



# Death Comes As Epiphany

*Sharan Newman*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

# Death Comes As Epiphany

*Sharan Newman*

## **Death Comes As Epiphany** Sharan Newman

Catherine LeVendeur is a young scholar come to conquer her sin of pride at the Convent of the Paraclete, famous for learning, prayer, and its abbess, the fabled Heloise.

When a manuscript the convent produced for the great Abbe Suger disappears, rumors surface saying the book contains sacrilegious passages and will be used to condemn Heloise's famous lover, Peter Abelard.

To save her Order, and protect all she holds dear, Catherine must find the manuscript and discover who altered the text. She will risk disgrace, the wrath of her family and the Church, and confront an evil older than Time itself--and, if she isn't careful, lose her immortal soul.

With *Death Comes As Epiphany*, the first in the Catherine LeVendeur mystery series, medievalist Sharan Newman has woven dark mystery and sparkling romance into a fascinating and richly detailed tapestry of everyday life in twelfth-century France, and one of the most moving love stories of all time: Abelard and Heloise.

## **Death Comes As Epiphany Details**

Date : Published January 5th 2002 by Forge Books (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780765303745

Author : Sharan Newman

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Fiction, Medieval, Cultural, France

 [Download Death Comes As Epiphany ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Death Comes As Epiphany ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Death Comes As Epiphany Sharan Newman**

---

# From Reader Review Death Comes As Epiphany for online ebook

## Kelsey says

Do you like...?

- The Middle Ages
- Mystery
- Historical fiction
- Intelligent, zealous, and innocent heroines
- Mysticism
- France
- Sean Connery in ~~Goldfinger~~ *The Name of the Rose*

Then you'll like this book.

My Medieval Studies professor recommended this as a good example of a realistic medieval setting. She was true to her word: Newman slips in interesting facts without once appearing pedantic. We learn about cures for ailments, religious rituals, strained race relations, and chivalrous tournaments as easily as you learn about New York from *Sex in the City*. I was fascinated, but even if you're not a Medievalist, you can easily enjoy the book without getting bored or distracted.

What my professor didn't tell me about was the complex web of a mystery. The French heroine Catherine leaves her convent to figure out who defaced a holy book and stumbles into theft, heresy, riots, and murder. She tries to solve the crimes using her logic and Christian morality, all while fighting against others' dismissal of her as a woman. Along the way she meets a suspiciously smart English stoneworker with stormy eyes, a hermit who works magic, real scholars and religious leaders from history, and people who believe wholeheartedly in saints, immortal souls, and the devil. Okay, so maybe it's *Asceticism in the City*.

The plot is complex, but the storytelling is simple. The moral arguments are intriguing without being preachy or prescriptive. The mystery unfolds at a good pace, and I guessed some of the pieces but not the whole pie. I also liked the romance between Catherine and the English stoneworker. No insta-love, thankfully, but also no I-can't-stand-the-sight-of-you-and-we-fight-and-fight-until-just-kidding-it's-love.

Some bits were contrived. Catherine seemed to be auditioning for *The Three Stooges* given the number of things that kept falling on her or tossing her to the ground. There were also a few right place, right time coincidences. Still, these were small enough that I didn't really mind them.

Don't expect car chases (or even wagon chases), but if you like any of the items above, you'll like *Death Comes as Epiphany*.

---

## Veronica says

This was an enjoyable murder mystery set in 12th century France. It had a likable pair of characters in Catherine and Edgar; I especially liked Edgar's sense of humor. Although the ending was a bit overly dramatic, and the shift in one of the characters was a tad far fetched, the overall impression was that of a pleasant read.

---

## **LJ says**

DEATH COMES AS AN EPIPHANY - Okay

Newman, Sharan - 1st in Catherine LeVendeur series

Catherine LeVendeur, a young novice and scholar at the Convent of the Paraclete, is sent by the Abbess Heloise on a perilous mission to find out who is trying to destroy the reputation of the convent and, through it, that of the abbess's onetime lover and patron, theologian Peter Abelard. A psalter created at the convent and given as a gift to the powerful abbot Suger of Saint-Denis is later rumored to contain heretical statements in its accompanying commentaries.

