the historical romance, romantic suspense, mystery, and romance genres.

DISCLOSURE: A copy of The Crimson Cipher was donated by the author in exchange for our honest review. Opinions expressed are solely those of the reviewer.

Janna Ryan says

I have read lots of books concerning WWII, but not nearly as many about WWI. Consequently I was fascinated by "The Crimson Cipher" which deals with sabotage and espionage in America before it entered WWI. I loved the characters that were dealing with murder, mystery and so much more as they tried to uncover danger before it happened. Emma is a strong young woman that is devastated when her father is killed over what seems to be the project he was working on designing - a machine that can encrypt messages and maybe decode them as well. The Navy gets involved and soon Emma is working as a civilian in a secret part of the Navy that is responsible for trying to decipher intercepted messages from the enemy regarding sabotage on American and Canadian soil. In the meantime, somebody wants Emma dead and they want her father's machine.

I loved learning about what was going on before America joined the war. Susan Page Davis has a section that tells which parts are fact and which parts are literary license, it is so interesting. I had never really heard about this before and I would like to learn more. That is an interesting book, something that can grab my attention and hold it and then make me want to learn more. Excellent characters, excellent time period and storyline and a wonderful book all around!

Bibliothekerin says

I can't say that this book is one of the best I've ever read, but the story is interesting, and unique in shedding light on a time in U.S. history that few are aware of, a time when German spies were in the U.S. and Canada sabotaging munitions factories to stop America from resupplying English troops in WW1. And when German U-Boats sank our ships delivering goods to England.

The story takes place in 1915, before the U.S. entered WW1. The initial setting is the college town of Brunswick, Maine, but later moves to Washington, DC and environs.

I know the author took liberties with many historical facts--she admits as much--but there is still an authentic feel because of the many period details she includes. To read about Washington 100 years ago was sort of magical for me, perhaps only because I lived in that area for decades and thought I knew the city.

Many of DC's landmarks that we today take for granted weren't there 100 years ago, which is hard for me to imagine. The author says that only 3 years before 1915, the Japanese government had given our country the cherry trees for which DC has since become famous. As the book's hero and heroine walk the streets of Washington near the White House, she mentions that the Mall and the Lincoln Memorial were just being built.

At times, I had to stop reading to digest this and other snippets of history, to reflect on how much our country and world have changed. It's hard to imagine that these events took place only 100 years ago. Automobiles still had to be hand-cranked to start. Young, unmarried women still had to be chaperoned or face social ruin. It all seems impossibly quaint today; such customs relics from centuries ago, not just one century.

In 1915, many Americans were still 1st generation immigrants and spoke the language of their homeland with family, friends and neighbors. My father's grandmother lived with the family when he was a boy. She never learned English, so the family spoke German at home.

I asked my grandmother, Dad's mother, once when and why she stopped speaking German, and she said something about a world war and that they didn't want their loyalty to America questioned, that speaking German in public was a sure way to be shunned and pointed at as possible spies. I never asked for details because I sensed even as a child that it evoked painful memories for her.

But I never understood why speaking German in America at that time was viewed as treasonous. That chapter of history was certainly never taught in school when I was growing up. Which seems strange, if it concerned foreigners perpetrating evil, not American citizens. I wasn't even aware that there were German spies in the U.S. then.

We all know about the World Wars, but tend to think only of the battles fought overseas, not about espionage here in the homeland. It seems incredible that we know so little about this chapter in American history. (I'm surprised, frankly, that no one in Hollywood has made a film about it.)

Many German-American families at the time were divided between loyalty to their new country and loyalty to family members still living in Germany. It bothered them that their government was aiding Germany's enemy, whose soldiers were killing young German soldiers in France. Most German-Americans were probably loyal to their new country, but some apparently supported or even joined German saboteurs in North America -- a revelation for me.

The author does an excellent job of bringing history to life. It was a time when everyone's loyalties were tested: Emma, like her father, had only one allegiance, to America. The German-born aunt and uncle, however, do not support America aid to England, and their son takes the sentiment even further.

Emma's father fought for America, however, in the Spanish-American War and has never questioned his allegiance to America. Now a math professor at Bowdoin College in Maine, he has kept in touch with former comrades who are now senior military officers in DC.

Professor Schuster is shot one morning on campus by a German spy trying to find the cipher machine he was working on. Upon hearing of his murder--and recognizing the potential of such a machine--the military officer friend immediately sends a junior officer to Maine to get the machine before the Germans do.

The German spy ringleader "Kobold" (German for gremlin) will stop at nothing to obtain the cipher machine and the professor's papers. Kobold mistakenly believes that the cipher machine is the only possible explanation for the Americans being able to read his coded messages and thwarting German sabotage on American factories.

Which is where plucky Emma comes in. It seems that she has inherited her father's mathematical genius, and just happened to have been helping her father for the past 3 years with his secret project, code breaking. The author goes into some detail on the mechanics of code breaking, but not enough to satisfy me. I think the main reason for my disappointment was that the book just wasn't long enough and ended too abruptly.

In some ways, this is a typical coming-of-age story, about a young adult venturing from home for the first time, meeting new people and forming friendships. On her own for the first time, she must figure out who she can trust--her father's military friend and his junior officer, the kind young man who protects her, or her

self-centered, oafish relatives.

Emma is a young woman finding her way in the world, learning to believe in herself and her ability to make a difference. Which she does: Her skills are invaluable at a time when codebreaking in America was in its infancy.

But Emma is also, unlike most, in danger every day while Kobold and his minions are free. She perseveres because of her faith in God and her love for her father and the young man who helps her.

