



Lessons for Survivors

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Cambridge, September 1919 Orlando Coppersmith should be happy. WWI is almost a year in the past, he's back at St. Bride's College in Cambridge, he has his lover and best friend Jonty Stewart back at his side and to top it all-he's about to be made Forsterian Professor of Applied Mathematics. With his inaugural lecture to give and a plagiarism case to adjudicate on, Orlando's hands are full, so can he and Jonty afford to take on an investigative commission surrounding a suspected murder? Especially one which must be solved within a month so that a clergyman can claim what he says is his rightful inheritance? The answer looks like being a resounding "no" when the lecture proves almost impossible to write, the plagiarism case gets turned back on him and Jonty (spiced with a hint of blackmail), and the case surrounding Peter Biggar's death proves to have too many leads and too little evidence. Orlando begins to doubt their ability to solve cases any more, and his mood isn't improved when there seems to be no way of outsmarting the blackmailer. Will this be the first failure for Coppersmith and Stewart? And how will they maintain their reputations-professional, private and as amateur detectives?

Lessons for Survivors Details

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Line says

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Pooh says

Lessons

When she wrote, All Lessons Learned, I disparaged that there would be no other. Thank you Charlie for bringing our beloved Cambridge Fellows from St. Brides back into our lives. Surviving more than the war, Coppersmith and Stewart, once again have more than enough going on in their lives, when another mystery comes walking through the door. This time with riddles, and a time limit. They have to prove to themselves, they can do it, just as they learn they are Survivors.

Mark says

If a bit of sleuthing and solving murders Sherlock Holmes style is your thing then this book will be right up your street. I just loved the the way this book was set out, intelligent, well-written and a perfect historical backdrop to go with it.

Jonty and Orlando are back in Cambridge after surviving WWI. they have now got a bit of a name for themselves as detectives and soon get their next case. They feel a little out of practice as it has been a while since their last one, but take it on as the temptation is just too good. What I liked mostly about this whole book was the fact that it really isn't a romance, but a solid murder-mystery where the two detectives, Orlando and Jonty are already in a long-standing relationship. Personally, I found this totally refreshing to read a book where the focus is on two normal gay guys just going about their everyday business or in their case not so everyday as it always seems to involve a murder or two. It breaks totally away from the "objectification" of gay men having gay sex, but gay men as MCs in the case that the sex or romance is no longer the focus. Of course they share some tender moments as in the case with any long standing relationship so the romance is there, but more in an everyday way.

I loved the way that the author got the style of writing and feeling for the period exactly right. The sentence construction and vocabulary used all felt real and realistic for this period, wonderful! Also the question of how Orlando and Jonty managed their relationship in a day where people certainly would have been less understanding. this meant in public they kept up the front of two confirmed bachelors who have just not found the right woman and are "best friends." Sometimes I wonder whether people were really that naive or ignorant as to not see what kind of relationship they had or were too polite to say anything. Makes me also wonder how many gay men lived in this time exactly under that kind of smokescreen. All quite plausible if you ask me. Maybe Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were also gay being the "confirmed bachelors" that they were.

This I found intriguing and quite funny that Orlando hates Sherlock and Watson and mentions this and why

several times, although for me parallels could definitely be drawn with their relationship and the characters of Arthur Conan Doyle. The author does not in anyway imitate, but in my opinion almost uses this as a vehicle to make the contrast between her characters and the classical ones of Sherlock and Watson. Knowing that Sherlock and Watson are fictional and listening to these guys talk about them so, gives Jonty and Orlando and even more real feel. Nicely done Ms Cochrane :-) Loved it. the balance in the characters were great too. Orlando has just got his professorship in Maths and is obviously the more logical one liking to work things out and putting the pieces together in a scientific way. Jonty is more the intuitive partner, relying on his feelings and hunches to get him his answers. Put them together and you have the perfect crime solving machine and a great dynamic for a relationship.

As for the mystery, well set in England at this time everyone of course is always on their best behaviour. Codes of etiquette are rigidly observed even in the face of murder. Stiff upper lip and have another cup of tea. The murder-mystery is well thought out and developed nicely, leaving me guessing how they are going to ever solve this, with lots of, "I know who did it," then, "maybe not," then, "it has to be him/her," but finally it was a joy to read how the murder was carried out and brought to its final conclusion. So all in all a great book, well written and thought out, liked it immensely.

