



City of Gold and Shadows

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When Alan Morris disappears, his great-niece, Charlotte, regrets never having got to know the renowned archaeologist better. In an attempt to remedy that deficiency, she goes to visit one of his digs. But there she finds more than just a few old stones.

City of Gold and Shadows Details

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From Reader Review City of Gold and Shadows for online ebook

David says

Fairly engaging. Set in the late 20th century England, by the border with Wales, there is a murder at the Roman military site of [the fictitious] *Aurae Phiala*, which the author describes as 'this tragic palimpsest of a city without people'. "When Alan Morris disappears, his great-niece, Charlotte, regrets never having got to know the renowned archaeologist better. In an attempt to remedy that deficiency, she goes to visit one of his digs. But there she finds more than just a few old stones."

The underground heating system provides a burial ground, for hiding a body, and Hambro's 36 hours of escape effort reads as tedious. Indeed the Hambro character is nearly as critical to the story as is Lesley - and provides the eventual endearing Charlotte-&-Gus conclusion to the mystery.

This is a well-composed mystery, which is not at all like the famous and popular Peters' tales of Brother Cadfael. Here Detective Chief Inspector Felse works to solve the mystery and crime - story #12 in the Peters series on Chief Inspector Felse.

It is a quick book to read, and it is a good yarn - yet fails to excite in me the interest as did books in the outstanding Cadfael series. Why is this? Does the modern setting weaken the mood of the tale? Are the Roman ruins weakly described so the story locale falters? Does the attraction of Charlotte to undercover agent Gus Hambro seem false, or the emotional cripple Lesley seems especially false? In sum, engaging but certainly not Ellis Peters at her best.

Jack says

Charlotte's uncle is missing. She visits one of the last places he stayed, in an attempt to know more about him, then things start to happen. Nicely drawn crime story.

Patricia says

City of Gold and Shadows takes place in Chief Inspector Felse's territory where he investigates a murder at an ancient Roman archeological site near the Welsh border. This is number 12 in Ellis Peters' Felse series and, I think, one of the best, although it doesn't have to be read with regard to series sequence. I couldn't put it down and she had me breathlessly turning pages at one point. Most people know her work because of the very successful Cadfael series, but her body of work doesn't stop there. She wrote under other names, starting with her own, Edith Pargeter, as in the amazing Heaven Tree Trilogy.
Her writing is classic and worth reading again and again.

Tria says

Read count 7; recorded March 1, 2012; April 27, 2013; April 12-23, 2016. Rating 4.5* rounded up. This is probably my favourite of E.P's non-Cadfael mysteries, & Charlotte very much a favourite character, beautifully drawn & with delightful ink-splashes of personality showing through her thoughts, words & actions.

Maureen E says

An Inspector Felse mystery. This time, a young woman's great-uncle, a noted historian and archaeologist, has disappeared. Without intending to, she stumbles into the heart of the mystery of his disappearance when she visits the last place he wrote about. With typical Peters prose and a great cast of characters, this was a treat. [May 2010]

I re-read this book because I was in the mood for a Felse mystery and I remembered liking this one. I do like it—the Shropshire setting is my favorite, and the descriptions of Aurae Phiala are vivid and haunting. But the sadness of it struck me more this time than before. [Oct. 2011]

Polly says

A very fine mystery with some romance, too. I love Ellis Peters.

George says

#12 in the British Inspector George Felse mystery series. Concerns about her missing archaeologist grand uncle, sends a young woman to a Roman archaeological site on the banks of the Comer River to see where he was in England before leaving the country. A death and a series of accidents turns the visit into a mystery involving Felse.

A nice cast of characters adds to the story line as the mystery evolves and to the eventual solution.

Beth says

I've loved her Brother Cadfael mysteries and was happy to discover this book, a mystery set in late 20th century England near the Welsh border. Peters still focuses on the history of this region - much of the story takes place on the site of a Roman ruin being explored by archaeologists.

The story starts slowly, but then has lots of twists and turns. It's 3 stars because I like to the Cadfael stories more and couldn't help comparing them. It was fun though

JInpeacock Peacock says

This was the fourth of the books I found out our library dealing with the characters introduced in "The Piper on the Mountain." I appreciate all the historical information she gives about the area in which her mysteries take place. Her descriptions of the areas give me the feeling I've actually visited the places and know the country well. She ties in the ancient history with the current in a delightful manner. I am happy to spend a few hours with her and being enlightened about quite a number of subjects, as well as having a nice mystery.

Angie Rhodes says

Another winner,from the great Ellis Peters, a little different from her Cadfael books,(which I have and love) Charlottes great Uncle Alan,a famous archaeologist, goes missing, his solicitors, get in touch, with her, and lets her know,she is his last known, relative. Worrying about him, Charlotte sets off,in search,of her missing uncle. Through in a murder and romance, and you have a nice,little mystery to curl up, with, on a cold autumn or winters night,,,

Avarill says

I found the book a little confusing in the beginning with the introduction of so many characters. I also seemed to lose who was telling the story at first as Ellis Peters seemed to move from one character to the next.

Her profile of the characters is excellent, her writing once into it and along with the plot is captivating. I did enjoy the book although in the beginning I thought the book might be better for a young adult, than for me. I doubt if I can blame Ellis Peters for this.

When reading books like this one tends to begin to read between the lines and pick up on what might and probably does lie ahead.

Cheryl Sinclair says

One of my favourite mystery authors Ellis Peters has written a lovely old fashioned tale with a smart and steadfast Detective Chief Inspector. Although I find the book is really Charlotte's, the heroine with looks and intelligence of course.

Margaret says

One of her good ones, perhaps more so because I have given them a rest!! A murder or two and a mystery set on the site of a Roman `rest town` for legionaries on the Welsh border. Very light and enjoyable.

