



## A Death of No Importance

*Mariah Fredericks*

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## **A Death of No Importance** Mariah Fredericks

Mariah Fredericks' compelling adult debut novel follows Jane Prescott, a ladies' maid in an upper-crust 1910 NYC household, after her mistress's playboy fiancé is gruesomely murdered.

Jane Prescott has perfected the art of serving as a ladies' maid in the upper-most echelons of 1910 New York City society. Invisible until she's needed, Jane has a deft hand and a sharp, observant mind. Which means she sees a lot more than the wealthy, glamorous people she serves realize. When her mistress, Charlotte Benchley, surprises the family by getting engaged to notorious society playboy Norrie Newsome, Jane understands how the engagement might have come to pass, and what it means for both families. And when Norrie is suddenly and gruesomely murdered, Jane is uniquely positioned to understand who might have wanted him dead—from the family he was supposed to marry into before he proposed to Charlotte, to the survivors of a tragic accident in a mine owned by the Newsome family, to the rising anarchists in industrial revolution-era New York City who are sick of the elite classes getting away with anything they want simply because they were born wealthy.

Jane's thoughtful, clear-eyed, and witty voice leads us into the heart of a gripping, atmospheric murder mystery in Mariah Fredericks's debut adult novel.

## **A Death of No Importance Details**

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Author : Mariah Fredericks

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## From Reader Review A Death of No Importance for online ebook

### Lauren Albert says

I didn't post that I was reading this since I know the author (Hi!). It's awkward when you do but don't know if you'll like it. Thank goodness she wrote a great mystery. I thought the motivations were complex and the reader is (rightfully) left torn.

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### Aura says

Enjoyable mystery set in the 1900 NYC. The story is told from the perspective of the maid who sees everything. I liked it a lot and it kept me interested the entire book.

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### Karen Kay says

I received this from netgalley.com in exchange for a review.

"New York City, 1910. Invisible until she's needed, Jane Prescott has perfected the art of serving as a ladies' maid to the city's upper echelons." Jane investigates the murder of playboy Norrie Newburg with the help of a handsome newspaper reporter.

This book was all over the place, chunky and blocky reading. There were several mentions of historical happenings in New York at that time: Shirtwaist Fire, women's vote, mining disasters, an abused circus elephant, etc. But it felt like it was thrown into the story rather than an actual part that moved the story forward.

3.25?

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### Patricia says

I did not enjoy A DEATH OF NO IMPORTANCE nearly as much as I anticipated. Not written quite as tightly as I would have liked, the novel concerns a lady's maid named Jane Prescott who is quite observant.

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### Lesia says

If you like compelling historical mysteries that portray social and class inequities, you might want to try Mariah Fredericks' A Death of No Importance. Set during the Gilded Age, the story includes mining disasters, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the execution of an immigrant, anarchism, and murder. And, yet, the author manages to vividly describe the excesses of the rich as the story is told by a lady's maid, an orphan who came from the lower class, and served the upper class.

Jane Prescott looks back at 1910 in her account of what was considered a crime of the century. After the death of her first employee, Jane is hired by the nouveau riche Benchley family. She is to serve as the maid for Louise Benchley and her younger sister, Charlotte. Charlotte throws herself at Norrie Newsome, heir to a prominent family. The scandal provokes an ultimatum, and the couple's engagement is to be announced at the Newsomes' Christmas Eve party. Everyone is uneasy, and there is added security because Mr. Newsome has received threatening notes about his ownership of a mine where over 100 died, including children. When Jane finds Norrie's body in the library, she has multiple reasons to worry. Did Charlotte kill the man who had become inattentive? Or, if anarchists killed him, what did Charlotte's long-time friend know about the murder?

As New York scandal sheets comb through Charlotte's story, naming her as a suspect, Jane teams up with a newspaper reporter to search for stories in the Newsomes' past. Was Charlotte the only one with a reason to kill the Newsome heir?

