



A Killing Season

Priscilla Royal

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Baron Herbert's return from crusade should have been a joyous occasion. Instead, he grows increasingly morose, withdraws from his family, and refuses to share his wife's bed. When his sons begin to die in strange accidents, some ask whether Herbert harbors a dark sin for which God has cursed him. The baron suddenly sends for Sir Hugh of Wynethorpe, begging his friend to bring spiritual and secular healers but giving little explanation for the request. Worried about Herbert's descent into melancholy and the tragic deaths, Sir Hugh persuades his sister, Prioress Eleanor of Tyndal Priory, to accompany him as well as a respected physician, Master Gamel. Although he is pleased when the prioress brings her healer, Sister Anne, he is dismayed to find Brother Thomas included, a man he has reason to despise. Perhaps there is a malign presence at this storm-blasted castle, oddly named *Doux et Dur*. Tensions spark among family members and soon between those who came to help. Death's scythe harvests more victims, and it is not long before Ecclesiastes' grim words seem all too apt: there is a season for everything under heaven, including a time to kill. But is there also a time to heal?

A Killing Season Details

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From Reader Review A Killing Season for online ebook

Stephanie says

Well, I knew who the murderer was the minute he was introduced, but I still enjoyed listening to this while I did yardwork the other day. I really like the medieval setting- even though it mostly makes me really glad I didn't live back then.

Margaret says

Had worked out who did, why and how by the time I was a third of the way through the book.

I prefer a mystery that challenges me, so I really didn't enjoy it very much. Also Prioress Eleanor's brother Hugh is a huge pain in the arse.

Kk says

I am an avid medieval mystery reader I wanted to like this first book I read by Priscilla Royal. I guessed the murderer and the cause of the strange behavior by Sir Herbert almost at the beginning. References to sinful behavior being the cause of misfortune were constant, repetitive and frankly boring. The characters were not quite likeable. Maybe this is not the norm from this author. Will try another title.

Cheryl says

Eleanor, Hugh, Thomas & Anne are off to see Hugh's former war buddy Baron Herbert when upon their arrival, one of Herbert's remaining sons jumps out a window to his death. Apparently, this is something that has become quite common for Baron Herbert & his wife (sons mysteriously dying) and it's priests & nuns to the rescue! I just really love this series by Priscilla Royal. I love the time period it takes place in and all of the main characters are so intriguing, interesting, fun & human! Sure, sometimes once in a while the mystery is a pretty easy one to solve but it is so much fun getting there and they're so well-written that I honestly do not mind when I figure out who did it early on because while I figure out who did it - I don't always know why or how.

Judith Starkston says

I've always enjoyed medieval mysteries. When well written, they pull me into a world distant and exotic enough to be utterly entertaining. Escape and history all in one read. Perfect. A friend recommended I read Priscilla Royal, and now I think I owe her a good lunch in return. Royal is definitely a skilled writer of medieval mystery.

Her duo of “sleuths,” Prioress Eleanor and Brother Thomas, have come to their vows from utterly different motivations and backgrounds, but nonetheless have a fascinatingly close working relationship, even while secrets and awkward moments abound. Royal resists putting modern sensibilities into her characters. They often make decisions violently at odds with the contemporary view of things. Good for Royal to have the integrity to build such true-to-history people. It makes for much more engaging reading.

The setting of *A Killing Season* is a fearsome castle in the middle of winter—a castle that “looms like Satan’s shadow” on a wild coast connected to the mainland only by a narrow walkway over jagged rocks and crashing sea. Sir Herbert, its master, has recently returned from a crusade and has summoned his fellow crusader, Sir Hugh, Eleanor’s brother, to bring him both medical and religious assistance. Even as Hugh, Eleanor, Thomas, and the others with them approach the frozen castle, they witness a sign of the profound troubles haunting everyone inside: a young man launches out of one of the windows to his death below. That’s only one of the mysterious deaths that sprout like weeds in this killing season. Is some evil plot of men behind them or has the devil come to exact his due? And for what great sins?

The knights have lost the shine on their armor. Indeed Royal shows the psychological costs that the wars have exacted on these “holy” soldiers. We might label it post traumatic stress today, but no such consideration is granted these men. And then there are other problems of prejudice and rigid viewpoints—Royal avoids either romanticizing this world or modernizing it. As you try to guess who or what is behind the killings, you must step into the characters’ viewpoints, into a strange old world. Or is it so far from ours after all?

Susan in NC says

I got half-way through and just didn't care to finish this book; I knew who the killer was, and I frankly didn't care anymore what big secret Baron Herbert brought back from the Crusades. I did skim the last chapter to confirm the identity of the killer, but I just lost interest - same thing happened with the last book in this series, but I made myself finish it. I've read all of the books in the series but found the last two books annoying, plodding and totally lacking in humor; I know it was a dark, difficult time and life was hard and often brutally short, but the plots just seem to drag for me. I found every character babbling on about Satan, the dark one, imps, etc., just a bit much; in past books it was effective in setting the mood of superstition, fear of natural phenomena and the dark side of human nature, but there were other things going on with plot and characters that moved the story forward. Not here; just constant hand-wringing, self-loathing, jumping at shadows and lurking in freezing corridors - by the way, what a miserable, depressing setting for a novel! At first the Baron's castle seemed suitably creepy and atmospheric, but it, along with most of it's unlikeable inhabitants, couldn't hold my interest.

