



Fatal Enquiry

Will Thomas

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Brimming with wit, atmosphere, and unforgettable characters, FATAL ENQUIRY reintroduces private enquiry agent Cyrus Barker and his assistant, Thomas Llewellyn, and their unforgettable world of Victorian London.

Some years ago, Cyrus Barker matched wits with Sebastian Nightwine, an aristocrat and sociopath, and in exposing his evil, sent Nightwine fleeing to hide from justice somewhere in the far corners of the earth. The last thing Barker ever expected was to encounter Nightwine again—but the British government, believing they need Nightwine's help, has granted him immunity for his past crimes, and brought him back to London. Nightwine, however, has more on his mind than redemption—and as Barker and Llewellyn set out to uncover and thwart Nightwine's real scheme, they find themselves in the gravest danger of their lives.

Fatal Enquiry Details

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From Reader Review Fatal Enquiry for online ebook

Kelly says

I had lost track of this series after reading the first five, not knowing that there were more, until Goodreads invited me to enter a contest for book #8 (which I won!), so I have to catch up. I borrowed this from my wonderful mother-in-law who introduced me to the series. I love, love, love these books. The characters are so colorful and descriptive and wonderfully flawed and imperfect. The historical backdrop with the author works so hard to weave his stories into (even going so far as to feature real historical figures mixed in with the story). If you are a mystery fan, if you are a historical fiction fan, if you are a reader, you must try this series.

Joe Santoro says

I was a little worried while I was waiting for this book to come in from the library... I noticed the large gap in time between the previous book coming out, and saw the object of the story, Barker's nemesis, Sebastian Nightwine, was the main villain. Had Thomas given up making his story unique, and decided it was time for Barker to plunge into the falls?

Happily, Nightwine is nothing like Moriarty... in fact, Thomas doubles down on my previous opinion that Barker and Llewelyn are more 'Batman and Robin' than Holmes and Watson. Nightwine, rather than being a criminal mastermind, instead uses politics, influence, and a daughter trained as an assassin to try to conquer a country for himself... not just a little like Ra's al Ghul and his daughter Talia. Soho Vic is reminding more of Jason Todd in every episode... Mac gets out and gets to be a butler/adventurer, even.

Unlike the previous books that focused on a particular section/minority in London, this one was just a duel between Barker and Nightwine... it wouldn't surprise me to find that it was intended to be the last book of the series. While it did lack the development of Victorian London the other books have, it made up for it in action and suspense, there was really just no one one isn't going to read the majority of this book in one sitting.

We also got treated to Llewelyn on his own, which was really entertaining, and showed a good logical progression since the beginning of the series. He had some really impressive one liners in this one too... most of Llewelyn wit in the past has seemed forced, but here it flowed much better, like he was suddenly comfortable in his life, which really worked on a lot of levels.

If I was going to complain about anything, it would be the sudden, 180 degree turn the Yard made in terms of Barker and his reputation... it was far too sudden to make logical sense this side of the Marvel or DC universe, but, hey, they just reinforce the 'Victorian Batman and Robin' theme, right?

Laura Lee says

Closer to 3 1/2 stars. Another good book in the series.

Brittany says

A detective story set in Victorian London, Fatal Enquiry takes it's readers on an adventure through the underbelly of London's streets. Cyrus Barker and his assistant Thomas Llewellyn, run an enquiry service to help people who Scotland Yard has been unable to help. Barker finds out that his arch nemesis Sebastian Nightwine is back in London. Nightwine could only have devious intentions in mind. Barker and Llewellyn must use all of their talents to stop Nightwine from completing his plans. I really enjoyed this book. The heroes are resourceful and the villains are artfully manipulative. Full of adventure, close calls, street gangs, secret societies, swindling, murder, assassins, and scandal. It was an adventure that I was delighted to lose myself in.

Originally Published at:

<http://cozycornerandcafebookreviews.b...>

A. Lieberson says

Will Thomas has written another great Barker and Llewellyn novel. This time we learn more about Barker's life in China but as Barker is forced into hiding, Llewellyn carries the plot. As usual excellent writing, great characters and well thought out plot.

