



Crucible of Secrets

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It is Midsummer, 1631. While Alexander Seaton and his fellow masters enjoy the holiday with their students, Robert Sim, librarian of Marischal College, is murdered in a dark alleyway in town. While the university and town authorities investigate the murder, Seaton is asked by the college principal to look into Sim's private life. In the course of an investigation in which his personal feelings threaten to cloud his judgement and endanger his young marriage to Sarah, he discovers a side to the librarian he could never have guessed at.

Crucible of Secrets Details

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Author : Shona MacLean

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From Reader Review Crucible of Secrets for online ebook

Chris Stanley says

This third book in the Alexander Seaton series is riveting. The pace is much slower than A Game of Sorrows, which is my favourite out of the three books, but it's gripping from the first page. I was not overly impressed when I discovered a plot line with yet another "secret society", but my reaction was premature and very wrong.

This book will treat you to some favourite characters from the earlier books, a few red herrings, exceptional historical research and great writing skills.

I'm keen to know whether Shona MacLean will write more in this series; Alexander is such a lovely character!

Lee Dunning says

My favourite of the series so far. I was gripped from start to finish. You can definitely see an author honing their craft over the three books. Can't wait for more

Waterstoneswalsall says

An enthralling historical mystery set in 17th Century Aberdeen. I really liked the first book in this series, wasn't so keen on the second one, but this third one is really, really good.

Silke says

The book is atmospheric and contains a well paced and interesting story.

I thoroughly enjoyed following Alexander Seaton once again when he is trying to solve a murder and navigate through his personal life. The latter also initiated the return of a character I really liked in the first book and who voiced some of the things I would have liked to tell Alexander myself.

A.M. Dean says

Must say that I thoroughly enjoyed this book (I read the newer edition, entitled just 'The Crucible' in eBook format), which came as a pleasant surprise as I'd known nothing about it, the author or her earlier works, and was launched into the world of Old Aberdeen with no expectations whatsoever. Any that I could have had, however, would have been met: the book is atmospheric, erudite, wonderfully situational and pleasantly comic in places -- all whilst being a 'whodunnit'-style murder mystery set in post-Reformation Scotland, with a compelling degree of actual mysteriousness.

It is, in my experience, fairly rare that period-based mysteries work out well; but 'The Crucible' is one that

does, and I found myself quite entranced by the read. Characters are well drawn, and the first-person narration (which can so easily become distracting and contrived) worked well, drawing me into Alexander Seaton's mind and thoughts easily.

My sole criticism of the book (*spoiler alert here; skip this paragraph if you've not yet read the book*) is that the ending so trounces and eradicates the supposed build-up of the whole novel. To spend 90% of the novel being drawn into the secretive world of the Masons and their rituals, etc., only to find out in the final chapters that none of this had anything actually to do with the murder and was just a distraction -- this I found to be rather disappointing, and I thought the author could easily have kept the nature of the crime and its villain the same, without being quite so dismissive of all the reader had invested in this second storyline.

But that said, it is a wonderful read, highly recommended, and I shall be reading more of MacLean's works.

Lisa says

A really excellent read, combining knowledge of 17 century Aberdeen with an intriguing 'whodunnit' plot that encompasses the secret rituals of the Stonemason's with secrets of the characters. I didn't guess 'whodunnit' but loved the descriptions and details of a past time. Will be on the lookout for the previous 2 novels now.

Pamela says

An intriguing murder mystery set in 17th century Aberdeen, touching on secret brotherhoods and alchemy. This author has been compared with CJ Sansom and Hilary Mantel - this novel lacks the attention to detail and esoteric knowledge of the period found in their works, but it is an enjoyable read nonetheless.

Karen says

Okay yarn, made better by the local setting. The first book was still the best

Sarah says

I bought this book from a charity shop and didn't know it was the last in a series so that may have coloured my enjoyment of it. I found it a little dull, the pace seemed quite slow to me and even when we knew the 'secret' it was a bit of a let down. I didn't hate it and I certainly wouldn't say that the writing was in any way bad, but it just didn't make me care about any of the characters. It was all a little bit meh for me. Perhaps the other books enhanced this one and that's why it was so flat but there you have it.

Joelle Gilbert says

The first book in the series was excellent, the second even better and this is even better than that!!!

Richard Whittle says

This is good stuff. I remember seeing it a few years ago, displayed by Waterstones alongside the Da Vinci Code - and for that reason I didn't buy it (having bought and read the latter and felt like throwing it in the bin).

My son recently moved house, and while helping him to pack I found Crucible of Secrets. It is not the Da Vinci Code, it is nothing like it - and it should never have been displayed with it for the simple reason that it is a well written and believable novel.

I like the author's way of using 'old English' dialogue. Or 'old Scottish', perhaps, as it is set in Aberdeen. I look forward to buying more by MacLean. So many books these days aren't worth the paper they are printed on, and it is good to find another author to put on my 'To Read' list.

Margareth8537 says

Audiobook read by David Monteith

The Alexander Seaton books seem to divide people - you either like them or you don't. At times they can seem quite slow moving, which is strange as actually quite a lot happens in them. In this one, Seaton is asked to investigate a murder to ensure the good name of his college does not come into disrepute. More incidents follow, while Alexander has his usual personal crises to face. He is lucky in his friends.

Every now and then Shona MacLean gets us rather bogged down in the Rosicrucians, but her descriptions of a period notorious in Scottish history for its witchhunts is quite fascinating

Roberta says

OMG! I just saw that there is a #4 in this series, The Devil's Recruit. The first one in the series took me forever to read because I could barely read one page before I fell asleep. But these books came very highly recommended and it was sort of exciting that the main character had my not-very-common surname. I asked the recommender if the second and third book were any less boring and he assured me that they got better. I managed to slog through the second one although I couldn't care less about any of the characters. Now, reading the third in the series, I am liking the characters a little better and it is either less boring or I have developed a resistance because I am able to read several pages before falling asleep.

Cynthia says

Good historical fiction set in Scotland in the 1600's.

Alan Thomson says

I really enjoyed this book. I have read the 2 preceding books in the series and was keen to read this and it kept up the excellent standard. Very well written in both content and style and a great plot. I don't understand how readers could not be hooked into reading this avidly but I guess that is the subjectivity of art. I'm off to read the 4th and last in the series!