A.M. says

Charlotte Rossignol is half French and all smart. She's heard a lot about her great uncle, Alan Morris, the famous archaeologist and confirmed ladies man. She is contacted by his solicitor as his only heir. Morris is missing. After sending his last manuscript from Turkey, he hasn't been heard from since. It's eighteen months now, and the solicitor is worried. His last book was about a site close to the Welsh border. She reads the book and then heads there to check it out for herself. An impulse decision.

The local museum is run by friends of his, Steven Paviour and his much younger wife Lesley. Bill Lawrence is a guide at the museum and dig helper. On her first visit she meets another man Gus Hambro. She is attracted to him but notes his odd behaviour. He asks her where she is staying, and once he knows, insists that he is staying there as well. Later she hears him check in.

Suspicious... right?

But they are mostly distracted by the antics of a school party, and one errant student, Boden. They see him sneak away from his group and are questioned later that evening by Inspector Felse when he remains missing.

Afterwards, Charlotte follows Gus back to the site. As she walks along the edge of the river, she sees a body lying with its head in the water. She hauls him out to discover it's Gus; someone has hit him on the head, stood on his back and tried to drown him. She resuscitates him and saves his life. She must have scared away the murderer.

The next day, Boden's body is found. He's been killed by a hit on the head and pushed into the river hours later. But in his pocket he has a shiny gold Roman coin of the emperor Commodus.

Ellis Peters is too clever. I actually looked up her fictional roman town... sighs. Silly AM.

There is something about the way she sketches out people with a minimum of description.

The solicitor:

He was small and nimble and immaculate in fine grey mohair, with a clever, froggish, mildly mischievous face, like a very well-turned-out troll from under some Scandinavian mountain.

Orrie (short for Orlando), the local handyman:

He was built rather heavily, even for his height, a monumental creature admirably suited to these classic and heroic surroundings; and his face was a mask of antique beauty, but crudely cut out of a local stone.

Gus:

He had a thick crop of wiry hair the colour of good toffee, and heavy eyelashes many shades darker, as lavish as on a Jersey cow, fringing golden-brown eyes of such steady and limpid sincerity that she felt certain he could not possibly be just what he seemed.

Steven Paviour:

... at the door, casting a spidery shadow, a long, meagre but erect man, all angles, like a lesser

Don Quixote put together out of scrap iron.

Wonderful descriptions.

The trail leads to art theft, sex and more murder attempts. Someone is stealing items from the site and selling them to collectors who don't care too much about legal provenance.

(view spoiler)

This is 1960's England when hanging was still the punishment for murder. (I think the last one was 1964)

The method Charlotte used to resuscitate Gus is terrifically old school. I learned CPR in the 1970's. Maybe that was Australia. More pools and beaches and subsequently more drownings.

I would have preferred more of Charlotte's POV but I found it a great read.

4 stars

Chris says

Take an assortment of singular characters, one missing person and a generous helping of archaeology; when you blend them together you'll likely get something like this, a whodunit by Ellis Peters set in her favourite area — the Welsh Marches — and based on the ruins of a fictional Roman city that is rather reminiscent of Wroxeter in Shropshire. Though I've not knowingly read any of her work before (certainly before I was aware that this was the twelfth in a series) I wasn't disappointed in this offering — what would be known in North America as a cozy mystery — especially as it worked very well as a standalone novel.

An essential aspect of a 'cozy' is that it often features a strong, intelligent woman as amateur sleuth; and here it is Charlotte Rossignol. Half-French, a classical musician at what one hopes is the start of a successful career, she is drawn by the concerns that a lawyer ("like a very well-turned-out troll from under some Scandinavian mountain") has over her missing archaeologist uncle, Alan Morris. Visiting the subject of his latest (or last?) monograph, the ruins of *Aurae Phiala* near Moulden village in Midshire, she makes the acquaintance of a number of very distinctive characters, any of whom could be responsible for some of the odd incidents that start to occur. Who is Gus Hambro, and why is he behaving suspiciously? What is schoolboy Gerry Boden up to? What's the nature of the relationship between site custodian Steve Paviour and his young wife Lesley? Is gardener Orlando Benyon all that he seems to be? What does graduate student Bill Lawrence know? How does DCI George Felse deal with the strange events that closely follow one another? And do we ever find out what happened to Charlotte's missing uncle?

From my little experience of archaeology and my zilch experience of forensic police work I was impressed with the author's confident handling of procedures and technical terms, especially the historical details: even a sketch map of *Aurae Phiala* (the name means something like "bowl of the breeze", no doubt with a pun on *aurum*, Latin for 'gold', in the book's title) appears as a frontispiece. This plan actually shows part of the public baths that were so central to Roman urban life but, unfortunately, the Latin phrase *mens sana in corpore sano* could not be less apt as the potential body count rises, leaving this zephyr-blessed place an unhealthy spot.

I like the little details that suggest other stories may possibly be being referenced. For example, are we to see in the largely covered over hypocaust system under the site's baths a hint of Knossos in Crete, with a groundplan that some see as the inspiration for the legend of Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur in the labyrinth? And the Roman cavalry parade helmet that puts in an appearance — is the well-read author slyly hinting at the supernaturally large helmet that initiates the action in Walpole's classic Gothic tale *The Castle*

of Otranto?

Cozies and other mystery novels that hark back to the so-called Golden Age of Detective Fiction are rarely thought of as great literature, and *City of Gold and Shadows* has no pretensions in that direction. But there is a little more to it than would merely appeal to crossword solvers. There are some credible characters with interesting motivations (such as George Felse, who reappears in other titles in this series); there is a sense of place; and dialogue, descriptions and plotting are all beautifully done. I can see now why Ellis Peters is well regarded.

<https://calmgrove.wordpress.com/2015/...>