A Death of No Importance is an eye-opening story that deals with the extremes of wealth and poverty, and the inequities in society. Jane Prescott is an observant sleuth who belongs to neither world. She's an orphan whose minister uncle housed prostitutes to try to give them a second chance. She has a friend, a young woman who is organizing unions and consorting with anarchists. Yet, she lives and works in the Benchley household. She appears to have a foot in both worlds, but, she actually belongs to neither. It makes her a perfect observer.

The mystery is an intricately plotted story that confronts social issues of the time. Fans of Alyssa Maxwell's Gilded Age mysteries may want to try this well-developed book.

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### **Meg Cabot says**

I love mysteries but finding one that really keeps you guessing is difficult these days. This one not only does that, but features a smart heroine who just happens to be living in NYC during one of its most interesting time periods (early 1900s)! The attention to historical detail - down to the flounces on the skirts - really sucked me in, and I actually cared about the characters. Can't wait for more from Mariah!

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### **Cindy Burnett says**

4.5 stars

I really enjoyed A Death of No Importance. Set in New York City in the early part of the 1900's, the book follows Jane Prescott, a lady's maid to a wealthy family trying to ingratiate themselves into New York City high society. Her mistress, Charlotte Benchley, claims she is engaged to a wealthy and sought after bachelor who is subsequently murdered on the night that Charlotte believes their engagement will be announced. Jane works with an enterprising reporter, Michael Behan, to solve the murder.

My favorite part of the book was Mariah Fredericks' attention to detail with respect to both the characters and the setting. New York City comes alive as do the characters; Fredericks clearly did her research, and her efforts pay off significantly. My one small caveat is that the cover is terrible. Had I not had someone

recommend this book to me, I would never have picked it up.

I highly recommend this entertaining read and hope there will be another book starring Jane Prescott.

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### **Moe's Book Blog says**

A Death of No Importance by Mariah Fredericks is a historical fiction murder mystery set in New York City in 1910 involving one of high society's most affluent and notable families, the Benchleys.

This intriguing story is told by Jane Prescott, a ladies' maid to the Benchley family, who understands the rules of high society, and is very discreet. When Charlotte, the youngest Benchley daughter, becomes engaged to the notorious and roguish playboy Norrie, son of the Newsome empire, all hell breaks lose as he's already betrothed to another. But when Norrie is found murdered at a Christmas Eve party and Jane discovers the body, she is put to the test. She must now help solve the crime and prove that Charlotte is innocent. Jane has the advantage over all others -- invisible in the background and witness to everyone's grudges, secrets, and scandals. Does the Shickshinny Mining disaster from 10 years prior have anything to do with his murder or are there other elements at play?

Oh my goodness, what a delightful book! It is well-written, has interesting well-rounded characters, has a compelling plot; I could go on and on! Fredericks' mystery debut novel for adults is a hit! She is definitely on my radar for future reads. I rate this novel 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Thank you NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for providing a copy of this novel in exchange for a fair review.  
<https://moesbookblog.wordpress.com/>

Reviewed: April 8, 2018. Novel Publish Date: April 10, 2018.

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### **Faith says**

In 1910, Jane Prescott took a job as ladies' maid for Charlotte Benchley, a nouveau riche young woman who was very anxious to become engaged to the playboy Norrie Newsome. Norrie wound up being murdered and the maid investigated the murder. Except for a touch of pedophilia, this could have been a Nancy Drew book. It definitely had a middle grade feel about it.

