



A Dissection of Murder

Felicity Young

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A compelling new series about Dr Dody McClelland, the first female autopsy surgeon. Murder treats everyone equally...

A woman. A doctor. A beastly science. At the turn of the twentieth century, London's political climate is in turmoil, as women fight for the right to vote. Dody McClelland has her own battles to fight. As England's first female autopsy surgeon, she must prove herself as she also proves that murder treats everyone equally... After a heated women's rights rally turns violent, an innocent suffragette is found murdered. When she examines the body, Dody is shocked to realise that the victim was a friend of her sister - fuelling her determination to uncover the cause of the protester's suspicious death. For Dody, gathering clues from a body is often easier than handling the living - especially Chief Detective Inspector Matthew Pike. Pike is looking to get to the bottom of this case but has a hard time trusting anyone - including Dody. Determined to earn Pike's trust and to find the killer, Dody will have to sort through real and imagined secrets. But if she's not careful, she may end up on her own examination table ...

A Dissection of Murder Details

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From Reader Review A Dissection of Murder for online ebook

Carolyn says

More a cosy crime than a gripping murder mystery, this book is set in an interesting period of British history with interesting characters. Set around 1910, Dorothy McClelland, Dody to her friends has recently qualified as a doctor in Edinburgh. Unable to be trained as a surgeon because she is a woman, she instead trains to be an autopsy surgeon and finds a part time position in London with the Home Office. Her family, although wealthy, are accepting of this as they are also less than conventional. Her parents are Fabians who lived in Russia for many years while Dody was young and her sister Florence has joined the Bloomsbury suffragette movement. During one suffragette protest march, hired thugs and some willing policemen throw themselves in to the crowd and beat up with women. When a prominent society woman, Lady Catherine Cartwright is found dead, Dody and Florence suspect that this was no accident and she was murdered.

I enjoyed that the description of the period is based around known facts (such as the suffragette riot) and people (such as Bernard Spilsbury, the chief pathologist at the Home Office). The descriptions of autopsies around that time, as well as description of a hanging that Dody must attend was well researched as well as what it would have been like for the first female autopsy surgeons. Dody also volunteers her time at a free clinic for poor East End women so we also see the poor health problems caused by poverty and deprivation. We are also introduced to the London Police force and Inspector Matthew Pike, an ex soldier from the Boer wars, assigned to investigate the death of Lady Cartwright. An unexpected twist at the end tied up the murder mystery nicely and left me looking forward to the next book.

Giedre says

2.5/5

Almost, but not quite.

An Edwardian mystery with a female pathologist protagonist. There's also an army man turned policeman, a bunch of suffragettes, and a couple of Irish revolutionaries. There might be a series worth investing time into here. If the author decides what she wants to do with her characters. Still, I'm not sure I'm interested in finding out.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Against the backdrop of the suffragette movement in turn of the century Britain, Felicity Young introduces Dr Dody McClelland, the first female autopsy surgeon. Fresh from training with the preeminent surgeon of the time, she is eager to start her job at St Thomas Hospital but finds she must recuse herself from her very first case for the corpse is an acquaintance, a suffragette, who has died in a vicious riot sparked during a peaceful demonstration calling for women's right to vote. Despite being only nominally concerned with the strident calls of the suffragettes, Dody allows herself to be convinced by her sister, Florence - an avid supporter of the cause- to investigate the autopsy findings. It becomes obvious that Lady Catherine Cartwright was savagely murdered and a member of the police force is suspected to be to blame.

As the first book in a new series, Young takes time to establish the historical and social backdrop of the

book, having chosen quite a unique era in which to set *A Dissection of Murder*. The turn of the century was a period of budding social change, as evidenced by the suffragette movement, as well as being a period of emerging medical competency and forensic science and I love that Young has chosen to combine the two. Though I am not generally keen on historical fiction, yet a fan of the crime genre, particularly forensic and medical mysteries, I am surprised at how intriguing I found both aspects of the novel. The mystery behind the cause of Lady Cartwright's death is well plotted though it does drift a little as a central plot as Young is distracted by grounding the series, but that is to be expected in the first book of a series.

