



The Insanity of Murder

Felicity Young

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The fourth engrossing mystery in the acclaimed Dr Dody McClelland series, featuring Britain's first female autopsy surgeon.

To Doctor Dody McClelland, the gruesome job of dealing with the results of an explosion at the Necropolis Railway Station is testing enough. But when her suffragette sister Florence is implicated in the crime, matters worsen and Dody finds her loyalty cruelly divided. Can she choose between love for her sister and her secret love for Chief Inspector Matthew Pike, the investigating officer on the case?

Dody and Pike's investigations lead them to a women's rest home where patients are not encouraged to read or think and where clandestine treatments and operations are conducted in an unethical and inhumane manner. Together Dody and Pike must uncover such foul play before their secret liaisons become public knowledge - and before Florence becomes the rest home's next victim.

The Insanity of Murder Details

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From Reader Review The Insanity of Murder for online ebook

Marianne Locke says

Aside from the fact I want to kick all the male characters in the nutts, I still really enjoy this series.... 4 down. 1 to go. ?

Dana says

This whole series is fabulous. Dody seems to be getting braver and bolder with age. I look forward to reading many, many more of these mysteries. Hats off to Ms Young.

Phrynne says

Number 4 in the series and very enjoyable except that Florence is back being as silly as ever. More silly really since this time she is blowing up parts of London with dynamite. I am not sure how that was supposed to demonstrate that women were smart enough to get the vote but apparently it was one of the many things the Suffragettes did.

That apart most of the book deals with mental asylums and the awful treatments dealt out to women who were frequently suffering from nothing more than depression. The author tends to the melodramatic but it is all informative and makes a very good story. Dody and Matthew continue their secret love affair and all is right with the world.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

When the Necropolis Railway Station is blown is it up Doctor Dody McClelland to deal with all the bodies that have been blown up. She must find out if anyone was killed in the explosion or if it is only corpses. And, to make matters worse, it seems that one of the people behind the blast could be her sister Florence, a very well-known suffragette. Will she stand by her sister side no matter what, especially when it's her lover Chief Inspector Matthew Pike that is handling the case.

I have been curious about the series for a while now and I could not resist requesting the book when I saw that the latest book was available at NetGalley. And, now I'm really happy that I did.

This series takes place in the Edwardian era and women's role in the society is limited and it's interesting to get to know Dody, a female doctor. The suffragette moment is striving for equality for women and both Dody and Florence are fighting the fight in different ways. While Dody is a doctor is Florence a bit more radical and she does get in a lot of troubles in this book.

I found the case in this book really interesting, you get an insight into women's rest home, where women that are “unstable” is placed, often against their will. Dody, Matthew, and Florence must uncover the truth about a woman's death, and if there are any links to the rest home where she had escaped from.

The romance between Matthew and Dody were handled well, they have to keep their relationship a secret since marriage and working as a doctor is out of the question for Dody and although she loves Matthew she just can't give up her work for him. But that doesn't mean that she sometimes regret the decision to turn down Matthews marriage proposal.

The book was really good, a great mix of crime, romance, and social injustice.

Thanks to the publisher and NetGalley for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

I look forward to each new installment of Felicity Young's historical mystery series featuring Dr Dody McClelland, autopsy surgeon. The Insanity of Murder is the fourth book in the series which continues to impress me with its rich period detail, strong characterisation and interesting plots.

The Insanity of Murder begins with an explosion set by the suffragette's at London's 'Necropolis Railway'. With a watchman badly injured, Dody is horrified when Florence is arrested for the crime, afraid that a regime of force feeding in prison will destroy her sister. While Dodie and Pike do their best to protect Florence from the worst consequences of her behaviour, it's the witness to the bombing that captures their attention. Initially mistaken for a vagrant, they discover the elderly woman is Lady Mary Heathridge, who has escaped from the ladies 'rest' home where she is confined, in search of a missing friend.

The main plot then involves Dody and Pike's ensuing discrete investigation into The Elysium Rest Home for Gentlewomen where they suspect the attending doctor is performing illegal and possibly experimental treatments on the women entrusted to their care. Florence, benefiting from new laws regarding the incarceration of suffragettes, decides to help by getting herself sent to the home, but instead finds herself in grave danger. The plight of these women, several of whom have simply been discarded by husbands and families, is chilling, treated in horrific ways for their 'hysterical' behaviour.

I did feel the story was a little diluted however. Pike is distracted by his daughter, Violet, who is trying to convince her father to let her study nursing, his secret involvement in shaping a new law, and politics at play in Scotland Yard. Naturally Dodie's main worry is for her sister, concerned by the suffragette movements increasingly violent and dangerous protests, but her relationship with Pike is also on her mind.