The hardest reviews for me to write are for books that don't leave any impression on me, positive or negative, and unfortunately that was the case with this book. For an historical mystery, the book was seriously lacking in any period feel. At the end of the book the author does throw in details of the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and the disgusting killing of an elephant (which I assume was true), but neither of these events had anything to do with the mystery. If she was aiming for adding some social commentary to the book, she missed the mark. The references just felt gratuitous. I did finish the book, mostly because it was short and I could listen to the audio book while I did chores, but I doubt that I would read this author again.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

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### **Niki says**

in fact i give it 3.5/5 stars because it was quite a good historical whodunit - the ambience of the story set in early 20th century was well defined, and i liked Jane Prescott who is not your meek little lady's maid - the plot was good, with some political background, and there was a twist I did not see coming - my only regret is that i couldn't find the english version, but the french one was ok

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### **Kristina says**

A Death of No Importance by Mariah Fredericks takes readers back in time to New York City in May of 1910. Jane Prescott is a lady's maid for the Benchley's daughters, Louise and Charlotte. Charlotte is the more vivacious and fashionable of the girls. She sets out to capture Robert "Norrie" Newsome despite the rumors that he is practically engaged to Beatrice Tyler. In September, Charlotte tells her mother that Norrie has proposed, and it is decided to announce the event on Christmas Eve at the Newsome Annual Christmas Eve Ball. When it is near time for the announcement, Jane goes looking for Charlotte and finds Norrie dead on the library floor. Inspector Thomas J. Blackburn is assigned the case and Charlotte finds herself a suspect. Jane with the aid of reporter, Michael Behan delves into Norrie's life. There is a myriad of suspects who all had good motive to eliminate victim. Join Jane Prescott on her debut case in A Death of No Importance.

A Death of No Importance had a good beginning that drew me into the story. After a while, though, the pace slowed down and the content was less captivating. The book became political with the author being on the side of the poor (the rich industrialist versus the working-class poor). We get detailed descriptions of the indulgences of the upper classes. The author tried to capture the time-period by installing various historical happenings including Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (it was a devastating fire that killed 146 people—mostly immigrant women), Hull House, and the bombing at the LA Times Building. They were not integrated into the story properly (felt like add-ins) and had nothing to do with the mystery. The murder appears complex, but the solution was apparent. The book needed action and active investigating that would help move the book forward. The investigating that Jane can do is limited due to her gender and ability to leave her work (she does manage it at times, though). The story is told from an older Jane Prescott (reliving her younger days). Jane is an observant main character whose eye for detail aids in her solving the case. A Death of No Importance had a disappointing ending (a big letdown). A Death of No Importance was not the right fit for me.

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### **Jeanette says**

This is a full 3.5 star and for my own enjoyment it was almost a 4 star. I only down rated it because of the length; it's overlong. (Jane Prescott's introduction as a character is quite more repetition than would be needed using a sharper focus on her personality quirks instead of just her long winded past and continuing "circumstances", IMHO.) Without that quality to verbose redundancy throughout the book, and the addition of two multi page segments near the ending of the book to bide copy count? Without those, it would have been a full 4. She used those rather strangely placed social warrior issues (circus elephant treatment was

one) to increase the feel to the exact period? But they didn't belong and broke the plot tension. She has only written YA before this book. IMHO, the social crusades (exactly as would be inserted into a YA book- in just such a simple manner than you are not supposed to notice?) muddied the sharp focus of the house of her job, and all of the guilty questions. Apart from those negatives- all which added length, this could have been more than a full four. I enjoyed it to a 4. The Triangle Shirt. Fire is far too important and pivotal horrific event to stick into an aside of 5 pages like that. Not in the way she did the placements or the inclusions.

But regardless, in fact, I think I could become a Mariah Fredericks fan. She just doesn't have the knack yet of leaving the YA elements of effusion and drama for kiddish "eyes" behind her yet. But her writing skill is considerable. Her era feel fine and strong (and the facts of everyday applications are correct in great majority too). And her plotting lines, in this book they were above average. Especially for a first entry into a who-dun-it female in early 20th century. It's prior to WWI and all the shake ups are beginning for a break out feminist ambiance (all the '20's breaks with long standing female tradition). That she is a highly intelligent servant, instead of a master/mistress elite role is a double down too on the "below stairs" eyes. And did she do a good job on that! Bravo, Mariah Fredericks!

