



Conductor of Light

Rachel McMillan

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It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but that you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it.

Arthur Conan Doyle, The Hound of the Baskervilles

Toronto, 1912

A seemingly forgettable evening of second-rate vaudeville entertainment proves lethal when Constable Jasper Forth and reporter Ray DeLuca witness the onstage death of the actor Stephano. Was this the performance of a lifetime or merely opening night of the next intriguing case for Jem DeLuca and Merinda Herringford?

Hiding from Toronto's dreaded Morality Squad in the back alleyway of the theater, Jem and Merinda encounter a mysterious musician who steps out of the shadows to tell them a murder has occurred inside.

Jasper and Ray join the detective duo backstage and begin to interview the rest of the troupe, a veritable casting call of possible suspects, every one of them with more motives than talent. Can Jem and Merinda foil this plot before a fatal encore ensues?

This Herringford and Watts adventure in four acts will keep you on the edge of your seat until the final curtain closes on yet another enthralling whodunit.

Conductor of Light Details

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Author : Rachel McMillan

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From Reader Review Conductor of Light for online ebook

Cheryl says

This is a 2.5 star read.

**** 30 Minute Reads from Kindle ****

I thought I'd try a few of these 30 minute reads from Kindle to see how they compare quality wise to other short stories I've read.

A whimsical look at a Victorian murder mystery set in the theatre, with the author setting out the short story like a play script.

This is a new author for me and unfortunately I came in at 2.5 in the series so I have missed the back story regarding the characters. I found the plotline a bit higgledy piggledy and it felt like a mass of confusion. A historical mistake regarding women wearing trousers also was distracting. (Women didn't start wearing trousers until 10-20 years later, and even then they were styled similar to palazzo pants or culottes)

Maybe I've been spoiled for choice regarding historical murder mysteries but I've read a few far better than this work, which has left me wanting.

Nadine Keels says

It's now 1912 in Toronto, and a lady detective duo is on the case when an actor dies onstage during a night of vaudeville theater. Well, actually, a gentleman reporter and constable duo is on the case first. But the four of them eventually team up to get to the bottom of the murder in *Conductor of Light* by author Rachel McMillan.

It wouldn't be unfitting if the Herringford and Watts Mysteries were called the Herringford and Watts and DeLuca and Forth Mysteries by now. But that'd be too long a subtitle, of course. Detectives Merinda and Jem certainly aren't alone on their cases with Jasper and Ray around, and this quartet of characters has really grown on me during the series. I also like this novella's approach, different from the others, set up like a play.

It's no secret that I'm quite a fan of short reads. But I'd say the novellas in this series aren't as strong as the novels are, so far. While the portion of a mystery began rather late in *Of Dubious and Questionable Memory*, the mystery in *Conductor of Light* ends rather early while the book keeps...going. Even with the flashes of beauty and poignancy woven into the continuation, it's as if the story doesn't know exactly where to stop. I like the first novella best, and though I wouldn't call the next two unnecessary filler, they do have something of a filler-ish feel.

Nevertheless, I think readers of the series should stop by this quick read if they want extra time with the core quartet and more of the complex pulse of Toronto. Looking forward to reading the next novel!

Kelly Bridgewater says

Rachel McMillan is a great author, paying tribute to her homeland of Toronto and her love of Sherlock Holmes. In her latest addition to the Herringford and Watts Mysteries, *Conductor of Light*, McMillan creates a short mystery that appears in four acts. When I heard the story was going to be in four acts, I thought I would be getting an actual script to a story, but instead, McMillan tells a story with chapter headings of Act 1, Scene 1 and so on. The story does read like a novella. As for the story, I'm always excited when I return to the lives of Jem and Merinda. They are some of my favorite lady detectives. The mystery in this novella is pretty short. It is settled within a number of pages. All this did was wet my appetite for the *The White Feather Murders*, which comes out in May. I anxiously await for the next novel, knowing McMillan will do justice to her wonderful characters.

Miranda Atchley says

In 1912, Jem DeLuca, née Watts, and Merinda Herringford are still working as lady detectives in Toronto. While Jem's newspaper reporter husband Ray and Merinda's admirer Detective Constable Jasper Forth go out to the theatre, Jasper having been set up on a date with a nice, church-going girl by his mother, the two lady detectives claim to be going to the picture show. Yet they can't resist pursuing a case of a missing necklace on their way home, leading them just outside of the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres. Meanwhile, inside various performers go through their acts of singing, ventriloquism, and miming, among other things. As The Great Stephano performs the classic death scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, one half of the Tansy Twins playing opposite him, the charming actor suddenly and mysteriously dies. Jem, Merinda, Ray, and Jasper, along with a little help from Kat and Mouse, soon pursue the case, finding traces of rat poison in Stephano's prop gauntlet. The team spends the night interviewing members of the vaudeville group, and soon finds that racism could play a part in the murder of the talented actor.

