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Magdalen Nabb

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Two foreign girls are abducted from a Florence piazza in broad daylight. The unusual March snowfall has distracted everyone, even Marshal Guarnaccia, who is unsure of what he has actually witnessed. One of the girls turns up in a village in the Chianti, claiming the kidnappers have released her to propose a ransom for the other victim. But the marshal thinks she's lying. Italian law forbids paying ransom to criminals, and the marshal must find the second girl before her kidnappers decide to end her life.

Death in Springtime Details


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Author : Magdalen Nabb

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From Reader Review Death in Springtime for online ebook

Elaine H says

Another kidnapping in Florence. We meet the smoking Substitute Prosecutor Virgilio Fussari, a Milanese. " 'I'll pick you up at one.' 'But...you haven't a car...?' 'Never use it-unless my registrar drives. Driving interferes with my smoking.' " 23

Joyce Lagow says

3rd in the Marshal Guarnaccia series.[return][return]A young American student is kidnapped in broad daylight in March, during an unusual snowstorm that so distracts the Florentines that the Marshal can not find anyone who witnessed the crime. The kidnapped woman's friend, another foreign student, is released with a message for the victim's parents. Because kidnapping is practically an industry with the Sardinians who occupy the hills surrounding Florence, the carabinieri are well-versed in hostage technique and the difficult job of getting the victim back alive.[return][return]This, then, is the setting. What follows is a fascinating look at Sardinian culture as lived on the mainland, in the mountains around Florence. Enlivening the book no end is the cast of characters. Carrabiniere Bacci appears once again, as his English language skills come in handy in communicating with the kidnapped woman's friend (with the predictable result that he half falls in love with the young woman). A new substitute Prosecutor from Milan is hardly cast in the usual mode, and his cigars and comments add a great deal to the story. Carabinieri life outside the urban area is explored for what it is - getting to know the people, all the details of their lives and habits, the countryside counterpart to Guarnaccia's (himself from a Sicilian peasant family) urban obsession with serving the ordinary people of his Quarter. Captain Maestrangelo, ever more respectful of Guarnaccia's intuitive talents, adds his usual efficient, somber presence. And the Stockholm Syndrome makes its appearance.[return][return]The understated writing, the fully-realized characters, and believable plots, as well as the very evocative setting in Florence set this series far and above the ordinary in police procedurals. This one is no exception - it is a real page-turner quietly building up suspense until you are racing through at the end to see the well-thought out denouement.[return][return]Highly recommended.

Kimberly Ann says

I just didn't comprehend the ending of this book.

There was a kidnapping of two young women, one was let go with the note the other kept hostage.

There were drug related deaths and a murder...all interrelated, but the Family connection wasn't delved into enough, nor was the ending satisfying.....

This book fell quite short.

Lisa says

Lately I have read a number of half-backed, poorly written mysteries. I was beginning to despair that I would

never find another decent detective story. One of the problems with current mysteries is that they too often rely on a gimmick, ones often involving setting, transplanted characters from famous books, hobbies, another time period or cats. If one was to go by current mystery trends one could conclude that every other well bred Georgian woman, including the great Miss Austen and her beloved creation Lizzie Bennett, was hot on the trail of some nefarious ne'er do well. What would Jane think? What would Jane do? Reach for her magnifying glass and fingerprint kit? I'm thinking no.

Thank goodness for Magdalen Nabb's small jewel of a mystery, *Death in Springtime*. Despite what I said about setting before, the thing that drew me to this book was the cover illustrations of Florence. Oh, I do love Florence! Last time I read a mystery set in Florence I was irritated beyond belief. It was so cheesy. Now, *Death in Springtime* is cheesy too. As in there are Sardinian shepherds and their wives busily, steadfastly making the pecorino and ricotta. Cheeses are stolen. The cheese making, shepherding and illegal activities of the Sardinian population of Tuscany forms the backdrop for the plot which revolves around the Carabinieri's search for a kidnapped American student. I also have a weakness for the Carabinieri; have since my childhood in Naples. Splashy dressers! Nabb's use of setting is not superficial or gimmicky. Her exploration into the history and culture of the maligned Sardinians is based on solid research, yet she incorporates the information seamlessly into the story. Her characters are well conceived, solid, interesting people. The stage is shared by four carabinieri officers and an Substitute prosecutor. There is the serious minded Captain Maestrangelo, a seasoned hand in kidnapping cases. Kidnapping is apparently a lucrative business in Tuscany. The soft-hearted, intuitive Marshal Guarnaccia. For subtle humor there is the woeful Brigadier of Pontino. Often he bemoans his understaffed department which is principally filled by youngsters doing their national service year, "mama's boys who can't even cook pasta." His knowledge of the area, insight into and sympathy for the Sardinians proves invaluable to the city officers. There is the lovelorn Bacci, a sub-lieutenant whose excellent English the others rely on. Only problem is the poor fellow tends to fall in love. Finally, the quietly ironic, cigar smoking Substitute Prosecutor who keeps the Captain well feed.

Nabb's style also sets her apart. To say her style is literary may be off-putting. Let's say her writing is far better than that of the majority of books that have made their way into this grossly bloated field. Much of this has to do with trust. I think too many writers of the mystery genre today do not trust adult readers to be intelligent, thus their writing style is juvenile, simplistic and heavy on needless explanation.

Finally! A mystery series that holds up well in comparison to Sayers, Marsh and Co. Granted this is not really a new offering; it was actually first published in 1983 before the invasion of the cozy.

John Lee says

I believe that I have enjoyed the previous books of the series but it feels that I must have missed something with this one.