Still, the writing is of its usual high standard, and the pace is good. The historical detail is fascinating, of note here is the death of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison at the 1913 Epsom Derby.

As with the previous books in the series, The Insanity of Murder is an interesting and engaging read. And I will be looking forward to the next.

Hilary says

When politics comes into play, loyalties are divided between family and friends, love and law, and this proves no exception.

You'll find suffragettes as you've never seen them before, discover a new understanding of the Cat and Mouse Act, and see the spotlight shone on women's lives under George V. (They could attend university but not be awarded the degree, they could hold a job in their own right but otherwise might just as well be labeled chattels. "Rest homes" (fancy asylums) were very convenient ways to dispose of inconvenient wives, and it's ironic that the higher proportion of women made the [male] psychiatrists convinced that there were more problems with women, rather than noting that only men had the easy right to lock away a spouse!)

But rather than concentrating solely on the injustices purported by both men and women, we see society's view through expectations and the more traditional male viewpoint as well, carefully and appropriately alluded to through Pike, helping to keep it all in context.

I enjoyed both the history and the mystery, which had a few edge-of-the-seat moments. These are lighter reading than Anne Perry but don't expect fluff! I hadn't read the first three books, but wasn't mystified by the plot or characters. (I'll be going back to read them though, for my own pleasure!)

Disclaimer: I received a free copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Kerrie says

Australian writer Felicity Young has certainly grown as a crime fiction author and this latest offering in the Dody McClelland series brims with confidence and authenticity. I have somehow missed reading #3 and feel that is an omission I must rectify.

Dody McClelland works as an assistant to Dr Bernard Spilsbury and is right at the centre of the suffragist world. If she is not present, then her lover Inspector Pike is, and between them they are a formidable pair. Besides being a murder mystery, the novel does a good job of presenting the injustices of a world where women lack equality and where males can deal with unwanted females in the most radical manner.

If you like authentic history in your crime fiction then give this series a go.

Greg Barron says

Dody McClelland is back! The *Insanity of Murder* blends history, mystery and murder into an unforgettable story. As always, Young's prose is tight and descriptive, placing the reader vividly in turn-of-the-century London. There are some great set-pieces that had me leaning forward in my seat, such as the near drowning along with horrific scenes at the asylum and the heart-stopping finale. I remembered some of the suffragette protest incidents from high school history lessons which was an added bonus.

The *Insanity of Murder* is a pleasure to read from start to finish and should appeal to a wide range of readers, particularly fans of writers such as Kerry Greenwood.

Carolyn says

Yet another excellent episode in the series featuring forensic surgeon Dody McClelland. The year is 1913 and Dody, assistant to Britain's chief pathologist, Bernard Spilsbury, has been called in to help identify a number of bodies blown up in the bombing of the Necropolis Railway, used to transport bodies for burial at various London cemeteries. When Dody's suffragette sister Florence is implicated in the bombing and sent to prison, Dody's friend and lover Inspector Matthew Pike helps to get her released and Florence books herself in to a rest home for the mentally insane to avoid future imprisonment.

Felicity Young's books are a wonderful mix of cosy crime, historical fiction and social commentary. Her research is impeccable, with the books often featuring real events and characters and a very authentic feeling Edwardian era. In this episode, the author explores 'rest homes' for the insane and in particular women suffering from 'hysterical conditions' and the injustice of their treatment. Another excellent look at Edwardian society through the eyes of Young's intelligent and unusual heroine, Dody McClelland told by an insightful author who would surely have been a suffragette herself had she lived in Britain 100 years ago.

With thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an e-copy of the book to read and review

Tracey says

I did not have high expectations for this book (received from Netgalley for an honest review, with thanks), I have to admit. But I had already picked up the previous in the series as an Amazon deal, and I thought I'd try this. It sounded promising: in the aftermath of a bombing in London comes investigation into disappearances at a women's "rest home".

I love period mysteries – except when I hate them. The writing and setting have to be exceptional in order for one to stand out. There have been an awful lot of semi-cozy mysteries set in this rough time period featuring plucky young women who are either nobly not working or working very pluckily in jobs women don't commonly do. I can't criticize the fact that Miss Felicity Young of turn of the century London is a coroner, as she's based on the author's ancestor. Improbable as I might find her position, it's based in fact, and that's that.

What I really dragged my heels over, which for all I know is also based in fact but which I also found improbable, was Constable Singh. I find it difficult to swallow that at this time period (1913, based on events) an Indian gentleman complete unto turban would even be able to secure a place in the police department, much less be given any level of command: "Singh's in charge with Hensman as his assistant." To be sure, he does not have an easy time of it; my hunch, though, is that it would have been much worse, if it *was* at all.

