



A Noble Radiance

Donna Leon

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Donna Leon has topped European bestseller lists for more than a decade with a series of mysteries featuring clever Commissario Guido Brunetti. Always ready to bend the rules to uncover the threads of a crime, Brunetti manages to maintain his integrity while maneuvering through a city rife with politics, corruption, and intrigue.

In *A Noble Radiance* a new landowner is summoned urgently to his house not far from Venice when workmen accidentally unearth a macabre grave. The human corpse is badly decomposed, but a ring found nearby proves to be a first clue that reopens an infamous case of kidnapping involving one of Venice's most aristocratic families. Only Commissario Brunetti can unravel the clues and find his way into both the heart of patrician Venice and that of a family grieving for their abducted son.

A Noble Radiance Details

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Author : Donna Leon

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From Reader Review A Noble Radiance for online ebook

Sharyn says

I can't believe I have come so late to Brunetti. I am going to Venice in Sept. and decided to read and listen to them. I also found a TV show (German with English subtitles, filmed mostly in Venice) so I am not reading in order but as I can get them. (Tomorrow I will watch this show) I love the philosophical discussions, the home life, the meetings with his boss, the humor and most of all Venice!! The mysteries are secondary, but learning how Italians look upon different parts of the country is interesting, and also that there is a Venetian dialect. The religious discussions, the difference in the aristocrats, the corruption!! One of my favorite lines, not from this book, but another, Argentine bureaucracy makes Italy look like Switzerland, sums up the kind of humor in the books. Brunetti and his wife are smart and engaging, his love of his children is sweet and the books themselves are "not put downable".

Tony says

A NOBLE RADIANCE. (1998). Donna Leon. ****.

This is another episode from the career of Commissario Guido Brunetti based in Venice. As we enter the plot, we learn of the discovery of a man's body that had been buried in farm land in an area about 100 miles north of the city. The body had essentially decomposed, but a ring was found in the same shallow grave. The ring bore the crest of the wealthy Lorenzoni family. Their son had been kidnapped a little over two years earlier, but had never been returned to them – even after they had offered to pay the ransom. Brunetti takes over the case, but is initially stymied. The son worked with his father and cousin in small ways, acting as a courier and go-between in many deals. He was always used in small ways because he did not have the same level of business acumen of his father or cousin. Brunetti spends a lot of time looking for potential suspects in the murder, and we are treated to a police procedural tempered with the traditional respect for titles held by most Italians – especially older Italians. Ms. Leon manages to keep us on track with Brunetti's investigation into the death of the son, letting us learn of each new clue as it is discovered. Leon is a master of plot, and shows off her skill in this novel. I am continually impressed with her books by the way she manipulates the reader without having it show. This is a good example of her writing skills, and I can heartily recommend this book.

annapi says

A body is discovered when a field is plowed, and it turns out to be that of a young man who was kidnapped two years before and never found. Now the case is re-opened and Brunetti investigates the prestigious and wealthy Lorenzoni family, tearing off the scars on old wounds.

This has been so far the most disquieting book of the series for me. Though I never really attempt to solve the mystery on my own, my early suspicions turned out to be correct, although I couldn't figure out the motive. It wasn't gory, but the whole affair was sordid and just quietly horrible. I think that Leon's writing was clearly intending to project this mood to her readers, which is the same funk that her detective falls into, and it's a testament to her skill that she succeeds. I also like the title's play on words.

I'm eating up these books like chips, they're addictive!

Isabelle says

I read the novel in a couple of days easily enough but without great pleasure. It is neither good nor bad, neither captivating nor boring... what else could I possibly say?

Alex is The Romance Fox says

A Noble Radiance, the 7th novel and an interesting addition to Donna Leon's amazing and thought provoking Guido Brunetti Series.

Guido Brunetti, the intelligent and intellectual Venetian Commissario is called in to investigate the findings of a decomposed male body found in a shallow grave by workmen in a home just outside Venice. The body is identified as Roberto Lorenzoni, the son of Count Lorenzoni, a member of the Venetian aristocratic society, who had been abducted two years earlier and had never been found or any ransom being paid.