Dody McClelland proved to be a surprise, I was expecting her to be a stalwart feminist, intimately involved in the cause, having fought to become an autopsy surgeon against social convention. However it is Dody's younger sister, Florence, who is militant, and Dody vaguely supportive in principal, but uninterested in becoming actively involved. Daughters of wealthy, 'bohemian' parents the McClelland sisters are strong-willed women but with different approaches to life. Even though Dody has taken an unconventional path she wants only to use her interests and skills to do the job that fascinates her. While she is concerned about injustice, it is her intellectual curiosity that drives her rather than the passion in this case.

Chief Detective Inspector Matthew Pike of New Scotland Yard is in charge of the investigation into the cause of the riot and Lady Cartwright's death. A principled man he refuses to allow his superiors to sweep the matter under the carpet, despite not being particularly sympathetic to the suffragette movement.

The interaction between Pike and Dody is enjoyable and though there is a frisson of romantic interest, that the relationship is complicated by the social expectations, opinions and conflicts of the time, adds an additional layer of interest.

While I hope that the next book concentrates a little more on Dody's role in forensic autopsy, as she did not have the opportunity to do so in *A Dissection of Murder*, I am very impressed by this debut series. The concept is unique, the scope for development is wide and the characters are appealing. Felicity Young has earned herself a fan and I can't wait for the next installment.

Great news for US and UK readers as well, *A Dissection of Murder* is also being distributed overseas (in the US as *The Anatomy of Murder*)

Jess (Primrose) says

The word "Meh" comes to mind to sum up my thoughts on this book. It was ok. Not horrible. Not amazing. Not atrocious. Not even terrific. Just a shoulder shrug and a "meh" kind of book. Which did bum me out because the premise for the female lead character as one of the first forensic medical examiners was a good one that interested me. Yet, I found the story to be rushed, characters would start to develop and then stutter along for awhile, and overall, I think with everything happening in the story it became roughly developed rather than smoothly honed into novel. It was an easy summer read.

Lauren says

The Anatomy of Death

4 Stars

One of the first female pathologists, Dr. Dorothy "Dody" McClelland is called in to autopsy the body of a

suffragette killed during a riot. Upon learning that the victim is a friend of her rebellious sister, Dody is determined to uncover the truth about her death even if it means trusting Detective Chief Inspector Matthew Pike, the man assigned by the police to investigate or perhaps cover up the crime ...

An entertaining mix of historical fiction, mystery and romance.

The social and historical background on the suffragette movement is well-researched and expertly detailed. Unfortunately, the characters, both real and fictitious, are not as fully fleshed out and come across as one dimensional whether they be feminist extremists, militant Irish, or corrupt police officials.

The burgeoning relationship between Dody and Pike has definite potential despite its rocky start, and it is refreshing when the couple in question is older, wiser and more practical in their realistic perceptions of the world and each other.

The mystery is good although it does take a back seat to the characterization and portrayal of the political issues of the time. The investigation moves along at a strong pace and the climax and resolution are exciting albeit a little predictable.

All in all, a satisfying read and I look forward to reading more about Dody and Pike.

The Lit Bitch says

This book caught my eye right after Christmas. I was coming off of a historical mysteries binge and I was eager for another new heroine. I was so excited to read this one but I had to get through a couple of other books on my review calendar before I indulged.

Then the urge disappeared and I didn't pick it up again for a couple of months. I was finally ready for something new and was eager to get to know Dr Dody McClelland. Not only is this book based in the Edwardian era (my favorite) but Dody is also a medical examiner and I thought that would be an interesting angle for the series.

Something about this book just didn't live up to my expectation. It started off so strong. I was intrigued by Dody and her profession. I thought that the author did a decent job with her historical research and it added a lot of interest to the plot, but I don't think she capitalized on it as much as she could have. Dody had grit and pluck, so did her profession, but in this book we don't really get to see much of her profession nor did Dody carry that pluck through to the end. In the beginning she started off way more fierce than she did later in the book which I found disappointing.