The highly irregular relationship between Felicity and CDI Pike ...I get it, and I'm okay with it. But not when his daughter is in the house. For these two to leave her practicing music on the ground floor and go up to her bedroom and lock the door and ... no. This is not acceptable. This is a recipe for disaster, is what it is.

Here be spoilers for a historical event – skip the next paragraph if you want to be surprised by what happens at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

The incident of Emily Wilding Davison's suicide came up in the book, and steam began to puff gently from my ears. I was at a full boil by the end of the chapter. There is, and was in the book, apparently some dissent over whether she intended to let herself be run over by the king's horse that day, or whether it was supposed to be just a "brave" demonstration. Apparently, according to the Guardian, she was trying to tie a suffragette banner to the horse's bridle. (<http://www.theguardian.com/society/20...>) What a moron. A racehorse running at full speed. I'm sorry, if you're stupid enough to walk out onto a racetrack filled with steel-shod horses running at 35 mph+, you're asking for what happens to you. It's like committing suicide by cop, or stepping in front of a train – I don't care what your motivation is, forcing someone else to be the means of your death is one of the more heinous things any human being can do. Kill yourself in some spectacular manner – more power to you. Involve others, or destroy property? You've lost any sympathy I might have ever had. For this woman to take the risk of not only killing herself but killing the jockey, the horse, and any jockeys and horses coming up behind (there were at least two, from the pictures)... was this supposed to inspire support for the Cause? How could they think that it would inspire anything but utter loathing?

The horse did a somersault, on top of the jockey. I am not trying to be amusing when I point out that horses are not meant to somersault. Nor do jockeys benefit from being landed on by horses.

Take my reaction to this event, and multiply it by a factor of 10 to get my reaction to setting a bomb to make a point. This isn't activism. This is terrorism. It's perfectly black and white in my mind: like riots after a police shooting or crashing a plane into a building, this is unconscionable. No one person or group of people has any right to destroy the lives or livelihoods of anyone else, for any reason. Lovely, fine, you're setting your explosive device in a place you expect to be deserted. That's peachy. However, the ... ladies placing the bomb seem to have neglected to actually watch the location, or do any research, because they managed to kill a night watchman. In addition, they managed to mangle dozens of bodies waiting in that building for burial – forcing dozens of families to endure a hideous experience very shortly after the already awful experience of losing a loved one.

I hope this book wasn't intended in any way to inspire respect and pride for the suffragette movement. In me it inspired loathing and contempt, and made me ashamed for my gender. I think my disgust for the idiots setting the bomb in this book became diluted as events flowed on and went in another direction. Writing this has brought that disgust back to full strength. I want them in prison, and then hanged. Spoiler: this is not likely to happen. The idea that our main character's sister is one of the idiots setting said bomb – and that she's ever so sorry about the death but really it's all for a good cause and the reader will certainly understand and dear Dody will cover it all up and make every use of her influence on her detective ... No.

The rest of the story that arises from the sister's involvement in the bombing and her installation in a women's "rest home", where nefarious doings are being done, feels like a whole different book.

Comma splices bug me to a possibly unreasonable degree. "Indeed, she had not chosen autopsy surgery, more like it had chosen her." Stop that. There's no earthly reason that couldn't be two sentences – or one, joined with a semi-colon or a dash. "The law was like a pendulum, sometimes she swung towards the truth and sometimes she swung in the opposite direction." STOP IT.

I was going to say that I didn't love or hate this book, and that I previously picked up one of the other books in the series in an Amazon cheapie deal and would consider getting the rest if they were put under my nose in the same way. This has, unfortunately, been one of those times when thinking about the book and stitching

my notes and my thoughts on those notes into a review has made me reevaluate my rating. My irritation (and anger) with the characters (from fornication in very nearly the presence of one's daughter to blowing people up in order to get the vote), and my irritation with what I can only see as sloppy writing, have come to outweigh any liking I had for the book. I will probably, eventually, read the other book I unfortunately bought; I don't see myself buying any more.

There's one line I made a note of, and I'm still curious: "After blowing on her gloves to provide extra grip..." How does blowing on one's gloves help with grip?

Brenda says

4.5★s

Called out in the middle of the night to the results of a violent explosion at the Necropolis Railway Station, autopsy surgeon Dr Dody McClelland had no idea how torn her loyalties would be in the next few weeks. Her younger sister Florence, a suffragette fighting for the rights of all women was picked in a line-up as being connected to the bombing – the investigation was being handled by Chief Inspector Matthew Pike, who also happened to be Dody's secret lover.