So don't take my 3 star as an avoid. Try this one out for sure. She had me on the "baddie" perp and also sent me up a long flight of stairs to a dead end on one of the other characters who I thought was a dip and mentally ill (there are actually two characters like this in the book, so that isn't even a spoiler)- but absolutely wasn't before it was all over.

This is a era when upper class females and their expression within the words/ conversations fields (not looks, style, physical manners etc. but just the language and wit of words and depth of context of words) was not a recognized skill advantage, except possibly in the occasional mistress or salon diva. So the dichotomy between the sisters and in other relationships here are fairly interesting to what is deemed important to them, important to society, important to possible husband material etc. Not all just dirt and gossip conversations for the red herrings to be plied in this book. Instead we actually have some pretty acute varying cause/ effect in these examples.

I'll be reading #2 about Jean for sure. I only had to subtract a star for going on about animals and the Triangle fire etc. when it was not needed and hurt the "case" progressions. And for the fact that she gave so much out of the future as tells and reader knowledge near the ending. Another juvenile writing habit she's going to have to leave behind if she wants to make Jean a long series. It has immense possibility for being an excellent female p. i. Especially if Jean doesn't remain as insular as she is. And loses her attraction to anarchists. The role of her Uncle has some strong possibilities too.

If you like last minute "to be continued" tied on the railroad tracks type of hyjinx, you might like this much more than I. Young lady types like Pauline Peril wringing her hands and waiting to be rescued or sad sack hand wringer (same movement)female victims are not so much my cup of tea. But Jane here, she is the opposite.

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### **Sarah says**

I really enjoyed this historical mystery set in early 1900s New York, and I hope it's the beginning of a series, because I'd love to read more like this. I love historical mysteries, which are usually about the upper classes. While it's fun to get lost in the glitz and glamor of another era, I do wonder about the lives of people who are rarely depicted in those books, or who are only there to prop up the plot, like the servants. So I was excited to

read a mystery starring ladies' maid Jane Prescott. Jane is sensible and observant, and going about solving a mystery is very different for her than for upper class heroines, as her access to society is so different. She does have some connections to anarchists, who are suspected of the murder at the center of this book, but she suspects a different motive. Besides a satisfying mystery, this book sheds light on a variety of social issues and injustices of the day. Recommended for all lovers of historical mysteries!

\*I received a free pre-release copy of this ebook from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Bertha says**

This is a great period mystery told by lady's maid Jane Prescott. She is the one who does the investigation into a murder. The story flowed and the characters were well developed. The reader also learns a bit about the behind the scenes life in a wealthy household.

There was a line from Jane that said she had more stories to tell. I'm hoping that it's the author's way of telling us there may be another book in the works.

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### **Alina says**

I am a huge fan of historical fiction, mystery, and suspense. You have no idea how happy I was to come upon this gem!

This story takes place in 1920s New York City. An elderly employee of Jane Prescott passed away and our charming lady's maid is on a lookout for a new job. And she lands a great employment with Benchley "new money" family that recently relocated to New York City. Jane is being appointed as a lady's maid to Benchley's two young daughters: glamorous and spoiled Charlotte and shy and obedient Louise.

One fine fall morning, Charlotte announces her engagement to a wealthy playboy Norrie Newsome. New York's society and Benchley family are taken aback by this shocking statement, as everyone expected for young Newsome to propose to his childhood sweetheart. The engagement is set to be officially announced at midnight on Christmas Eve... but Norrie is found dead at the family library minutes before the midnight. Newsome family shocks New York's society once again. Will this be the last time? Hmm...

A very handsome and determined reporter, Michael Behan, takes an interest in our charming Jane. He makes a deal, one of his "unprinted" discoveries for one of her stories about Benchley family. While everyone suspects rising anarchists in Norrie's death, Jane and Michael team up to find the real murderer of the young Newsome. And what a discovery our adamant Ms. Prescott will make!

A sensational page-turner. I hope this is first of many books that include marvelous Jane Prescott.

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