This book reveals a gentler, more innocent America where families attended church together every Sunday and prayed together before every meal. A time of boarding houses that offered home-cooked meals, a time when few owned cars and trolley cars were in cities across America.

But also a time when German spies infiltrated America and Canada to blow up munitions factories, killing American and Canadian citizens. The terrorists of yesteryear, if you will; hard to believe from a distance of a mere 100 years.

Some will undoubtedly find the author's emphasis on God and prayer distasteful, but it doesn't detract from a good story about an interesting subject and a unique chapter in American history.

Paula Shreckhise says

Crimson Cipher by Susan Page Davis is a wonderful glimpse into history during 1915.

What is the Crimson Cipher? Will cracking this code lead to uncovering a sinister plot?

Susan takes real historical happenings and weaves a credible story around them. I was fascinated by the ciphers and the code breaking in the days before the United States got involved in WWI.

Emma Shuster has met Lieutenant John Patterson on the way to see her father at his college campus office in Maine. John has a scientific question for Professor Shuster. But when they arrive to greet him, they find him on the floor! Emma and her father have been working on a cipher machine for a bank. Now, the Navy is interested in her father's work. John and Emma aid the government in their campaign against a looming enemy. Will her code breaking skills help the United States combat saboteurs? Is someone out to do Emma harm?

Lots of mystery and intrigue and a sweet romance. For fans of history and suspense. I am partial to them together.

*I received this book from the author. I was not required to post a favorable review. All opinions are my own. *

Ruth says

Emma Shuster's peaceful, academic world is rocked when she discovers her father, a professor and researcher, has been brutally murdered. His death leaves his most important work unfinished – a new machine designed for the secure encryption of sensitive information. With war raging in Europe, and the

United States government skirting a delicate balance of maintaining neutrality while protecting political and economic interests, the need for new methods of encryption and deciphering codes has never been greater. Thanks to her own knowledge of ciphers, Emma is recruited to join the Navy's Signal Corps and their top-secret group of cryptographers working to stop the sabotage plots of German spies and sympathizers on U.S. soil. Between her work and a blossoming romance with a handsome lieutenant, Emma's life has taken a turn she never could've imagined. When Emma learns that because of her father's machine she's being targeted by Kobold, the shadowy leader of the German saboteurs, she doesn't know who to trust. It's a race against time to capture the spies and catch her father's killers before they can eliminate Emma and stop the critical work she's now a part of in defending the country.

The early day of World War I, especially prior to U.S. involvement in the conflict, is a sadly overlooked time period in the historical fiction market in my experience. Happily, Davis' *The Crimson Cipher* illuminates this time period with a tale rich in detail and historical authenticity. The only other story I can think of that deals so intensely with cryptography during this time is *The 39 Steps* (I love both the Hitchcock and recent Masterpiece Classic versions of the story). While *Cipher* is less of a rollicking adventure than the film versions of *The 39 Steps*, what sets it apart is its focus on the ins and outs of cryptography and its applications, and the type of personality and training required to become a successful code breaker. In a day when computer programs can encrypt or decipher information in mere seconds, the discipline and trial-and-error work it took to manually crack codes blew me away. Emma and her real-life counterparts were brilliant and could look at number and letter combinations in ways I have a hard time fathoming, and I loved reading all of the detail concerning their work that Davis peppers throughout the text.

I have to applaud Davis for crafting a novel with a strong female heroine like Emma in an extremely unusual profession to boot during a time when women couldn't yet vote, and if they worked it was often as secretaries or the like, not in male-dominated fields. Emma is extraordinarily smart, but Davis is careful that quality doesn't translate into a modern, pushier personality – her character feels wholly true to the early twentieth-century's customs and manners, without seeming forward or out of place. I was occasionally frustrated with Emma though, because I feel like her emotional reaction to her father's murder is really glossed over and its impact on her decisions given the short shrift. And while I loved John's character – he very much embodies the dashing, gentlemanly quality I have always imagined a spy must've possessed during this time period (I blame old movies, LOL!) – the romantic in me wishes there'd been a little more focus on the romance aspect of the novel, since John is such a sweetheart. But solid research and an engaging storyline, a unique heroine, and a fascinating premise make *The Crimson Cipher* a thoroughly enjoyable read. Given her in-depth research and affinity for the time period, I hope that Susan Page Davis chooses to revisit this time period – she clearly has a knack for penning a thought-provoking spy tale.

Francie (glitter glu) says

it was very slow and boring. didn't finish it because of those reasons. i could not get into it.

Christy Lockstein says

The Crimson Cipher by Susan Page Davis is a fast-paced and intriguing look at the world of code-breaking in the days leading up to WWI. When Emma Shuster's father is found shot dead in his office, she assumes that he was murdered for information about the new ciphering machine he was creating for a bank. Navy

lieutenant John Patterson arrived to talk to Professor Shuster but ends up helping Emma deal with funeral preparations and plans for the future in the wake of her father's death. The couple feels drawn together by the tragedy, and he helps her find a job with the military as a code-breaker. But suspicious activities by Emma's aunt, uncle, and cousin, and a suitor put in her life in danger, as does the man who will stop at nothing to find that machine. Davis truly brings to life the tense days when Europe is at war and the US tries to remain neutral, even when its ships are being attacked and sabotage is happening all over the country. Her portrayal of the fascinating role code-breakers played in that time makes the story compelling and enjoyable. I hope that she isn't done writing about this era, Doris and the other women rooming at Mrs. Draper's boarding house could each support their own book!

Amber says

I loved the history part the best, the mystery is a great addition and the love story - super sweet! There's nothing not to like about this book (I know double negatives) and it would be wonderful if there was a continuation of the story to see how Emma and John's lives and careers progress.