Dan Schwent says

When his arch-nemesis Sebastian Nightwine returns to town, detective Cyrus Barker and his assistant Thomas Llewellyn are on guard. But why does Nightwine have diplomatic immunity and protection from Scotland Yard? Can Barker and Llewellyn find out what Nightwine is up to without winding up in jail?

I got this from Netgalley and the fine folks at St. Martin's.

This is the sixth Barker and Llewellyn book but, as the blurb on Netgalley promised, serves to reintroduce the pair to new readers and does a fine job at that. While there were a few references to past cases, I was perfectly able to enjoy this one on its own.

When it comes to Victorian detective stories, all things start with Sherlock Holmes. While Barker and Llewellyn might be the literary great grandchildren of Holmes and Watson, they owe little to the Great Detective and his chronicler. Barker, with his keen detective skills, is the Holmes of the pair, but he's a burly world traveler known for his skill with firearms and his fists. And he's not addicted to opium or other illicit substances, which is refreshing in a Victorian era detective. Llewellyn is a young handsome former felon and widower.

Another things that separates Barker and Llewellyn from Holmes and Watson is that Holmes and Watson never took a world class shit-kicking. Barker and Llewellyn go through several wringers in this one.

The story isn't all that complex at the beginning. Sebastian Nightwine, Barker's moriarty, returns to London with a plan of conquest and some maps and gets diplomatic immunity to keep Barker off his back. Soon, Barker is framed for murder and gets a bounty put on his head. Things quickly spiral out of control with a mysterious woman thrown into the mix.

Llewellyn, idealistic young Welshman, is a great narrator since he's normally almost as in the dark as the reader. Barker is a complicated man with a complicated past, far from the Sherlock Holmes-inspired character I thought he would be before I started reading. I felt bad for poor Llewellyn, getting dragged in Barker's wake for most of the book and taking a really brutal beating for his employer.

Will Thomas's writing has a fairly serious tone but was much easier to digest than a lot of similar books. There was also a good amount of humor. I loved that there was a killer named Psmith in it, who found the need to mention the silent P, much like P.G. Wodehouse's Psmith character. Man, I really need to read another Wodehouse book sometime soon.

Anyway, despite being the sixth book in a series and the first I've read, I found Fatal Enquiry to be a very engaging mystery full of characters I want to read more about. To the bookstore! Four out of five stars.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

More like 3.5 stars.

Ken says

Barker's life-long enemy has arrived in London and has plans to destroy Barker while enriching himself unless Barker and Llewelyn can stop him.

I have enjoyed every book in this series to date. The novels are well written and display a tremendous amount of research on the author's part to maintain a certain level of historical accuracy. Thomas has created a interesting enquiry agent and surrounded him with an equally interesting cast of support characters.

4 STARS

Vicky says

The best part of a Barker and Llewelyn novel is the sense of time and place. These books are firmly set in Victorian London and these men are products of their time. Thomas Llewelyn is a failed scholar, once imprisoned for stealing and Cyrus Barker is a private enquiry agent with a mysterious past in the exotic Far East. Sebastian Nightwine, Barker's mortal enemy, appears in London, under the protection of the Crown. Barker is frustrated by Nightwine's ability to pull the wool over everyone's eyes. Nightwine is accompanied by his daughter, Sofia Ilyanova, a beautiful girl he has trained to be an assassin. The battle is engaged. We

learn a lot more about Barker's mysterious past, including the fact he has a brother. I hope I don't have to wait quite so long for the next installment.

Ed says

Will Thomas is back with my favorite 1880's London detectives(Enquiry Agents),Cyrus Barker and his partner and narrator, Welshman Thomas Llewellyn after a 6 year absence. The first 5 books in this exceptionally entertaining crime fiction series were very good, especially "Some Danger Involved", the first book in the series that introduces these wonderfully complex characters with imaginatively captivating back stories. "Fatal Enquiry" is absolutely the best book in the series and well worth the wait. Barker and Llewellyn are faced with an old adversary that Barker knew years before in China and believes murdered his brother during the Taiping Rebellion. The dastardly villain of the book, Sebastian Nightwine, frames Barker and Llewellyn for murder in his quest to destroy his old enemy and defraud the British government with a bogus plan to invade Tibet.