I also felt that the suffragette movement took up way too much of the narrative. I am not overly interested in the suffragette movement, but I was willing to wade through some of the propaganda. However it just consumed the narrative in my opinion. I never warmed up to Florence, she was a little too extreme for me and I had a hard time relating or feeling sorry for her.

Pike was kind of bland for me. I don't know that I ever bought into the 'feelings' that her and Dody supposedly had. I felt let down because their romance could have added a lot to this book but I didn't feel like the author went all in for it. She hinted but nothing ever seemed to fully develop.

But what I think bothered me the absolute most about this book was Dody and Pike never seemed to actually be working on a case. There was never any exchange of clues really. There was some consultations but nothing close to sharing info or even discovering new info. Then all of a sudden they were solving the case....on a chance discovery. I prefer my mysteries to be more about solving the crime rather than happenstance.

So why did I keep reading you ask? I kept hoping that things would fall into place more and then by the time I realized that they weren't, I was so far in that I felt like I was at least committed to reading the rest of the book. Was it a bad book? No. It had a promising premise but was poorly executed. Others might feel differently. Would I continue the series? Probably not. I wanted to love this one so much. It had all the elements that I was expecting to love but sadly I just didn't love it. It was ok but not good enough to make me want to keep reading the series. I just didn't feel a connection to any of the characters. Sadly it just wasn't for me.

[see my full review here](#)

Phrynne says

This is a historical mystery with the emphasis heavily on the history rather than the mystery but I enjoyed it anyway. The story takes place at the time of the Suffragist movement in England and there is one very informative and distressing description of force feeding which told me more than I really wanted to know. Nevertheless the main characters are charmingly British and the mystery such as it is, is solved with a bit of a twist in a satisfactory way. The book is nicely written and is full of examples of the attitudes of the day. Recommended for readers who like fact with their fiction!

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

This is a solid start to a promising mystery series that takes CSI-ish police procedural and puts a historical twist to it, with a great heroine, interesting class nuances, and a focus on the big political issues of Victorian Britain.

Set in November 1910, the novel follows Dr. Dorothy 'Dody' McClelland, the UK's first female autopsy surgeon. Newly returned from university in Scotland, Dody finds herself immediately plunged into work, assisting in an autopsy almost the second she gets off the train. To her dismay, the victim is a prominent suffragette, a good friend of her sister Florence, and Dody is shocked to discover the death came after counter-protesters and police turned a suffrage protest into a violent melee.

Dody meets Chief Detective Inspector Matthew Pike, who is investigating the death as well as the behavior of the police during the incident, and Dody finds that, despite his initial disapproval, that she and Pike get along rather well. Although he's suspicious of her and her sister, in the end, they find unlikely allies in each other -- which is good, as there's more than one mystery that needs unraveling -- and both face criticism and critique in their professional lives.

The mystery -- the actual crime -- wasn't the hook of this novel for me; it was the characters.

Dody is wonderfully complex. From an affluent family who were Fabianists, she's a 'radical' in her own way yet rather perturbed by her sister's association with militant suffragettes. Obviously a modest woman, she struggles with her attraction to her flirtatious, married mentor, Dr. Bernard Spilsbury, aware of how improper her feelings are yet unable to completely quash her interest in him. And yet, Dody is quite conservative in some ways that make sense given the era, her 'station', and her family's background. Her sister Florence seems at times to play the society activist, using her beauty and money and make a mess of things, yet a survivor of forced feeding, Florence struggles with PTSD and tries to moderate the infighting among her circle. Pike, older, a veteran of war, is fond of new technology (his wise use of the telegraph is responsible for the capture of a criminal, we learn) and yet he has his own issues working with women and dealing with the suffrage movement.

The ambiance of Victorian London is beautiful (disgustingly!) evoked by Young, which is why I love me some historical novels (all that delicious grime without having to actually suffer through it!). There's a waft of romance for Dody, which might annoy people who want the main characters to be sexless, but I actually *love* the burgeoning romance. (I'm a sucker for a good romance!)

I was delighted to learn Young modeled Dody on her grandmother and the historical woman who became the first autopsy surgeon in the UK, so Dody doesn't feel modern or anachronistic.