Catherine, in the role of a disgraced novice, must find the book and copy the disputed passages to determine if they are forgeries. Further complicating her search, Saint-Denis's master stonemason, Garnulf, is murdered, a crime which may be tied to the sinister hermit Aleran and the rebuilding of the splendid Abbey of Saint-Denis. Re-entering worldly life, the young novice must face both her sometimes disapproving family and her attraction to Garnulf's mysterious apprentice, Edgar.

I don't know why i didn't care for this. Since I read it in 1995, it may be that I wasn't reading historical mysteries. I may have to try it again, one of these days.

---

## **Karen says**

[ The whole Satanism line was somewhat silly to me, particularly when Roger started speechifying (hide spoiler)]

---

## **Elena Santangelo says**

Sharan Newman shows her amazing expertise in this era of history, but this isn't all dry facts. Fast paced story, great characters and a satisfying mystery and romance.

---

## **Joyce Lagow says**

There is a full blown sub genre in mystery writing that is devoted to the historical mystery . It most likely was started off by Umberto Eco's vastly popular The Name of the Rose, which was turned into a great movie. Then somewhere along about this time came Ellis Peters and her Brother Cadfael medieval mysteries, set in England at the time of the Maude/Stephen civil wars in the early 12th century. The field quickly filled until today we have crimes being solved in fiction ranging from post World War II--almost contemporary--right down to Imperial Rome (Lindsay Davis' Marcus Didio Falco being my favorite imperial informer).

Sharon Newman is a respected medievalist, writer of a number of nonfictional works. Her fictional series, of which Death Comes as Epiphany is the first, stars Catherine LeVendeur, a young novice in the convent of

the Paraclete headed by no other than Mother Heloise of Abelard and Heloise fame in the 12th century in France. Catherine is a young scholar who prefers intellectual engagements rather than matrimonial ones, and is a favorite of Abbess Heloise. She is sent on a mission to regain a psalter that is a cause for some concern. Naturally, there is a murder, a hue and cry, a love interest, various goings on, Abelard, and the Jewish community of Paris. Oh yes, Bernard of Clairveaux, Abbot Suger of St-Denis--lots of historical figures to liven things up.

Unfortunately, Newman can't plot and can't write. The story is barely present and the ending is so badly hashed that it is almost incomprehensible. The figures are one dimensional and mostly uninteresting. Hard from this book to see why the world got excited over Abelard and Heloise, who, from what I've read, deserve better than this treatment.

This is a fairly popular series, but I'm baffled as to why. Not every historian can make the crossover to good fictional writer, and Newman doesn't even come close.

Don't bother.

---

### **Ana T. says**

*A medievalist breathes life and vigour into the scholastic debates and religious controversies of 12th-century France in this entrancing mystery debut. Catherine LeVendeur, a young novice and scholar at the Convent of the Paraclete, is sent by the Abbess Heloise on a perilous mission to find out who is trying to destroy the reputation of the convent and, through it, that of the abbess's onetime lover and patron, theologian Peter Abelard. A Psalter created at the convent and given as a gift to the powerful abbot Suger of Saint-Denis is later rumoured to contain heretical statements in its accompanying commentaries. Catherine, in the role of a disgraced novice, must find the book and copy the disputed passages to determine if they are forgeries. Further complicating her search, Saint-Denis's master stonemason, Garnulf, is murdered, a crime which may be tied to the sinister hermit Aleran and the rebuilding of the splendid Abbey of Saint-Denis. Re-entering worldly life, the young novice must face both her sometimes disapproving family and her attraction to Garnulf's mysterious apprentice, Edgar.*

There were several things attractive to me in this book, it's a medieval, it's a mystery and it features Abelard and Heloise as secondary characters. I was looking forward to see how Newman would develop the story and I wasn't disappointed.

Catherine Levendeur is a young novice at the Convent of the Paraclete, she isn't as humble and well behaved as she could be but she believes she has a true vocation as the convent is the only place where she can pursue her studies. The convent seems to be under attack though and the Abbess Heloise asks Catherine to go back home to investigate who is trying to close them down. We get a glimpse of her life in the convent and, after she goes home, of the everyday life in the middle ages, the relationship with god and the divine...