This is an extremely well written, fun read with richly drawn characters interacting with each other with well mannered wry humor, heart, courage and unique insights into life in Victorian London. I highly recommend it to all my GR crime fiction friends. You won't be disappointed but should probably read Book #1 "Some Danger Involved" first.Ed

Laura says

There is definite humor here, with Llewellyn acting like an early version of Archie Goodwin. Barker is no Nero Wolf, on the other hand, nor is he particularly Holmesian. It may be this particular book, but there's little detection and more running around, more fighting and more talking about Barker's past interactions with Nightwine than I'd hoped for. It didn't really feel like a historical mystery (a la Anne Perry's Pitt mysteries) but more like a modern one shoehorned into the Victorian era.

Geri says

I enjoyed this book. Liked the time period that it takes place.

It seemed to me to be very much like reading a Nero Wolfe & Archie Goodwin.

This book had some twists that surprised me.

Susan in NC says

Master criminal and aristocratic sociopath Sebastian Nightwine, returning to London in a blaze of glory as a guest of the British government, has convinced the powers that be to bankroll an invasion of Tibet with him in charge - and plans to destroy his nemesis Cyrus Barker while he's in town. This exciting adventure also gives us longtime fans of this wonderful series a great deal of long-anticipated background and insight into

mysterious enquiry agent Barker; Thomas Llewelyn, his young assistant and narrator of the series, has been an "open book" from the beginning. Now we get to finally learn more about Barker! This was so much fun, and I am so glad to see Barker and Llewelyn back in the saddle again! I hope there will be many adventures in the future.

Author Will Thomas starts the action off at a cracking pace from the beginning with Barker and Llewelyn forced to go on the lam as wanted men, victims of Nightwine's twisted machinations to destroy their reputations. The action sputtered in a few places, not irretrievably so, while Barker was curiously absent for a span of time in the last third of the book; Llewelyn was on his own and stumbled about getting into trouble which was funny but seemed to slow things down a bit. Thomas is a very likeable character, however, and he is the narrator, so I guess the author wanted to give him a bit of the limelight. I did feel as if the ending dragged a bit, as if the author wasn't sure how to wind things up; I assume Sofia, Nightwine's daughter, will resurface some day, as will Barker's brother Caleb, who is apparently alive after all (we find out in the last sentence of the book, but I don't think it's a vital spoiler). Anyway, I would highly recommend this wonderful series to fans of historical mysteries with a dose of humor and fascinating characters.

LJ says

First Sentence: It is a truth universally acknowledged, at least among private enquiry agents, that the most momentous of cases, the real corks, begin on the blandest, most ordinary of days.

Cyrus Barker has a long history with Sebastian Nightwine going all the way back to their years in China. Was Nightwine responsible for the death of Barker's brother? Yet now, years later, not only is Nightwine coming to London, he has received immunity from the British government and is about to do a major deal with him. Nightwine recognized Barker will try to stop him and, in turn, is determined to destroy Barker. The two are locked in a desperate game of wits and violence; Barker with his assistant Thomas Llewelyn at his side and Nightwine with an unanticipated ally. Will anyone survive?

There is a wonderful sense of time and place from food, to clothes, to technology to the city of London itself. Even without introduction, the voice of the narrator and the wry humor is so engaging--The Gov's brows furrowed. "You've been hired to protect someone from me?" "You've been known to take a man apart like a watch." Barker considered this. "Not unless he deserved it."--one is immediately captivated. The case which is presented to Barker is unexpected and compelling.

Cyrus Barker is a fascinating character; a man of many skills and particular tastes. We learn a good deal about his childhood and understand that much of what made him as he is. Llewelyn, Barker's assistant, has grown as a character. For those who have been following the series, an interesting change is that Llewelyn takes the lead in much of this story.

Particular credit goes to the author for his secondary characters. These are not cardboard figures but fully realized and developed characters. Because of that, the reader becomes much more invested in the story and events.