But.....

The only mistake I made was not realising when I started that this is book #9 of a series, the penultimate book from a series of ten. Only when I began reading and was in to about chapter 4, after constantly getting the feeling that I was missing a whole lot of background to their relationship for such an established couple, did I realise it belongs to a series after looking it up on Goodreads. There were things that didn't quite add up that couldn't be explained. I must admit to having been a little lost at times with their relationship, also the MCs' connection between older established friends who obviously had been introduced in previous books, but I couldn't really place them in Orlando's and Jonty's life and what their significance to them were. I blamed it first on the old grey cells, as there were moments between Jonty and Orlando that refer to a shared history and experiences with no explanation being proffered in the book, but alas I accepted my lot that some things were not going to be explained for my too curious mind. Jonty and Orlando obviously share a very profound history, that would have made more sense had I followed the series from the beginning

ggggrrrrrrr

On the publisher's website it states that it is a standalone. Sorry, but I personally felt this was definitely not the case and feel slightly deceived, cheated and a little annoyed to be honest. When I saw it on the publishers site I snapped it up as soon as I saw it as I thought this will be something that will be right up my street. This has happened to me before because the other books are published somewhere else with another publisher and this fact is not mentioned. But this is seriously NOT FAIR to the reader. This book is essentially a re-release, it may have been re-edited and re-vamped somewhat, I can't really comment as I obviously haven't read the original version. However, with the best will in the world this book for me personally is NOT A STANDALONE.

I'm delighted to say that I could follow things easily enough as far as the murder-mystery contained in this book goes. I'm happy I stayed with it as I have been introduced to another series which I feel will be well worth reading. So I will be putting amends to my mistake now ~ I have enjoyed this book a lot. I will make it my New Year's resolution to read the series from the beginning! Maybe then I'll find out how Jonty and Orlando's relationship has developed and got to the solid and profound one that it is today. My advice is that if you like reading a series from the beginning to the end then I'm sure you will be well advised to start with book one. As with me if you start with the next to last book by mistake then you'll still definitely love the story, its characters and murder-mystery plot without a shadow of a doubt, but just may wish you had started

with book one.

Tamela says

I enjoyed this installment in the lives of Orlando and Jonty. It feels so good to see them growing in their relationship and to hopefully be settling in after the devastation of the war and the losses they suffered.

I truly missed Jonty's parents as they were both such vivid characters and rounded out the circle of those who trusted and loved the MC's. It is great to see how Jonty's sister is becoming another true support for them, though it will take a lot to fill her mother's shoes :)

Loved this book, loved this series, and hope to hear more from these two men.

Recommended

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1st read - Mar 13, 2015

2nd read - Jan 25, 2016

Heather says

Not quite a year out of the war and it looks like things are getting back to normal, or at least as normal as Jonty and Orlando are familiar with. Everything seems to come to their doorstep all at once, when doesn't it though? Just as Orlando is trying to write his lecture for his professorship, he's also on a committee that's overseeing a plagiarist case involving "the college next door" and the dreaded Owens that is still holding a grudge for not having solved the Woodville Ward case (Discovery #3) before Coppersmith and Stewart. But then a case comes for them to sink their teeth into, except there is a time limit, only one month. Seeing our beloved boys get back into the thick of things is amazing and fun. At the start, they seem to have lost a bit of their confidence in the deduction abilities, some due to the war and other due to still missing Jonty's parents, who were lost during the war to the influenza epidemic. Soon, they enlist the help of past friends and Jonty's sister, Lavinia and it seems that they just might be able to pull it off. Mixed with the usual humor we have come to know from the lovers and their unique way of looking at life, Lessons for Survivors is a great entry in this series.

Wart Hill says

Things I Find While Shelving

I received a free ARC Via NetGalley

I'm not really sure what all I can say about this book beyond I really liked it.

I haven't read the earlier books in the series, but I didn't feel lost or anything. I loved the characters, they're

very clear and distinct. Orlando and Jonty have very clear personalities, and they work very well together both as partners solving crimes and as lovers.