Newman doesn't shy away from showing the good and bad parts of medieval living, not to mention the prejudices against women and other religions. In her quest to discover who falsified a Psalter from the convent Catherine has the help of Edgar, a young man who worked in the construction of the new abbey and has a few secrets to hide. Her relationship with him is interesting and full of tension; both seem a bit unaware

at first of what is going on with them.

It's obvious that Newman has a strong medieval background and can make the story and the characters come alive like no one. While a woman of her time Catherine knows the choices she can make and doesn't hesitate to change the course of her life and go in search of her happiness even against her family's wishes. Abelard and Heloise are not a big part of the story but what we get was enough for me to be interested and the setting of medieval France sounded like a breath of fresh air after so many books set in England (not that those are bad of course). Now I'm very interested in knowing what more life has in store for Catherine.

Grade: 4.5/5

---

### **Hannah Notess says**

Nuns. Murder. Cathedrals. Hermits. Sassy females.

---

### **Amalia Gavea says**

I never thought I'd find a mystery set in the Medieval era that would be so plainly boring, but I have. And it wasn't just boring, it was painfully bad.

The main character is naive and full of bad choices, even though she's supposed to pass as oh! so intelligent and oh! so ahead of her times. However, in every interaction of hers, she comes across as docile, avoiding conflict with all those who plainly tell her they have the right to control her choices and her life. Her relatives, from her parents to her sister, her uncle, her brother, everyone is a complete boring brute. The only character who is remotely acceptable is Edgar. The mystery itself is not interesting at all, the twists are laughable, and I am pretty certain that the dialogue is far from the way in which French people of the era used to talk. It was outrageous to come across so many modern idioms, it was cringe-worthy.

The only elements that kept me reading until the end were Eloise and Abelard's presence and the descriptions of Medieval France. I had high expectations for this novel, judging by the reviews, but I suppose it wasn't for me. It goes without saying that I will not attempt to start the following installments in the series.

---

### **Freyja Vanadis says**

What a ridiculously awful book, and not even in the "so bad it's good" way. I first heard about this author on a podcast I listen to about the middle ages, where the host interviewed her. She seemed knowledgeable about the middle ages, so I looked her up. I decided to read the first book in her series, instead of the most recent one, just because I prefer to start at the beginning. I had misgivings about it, because what are the chances that an 18 year old girl can be written seriously as a crime-fighting novice nun? Well, it turns out the chances are a big fat ZERO. No girl from the 1100s would do the things she does or talk the way she does. Her character is written as a modern girl (modern in 1993, that is), and all the other characters are written as modern as well. None of it rings even slightly plausible. Also, her constant clumsiness, tripping and falling over everything including her own two feet, was just irritating rather than charming as I'm sure the author intended.

At least I bought this book used instead of brand new, so I only wasted a couple bucks.

---

## Courtney says

I adore ecclesiastical mysteries. It began with the Brother Cadfael series and ran wild from there.

This book had two things going for it: an amazing heroine, and a beautifully layered mystery. Catherine would be right at home alongside Galileo's daughters. She's that rarity in the medieval world: intelligent \*and\* educated. Her piety is somewhat underdeveloped,, but the true lure of the convent for Catherine lay in books: reading writing, assembling. And it is a book that lands Catherine in a world of trouble, religious politics, family politics, secrets, murder...and perhaps even worldly love.

Catherine's voice may be too "modern" for some readers, and the tangle of alliances can be tough to track. I thought I'd figured out the mystery early on, and will happily confess to having landed a juicy red herring instead.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and the development of the characters. I would've enjoyed a little more depth all around, but for the first book of a series, it has plenty of hooks raises lots of questions, but ends well. A reader could stop with this book and be satisfied, or move on to the other titles.

Guess which options. I chose?

---

## Clif Hostetler says

A quick look (not necessarily exhaustive or complete) through the list of those who have read this book on Goodreads.com shows that I may be the only person of male gender to have read this book. Hmmm, Oh well, I enjoyed it anyway. It's a murder mystery, historical novel (12th Century France), romance and thriller all rolled into one. However, the medieval setting gives the book a mood and tone that will never be found in a modern mystery-romance-thriller novel. It helps for the reader to be familiar with the story of Abélard and Héloïse before reading this book. Otherwise, you'll miss the significance of some things in the book.