Thomas skillfully inserts actual historical figures into the story but only in ways which would fit with their real lives. He also educates us on a number of interesting subjects; including the use of ricin, information on the Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller and the Freemasons; and the creation of the ambulance service. Rather than ever slowing the story down, the information serves to weave the story together. Some authors

are so good you want to read sentences or passages aloud to someone else. Will Thomas is so good, you want to read the entire book aloud to someone else just to ensure they experience the same high quality of storytelling as did you.

“Fatal Enquiry is excellent on every level. In addition to those qualities already mentions, it has a cleverly constructed, gripping plot with excellent suspense, and a wonderful “Ah-ha!” moment. It’s hard to wait for the next book in this marvelous series.

FATAL ENQUIRY (Hist Mys-Barker/Llewelyn-London-Victorian) – Ex
Thomas, Will
Minotaur Books, 2014

Christina Sampson says

*** This review, which does not re-tell the story or have spoilers, can be found on my blog "The Body on the Floor" at <http://goo.gl/LFlv9s> . If you enjoy historical mystery series, than it's the blog for you. ***

A Fatal Enquiry, Will Thomas' first entry into the Barker and Llewelyn series after a multi-year hiatus, is at once a relief and a disappointment.

First, the good: Llewelyn returns in fine form, his narrative voice as clear as ever and, though a bit wizened from several years of working with Barker, still shows all the affability, cockiness and impetuousness of his 21 years.

Thomas' Victorian London is also still intact, redolent with historical places that range from cafes attached to Masonic lodges to Westminster Abbey to shabby Thames waterfronts.

The plot of this installment, during which Barker and Llewelyn are on the run from various parties after Barker is framed for murder by his Moriarty-esque nemises, is well-thought out and interesting enough to keep on turning pages.

But.

There was something desperate about this installment, and Thomas kept intruding on the story with unnecessary recaps of action of which there was a bit much. This felt like an advertisement for the previous installments and a mad grab for the American action mystery set. Which is fine, after all, martial arts is very much a part of who Barker is, for very legitimate reasons. And it makes sense he would train Llewelyn and that training would be necessary in their roles as enquiry agents. But it just never felt to tedious in the previous books.

Thomas has also developed an exasperating habit of unnecessarily recapping what happened in the last few pages. If I just read about how three Scotland Yard officers were thwarted from capturing the pair while they're running on a bridge, don't begin the next chapter with a summary. It all felt a bit like a not-so-subtle humblebrag, as though Thomas were playing at bashfully saying, “Look at what in immensely entertaining scene I just wrote! Aren't you glad you're reading this?”

Well, I was. Until the fourth time that happened.

Adding to the narrative disruption, beloved characters and places from previous novels were gratuitously shoved into this story. It's as though Thomas felt if he didn't have Llewelyn go to the Barbados for a mocha and smoke the pipe with his name above it, all while philosophizing with Israel Zangwill, his fan base would disappear (we won't). Likewise, Barker's ward and partner were both shoehorned in as well and, though the latter served well to shed some light on Barker's mysterious past, (which was heartbreakingly predictable; hint: a woman fueled the animosity between Barker and his nemesis; I really expected more from Thomas).

On one hand, I get it. Readers like me return to mystery character series precisely because of the characters we come to know and love. I look forward to seeing Billy in every Maisie Dobbs mystery and of course enjoy it when Ian Rutledge's sister makes an appearance.

But here, Dummolard and Israel and even Mac to some degree just got in the way of, you know, the actual plot.

And, while Barker's nemesis Nightwine was great when he first appeared, in this he felt like a rather lazy Moriarty rip-off, and the femme fatal wasn't much more compelling, either. Of course she's a stunning blonde, and of course she's kinda-sorta-not-really a victim of circumstance. Yawn.

How I wish just once a femme fatal could be frumpy or have a poor sense of fashion or wear sensible shoes because walking around London to reconnoiter a target must be hell on one's feet.

In short, I wish Thomas would have just let the story he was trying to tell be the story. We'll come back to see Mac or Dummolard another day, we promise.