My feelings toward this book have grown more favorable as time goes on; about halfway through I stopped reading it because I was reading David Morrell's *Murder as a Fine Art* and loving that way more. But after I finished it, I returned to this one and finished the remaining half in a single night, unable to stop.

I am super disappointed the next book doesn't continue with the suffrage theme - there's so much fascinating in-fighting and crazy drama to plumb -- but as I loved the second book more than the first one, I can't complain. I am, needless to say, on pins and needles for the third book.

A breezy read, and low on the gross despite the fact our heroine handles dead bodies, this is a good book for rainy days and moody weekends. Definitely one for the autumn. A nice series for those who like light historicals -- not fluffy, per se, but not thick with research -- and those who enjoy intriguing heroines.

Kara-karina says

I can't tell you how long I've been waiting to read this book! At least a couple of years. It's one of those that publisher priced ridiculously high in e-format, and it took them that long to put it on offer which reduced it from £9 to under £4.

Anyway, I knew when I read the synopsis that I'd like it, and in this regard Felicity Young did not disappoint. It's a mild murder mystery, and you don't have to strain your brain too hard to understand who is the villain, but it's a curious take on the radical suffragettes in the beginning of 20th century, and here they are not painted in an inspiring light like it was in *A Mad, Wicked Folly*. Instead the women are portrayed as reckless fanatics.

Dr. McClelland herself is a fantastic character. She is a first female forensic pathologist in London, simply because as a woman she was not allowed into her chosen field of surgery, and she had found a different way

to practise her skills and put her education to use. She supports mild suffragettes and simply believe that women should strive to change the world by example, not by loud and violent rallies. Unfortunately her younger, hotheaded sister doesn't agree, and keeps getting into trouble.

While working on a case involving murders of three suffragettes both Dody McClelland and inspector Pike find evidence indicating that there were high ranking officials involved and it all gets messy really quickly. Dr. McClelland also can't stop worrying about her younger sis.

Pike is an interesting character as well. Stoic, acerbic, observant and non-judgemental, he is a mild mannered guy with a tragic past and a grievous injury. Overall, it's an understated, quiet book, but I enjoyed the atmosphere very much and looking forward to reading the rest of this series. Recommended!

Brenda says

Dr Dody McClelland returned from a year in Edinburgh where she had qualified as an autopsy surgeon. Back in London and at home with her sister Florence, she was to discover that her job as England's first female autopsy surgeon wouldn't be accepted by many. It was early in the twentieth century and change was coming – but many didn't want that change. And with the suffragette movement gaining momentum, the violence at a women's rights rally wasn't unexpected.

The horrible death of one such woman was a shock to Dody – but the further shock as she viewed the body was that this woman was a close friend of her sister; Florence was a suffragette herself and though Dody supported the women's views, she didn't condone the violence and wished Florence wasn't so passionate about her cause.

When Dody met with Chief Detective Inspector Matthew Pike in the course of the investigation into the identity of the killer, she realised that the distrust by the women toward the police was universal. But she was also finding that Pike had a quiet sympathy to their cause - one that wasn't reciprocated by his peers. And it seemed that he didn't trust anyone either. Dody would need to work on getting him to trust her if they were to work together.

As the investigation deepened and they moved closer to the killer, events took a turn for the worst. What would happen as the violence escalated? The danger caused a fear that was terrifyingly real...

I thoroughly enjoyed *A Dissection of Murder* by Aussie author Felicity Young. A great historical mystery, the plot is an intriguing one. The twists are fantastic and the resolution totally surprised me as I hadn't seen it coming. I read a later one in the series recently and enjoyed it immensely, so am now starting at the beginning. Highly recommended.

??Jülie ? says

I thoroughly enjoyed this captivating crime mystery which takes us on a nice historical look at the times while solving a crime.

Factual details about the Suffragette movement and women fighting for the right to vote and get equal rights make this a fascinating read and gives insight to the plight of women's roles in England in the 1900's. The protagonist is Dr. Dody McClelland, England's first female autopsy surgeon who is struggling for recognition in a male dominated area, and where not only females are frowned upon, but also the modern sciences which are introducing new advances in medical technology such as blood matching and forensics.