One twist to this story I found noteworthy; The body of the murdered victim literally falls down on top of the story's heroine while she's walking across a courtyard at night. Talk about a mystery being thrust upon you! She had no choice but to become a 12th Century sleuth and try to solve the mystery. She has several more narrow escapes before the story finally reaches a conclusion. I think the ending will not be anticipated by most readers.

This book is first in a series of ten books in the Catherine LeVendeur series written by Sharan Newman. I had previously read the sixth book in the series, and I decided I needed to read the first one to get a better understanding of the characters. I'm not sure I'll have time to read all the books in the series anytime soon. A complete list of the books in this series is listed at the end of this review.

I noticed that the author has written an errata that acknowledges and explains some historical inaccuracies in the book. (*Note, the website where the errata used to be located is no longer active.*) Only a well trained scholar of medieval history would care about the level of detail that she explains there. The story is fictional, but what we're talking about here are details contained in the story that don't fit into 12th Century life. No

movie producer has ever worried about this sort of problem.

Speaking of historical details, this book has details that the most creative writer of fiction would never dream up. Apparently dried moss was used then (at least by some) for toilet paper. Who would have known such a thing. I can just image the author with this tidbit of historical trivia trying to find a place in the story to mention it.

Here's my favorite quote from the book:

*"Catherine Le Vendeur," he asked sententiously, "have you known this man carnally?"*

*"No father," Catherine answered. "But, with your kind permission, I would very much like to."*

Now that is the level of sexual explicitness that I can feel comfortable with.

List of books in the Catherine LeVendeur series:

1. Death Comes As Epiphany
2. The Devil's Door
3. The Wandering Arm
4. Strong As Death
5. Cursed in the Blood
6. The Difficult Saint
7. To Wear The White Cloak
8. Heresy: A Catherine LeVendeur Mystery
9. The Outcast Dove
10. The Witch in the Well

---

## **Sarah says**

Amazing. Makes 12th-century France seem very alive and real, and avoids the trap of making characters in a historical novel paragons of the modern day. Later novels fall off in quality, but this one is absolutely top-notch.

---

## **Felicity says**

An engrossing plot, charming heroine and intriguing historical details. The main characters were well-drawn and likeable, and the use of Heloise and Abelard did not seem ponderous or contrived (as use of historical personages in fiction sometimes does.) I liked the thorough depiction of the culture, especially the way people's belief in the supernatural was pervasive and convincing.

My only quibble was with the occasional forays into the perspective of secondary characters. I felt it added little to the story while sacrificing some of the mystery.



Note on the audiobook: The narrator was great. Her voices varied, she read dramatically but not bombastically, and her Francophone pronunciation of names added to the atmosphere.

---

## **Elizabeth says**

There's so much more of a gamble making your main character a young unmarried woman in a time when women had few rights and if they came from families with money, their movements were even more restricted.

Catherine has been living in an abbey for 3 years with the intention of becoming a nun. Her Mother Superior asks her to pretend to leave the abbey in disgrace to track down a book the abbey produced in honor of a controversial religious figure. It's been rumored that this book has been defaced or altered to bring even more censure upon the controversial religious figure as well as the abbey.

So right off the bat we have a big problem. The Mother Superior is so without male supporters that she has to ask a novitiate to sacrifice her family's honor to go get a book? The Mother Superior is friends with the controversial religious figure who is a teacher to many many young men. Surely it would make a lot more sense to involve this guy who has the freedom of his gender to go figure this all out.

There's a couple of obvious lapses of logic related to the main character being a young single woman from a wealthy family. At one point, reliable and moral people looking out for Catherine's welfare leave her alone with a man about her age who they don't know in a basement for hours while they try to get a message to her father. I'm sorry but exactly how would that go over with her father?!!?! These lapses took me out of the story too often. If you want your main character to be a plucky young novitiate/bloodhound, then make her a modern woman or keep the story in the abbey or within her family.

If you really like this kind of story, go read Cora Harrison. Set in Ireland in a time long ago, when women actually held positions of power. The main character is a brehon - a woman of learning, judgment and the respect of her county and the author backs up her main character's actions with information on Irish law and custom. It's truly fascinating and fun.

---