Prioress Eleanor also seemed like a warmer, stronger heroine in the earlier books; now she seems to spend most of her time mortifying herself over her lustful urges and longings, not just for Brother Thomas, but for another character here. It gets old! I admire the research and atmosphere Royal puts into her work and really enjoyed the early books, but this series has lost it's charm for me.

Vicki Cline says

A friend of Prioress Eleanor's brother, Sir Hugh, has asked Hugh to bring his sister and some physical and spiritual healers to his manor. Baron Herbert has returned from the Crusades and refuses to talk to his wife and children, believing he has something terribly wrong with him. This one was pretty interesting.

Nidofito says

The mystery itself was not too complicated. The beauty of the earlier books of this series was not their complexity but the way the information was presented. Often it was vague and not enough and it was wonderful to see Eleanor and Thomas come together to brainstorm and solve it.

Thomas saved this book as he seemed to be the only one using his wits. Everyone else was either blinded by trust or lust. On a different note, I miss Eleanor's cat!

Rogue Reader says

Reading my way through Priscilla Royals medieval mystery series, and will catch up before too much longer. A Killing Season finds Prioress Eleanor, Sister Anne and Brother Thomas at Doux and Dur, a castle that seems cursed with darkness and pain. Too many secrets, too much pain troubles the family, and Eleanor, Anne and Thomas seek truth and light. Lovely research on medieval life and lifestyles from this masterful writer. Thanks Priscilla Royal, and Poisoned Pen Press for publishing the works.

--*Ashland Mystery*

May says

While the mystery is relatively straightforward, the strength of Priscilla Royal's writing is her ability to draw well developed characters operating within the constraints of their time period. There is no modernization of the values of the Middle Ages, no concession given to their political incorrectness. I enjoyed the mystery very much, as much for its insight into medieval life and its primary concerns--the Crusades, inheritance, and the constraints of life as a religious figure, a woman, and nobility. All of this is seamlessly incorporated into the story. The characters may not always be likable, but they are true to their times and to their roles. I highly recommend the series (they are best read in order).

Gretchen says

The plot seemed a bit far fetched and overly modern.

Susan says

I have read very few books set in Medieval times, so "A Killing Season" was a pleasant deviation for me. Ms. Royal was able to capture the cold desolation of a remote British island to the point where I kept refilling my tea mug in order to ward off the imagined chill. The mystery itself was unusual, another treat. The main characters, devoutly religious Catholics, were portrayed as semi-masochists in their quest for forgiveness. I accept that as an accurate description of the times, although it did make for a dark read at times. The author brings the era, the setting and the characters to life. Little else can be asked of a good read.

Ken Kugler says

A Killing Season, by Priscilla Royal, is a wonderful story to read. The author is wonderful in her ability to convey the time period and it is, be it dangerous or beautiful. Her characters are also fully fleshed out and all have flaws that they are ashamed of and well as goodness and graciousness.

That being said, I was disappointed that so early in the book I was able to figure out who the killer was in this story. I also knew why he killed. Still, I read on because of the characters and writing style a have come to appreciate.

People are dying in Baron Herbert's family. He has returned from the Crusades and is a changed man who isolates himself from all. He contacts his old friend Sir Hugh of Wynethorpe, the brother of the Prioress Eleanor of the Tyndale Priory. She comes along with Brother Thomas, the Priory's healer, Sister Anne and a doctor Master Game. The season is horribly cold and depressing but the call is something that Sir Hugh cannot turn down as are friends and were together in the Holy Land.

Baron Herbert's sons are dying one by one and many think it is due to Evil and partly payback for something the Baron has does. His suffering wife suffers horrible mental anguish watching her sons die one after the other and her husband hide himself away and not even touch her anymore.

The darkness of the weather is reflected onto all the characters and they try to figure out what is happening and why.

Rose Lambert says

Intwresting

Learning is a never ending trail and again a great deal of knowledge is to be gained from this story as well as a great read!

Lydia Presley says

Original review posted here

I love it when I pick up a book that is, say, 8th in a series, and fall madly in love with it. Why? Because that means I have 7 more to enjoy before the 9th comes out!

Priscilla Royal might just be one of my new favorite authors. *The Killing Season* set the mood so incredibly perfectly and boasted such a thrilling cast of characters that I fell madly and deeply in love with them before I was even 2 chapters in.

And the story wasn't shabby either!

Gothic mysteries, to me, involve big, creepy castles, lots of rain and mist, thrilling, ghostlike mysteries and generally make me want to curl up on my sofa with a hot cup of tea, under my blanket, and shiver while I read the book. That happened during the reading of *The Killing Season*.

The story opens with a cold journey to a castle and a cast of characters already comfortable with one another from previous stories - but that did not take from the book, especially as I had not read the previous books in the series. I was introduced gently to them and never once felt lost or bewildered. The setting was a medieval one and immediately my imagination filled with the clothing, the craggy surroundings and the looming castle ahead through the mists. And then - tragedy strikes.

I just shivered writing that.

This was a historical mystery unlike anything I've read before. If I had the money right now I'd be purchasing every book in the series, this one was that good. Read it, immerse yourself in Priscilla Royal's writing. I promise you will not be disappointed.