And I was definitely intrigued by the mystery. Very loopy and wtf-y. Though I called a bit of it. But not the way I thought it had happened, so that was good. Like, I knew a thing, and I thought a thing because of the thing I knew but I was wrong about the second thing.

Reviewing mysteries is hard because you don't want to give it away...

Melanie says

Rating: 4.75 stars for the book, 5 stars for the series. To read my complete review visit <http://wp.me/p220KL-14p>

For a followup interview with Charlie Cochrane about the series, read my Questions & Answers with Charlie Cochrane to be posted on 3/8/2013 at <http://scatteredthoughtsandroguewords...>

Cambridge Fellows Mysteries is one of Scattered Thoughts Best Historical Series, no matter the year.

Anne Barwell says

An enjoyable addition to the Cambridge Fellows series. It's nice seeing Jonty and Orlando moving forward after the war and getting back into the sleuthing and this was an interesting case with several twists and turns in it. I like stories where the characters are a little older, so it's an added bonus that the author has jumped forward in the timeline for the last two stories although I'm hoping she does fill the gaps leading up to the war years at some point.

Sophia says

A murder mystery set in Post-WWI Britain that has the added boost of a strong, steady romance for the detecting team. It also has the status of being the ninth book in a much loved series that shows no signs of winding down or weakening even though the last one felt the pinnacle and grandest of grand finales of the series.

Ah, I was so excited to read this one in that lazy afternoon-get cozy way, to settle near my fire with a flavorful cuppa (in my case hot chocolate since I don't like tea- gasp, I know) and some lovely homemade cookies all in anticipation of time spent with favorite fellows, Orlando Coppersmith and Jonty Stewart. Their witty dialogue, their discreet sweet passion, their sharp observant minds that love to tease out the puzzles,

their life at a small Cambridge college and the characters and mysteries that flit through their lives.

I wasn't sure what to expect after that stormy and deeply emotional eighth book that told the tale of their time in the war and the loss and need to heal that followed. It was both agonizingly dark and piercingly bright. I worried that this one would feel sadly flat after the other experience. Thankfully, it did not. They are older, rougher around the edges and all, but they are still the fellows I have come to appreciate and love through their stories.

For those who are just being introduced to this m/m historical mystery and romance series, it is one that needs to be read in order. It progresses through an actual historic time period, but it also introduces the main characters and tells their personal growth stories and their romance as they solve a mystery with each installment. It's like the Holmes and Watson of the academic world of Cambridge (though don't let Orlando know I said that since he loathes the comparison).

This story provided lots of fodder for a captivating read. There was the new academic achievement of Orlando making Professor of Applied Mathematics that has him stressing and worrying as only Orlando can do, there was the threat of unsavory blackmail from another college's master if Orlando and the rest of a committee of professors do not let a fellow mathematics teacher from a rival college off the hook for plagiarism, and there is the confusing murder mystery that Orlando and Jonty have been called in to investigate and have to solve in a time frame that allows their client to receive his inheritance. It is a confusing twisty case where nobody and nothing is what it seems, but the two men revel in this challenge and the chance to get their lives back to normal if that is ever possible.

The story had a second generation feel to it with the older Stewarts and the old St. Bride's college master gone during the war years and others with older faces yet the same engaging personalities and minds now stepping up to form part of their sleuthing circle. I am excited that the indomitable and spirited Mrs. Sheridan is on hand to help with their affairs around the college and it was fun to see Jonty's sister take over as their source for researching the persons of interest in their cases.

These books have a certain tone and personality to the writing that I just love. They have a formal feel because the characters and plots are from the Edwardian era that is painted with such authenticity. However, that doesn't mean it is so formal that it is stilted or cold. In past reviews, I don't think I have ever mentioned the humor the author brings to these books, but it was very present in this one. Not that it was painted on thick, but just that it showed the steady progress of their recovery from the war and attempt to find their way back to happier times that now include a loss of innocence. When I speak of humor, it is a dry wit and that back and forth snappy dialogue that is recognizable in established couples. It was also seen in the quirky and sometimes silly goings on in the small community of their Cambridge college and the rivalry between colleges. Jonty says and does the most provoking things to rile Orlando and even other people. Orlando can get a bit starched up about things and that can be funny too.

