



The King's Evil

Edward Marston

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A PERILOUS INVESTIGATION IN THE HEART OF LONDON RAVAGED BY THE GREAT FIRE

September 1666. Meeting in the ashes of a devastated London, Christopher Redmayne, an architect with Cavalier instincts, and Jonathan Bale, a Puritan constable, are hardly kindred spirits. Redmayne dedicates himself to rebuilding the city that Bale believes was destroyed by its own inner corruption.

The two men are thrown together when they catch thieves who are stealing from the house that Redmayne has designed for Sir Ambrose Northcott. The foul murder of Sir Ambrose joins them again, albeit reluctantly, in a complex and dangerous investigation that takes them through the brothels and gaming houses of Restoration London, right to the heart of the King's court.

The King's Evil Details

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Manybooks says

Fun, engaging and historically informative, I especially and gratefully appreciate how Edward Marston, how the author allows the friendship between the two main protagonists, between Christopher Redmayne and Jonathan Bale to progress slowly, organically, and yes, even at times much painfully (and therefore realistically, considering their vast and at first almost insurmountable differences both socially and religiously), that there is not some sudden *deus ex machina* enlightenment of sudden companionship, of sympathy and compatibility of character discovered as if by magic (or by the divine grace).

Redmayne and Bale are conceptualised realistically, with both having (like most individuals would) their good points, their laudable character traits and their faults (and while there are indeed scores of potential villains presented throughout *The King's Evil*, even they for the most part, and generally appear first and foremost as human beings, and not as monster types or caricatures). I guess the only minor quibble I have with *The King's Evil* is that like with most if not actually most of Edward Marston's historical mysteries I have read to, I would have appreciated a bit more length and description (his historical fiction novels always have such interesting premisses and themes, but for me, are usually or at least often rather annoyingly short, with not nearly enough background information presented, or rather worse and frustratingly, background details that are enticingly hinted at, but do not ever quite materialise). Still *The King's Evil* presents a more than promising start to an interesting series, and is highly recommended for fans of historical fiction and historical mysteries (especially mysteries set in the rather limited time frame of the British Restoration, the aftermath of the Great Fire of London, the reign of King Charles II, who is both amusingly and in many ways, accurately portrayed).

Graham says

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Vicky Thomasson says

I've enjoyed Marstons work before (I absolutely love the Elizabethan theatre series) so was looking forward to sinking my teeth into this. I wasn't disappointed, it is a well written novel laced with action and mystery. I love the two unlikely heroes, Christopher and Jonathan and I thought Henry was brilliant. Those who enjoy Historical fiction and action will love this.

henrys-axe says

A decent enough read, closer to a 3.5 rating. An okay plot and characters with a good take on post-Cromwell London. One area that was somewhat annoying was the author's style when relating conversations among characters. Rather than "s/he said..." or "...Christopher exclaimed..." the author used the phrase "...the other said" or "...the other uttered"

This occurred throughout the novel. I found it to a tad bit distracting.

Karen Brooks says

The King's Evil is the first in a series by Edward Marston (who wrote the marvellous Nicholas Bracewell series set in Elizabethan England) set during the Restoration and the early years of Charles II's reign. The year is 1666, immediately after the Great Fire has decimated London and rebuilding is commencing. The book introduces the reader to young and aspiring architect Christopher Redmayne, while the series follows his fortunes and misfortunes. Though blessed with great talent, Redmayne's greatest misfortune appears to be his brother, Henry, a Cavalier reprobate. He's also lumbered with a God-fearing Dean for a father, a man Henry at least, fears more than the Lord Himself.

When thieves are caught ransacking materials from a house Redmayne has been commissioned to build, he's thrown into the company of Jonathan Bale, a Puritan constable who has no time for the likes of Redmayne, let alone his brother. Forced to work together, Redmayne and Bale must solve, not only the mystery of the thieves, but also find who's responsible for murdering the owner of the house Redmayne is building, the rather obnoxious, Sir Ambrose.

Forced to venture into houses of ill-repute – brothels and gaming – wander the crowded, dirty and dangerous streets, endure listening to lies and evasions, and encounter all types of citizens from the highest to the lowest, a grudging respect grows between Bale and Redmayne who find that, despite their wishes, if they want to bring this investigation to a close, two heads are better than one, particularly if they want to remain intact.

