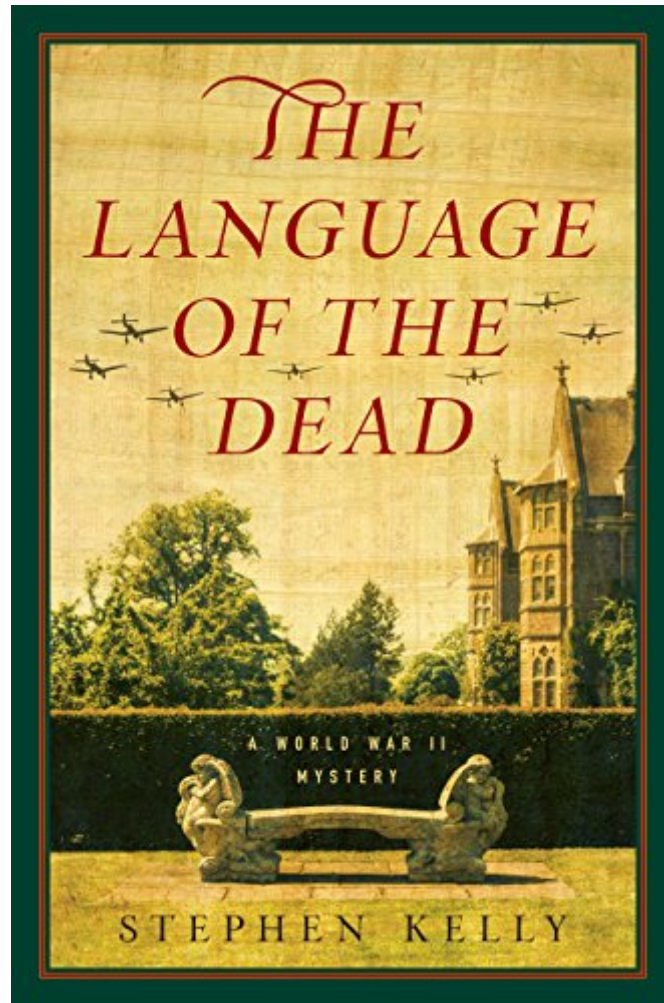


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The Language Of The Dead: A World War II Mystery



Synopsis

As the shadow of World War II descends over Europe, Detective Inspector Thomas Lamb hunts for an elusive killer behind the veil of a seemingly charming English village. German bombers are arriving daily, seeking to crush England. But in a rural Hampshire village, things have remained fairly quiet—until an elderly loner, Will Blackwell, is brutally murdered. The method of his killing bears the hallmarks of the traditional vanquishing of a witch, and indeed, local legend claims that as a boy, Blackwell encountered a ghostly black dog sent from the devil, who struck a bargain for Blackwell's soul. Not long after the murder, a young woman who is carrying the illegitimate child of a fighter pilot also is violently killed; then a local drunkard ends up in the race of an abandoned mill with the back of his head bashed in. As the Germans continue their relentless attack, Detective Inspector Thomas Lamb rushes to solve the crimes. Do the killer's motivations lie in the murky regions of the occult?

Book Information

File Size: 1820 KB

Print Length: 286 pages

Publisher: Pegasus Books (April 15, 2015)

Publication Date: March 16, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00LCD7YK8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #17,872 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #4 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Miscellaneous > History of Sports #15 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > History of Sports #129 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Historical

Customer Reviews

The TV series *Foyle's War* and the WW2 coming-of-age movie *Hope and Glory* both illustrate the concept that even in the midst of the Blitz, everyday life goes on—and that can include

non-war-related disasters and crimes. In *The Language of the Dead*, Stephen Kelly uses that concept as a backdrop to his 1940 village murder mystery. Detective Chief Inspector Lamb is called to the Hampshire village of Quimby to investigate when old Will Blackwell is found murdered, apparently in a ritualistic way traditionally used to kill witches. Blackwell was a loner, long rumored to be a witch, but Lamb and colleagues, Peter Wallace and Harry Rivers, have other, more prosaic, avenues to explore to explain Blackwell's murder before they think about the supernatural. Wallace is a good detective, but Lamb worries about his drinking. Rivers is new to the squad and an uncomfortable addition, because he holds Lamb responsible for the death in battle in World War I of a childhood friend who was in the same unit with Rivers, under Lamb's command. Lamb's 18-year-old daughter, Vera, is working in Quimby as an Air Raid Warden, and Lamb is glad to have the chance to see her. During the investigation, we learn more about the personal lives of David Wallace and Vera Lamb, each of whom is entangled in a troubled love affair. More murders take place in Quimby, Lamb and Rivers clash over the current investigations and their Great War history, other strange happenings in Quimby are hinted at, and the personal lives of some characters take turns for the worse. The murders are solved in a bit of rush, and mostly through lengthy exposition rather than clues coming together in a way that allows the reader to solve the puzzle.

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