As to their relationship, they have gone through so much in this series and this book finally gave them a breather in the sense that the issues in this plot were all external. They are like a middle-aged pair in a mature romance though the passion is still there. They are also like an excited newlywed couple after being apart for so many years during the war and having to adjust to the changes the war made on them both.

All in all, it was a smashing comeback-style success that has me eager for more Jonty and Orlando along with the rest loving and solving their mysteries.

My thanks to Riptide Publishing and Net Galley for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an

Ulysses Dietz says

Good grief. How does one begin to talk about the ninth of the Cambridge dons series? Jonty Stewart and Orlando Coppersmith are such old friends now.

I cannot find my review of the last book in this series, “All Lessons Learned” on Amazon. Could I possibly have not written a review? It was years ago, perhaps I wasn’t obsessively writing reviews for every book I read; perhaps I simply emailed Charlie Cochrane, as was my habit for every author whose work I liked. All those emails are lost on an old computer, alas.

I never expected there to be a ninth book. Book 8 brings our dons through the war. That seemed enough. I’m not sure what compelled Charlie to put pen to paper for a ninth book—fan pressure, perhaps? Her own unwillingness to let these young men go? But I’m glad she did.

“Lessons for Survivors” is not the intense experience of the 8th book—which was published four years ago and felt like the grand emotional finale for our dons. Book 9 might not appeal as the earlier series did, because it is quiet, relatively untroubled. This book is about getting on with life. In it we are allowed the privilege of watching Jonty and Orlando settle into what will undoubtedly be a long happy life together. They build their careers, solidify their relationship, cope with the world around them; and for fun, take on a bit of detective work to spice up the everyday pleasures and frustrations of academia.

In Jonty and Orlando we have E.M. Forster meets Agatha Christie. We have the upshot of “Maurice” as he imagined it but never quite was for Forster himself (read Wendy Moffatt’s “A Great Unrecorded History: a New Life of E.M. Forster”—hugely important and fascinating book focused on Forster’s life as a gay man).

The murder mystery in this book is low-key, small-town. It’s not fair to say that it is secondary, since it is the central plot arc in the book; but it is in fact (at least to my mind) secondary to the careful study of Jonty and Orlando’s relationship as it has survived the nightmare of the war and begins to adjust to long-term coping strategies.

We see a damaged and diminished Jonty—still himself, but mourning the terrible losses of the war and the flu epidemic of the postwar years. And we see a stronger, braver, and more fully-realized Orlando. Orlando now takes care of Jonty as much as Jonty took care of him in the earlier books. The men are really partners now, in every meaning of the word.

In its own quiet way, the mystery is also about relationships, but failed ones. Unequal relationships marred by deceit and distrust. Through all of this Jonty and Orlando tread softly, independently and together. Constantly checking on each other and reassuring themselves that the other is OK, doing fine.

For me, as a gay man of a certain age, this book is a comfort. It is a reminder that E.M. Forster’s wistful fantasy about Maurice and Scudder was a reality for those men lucky enough and brave enough to deal with the prejudices and dangers of being gay in the British empire. Our dons are both well aware of Oscar Wilde’s fate (as was Forster, very keenly) and when the threat of exposure is waved before them, it does not send them shivering into darkness, but forces them to turn to the small coterie of people “who know” for assistance and support. While this plotline is never played up too much, it is more important than any other.

The fact that the threat to their security never halts their pursuit of the murder mystery indicates how strong they are, as individuals and as a couple.

Family, both blood and chosen, plays a major role in this book. Jonty's sister Lavinia takes on a new role in this detective story; as do other Cambridge friends for whom the dons' relationship is a given and not a secret. In a parallel track, we see technology—in the form of the telephone and the automobile—begin to play a role in the dons' detective work; the modern world aiding and abetting our Miss-Marple-as-gay-couple in their pursuit of the truth and justice.

Through this intimate network we begin to see that there could be other novels possible in the future, with a different direction and a different emphasis. Has Charlie Cochrane just opened a new door for her characters and her fans?

