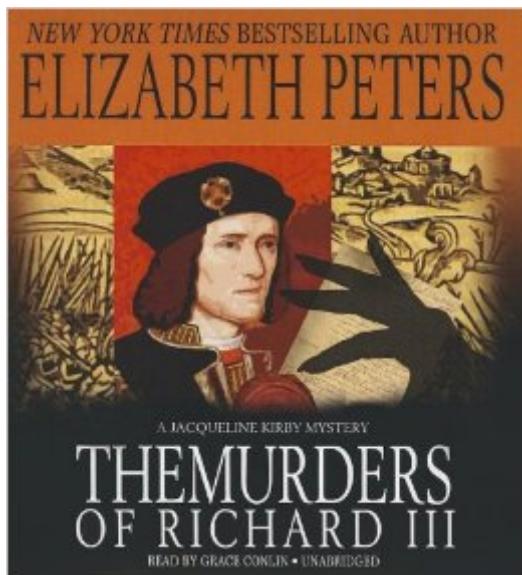


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The Murders Of Richard III (Jacqueline Kirby Mysteries)



Synopsis

American librarian Jacqueline Kirby is invited to an English country mansion for a weekend of role-playing and scholarship centered on King Richard III. Jacqueline is amused at the group's eccentricities--until history begins to repeat itself. A dangerous practical joker begins recreating famous fifteenth-century murder methods--beheading, poisoning, smothering, and even drowning in a butt of malmsey. As the jokes become more and more macabre, one at last proves fatal.

Book Information

Series: Jacqueline Kirby Mysteries (Book 2)

Audio CD

Publisher: Blackstone Audiobooks; Unabridged edition (June 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1470886715

ISBN-13: 978-1470886714

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 5.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (48 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #4,637,279 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (P) > Peters, Elizabeth #8971 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers #15025 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Unabridged

Customer Reviews

The house party mystery is a classic format. Here, Peters takes the format and applies a liberal dose of history as the guests are a group dedicated to clearing the name of Richard III. (Richard is the king whose image is that of the one who killed his nephews.) And while this book is hardly a technical treatise on Richard's innocence, it is an entertaining pitch for that argument. (Josephine Tey's "The Daughter of Time" is a more convincing fictional argument - also a great read.) As the guests wander around in costume and are generally being eccentric, accidents start to happen. Most assume it is just a "joker" trying to disrupt the meeting but Jacqueline Kirby is suspicious. It's a fun, light entertainment as she considers each of the guests as potential suspects -- and then saves the day. Bottom-line: This is the second in Peter's Kirby series. Reading of the first book isn't necessary. This book is a good (not great) read for fans of English history who can appreciate a cast of overblown characters. Amelia Peabody fans may find the book too different for their tastes.

I read this a while ago, but it remains one of my favourite Jacqueline Kirby mysteries. She is involved with a group of Ricardians, eccentrics who are determined to prove the 'innocence' of Richard III, and who happily involve themselves in re-creation activities. Knowing some medieval re-creationists myself, she has the bizarre mix of dedication, surrealism and fanaticism you find associated with these groups down perfectly. The mystery is witty and all that you would expect from a Jacqueline Kirby mystery. The only reason I didn't give it 10 is that I think The Seventh Sinner is even better. I would also recommend the Vicky Bliss and Amelia Peabody stories for those who like their mysteries with unusual flavours.

As a dedicated Yorkist and a member of the Richard III Society, I am constantly reading any work I can find about the Duke of Gloucester. This book is a murder mystery that takes place at a weekend gathering of Ricardians in England. Accidents begin to happen that echo Shakespeare's telling of Richard's alleged murders. Each of the Ricardians in the novel plays a role from the Yorkist period ... one accident has the fellow playing George, Duke of Clarence, bound and stuffed into a barrel (to echo the alleged drowning of the unfortunate Duke in a butt of malmsey). The reading is light and entertaining, and replete with well researched historical information. It's on my Listmania "Ricardian Reader's Library" as a result.

Jacqueline Kirby and her friend, Thomas Carter, are invited to attend an English house party. There will be several days of masquerades and lectures from the Ricardians, a group who believe Richard the III innocent of the libelous crimes that have been associated with him since the 5th century. A letter, sent to one of the members, will be revealed that proves his innocence in the infamous deaths of the two princes in the Tower of London. This setting, complete with a baronial mansion and Edwardian costumes, is perfect for the series of accidents that befall the guests. As always, I enjoyed Elizabeth Peters wit and style but this story is a little too long and somewhat contrived. I lost track of the many characters as they not only used their real names but also the names of the characters they were portraying. There were so many scenes of Jacqueline and Thomas rushing from one floor to another that even I felt exhausted from all those stairs. Elizabeth Peters is one of my favorite authors for good light reading, unfortunately, this book is just not one of her best.

You can certainly tell a difference in Elizabeth Peter's current writing style and what she was writing nearly thirty years ago. The Jacqueline Kirby series was one of two that she was writing almost concurrently (the other being the Vicky Bliss series) and dates before the Amelia Peabody books.

The writing is not as smooth as the Peabody ones but is still enjoyable. In this entry, Kirby is invited to a weekend in an English manor house to look at a letter that is supposed to be sufficient evidence to prove King Richard III of being innocent of killing his two nephews. The members of a Ricardian society are meeting and are playing the roles of someone that played a part in that history. Once there, several members of the party are treated to practical jokes. It was, for me, not too confusing to keep the characters straight; I basically just remembered the characters' real names as opposed to their role-playing character. Jacqueline is able to figure out the culprit behind the practical jokes before it goes too far but, of course, not before the reader is led to believe that something serious has happened. While this series does not live up to the Peabody books, and this book is nowhere in the league of "Daughter of Time" by Josephine Tey, it is quite an enjoyable read and I do really like the main character.

An entertaining re-hash of the arguments in favor of King Richard III not being as black as he's been painted, served up as an "English Country House Mystery". A group of disparate characters have gathered in a somewhat isolated house, for a meeting of an offshoot of the Richard the Third Society. Mayhem and deaths ensue. The case in favor of Richard isn't as fully presented as in Josephine Tey's "The Daughter of Time", but some good points are made. Made somewhat more current by the fact that Richard's skeleton was recently unearthed in Leicester.

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