Usually when I think that there will be a problem keeping track of the characters, particularly when non-English names are involved, I make a Character Map in my notebook.

I should have done that here as I confess that I did confuse characters both on the side of the goodies and the baddies.

Unfortunately it went further than this because at the end, I felt that I didn't understand a part of the solution that was being hinted at. Regrettably I cannot be more precise without giving too much away. Some parts of the narrative especially those about country life, I enjoyed but I am left with the feeling that something of significance eluded me.

It won't put me off the series but next time I will remember my map.

Between writing my notes and typing them up, I think that I now understand some of the reasons for the actions that confused me.

April says

A compact atmospheric mystery set in Florence and the surrounding countryside. Biggest disappointment-the eccentric, wonderful Marshal character made brief appearances in this third installment and I missed him.

Petra Willemse says

Like all of Nabb's mysteries, you get a fantastic sense of place from her writing. I love the details of Florence she includes and the feeling the reader gets that the city is as much of a character as the Marshal himself. As part of her series about the Marshal, this wasn't the strongest of the bunch, but it kept me reading and interested right to the end. A must read for anyone who has been to Florence or is planning a trip there.

LJ says

DEATH IN SPRINGTIME (Pol. Proc.-Captain Maestrangelo-Italy-Cont) – G+
Nabb, Magdalen – 3rd in series
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983, US Hardcover ISBN: 0684181339

First Sentence: "It can't be."

It is the first of March and snowing in Florence. This is such an unusual event, no one notice two college woman being kidnapped at gunpoint. One of the girls is released but the second, the daughter of a wealthy American business, is still being held.

Although Marshal Guarnaccia does what he can to help, it is up to Captain Maestrangelo, under the eye of the new Substitute Prosecutor to find and save the girl.

Within 165 pages, Ms. Nabb has provided a well-crafted, classic police procedural. This isn't a guns-blazing, car chase story. It is one of gathering clues, knowing the area and the residents and putting together the evidence piece by piece.

It is certainly evident how different the Italian system is from the American, but at the same time similar in the way the investigation was done and the determination to rescue the victim and find the kidnappers. Nabb provides a visual sense of the area, a bit of history of the Sardinian shepherders and the impact of changing times.

Guarnaccia plays a minor role in this story, but it is all handled so realistically. I very much enjoyed this book and look forward to continuing with the series.

Trey Meckel says

I was underwhelmed by this first entry to the series. I was hoping for something like Sjowall & Wohliniski (Martin Beck) or Janwillem van de Wetering (Grijpstra & de Gier). Instead, I got a sort of aimless plot that never quite seemed to click into place. It wasn't bad, but left me wishing for more. I'll try another and see how the series progresses.

Monica says

This is the third Magdalen Nabb book and I have to say that each one I read gets better and better. I like her writing style, the way she is able to spin so much out of so little. The plot of "Death in Springtime" is a simple one, a kidnapping in the hills around Florence, however Nabb is able to bring about a solution in a way that is unique from other mystery writers.

It's interesting that Nabb's mystery series is still called "The Marshal Guarnaccia Mysteries" since in these first three books in the series, Guarnaccia plays a very minimal role. The stronger character is Captain Maestrangelo, who is presented as a silent man of few words. The Marshal, at this point in the series, seems to be adept at providing the Captain with not only small clues but he is also able to wrap up the end of the book in a very satisfying way.

Desiree says

Nabb's books evoke a strong image of Tuscany and Florence. This episode of the Marshal Guarnaccia series is about a kidnapping of a young American student.

I like the way the books are written, the interaction between the "Marshal" and the "Captain".

Not a traditional whodunnit but more a scenic description of Tuscan Pastoral life and Florence.

Susan says

Snowfall is so unusual in Florence, that when people are questioned about the abduction of two girls at gunpoint in the middle of a storm, all they can recall is the weather. One of the girls is released and turns up in a dreadful state, eventually revealing that the kidnappers have released her to deliver a ransom demand for the other victim. It turns out that as Corsica has been subjected to rapid development, the shepherds of that island have moved to the hills of Tuscany, bringing with them their skills in sheep, herding, cheese-making, and kidnapping and providing an instant pool of suspects. An intelligently written procedural in an interesting setting.

Naomi says

This series continues to be good but not great. It is a quick read, but didn't stand out really as memorable. I need to read this for an upcoming review, but feel that I can head into that review without finishing the series. This series is not strongly character driven and focuses more on the mystery rather than relationship

development. On a side note they are incredibly quick reads.

Peter says

When I read a mystery, I like to find books that have a strong sense of place, interesting characters, and of course a good puzzle of a mystery to solve.

While the author does a great job of evoking Florence, I just could not sustain an interest in the story.

Also, the characters were often referred to by their rank, instead of by name, such as 'the Marshal, or the Captain'. Probably a minor point, but I found it a bit impersonal for the majority of the characters to only be referred to in this way.

This is the first of the series I read, since it's the third in the series I may not have chosen the best place to start. I'm sure there's things that I missed that were referred to in earlier books.

Overall, not an entirely bad book, just not very memorable for me.

Annabelle says

The cover says it is a Marshal Guarnaccia investigation, Marshal doesn't show up until the middle of the book, and the Brigadier is the main character. It has an Italian feel, the writing style that is, straightforward, even visceral, pragmatic about the machismo of officials, and sleight of hand strategy to get things done. A U.S. young woman is missing, and what opens up is intrigue of cocaine sells, Sicilian shepherd mafias relocated to the mainland. It is pretty good complication, and there is a lot of local color with various characters, in the mountains. I liked it.