But when the deepening investigation led to another body and a home for mentally ill women, Dody and Pike realized to their shock that there was much going on behind closed doors; were the unethical and inhumane practices from the past still being practised? Suddenly the clock was ticking with Florence in immense danger – could Dody save her sister? Would they be in time?

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Insanity of Murder* which is my first by Aussie author Felicity Young and #4 in the series. (I will now go back to #1 and read them all) Filled with intrigue and interesting facts about the suffragettes of early London; plus the horrors that all women faced in that era, the character of Dody McClelland was of a woman ahead of her time; strong and dependent yet loyal in the extreme. I have no hesitation in highly recommending *The Insanity of Murder* which is a blend of historical fiction and crime/mystery.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my copy to read and review.

Tara Chevestt says

Dr. Dody is back, and better than ever. While this novel doesn't explore too deeply the prejudice she faces in her line of work (she's a death doctor in Victorian England for those just now hearing about this series), it does explore a different kind of prejudice toward women during those times. There's an epidemic sweeping the country. Women are being declared insane and thrown into institutions where horrific surgeries are performed on them.

Dody's sister Florence plays a huge role in this novel as circumstances lead to her being incarcerated on the inside. Behind the scenes is Dody with her breaking and entering, Pike ready to acquire search warrants, suffragists running in front of the king's horse (real event included in the story), and doctors will ill

intentions.

And that's not all. More drama ensues with the maid's beau, tensions rise at police headquarters, and Violet, Pike's daughter, shows a headstrong side. Dody and Pike continue their romance nevertheless, but it appears their secret is no longer a secret and women did not take lovers and maintain careers both back then. So there's a lot of tension in this story. And did I mention female genital mutilation? Talk about frightening.

Full review and favorite quote: <http://www.bookbabe.blogspot.com/2015/...>

Kara-karina says

While I know I missed a lot happening in the previous two books of this historical mystery series, *The Insanity of Murder* still reads really well on its own. And what a read that is!

It starts with an explosion as a political act on behalf of suffragettes, and of course Florence is involved. However, something goes wrong and Florence is ordered to keep silent about her involvement. She is suspected nonetheless and to avoid dreaded force-feeding (a policy implemented towards suffragettes on hunger strike in prison) fakes mental health problems.

At the same time Dody and Pike's new investigation connects the death of a mentally unstable woman to a certain rest home, and Florence is impulsive enough to try to help them by making her doctor commit her into that same home...

This book might be unhurried but at the same time it's intense and devious in its darkness. Anyone interested in historical fiction might know how little power women had at the time, and Miss Young's books underline that fact in many different ways. Dody is constantly in danger of losing her career and social status if her connection to Pike is uncovered, and while their affair is sweet and almost shy, they have to keep it a secret.

The plight of women in mental asylums is chilling to the bone. There are discarded wives, older relatives, heiresses and generally abused and unhappy women labelled with hysteria and experimented upon by unscrupulous medical professionals in the name of science.

Dody suspects that the rest home under the investigation conducts illegal operations which pretty much mutilate women to "cure" them from hysteria. When Florence goes there undercover, Dody is horrified, and both her and Pike rush things forward to bring their investigation to an end. At the same time there are few subplots happening at the same time, which tend to slowly change Pike's mind on suffragettes' movement.

I found this historical mystery not only delightful, but extremely informative about the dark and desperate side of suffragette movement and other revolutionary groups of the time. Enjoyable, gripping and recommended!

Marlish says

This winning novel is a combination of suspense, intrigue and the fate of women in the early twentieth century. Life for healthy women was hard enough, for those less fortunate such as the mentally ill —life was dire. Often thrown into asylums at the behest of societal norms, women suffered appallingly at the hands of male doctors and surgeons. Meanwhile the suffragette movement and their militant actions were growing. These themes run through —The Insanity of Murder—and make for a gripping read as the heroine Dr Dody McClelland seeks to expose the plight of women. But the Insanity of Murder is also a love story, the developing relationship between Dody and Chief Inspector Pike is handled exquisitely. As is the relationship between Dody and her younger sister, Florence. A great read!

Kagsy Wagsy says

Reading this book made me feel like I'd been transported back in time. The words and phrases used take the reader to a time when everything for the upper and middle classes was so genteel. They had no idea about the hardships of working life, sickness and poverty. Even the insane were treated according to class and privilege. Some gritty topics are discussed in this book, such as FGM, equality, women's rights and suffrage. I would not have picked this genre before reading this book, but I was completely spellbound by the writing style. I thoroughly enjoyed this story, which is beautifully written, gripping and interesting all at the same time. I loved the characters and was immersed in the story.