Brunetti suspects that the family had something to do with the disappearance of Roberto and the more he learns about the Lorenzoni's family secrets and dubious businesses ventures and as he untangles the clues that are brought to light, the more he realizes that the kidnapping was just the tip of the iceberg in the investigation.

As Brunetti observes the pain and loss of the Lorenzoni family, he reflects on what his wife and children and family mean to him....

"Brunetti's thoughts went from Paola's happiness to his own, and he surprised himself by realizing that it had never before occurred to him to wonder whether he was happy or not. In love with his wife, proud of his children, capable of doing his job well, why would he worry about happiness, and what more than these things could happiness be comprised of?"

Brunetti's relationship with his father-in-law, Count Orazio Falier, is changing and Brunetti begins to see another side of him that he had never seen before.

Politics, corruption and the different sides of justice in Italy, where the law is manipulated and used by the powerful and rich society for their own gains.

Signorina Elettra is someone that I grow to like more and more as I get to know her. There's something about her....mysterious, smart...yes, a hacker.....funny and kind hearted and understanding. When Brunetti tells her about the pain of Roberto's mother on hearing about his body being discovered.....

'The poor mother,' Elettra said and then added, 'I wonder if she's religious.'

'Why?'

'It helps people when terrible things happen, when people die.'

'Are you?' Brunetti asked.

‘Per carità,’ she said, pushing the idea back towards him with raised hands. ‘The last time I was in church was for my confirmation. It would have upset my parents if I hadn’t done it, which was pretty much the same for all my friends. But since then I’ve had nothing to do with it.’

‘Then why did you say that it helps people?’

‘Because it’s true,’ she said simply. ‘The fact that I don’t believe in it doesn’t prevent it from helping other people. I’d be a fool to deny that.’

This is a sad and emotional and very touching story.

Marina Maidou says

First of all I must say I like this writer's books for one reason: they take place in Venice. The stories are interesting, unexpected and logic. But to be honest, I most like when she describes the life of inspector Brunetti and the problems he has with his family, as the comic times he has with ridiculous Patta or with the fantastic secretary Miss Elettra Zorzi, than the crime itself. That stays in my mind after I read her novels, not who was the murderer and why he/she did it. In fact I find sometimes the unbelievable thing that happens in her crime novels: at first I can always guess who did but in the end I become really confused what really happened until the murder. There is so much innuendo in the final pages of the mystery, that I am really tired to find what they say. But Venice is very nice viewing from her novels so I continue to search her foggy mysteries.

Gerald Sinstadt says

As I close this book I reflect on mixed reviews from other readers. Among the disappointed are those who complain of slow pace and a plot which is often virtually static. True, but they bought the wrong book. Donna Leon doesn't aspire to write another Italian Job; she is interested in moral issues, in personal relationships, in truth and justice and corruption. For example, she can deal perceptively with the fur trade in a couple of paragraphs, leave the reader thoughtful before turning the page. Her novels tend to have texture rather than line, and it is easy to believe that to be true of police work.

Devotees may regret that in *A Noble Radiance* there is less of Venice itself than in the earlier books, but that is compensated by further insights into the character or the Brunetti family. They feel more and more like real people who cook, worry about children, squabble and make up within the context of a family whose lives are touched by the Commissario's often unpleasant job.

Plotwise, the noble Lorenzoni's push the boundaries of credibility but just about survive. The coincidence of the role played by Brunetti's brother is crucial and artfully planted early; many a mystery story has relied on the device but it leaves a faint feeling of cheating. And not for the first time, Signorina Elettra, with her contacts and her computer, proves to be the most capable detective in the Questura. But she is a secretary - and one whose generous disposal of public funds at the florists might one day merit a thought or two from Brunetti himself.

A Noble Radiance is a good book which, read with the right expectations, will entertain and provoke.