Throughout her books, Cochrane earns my admiration for her careful use of language. There are no f-bombs here. These young men are Edwardians in the early 20th century, they are not modern characters transported back in time. This is their reality, and they reflect it in every way. The atmosphere of the period is on point. Cochrane's fantasy is made plausible and authentic.

I can't help but wonder if E.M. Forster would have liked Jonty and Orlando. My fear is that he wouldn't have liked them; because in Cochrane's novels they have attained something he only dreamed about.

Suze says

A bit of a different feel to this book - not good, not bad, just different.

I do feel the loss of Jonty's parents, they were such great characters.

The feel is more stable, no big excitement, no big mystery. But there is a potential danger to their life on Madingley Road and a mystery that, whilst not grabbing in its audacity, certainly sends Jonty and Orlando round in circles.

Jonty and Orlando have got back to a more mature even keel after the shake up that was The Great War. They seem to have come to terms each with a changed other.

Whilst not my favourite of the series, I did enjoy. 3.5*

Edina Rose says

Another Jonty and Orlando adventure. It takes place before the events of book 8, and they are as charmingly original as ever.

Terry says

It was fantastic to meet up with old friends Jonty and Orlando again in the latest Cambridge Fellows novel. I had been looking forward to this book for what seems like forever, well since I read "All Lessons Learned". To say I was disappointed would be about right and I have not been able to put my finger on why really. I think maybe this is a transition novel after having lost Jonty's wonderful mother and father and his sister not

yet fully fleshed out as a replacement for his mother - that certain "je ne sais quoi" was certainly missing for me. Having said that though the case they investigated was very good and not until just before the denouement could I work out what had happened. I am a huge fan of this series but this has to be the one I enjoyed the least.

T.M. Smith says

Murder, mystery and a forbidden romance between the two would be detectives trying to solve the case. The backdrop is Britain around WWI at a small Cambridge college while lovers Jonty and Orlando try to keep their romance behind closed doors and contained to the double bed they share, all while trying to solve the mysteries that encircle their lives.

Orlando is now a Professor and if that weren't enough to make him stress and fret like only Orlando can do, someone is blackmailing him. At the same time, Orlando and Jorty are hired to investigate a murder that is on a time frame if the man that hired them is to receive his inheritance. Jorty is determined to have a normal life with Orlando, and though the case is confusing and nothing is as it seems, their love, witty sense of humor and strong character will see them through any challenge they face, together.

I admit to being slightly confused with the characters and the story as I picked up the ninth book in a series, not realizing it should have been read in order. But I was seriously drawn into the mystery, intrigue and romance of this historical era story. I love when an Author can literally transport me back in time in my imagination with vivid details, scenery and characters. I could see Orlando and Jorty tromping through the halls of the college, putting their heads together to solve the case, and that double bed!

So, while I'm lost on the relationship between characters and the history of this world Cochran has created with her Cambridge stories, I thoroughly enjoyed the development of these two men as individuals and as a couple as they faced the challenges presented to them in this book. I would probably suggest you start at the beginning, and my plan is to go back and read all the stories from this series, but I was able to enjoy this story regardless.

A must read for fans of this series, Cochran's work and anyone that likes a rich historical romance full of depth, romance and mystery.

* I received a copy of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review through <http://mmgoodbookreviews.wordpress.com> *

Plainbrownwrapper says

I'm a big-time fangirl of this series. I don't think I could give less than a 4-star rating to any of em, no matter what. There is just such a warm heart behind all the characters that I can't help but love most everything about them.

Now, I don't think this was a standout addition to the series. For one thing, there is much too much repetition as Cochrane constantly reminds us of bits and pieces from previous books in the series. For another, the

deaths of Jonty's parents leave a big hole (as, of course, they should). And, for a third, the plot seemed rather inconsequential to me -- Jonty and Orlando weren't personally connected to the mystery in any way, and didn't really seem to have any serious investment in it or consequences from it. And the only problem of significance to our guys was solved offscreen, by Ariadne!

So -- not my favorite of the series. Nonetheless, the guys are still sweethearts, and reading more about their lives still feels like curling up under a fuzzy blanket in front of a warm fire, with a nice mug of hot chocolate and a few cookies. Definitely comfort reads for me.
