



# Black Cats and Butlers

*Janine Beacham*

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## **Black Cats and Butlers** Janine Beacham

The Clockwork Sparrow meets Downton Abbey

Rose Raventhorpe loves nothing more than wandering around Yorke with her beloved butler, Argyle, listening to the stories he tells about the city. So when Argyle is murdered - the third butler to be stabbed in a week - Rose knows she must find out what really happened.

Rose's investigation leads her on a journey into a hidden world of grave robbers and duelling butlers, flamboyant magicians and the city's ancient feline guardians.

Knives aren't just for cutting cucumber sandwiches, you know . . .

## **Black Cats and Butlers Details**

Date : Published March 9th 2017 by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9781510201286

Author : Janine Beacham

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Fantasy, Thriller, Mystery  
Thriller, Fiction, Victorian

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# From Reader Review **Black Cats and Butlers** for online ebook

## **Lucy Banks says**

*I received a copy of this book from Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.*

**Murdered butlers, bodysnatchers and amateur-sleuths... a nice spin on the classic Victorian 'who dunnit'.**

Overall, I really enjoyed reading this book. It was fast-paced, well crafted and full of fun characters.

The book follows Rose, a well-to-do young woman living in York, who finds herself tangled in a murder mystery after her family's faithful butler is murdered. In true Victorian Nancy Drew style, she throws herself into solving the mystery, with the help of some charismatic butlers, who operate a secret society and are a dab hand with weaponry.

The characters and setting are the real strength of this story. Rose is wonderfully irrepressible and I loved her gothic friend Emily - the magician butler was also a wonderful touch. The notion of an underground network buried beneath the streets of York was also a magical idea - and the eerie bodysnatchers were a nice addition.

At times, the plot became slightly unbelievable, and the supernatural element at the end didn't quite work for me - it seemed to much at odds with the glorious, down-to-earth practicality of the rest of the book. However, this didn't mar my enjoyment at all, and certainly shouldn't deter people from reading it.

I very much look forward to seeing what else this author has to offer!

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## **L-J Lacey says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this fast paced middle grade fiction. A perfect combination of a feisty protagonist, mystery and adventure.

Rose Raventhorpe has basically been raised by Argyle, the family butler. Argyle is murdered on Rose's birthday and she discovers there was more to him than she ever thought possible.

Rose refuses to sit idly by as the cats who watch over the town disappear and the murderer stays at large. It is this tenacious aspect of her character that drew me in from the start of the book.

A great introduction into historical fiction and the classic Victorian murder mystery genre (complete with Lords, butlers and bodysnatchers).

Overall a great fun read, perfect for fans of Wings & Co and EJ Spy School. I highly recommend this book.

Danielle Lacey

Three Four Knock on the Door

Independent Children's Bookshop

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## Sigourney says

*Received from NetGalley for review.*

*Black Cats and Butlers* was so much fun to read. It's a middle-grade murder-mystery romp through Victorian London, complete with a secret service of Butlers and ancient prophecies regarding cat statues. How could that not be a winning combination?

The story focuses on Rose Raventhorpe, a young girl with a big imagination that doesn't quite mesh with her mother's ideas of propriety. She adores her Butler, Argyle, and is obviously distraught when he is murdered – stabbed on the doorstep of Rose's home and clutching a black glove – more so as Argyle's murder is the third murder of its kind. Rose's investigation into Argyle's murder leads, as the blurb suggests, on a '*journey into a hidden world of grave robbers and duelling butlers, flamboyant magicians and the city's ancient feline guardians*' and it is just as much of a fun journey as it sounds.

I absolutely adored Rose. She's smart, imaginative, caring, and brave – a generally lovely and refreshing character to read. She makes mistakes but she always has the best intentions and wants nothing more than to find Argyle's murderer and make sure that justice is served. The other butlers were hilarious – an elite group who are Guardians of Yorke, protecting the city and its inhabitants, and Heddsworth, Bronson, and Malone were excellent supporting characters to Rose's investigation. Rose's friend Emily was another hilarious addition, a wonderfully dramatic young lady in mourning for her beloved Pomeranian.

The story as a whole is brilliant – the writing is simple and easy to read, and I had such a good time reading it. It is a prime example of a fun, light read, and I found myself laughing out loud at some of the things that were happening. One of the most impressive things about this story is the atmosphere. Beacham has created an incredibly vivid world; Yorke is based on Yorkshire's gorgeous city of York (a place I love) and it felt so real, all cobbled streets, great architecture, and hidden treasures.

It is very much a middle-grade story but I would highly recommend it for anyone wanting something light and heart-warming, I certainly found it a welcome break from the more intense novels I've been reading lately.

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## Angela Sunde says

A great premise for a historical fiction story - a serial killer is targeting butlers and cat statuary across the city is disappearing.

I absolutely adored the secondary character of Emily Proops, who, as the side kick, I wish had been given more time on the page. Instead Rose, the feisty and strong willed main character, relies more on the assistance of the butler 'guardians' to help her solve the mystery. And, numerous times, when she finds herself in dire circumstances, one of the butlers always appears out of the blue and saves her. This in itself isn't surprising, since they each have a key to the Stairs Below.