Another fun adventure in the Herringford and Watts Mysteries. McMillan's love for theatre shines in this short story. *Conductor of Light* is full of charm with lots of quirky characters and a diverse cast. I enjoyed reading about the various acts taking place in the vaudeville set and of course, the humor that I've come to expect from this series. I also love the quote by Arthur Conan Doyle used in the book, of which the title is derived from:

"It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but that you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it."

So beautiful. And the change that we can see working within Merinda; love it!

Sometimes, I get a little nervous about novellas and shorter books, afraid I'll miss the details that really bring the story to life. But I never feel that way when reading the Herringford and Watts novellas. They're fast paced, full of witty banter, and plenty of mystique as you try and guess at who has committed the most recent crime Jem and Merinda find themselves solving.

All in all, *Conductor of Light* is yet again a great balance of humor, heartfelt, and mystery with lots of historical charm.

I give this book 4 out of 5 stars.

Kellyn Roth says

3.5 stars

Because I have yet to read books 1 or 2 yet, it was just a wee bit confusing, but that was all my own fault for not getting *The Bachelor's Guide to Murder* when I first saw it. Now I really want to read it. ;)

Okay, so, this was both amusing and fun. I loved the writing style, the plot, and the characters. All pretty awesome and well done. Bravo to the author! I definitely am looking forward to getting my hands on her longer stories.

The negatives:

I felt that it wasn't historically accurate. Maybe that's just me, but it was a feeling I had. I commented that I felt it had an almost steampunk-ish style despite the fact that, of course, there were no steampunk devices or science-fiction-y details. It was just a straight-up historical mystery.

However, I felt that the social attitudes expressed (political correctness, etc.) weren't befitting to the time, and it was just a little bit strange that these ladies from the early 1900s were wearing trousers and all the rest of their rebelliousness. Probably was explained in earlier books or something, though. I wouldn't know since, as I said, this is my first experience with Herringford and Watts.

Still, it was amusing and sweet, the mystery was well-done and intriguing (maybe a little rushed, but it was a short story after all), and can I comment again on the hilarious characters? :)

This is a Goodreads- and Amazon-only review.

~Kellyn Roth, Reveries Reviews

Emma Marie Reads says

A quick, fun interlude between the bigger stories.

Crystal says

I honestly could not finish this book, for me it was the writing style. I couldn't get in it, it felt awkward and stilted. This was the first book by this author I have read and will not continue with this series.

Den Ch says

It's just an interesting story I was passing through.

English says

Good little short mystery featuring the much loved duo, their menfolk, and an acting troupe.

Mahoghani 23 says

Short read that's written like a play. Consist of a death and who dunnit scenario. It also deals with racial barriers and racism. A short but okay read.

Ian says

It was quite a surprise to see the Contents Page read like a screenplay: Acts and Scenes, not chapters. However, I soon remembered Ms McMillan to be an avid theatre goer so it made a lot of sense that she would have her dynamic detective duo feature in one. Strangely, the story starts without Merinda & Jem rather we're introduced to the key players in the show under the watchful eyes of Jasper and Ray DeLuca who happen to be invited for differing reasons to tonight's performance.

One of the cast mysteriously dies on stage and Jasper and Ray jump to investigate.

Merinda and Jem happen to be passing the theatre when one of the performers is making a fast exit and informs them of the tragedy. Merinda, ever the entrepreneur sees the opportunity to solve a case and it's not long before the foursome are reunited and the investigation begins in earnest.

Full of McMillan's clever wit and sophisticated whimsy, this short story is fun and engaging and keeps the fires burning for we readers who can't get enough of the Herringford and Watts Detective series. Bring on May when the next full story, The White Feather Murders, is released.

Yibbie says

Please, keep in mind this is the only work I've read by this author, and I didn't finish it.

So, this book annoyed me almost right from the start. For a short story, the disparity between social classes is emphasized to a very odd degree. I felt pulled from the scene by each digression on people's economic status. That was in Act 1.

Then in Act 2, we meet the heroines...

Right now I just can't deal with cross-dressing feminists transplanted from their proper time period. I was hoping for a nice period who-dun-it and was deeply disappointed. I couldn't finish.

Becky says

Just couldn't get into it.

Cindy says

Not my favourite of this author.

Rachel says

I have come to adore the world that Rachel McMillan has created with Herringford & Watts! Female detectives, turn of the century excitement and discoveries, Toronto, humour, mystery, romance, and so much more!

My review for this book will remain short since it would be too easy to give too much away. However, I will say that I did enjoy the format of this fun story. Written as an "Adventure in Four Acts" it sets the stage for the readers in a very literal way. It still reads like a regular book, but with Acts and Scenes instead of chapters. Throughout the book there are many beautiful descriptions which make me feel as if I am walking along the streets of Toronto instead of curled up under my blanket.

As an avid fan of Ms. McMillan's work, I can not recommend this story enough. You will be thrilled to the core with the adventure laid before you. Can you solve the mystery before Jem and Merinda do? Find out for yourself today!

I purchased Conductor of Light for FREE from Amazon. I was not required to write a review. All opinions expressed are mine alone.
