



A Curtain Falls

Stefanie Pintoff

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The careers of New York City detective Simon Ziele and his former partner Captain Declan Mulvaney went in remarkably different directions after the tragic death of Ziele's fiancée in the 1904 General Slocum ferry disaster. Although both men were earmarked for much bigger things, Ziele moved to Dobson, a small town north of the city, to escape the violence, and Mulvaney buried himself even deeper, agreeing to head up the precinct in the most crime-ridden area in the city.

Yet with all of the detectives and resources at Mulvaney's disposal, a particularly puzzling crime compels him to look for someone he can trust absolutely. When a chorus girl is found dead on a Broadway stage dressed in the leading lady's costume, there are no signs of violence, no cuts, no bruises—no marks at all. If pressed, the coroner would call it a suicide, but then that would make her the second girl to turn up dead in such a manner in the last few weeks. And the news of a possible serial killer would be potentially disastrous to the burgeoning theater world, not to mention the citizens of New York.

Following on the heels of Stefanie Pintoff's acclaimed and award-winning debut, *A Curtain Falls* is a moody and evocative tale that follows Ziele and his partners as they scour the dark streets of early-twentieth-century New York in search of a true fiend.

A Curtain Falls Details

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From Reader Review A Curtain Falls for online ebook

Lauren says

The sequel to *In the Shadow of Gotham*, this book has one redeeming factor: an interesting premise. Unfortunately, an interesting premise alone does not make for a good novel. The plot is long and rambling (I'm sorry, but when a murder mystery clocks in at almost 400 pages, I expect some complexity and twists). The "twists" that are in this book are so laughably bad that even soap opera writers would be horrified. The characters are flat, flat, flat, and the dialogue is so stilted that a couple of times I stopped reading, guessed the conversation, and was never once surprised. The main character – who is supposed to be a clever male detective – reads like an emotionally-stunted woman with a fashion fetish. The author alternates between anvil-style reminders that this is NYC in 1906 and dialogue and reactions dictated by modern sensibilities. The more I think about this book, the worse it gets. Not recommended.

Sue says

This is the 2nd in the series by Pintoff and I just rushed through it, enjoying the story as I did *In the Shadow of Gotham*. I have to admit another reason I hurried is that I forgot how soon it's due back at the library and I have it on inter-library loan. Seems silly to renew when I knew I would like to read it quickly.

So I put everything else aside....and I'm glad I did. I enjoyed revisiting the same characters as they struggled with another odd series of crimes in New York City demanding all of their individual skills.

I think this will be a series I continue to enjoy. There certainly are enough characters and situations in early 20th century New York to provide many plot lines.

Bethany says

I really enjoyed Ms. Pintoff's 2nd novel. It is a perfect blend of mystery, intrigue and one really connects with the characters. I also liked that there was just a hint of romance, but it did not take away from the story. Stefanie Pintoff is a wonderful writer and one of my favorite mystery authors.

Kelly says

A Curtain Falls by Stefanie Pintoff is the sequel to the Edgar Award finalist *In the Shadow of Gotham*. My book club picked the sequel to read so I needed to tackle this one before the first. I was a little apprehensive, because I thought I would have needed some background, but I needn't have worried. *A Curtain Falls* is a true mystery in its own right and a darn good one at that.

Set in New York City in one of my favorite time periods, the early 1900s, Detective Simon Zeile has been asked to help on another case. A serial killer is on the loose, murdering chorus girls in their theater houses, and arranging them in macabre positions. Zeile is asked to keep details very hush-hush, as all relevant

theaters belong to Charles Frohman, a very wealthy and powerful owner. With his gang of motley assistants, Zeile rushes to solve the case before the next killing.

This is definitely a quick page turner, and I must admit I was not able to predict the ending. While obviously not on the same level as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe, Pintoff succeeds in keeping the reader guessing and building suspense. I look forward to reading *In the Shadow of Gotham* to get to know the history of Simon Zeile.

MY RATING - 4

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Lourdes Venard says

A CURTAIN FALLS returns us to turn-of-the-century New York City, following the debut of this successful series (Pintoff recently won an Edgar award for Best First Novel for *IN THE SHADOW OF GOTHAM*.) This second book is set four months later, in springtime, 1906. Detective Simon Ziele, who lives in Dobson, just north of the city, is called in to help his longtime friend, New York Police Captain Declan Mulvaney.

A Broadway chorus girl has been murdered, and a note left by her body. But it is, in fact, the second such murder – the beginnings of a serial killer? Ziele brings in the two people who helped him in his last investigation, Alistair Sinclair, a criminologist, and Isabella, Sinclair's assistant and the young widow of Sinclair's son. The team also relies on two New York Times reporters – the killer has sent the newspaper a letter. In return for not publishing it, the reporters are given the chance to work closely with police. Investigators soon focus on Timothy Poe, an actor who is concealing a secret. But Ziele believes Poe to be innocent. After being unable to convince Mulvaney to look elsewhere, he decides to carry out his own rogue investigation with Sinclair and Isabella. He and Sinclair also believe the serial killer will strike again – and soon.