However, I would've preferred that Rose, as the child hero, (together with Emily) was more proactive in saving herself and less reliant on adult assistance.

Middle grade readers will enjoy this story.

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### **Sonia Bellhouse says**

Enjoyed this book which I happened on by chance as it was shelved with adult fiction. in the library. Its middle grade fiction - so I'm not the intended readership. The story was fast paced and exciting. It appealed to me for the crime content- butlers those bastions of respectability being murdered. Additionally I was fascinated to learn about the cat statues of York England being stolen. Note there really are statues of cats on buildings in York in reality. Rose Ravensthorpe is a feisty and determined character and I can certainly see the potential for further adventures. A lot of fun!

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### **Sinéad O'Hart says**

A gripping story, which just keeps unfolding as its mysteries deepen, the first Rose Ravensthorpe mystery is simply excellent. Beautifully written and evocatively set in a reimagined 'Yorke', the book takes the reader on a journey as labyrinthine as *The Stairs Below*, but one in which we can never put a foot wrong due to Janine Beacham's masterful writing. An assured debut.

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### **Tricia says**

This was a cute little mystery, ideal for younger teen readers.

When Rose's butler is murdered she is drawn into a secret world, where butlers are trained guardians for the city. There she finds the truth behind the legendary cat statues guarding the city.

Rose is a great heroine and I look forward to reading more from this series.

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### **Susan says**

This is the first, in what will hopefully become a series, featuring Rose Ravensthorpe. Rose lives in Yorke, daughter of Lord Frederick and Lady Constance Baron of Yorkeborough. There have been a spate of murders, with all of the victims being butlers. When Rose's beloved butler, Argyle, is murdered, then Rose sets out to discover the culprit.

The book is set in Victorian times and there is a great sense of time and place. Secret societies and fog abound, carriages bump over cobbled roads and Rose is realistically both outgoing and intelligent, yet constrained by the customs and manners of the time. There is a little bit of magic and a group of friends that Rose comes in contact with, to help her discover the truth about the killings.

This is aimed at 8-12 year olds. There are no illustrations and the chapters are fairly long, so I would suggest it is best for more confident readers. My ten year old daughter loved it, especially the character of Rosie. She has said already that she would like to read more by this author and I think it is an assured and imaginative

debut.

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### **Liz Filleul says**

4.5 stars

This debut novel by Aussie author Janine Beacham is a great addition to the children's mystery shelves. Rose is the daughter of a Lord in Victorian England who takes it upon herself to investigate the mysterious death of her beloved butler and other butlers in the city of Yorke.

I found it hugely entertaining and would have loved it when I was in the target age group. The plot was neat and fun, and the characters engaging. My only reservations were the supernatural element towards the end (it seemed out of place in a detective novel) and the disparaging way Rose looks at shopgirls and their beaux in the theatre scene. I bristled at that bit, but accept it was a realistic reaction for the daughter of a Lord, and she does show concern and consideration towards other lower-class characters, notably the beggar.

Overall, though, this a great debut, and the book will surely be a contender for next year's best children's crime novel at the Davitt Awards.

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### **Amy (Golden Books Girl) says**

Drawn in by the unusual title and intriguing premise, I picked up the first in the Rose Raventhorpe series and discovered that it was just as good as it looked. It felt unique to other middle grade mysteries that are out just now, possibly due to the vivid, vibrant setting of Yorke, or the colourful cast of characters. I did find that at times I lost track of who characters were, so would have appreciated a list at the beginning of the book, but I really enjoyed the mystery and I didn't guess who the murderer was. I'm really looking forward to reading Rose's next adventure in July. 4/5

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### **Wendy says**

Awesome. like Trixie Belden in the 1800's. I can't wait to read the next one.

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### **The Barefoot Crafter says**

This was such a fun read! I grabbed it from my local indie book store not realising it was a kids book, but I still quite enjoyed it. Rose is a 12 year old only daughter of one of the local aristocracy, who gets caught up in a murder mystery, and must help catch the killer with the help of the city's invisible guardians. With prophecies, secret passageways, a dash of fabulous misdirection and some delightfully earnest Victorian Gothic mixed in, I would liken it to Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys, crossed with the intrigue of Northanger

Abbey. Lots of fun, and now on my 11yo's shelf. Because really, who doesn't love a secret society traversing the city in underground tunnels?

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### **The Teacher's Library says**

This was pretty cool! I love the idea of a secret society of butlers, as well as the hint of magic.

I'll definitely keep reading the series :)

[Full review here](#)

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### **Sharni says**

MG historical fiction with a hint of magical realism. Rose is an intrepid heroine who isn't afraid to follow the clues in the face of danger and great loss. She is aided by her overdramatic friend, Emily and by a secret society of butlers, tasked with keeping the city of Yorke safe... Looking forward to reading the next instalment!

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### **Sal says**

I really enjoyed this book and am about to pass it onto my great nephews and nieces. This is the first actual book/book I have read in over 1 year. I always read on my Kindle this days as I find it much easier. This book has stimulated me and I will go on to reading the others in the series. The whole concept of the book kept me entertained and I read the last 80% in one sitting, as I couldn't put it down by then.

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