Well-written, Marston has a flair for capturing the period and this book is no exception. While Redmayne and Bale are well drawn, the brother, Henry tends to verge on caricature and some of the dialogue lacks the bawdy joy of his earlier series and can be long-winded and forced. Nonetheless, it was a very enjoyable read and I immediately downloaded the next one in the series.

Carole Moran says

This series by Marston is an excellent read. There are six books in this series; this is the first. Set in England's Restoration period, after Cromwell's death and with King Charles II on the throne, the hero Christopher Redmayne relentlessly pursues murders and uncovers mysteries. Redmayne is a Cavalier architect who is doing his part to rebuild London after the Great Fire of 1666, and with the assistance of an able Roundhead constable, Jonathan Bale, is an engaging character with an outrageous brother and an uncertain love life. The plots do not leave a reader of historical novels with a sense of total disbelief, and the relationships are interesting and often entertaining. Well worth a try.

Julie says

Bleargh. Life is too short to read this book.

Pat says

I loved this book. I like mysteries that are set in a time and/or place with which I am totally unfamiliar. This book is set in London after the Great Fire. Christopher Redmayne is a budding architect who wants to be a player in the rebuilding of London. He teams up with Jonathan Bale, a constable, to solve a murder. I felt the "feel" of the book and the settings transported me to a long ago and far away place. I like learning things about what life was like at that time and in that place. I recommend this book.

Lynne says

Enjoyable nonsense, set during the Restoration, featuring a rather too-good-to-be-true architect and all-round Mr Perfect, Christopher Redmayne and Constable Honest Bluff, Jonathan Beale. Regardless, the plot is simple and entertaining enough without falling into the usual sallacious detail beloved of such as Rose Tremain (Merivel and Restoration come to mind). Thankfully, Charles II is a peripheral character this time, although I daresay much more will be seen of the simpering female characters (either whores or wives) in future outings. Another of the Works' purchases in their bargain section.

Kay says

An exceptionally well-written historical mystery, with believable characterisations. Marston's style is flowing and easy to devour, and blessedly free from the tedious pseudo-historical flourishes beloved by many historical fiction writers! The setting of Restoration London is interesting, and there are some similarities with the Chaloner mysteries, but Marston is more historically accurate in terms of his depictions of Puritan life in particular. Interesting for both mystery lovers and history lovers, and well worth reading.

P.D.R. Lindsay says

'The King's Evil' is a reprint of the first of the Christopher Redmayne novels, a historical mystery series set in Restoration England. This is one of Edward Marston's five historical series and each series has a devoted readership. I'm particularly fond of the Victorian Railway Detective, Inspector Robert Colbeck, and the Elizabethan stage manager, Nicholas Bracewell. Marston has a solid grip on his craft and all his books are well written, well researched and a most enjoyable read.

'The King's Evil', first published in 1999, sets the Redmayne series off with a cracking plot and two main characters who are delightfully mismatched. The novel begins with the fire of London slowly taking hold, and Jonathon Bale, the strong minded, monarch-disapproving puritan constable, at work defending his area from its ravages. Christopher Redmayne, the Dean of Oxford's son, newly qualified architect, supporter of the restored monarchy, arrives after the fire, and hopes to rebuild a better, more beautiful London. The pair meet when hunting thieves stealing building materials from the house Redmayne designed, and when Redmayne's employer is murdered they work together to catch the murderer.

It's a nicely convoluted plot, guessing whodunit or whydunnit is not easy, and the ending leaves the reader looking for the next in the series, if only to see how poor Jonathon Bale copes now he has to work for the King. One of the joys of Marston's novels is that light touch of humour and Bale and Redmayne reacting to each other can make a reader laugh out loud. Highly recommended.

Joanne Wood says

To be honest it's more 4 and a half but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. An enjoyable mystery and characters I rather liked but the solution, while feasible, was a bit of a stretch from the information we had. I shall, nevertheless, be moving on to the next book with all speed. lol

Stevie Carroll says

I had mixed feelings about this one. The mystery was interesting enough, but I couldn't quite believe in Christopher as a man of his time. Not a series that I'm desperate to keep following.

Vicki says

I really enjoyed this book because it is a light read and is not too demanding on the little grey cells. The sense of period and place is not as good as other authors (Gregory or Sanson for instance), but it is an easy read with likeable characters. The protagonists of the story give a feel for the social and political extremes of the time - the Royalist gentleman, the Roundhead parish constable and his Quaker neighbour as well as the hedonism of the wealthy of Restoration London.

John William Boundy says

Thoroughly enjoyable book, good pace, well developed plot. Look forward to the rest of the series.