Jeanette says

There is no mention of any Brunetti or associate until page 18. And it was superb. 4.5 star in every category, not just the beginning. Plot (yes, there is real heinous crime), voice, continuity, conversational flow, characters melding within connection- all of it. Formerly I noted in my successive Brunetti reviews that I was reading them out of order (completely hodgepodge) and that the very best were all within the last 10. Most are, but this Noble Radiance is certainly the one exception to that rule. For inclusion into the "top 5" category out of 25 novels by Donna Leon in Brunetti series of 25, this one is definitely in that elite group. And by some reckonings, might even be in the top 3. I'd say exactly #4 (fourth best) and I only have one more to read. POOR ME! What will I do without my fix of the Veneto. And the reasoning of Guido and Elettra to season my thoughts!

Yes, there is the skillful dichotomy of Italian "Justice" revealed. And the pathways by which the powerful and monetary can entwine. And what that immense "luck" might produce. And also the asides of observation by all of the Brunetti's and in-laws, especially the Count, his father-in-law were not only compelling of intellectual interest but psychologically core to the Italian perception of authority. And more. And more. And more.

Never forgetting that luncheon that might be "best in the series" running all by itself, that Guido had with his father-in-law at the elder's favorite secret place- as a setting for both inquiry and "Father-in-law concerned about his daughter" TALK. And God save me, Guido hates small piles of what I call "tortured" food in 5 star arrangement too! I would have went with the bream as he did, instead of the "coda". But give me a separate dish for the tiny clam shells.

Also, if that were not enough- going to the farmlands on the mainland North of Venice and close to Austria- the regional interplay also became fantastically notched too here. With Patta squirming because of all the money men and power brokerage paths in which he could get solidly caught within the very cracks.

Here was a history to uncover for a "star couple" that was enthralling, as well. And their homes and all that travel. Just the passport of the "vic" was enough for a 4 star read!

And Paola had some bones to throw too. Some of them actually contained a thread of meat. As in what morality "is" and when the death sentence is essential? But more so a kernel of absolute insight when Guido thoughts lead to the observation that the law only contains and punishes what is AGAINST THE LAW. The "bads" that are unlawful. But that formerly religion curtailed the "bads" that were not against the law, but at times, more harmful.

Of course, this is a hard book to review. Because the criminal perp is truly evil. And the outcomes are far more than just unfortunate in societal collapse. And more murder ensues.

This is a really good Leon. Guido matures here.

You know, after reading so many I am getting skilled at recognizing a Leon theme. She loves to relate how this one or that one has no belief but still "loves" the magic or the ritual or the tradition of the forms for religion. So she can then discount faith as a mere voluntary whim or superstitious habit- like loving a certain form of music or the visuals of a ceremony admired.

Oh of course, the Palermo natives who now work in Venice or Milan are slow to the direction that this one takes. As usual. But there are also some extra special under character descriptions too. The victim, his mother and several of the "hear-say" witnesses are pure 5 star.

There's much more of Leon reaching into the core of Italian governmental, cultural, economic that I could type in length upon. And at least 6 or 7 fine quotes to list next after that which were perception incredible. But I won't. It (paperback copy this time) had to go back and I don't have the time.

But this one is a gold nugget disguised within a bluish glowing color? That doesn't make sense? Read this one and find out how it does.

Austra says

Donna Leona ir autore, pie kuras es atgriežos ikreiz, kad gribu palasīt k?du klasisku detekt?vgabalu, kur ir noziegums, ir izmekl?t?js un ir izmekl?šana. Bez vis?diem liekiem pribambasiem, tb spiegiem, maniakiem un p?rm?r?ga alkohola pat?ri?a. Tiesa, Brunetti s?rij? finišs bieži vien ir bez soda, jo - korupcija, mafija un tml., kas liedz spriest taisnu tiesu. Bet nu jau pie t? ir pierasts, un š? bija v?l viena jauka atgriešanās Ven?cij?, kur, protams, atkal k?ds tika atrasts beigts un pagalam.

Madeline says

Oh Donna Leon, I wish I knew how to quit you.

Seriously guys, I can't fully explain what keeps me coming back to her books. The mysteries are never as good as the synopses make them sound, the stories are full of useless filler scenes to increase the page count, Guido Brunetti's investigative technique is less "actual investigating and action scenes" and more "doing lots of phone interviews", and none of it is terribly riveting.