The characters and the plot are well done, with a few good twists thrown in, but where Pintoff really excels is in vividly putting the reader into 1906 Manhattan. Not only does she shed information on police procedures – fingerprinting was still a new science, not yet used in courts as evidence, and Ziele relies on a handwriting expert, despite being dubious at first – but we also get marvelous tidbits about the Dakota building, Times Square, Central Park and Broadway. The book is so well-researched that we even get the menu of the day for a famed Fifth Avenue restaurant.

A CURTAIN FALLS is an even stronger book than the first, which had some bumps in plotting. There is also more depth to the characters, and an interesting development in Ziele's personal life which coincides with the investigation. With this book, we have the beginnings of what promises to be a strong series.

Kathy says

I'm loving this series, with its protagonists developing early forms of criminal profiling (before the term was

even invented). In fact, as I read this book, I could almost picture it as an early 1900s version of "Criminal Minds." Well written, interesting characters, and fascinating mysteries.

Doreen Fritz says

2nd in a series, this novel doesn't suffer from the "sequel" weakness. The characters are still strong and continue to develop, and the early-20th-century New York City setting is intriguing. The theater community serves as the focus of this mystery, as a series of murder victims (women) are found all made up and elaborately costumed at theaters -- all owned by one powerful man. Detective Simon Ziele and the criminologist Alistair Sinclair join forces once again to decipher the clues found on and around the bodies, and in the communications from the murderer.

Once again I found the references to the growing field of forensics and crime detection to be fascinating: for example, fingerprinting is so new that although Simon can use the technique to investigate, any results are not admissible in court. Handwriting analysis also plays a part in the investigation -- is it science? or a sham?

Other reviews tell me that "if you like Caleb Carr, you'll like this book." So now I guess I'm headed in the direction of Caleb Carr. Oh, goody! Another new author to explore!

CJ says

The second of Pintoff's novels about Simon Ziele who solves crimes at the beginning of the 20th century. I love the feeling evoked by these books - slightly dark, but with hope that new things are coming. The walks through New York tenement buildings are harrowing, but stepping into Delmonico's for dinner is heavenly. I look forward to reading more from Pintoff.

Jess Clayton says

A great little detective mystery set in NYC in early 1900. All elements of my favorite genre to read!

Teacatweaves says

I really enjoyed this book. It had the suspense of a Sherlock Holmes mystery, and some good plot twists. The personality of the times - turn of the century - were well represented. It wasn't too maudlin, either. Good read, definitely, and I would read more by this author in the future.

sage says

There is nothing more frustrating to me as a reader than an interesting idea mangled by an inept writer. I hated so much of this, and yet that kernel of interest kept me going...to a finale worthy of a terrible soap

opera.

Sage Streck says

I wasn't sure if the second book in this series would be as good as the first, but I'm pleased to say that it was! Pintoff's descriptions of early 20th-century New York City are wonderful, and it is easy for the reader to imagine himself or herself as a character in the story. I am eager to read more of Detective Ziele's adventures with Alistair and Isabella.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

This second book in the Simon Ziele series follows the same pattern as the first, *In the Shadow of Gotham*-basically commit a horrid crime, arrest someone who is obviously not the murderer, then focus on the investigation. It seems that the process is more important than the person. The plot plods along in a series of daily dated entries, days jammed packed with countless activities. Nothing exciting occurs until the last couple of chapters when one learns whodunit and how the mystery is solved. I find this series interesting enough that I will read book 3, but I will check it out from the library.

Chris says

The good - Pintoff does an excellent job at capturing time and place. I loved all the theatre tie ins and detail. That was truly wonderful. The mystery was interesting as was the interplay with the newspaper staff.

So why didn't I finish the book?

Because none of the characters is interesting enough to care about, at least to me.

Robin says

I LOVE this author! She is a blast. These books are set in turn of the century NYC, and though this is well covered territory (Caleb Carr, Rhys Bowen, Victoria Thompson) she really makes it fresh. Her main character is a grieving detective (he lost his fiancée in an infamous ferry accident, referred to in both books) who is interested in the newest methods of detection, with each book spotlighting a different one. This one highlights handwriting analysis, thanks to the author's interest in serial killers who write messages to the police or newspaper. A delightfully complicated but well thought out plot set in NY's fledgling theater district, this book is really a knockout. If you like historicals or police books or both, you'll be in heaven, but Pintoff is simply a great storyteller.
