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Death By Silver (Julian Lynes And Ned Mathey Series Book 1)



Synopsis

His practice newly established, metaphysician Ned Mathey can't afford to turn away any clients. But the latest Londoner to seek Ned's magical aid gives him pause: Mr Edgar Nevett, an arrogant banker, is the father of the bully who made Ned's life hell at boarding school. Nevertheless, Ned accepts the commission to ensure the Nevett family silver bears no ancient or modern curses, and then prepares to banish the Nevett family to unpleasant memory again. Until Edgar Nevett is killed by an enchanted silver candlestick "one of the pieces Ned declared magically harmless. Calling on his old school friend Julian Lynes "private detective and another victim of the younger Nevett "Ned races to solve the murder, clear the stain on his professional reputation, and lay to rest the ghosts of his past. Assisted by Ned's able secretary Miss Frost, who has unexpected metaphysical skills of her own, Ned and Julian explore London's criminal underworld and sodomitical demimonde, uncover secrets and scandals, confront the unexpected murderer and the mysteries of their own relationship. In the Lambda Literary Award winning novel, *Death by Silver*, veteran authors Melissa Scott and Amy Griswold introduce a Victorian London where magic works, influencing every aspect of civilized life, and two very appealing detectives.

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Customer Reviews

I love stories that integrate magic use into everyday life, and this book, where detectives use magic - or 'metaphysics', such a lovely Victorian turn of phrase - doesn't disappoint. I adore the way that Victorian England is shown to have adapted to using magic - charms for aiding housework, cursed silverware, and helpful carnivorous plants. The mystery itself is interesting and involved, both from the point of view of stratified Victorian society, as well as the way that magic both hinders and helps the investigation. The authors really bring magical Victorian London to life, and it's easy to understand and enjoyable to visualise the way magic use has seeped into all walks of life, from the wealthy to the criminal. I very much enjoyed the different skills the two main characters, Ned and Julian, bring to the field, and the way that the investigation helps rekindle a friendship formed at their very nasty public school. The supporting cast - Ned's secretary and peers, Julian's criminal contacts, a capable Scotland Yard detective - are interesting and engaging in their own right, and the mystery remains entertaining to the finish. If you could imagine taking the best bits of Sherlock Holmes, Harry Potter and Tom Brown's School Days, and cramming them into one book, it would be *Death By Silver*. I hope to see more of Ned, Julian, and magical London.

Fans of Melissa Scott and Lisa Barnett's *Point* series, and the series' two protagonists, Nico and Philip, will find themselves in both familiar and unfamiliar territory in this newest Scott novel, *Death by Silver*, co-authored with Amy Griswold, just released by Lethe Press. There are two clever men, a love affair and its complications that needs sorting, magic, a mystery that needs solving, dangerous antagonists, and a richly developed, detailed, and nuanced world, and language that is graceful and beautiful and honest and very, very witty--all familiar. But, it is the unfamiliar territory that engaged me and kept me reading this page-turner--unfamiliar territory that is both strange and comfortable at the same time. *Death by Silver* is set in Victorian England, yet not quite the historical one. In this England young men who go to Oxford can study to be a metaphysician and learn a particular magic peculiar to this world, a magic that Scott and Griswold have carefully and convincingly constructed, a magic of wands and letters and signs and sigils, a magic of written words. A cantrip, written on a piece of paper and dissolved in a glass of water, can "banish [an] incipient headache" (206). The two clever men of the novel are metaphysician Ned Mathey and private detective Julian Lynes. Mathey, "just up from Oxford," has only recently hung out his shingle

and can't afford to turn away clients, not even the rich and arrogant father of "the bully who made Ned's life hell at boarding school" (back cover). Edgar Nevett wants an investigation into "the matter of a curse upon certain pieces of silver owned by the Nevett family. All other remedies have failed, and the assistance of a metaphysician has become obviously necessary" (2). Whether the silver is actually cursed or whether Mr. Nevett wants the romance of a curse become something of a side issue, when he is "found dead in his study, felled by a heavy silver candlestick that lay bloody at his side" (25). When Scotland Yard seeks Ned's assistance, he brings Julian, another old school friend, onto the case. The game is afoot. Who murdered Edgar Nevett? And how--was a curse actually used and Ned failed to detect it? He had determined the silver candlestick to be "magically harmless," after all. Where will solving this mystery take Edgar and Julian--how deep in to "London's criminal underworld and sodomitical demimonde" (back cover) must they delve? Can Ned and Julian both work with Victor, the son who so bullied them at school that Julian still wishes Victor dead? The memories of what happened at school are still painful, and far closer than either Ned or Julian imagined. The beatings, the canings, still haunt both men. And, what of the mysteries of their own hearts, the mystery of who Ned and Julian are to each other, now as grown men, and no longer bullied school boys? This carefully constructed mystery, with its red herrings, obscure clues, its scandals and secrets, and carefully imagined magic, is compelling and engaging. I started it as a book to read on a plane and I couldn't put it down and I kept reading it long after the three-hour flight was over. Ned and Julian are charming men, real and authentic, and how they sort out their feelings for each other ring true for the repressed nuances of Victorian sexuality. The ending is very satisfying; this novel really works. I want a sequel, a series! Highly recommended.

Death by Silver could have easily been written by Anne Perry if she ever turned her pen to Victorian urban fantasy featuring gay male lead characters. Yes, it's just that GOOD. This is the kind of mystery one can curl up with a cup of tea, some scones and a fluffy blanket. Even without all the magickal hijinks, Death by Silver stands as a classic English murder mystery. The authors have done a smashing job of capturing the manners and morals of a Victorian London that easily could have been if magic were a natural part of everyday life. Add to that the characters of Ned Mathey and Julian Lynes, men attracted to each other in an age where such attractions were not just frowned upon by society, but deemed criminal acts as well. Moreover, the horrors of the English private school system are depicted in painful flashbacks by Ned and Julian who suffered terribly under what amounted to sanctioned bullying. The irony being that one of their tormentors, Victor Nevett, has come to them seeking magical detective prowess in discovering who murdered his

father, Edgar, with an enchanted (and rather heavy) candlestick. Of course, solve the mystery without bringing to light family secrets that are best left undisturbed. And, there's no genderfail either. Ned's unflappable secretary, Miss Frost, has her own magickal abilities which serve to help solve the mystery. She's a finely-drawn heroine, well-suited for the rather restrictive era she lives in and hopefully there will be more written about her. Fans of mannered fantasy/mystery will enjoy this.

I liked the characters, and I liked the solving of the mystery. The story has many flashbacks that are relevant to the story and you get to know the characters well. There was no explicit sexual content, but it was made clear that Ned and Julian had a sexual relationship, the reader just wasn't let in on the details of the moment. I felt that that was better than pretending that side of their relationship didn't exist, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to know. I found it odd that some of the people in the crucial time frame of the mystery were never interviewed, and I thought that some details could have been done better. Also the magic system in the book was interesting, but I don't claim to have grasped it very well during the book. There was also the matter of most every round of post containing bills, which struck me as odd. The book is a little expensive, but if you can afford it and are looking for a cup of romance and mystery, I would recommend it. Editorially it is quite clean.

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