But then again: Venice. The setting is what makes these books. The way Leon knows and understands this city - the people, the geography, the politics, the overall *feel* of Venice - is nothing short of intimate, and no matter how lackluster her actual stories can be, I always enjoy seeing Venice through her eyes. I just wish the mysteries were a little better.

This one's not too bad, all things considered. The story starts when the partially-decomposed body of a young man is found in a shallow grave on farmland outside the city. Found on the body: a ring with the crest of an old noble Venetian family. The body is identified as Roberto Lorenzoni, who was kidnapped two years before. Brunetti suspects that the original kidnapping may have been orchestrated by someone within the family, and starts digging into the Lorenzoni's dirty secrets.

It could have been a lot more explosive, as far as I'm concerned - characters were so reluctant to say definitively that the body was Roberto that I was hoping the big twist would be that the body *wasn't* him and that he had pulled a Harriet Vangar and switched places with a relative, but unfortunately this did not happen. Pointless scenes with Brunetti's family still intrude on the investigation (this time, we get an in-depth look at the daughter learning to make ravioli) but they are at least slightly relevant here, because the scenes make Brunetti consider what would happen if it was one of *his* children who had gone missing, so it at least

connected to the main storyline. Less relevant is the two-page conversation he has with a colleague about insurance plans, but we can't have everything.

The solution to the mystery and ending are, in typical Leon fashion, less than satisfying, but at least this time Brunetti figures everything out on his own instead of having the solution handed to him by someone else. So altogether, not a terrible installment of the Brunetti adventures. Just the usual sense that something is missing.

Monica says

This is #7 in Donna Leon's Commissario Brunetti series. For me, they just keep getting better and better all the time. In this book, Brunetti finds resolution to a kidnapping that happened two years previously. He digs into the past and present of a well known Venice family, making his usual intimate disturbances along the way so that he find justice for the long dead Roberto.

Another Goodreads member reviewed this book, saying that many people who read Donna Leon find her books slow paced and the plot often static.

I totally agree with him. Donna Leon novels are not fast paced and they lack what many people want in a book...constant action. But they have something to me that is much more important when reading any book...the ability to make me think. I adore sitting down with one of Leon's books and submerging myself in the life of Brunetti...the way he thinks, what he feels, his strength of character to uphold morals and justice at the cost of himself feeling uncomfortable and making other people question their own humanity.

Cherie says

To begin with, I have to confess that I love Venice. So any story that takes place there is likely to please me. Also, I love a good whodunit. Nothing's better for curling up with and relaxing. Still, Donna Leon's stories have something special. Maybe it's her detective, Commissario Brunetti. He's an extremely wise and cool person. A murder mystery's effectiveness depends on the personality of the detective, and Brunetti is extremely simpatico. Maybe it's the way her ripped-from-the-E.U.-headlines plots examine aspects of contemporary life that we don't like to look at, lay bare the ugliness of society, and yet leave you feeling hopeful for the human race. Actually, I think it's because it's through the eyes of Brunetti and his unforgettable friends and family that we observe these things. Riding along in his boat is a bit like following Virgil through the Inferno: you know you will witness the very worst of human nature, but you'll be safe, and you're headed for better places.

Sandra says

This mystery from author Donna Leon offers yet another challenging murder for Commissario Brunetti to solve. Very interesting twists and turns in this one as he pulls together bits of information that look as if they're leading nowhere.

Carolyn Mck says

This is an early Donna Leon and has all the hallmarks of her early work: the politics of the police workplace, references to the wider challenges of Italian politics and bureaucracy and descriptions of charmingly decrepit Venice. Then there are the familiar characters and the home life of Guido Brunetti to add a warm and human touch to the darker world of murder investigations. In this story, the body of a young man who was kidnapped some years earlier is found. The plot has all the requisite twists and turns and although I guessed part of the denouement (the title was a bit of a giveaway at about the two-thirds mark) I found the ending both tragic and convincing.

Marguerite Kaye says

I really like Brunetti. I'm not so sure about the murders he's involved in, far too often they are political and 'big business'-y, and not really whodunnits. But Brunetti and his family and the other characters at the police station carry the day. They, and Venice, are why I keep going back for more even when I'm not too bothered about the plot. So I'll be going back again soon.