An easy yet captivating read in the vein of Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh.

I look forward to following this author and books in this series.

A nice cosy crime 5★s

Kathryn says

I enjoyed this first in the Dr Dody McLeland series set in London in 1910, around the time of the Suffragette movement. It starts with a peaceful march on Whitehall and the Houses of Parliament to protest for votes for women with protesters brutally disbanded by police. It was interesting to read more of the fight for women's suffrage.

During the fight between police and protesters, people are killed, and Dr Dody McLeland is called on to autopsy the bodies. It was also interesting to read more about forensics at that time - and to see Dody leaning towards belief in the ability to assess a person's nature from the size and shape of their head and other anthropometric measurements, which we now know is not valid science.

It was a light and easy read and I was reading it while I was walking on the treadmill, so I'm sure I missed some details in the story, but it didn't matter. It kept me entertained during an otherwise ho-hum activity!

Looking forward to reading the rest of the series.

Margaret says

Not a bad outing for a series first.

Dr Dorothy (Dody) McClelland is one of the first female pathologists in London, and an assistant to the great Bernard Spilsbury.

The case revolves around the suffragette movement, making this a timely read, as 2018 is the 100th anniversary of women getting the vote in the UK.

There is a march that is attacked by the police and women are assaulted and several turn up dead. Dody along with Inspector Matthew Pike must find the killer.

A workmanlike book, but not outstanding. I'll read the others if I come across them, but I won't actively seek them out.

Tara Chevestt says

LOVED this book. I have nothing bad to say about it. It has everything a strong woman could possibly desire in a fiction book.

Suffragettes. Dody's sister Florence is a suffragette becoming further embroiled in the militant movement. There's riots, force feedings, passion for the cause, foiled attempts to make a statement...

A rule-breaking heroine. It's pre 1910 and we have a lady medical examiner. She even works at a women's clinic free just to get experience because back then hardly a soul would hire a woman doctor. She's tough and compassionate at the same time.

Mystery. What was supposed to be a peaceful Votes for Women parade goes awry when police begin beating up the ladies. But when one society woman ends up dead, it appears there's a cover up and Dody is placed in the middle of it in more ways than one. Her sister could be involved somehow and while Florence accuses her of taking the police's side, the police are distrustful of her.

Mild romance. With Police Inspector Pike. It doesn't leap off the page. It's barely worth mentioning, rather giving us hints of things to come and I was totally fine with this. I love that we have a novel here that doesn't make it seem as though us women do nothing but sit around and pine for men and wish for love.

I found this very well written, decently paced, and while I was almost able to tell whodunit, I wasn't certain or 100%. I only had a vague idea and I like that. I'll be reading the rest of the series. I foresee lots of tension coming between Pike and Dody, Dody and her mentor/another doctor, and Dody with the police force, period. I also think that thanks to Florence, we'll be seeing a lot of women's rights issues in this series. This combination makes a winner for me.

Come read my favorite part on my blog: <http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2013/...>

Andrea says

It's the early 1900s and the Suffragette movement is making serious waves in England. At a protest march, things turn ugly and 3 women are killed, including Lady Catherine Cartwright. It is at this time that Dr Dorothy 'Dody' McClelland has returned to London as a newly-qualified autopsy surgeon; the first female in the field.

Dody happens to be called on by the Home Office, as the very first engagement of her brand new employment contract, to conduct the autopsies on the 3 victims, but when she realises she knows Lady Catherine (a close friend of her sister Florence), she has to decline to perform the autopsy. But the police are looking for a swift resolution - and absolution - so a third rate doctor is called in to take her place, delivering questionable findings. For her sister's sake, Dody agrees to follow up the results of the autopsy, and what she reads casts serious doubt in her mind. She shares her reservations with DCI Pike, and so begins what I expect will become one of those classic partnerships of science and law enforcement.

What I really liked about this book was the two main characters, Dody and DCI Pike, and also the fact that the story was built around actual historical events. Some of the detail of the women's meetings dragged a bit, but overall the pace wasn't too bad. And it was pretty short!

This is #1 in a series, and I'll happily continue on to read #2 in due course.
