



Corridors of Death

Ruth Dudley Edwards

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Battered to death with a piece of abstract sculpture titled 'Reconciliation,' Whitehall departmental head Sir Nicholas Clark is claimed by his colleagues to have been a fine and respected public servant cut off in his prime. Bewildered by the labyrinthine bureaucracy of Whitehall, Scotland Yard's Superintendent Jim Milton recognizes a potential ally in Clark's young Private Secretary, Robert Amiss. Milton soon learns from Amiss how Whitehall works: that it can be Machiavellian and potentially homicidal, that Sir Nicholas was obnoxious and widely loathed, that he had spent the weeks before his murder upsetting and antagonizing family and associates, and that his last morning on earth had been spent gleefully observing the success of his plan to embarrass his minister and his department publicly. And they still need to discover who wielded the blunt instrument. This is the first of Ruth Dudley Edwards' witty, iconoclastic but warm-hearted satires about the British Establishment. Dr. Ruth Dudley Edwards was born and brought up in Dublin, Ireland. An historian and prize-winning biographer, she uses her knowledge of the British establishment in her satirical crime novels. She has three times been short-listed for awards from the Crime Writers' Association. www.ruthdudleyedwards.com

Corridors of Death Details

Date : Published May 1st 2007 by Poisoned Pen Press (first published 1981)

ISBN : 9781590584347

Author : Ruth Dudley Edwards

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature

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Cybercrone says

Looks as if this will be a fun series.

Good plotting and the characters are likeable.

Angie says

Too many characters , shallow story line , not my cup of tea and all that !

Damaskcat says

Robert Amiss finds himself involved in a murder case – not as a suspect because he couldn't have murdered the victim – but as a mole helping Superintendent Jim Milton to understand the background to the case. Amiss is a civil servant working in Whitehall and Sir Nicholas, his boss, is murdered.

The problem is that just about everyone who was involved in the meeting just before the murder had the means, the motive and the opportunity to commit the crime. Milton finds himself at a loss when it comes to understanding the civil service culture and Amiss agrees to help.

This is a well written murder mystery with an interesting and authentic background with many amusing moments. I first read this book some years ago and I found it just as good on second reading. It is well plotted with believable and likeable characters. The book is the first one in a series and more series characters are introduced in later books.

Picky Virgo says

I may revise my review if I re-read this book. Since I found the prose fussy and somewhat stilted, I caught myself skimming instead of paying attention. I did like the MCs, so I will likely try at least the next book in the series.

The ending was contrived, not to mention absolutely preposterous.

Ken Cook says

Thoroughly enjoyed this whodunit. Set in London, involving civil servants to Parliament, it gives a nice picture of early '80's. The voice seems to bounce between the Chief Inspector Jim Milton and the Personal

Secretary Robert Amiss - who apparently becomes the focus of a series. Well developed characters, nice plot lines, good dialog with minimal slang. Believable. Will get me to read more of the series.

Rob Kitchin says

Corridors of Death is the first of the Robert Amiss mysteries and blends British establishment satire with crime fiction. For me the story was 'Yes, Minister' meets golden age British crime novel, a la Agatha Christie. Edwards keeps the storytelling light, engaging and witty, without undermining the mystery and the seriousness of the case. The labyrinth bureaucracy and petty personal politics of Whitehall is well depicted. And the characterisation of politicians, civil servants and family relations are nicely observed. The style is all show and no tell, and well paced, with the plot having a number of twists and feints. My only reservation was the denouement, which although plausible didn't quite seem to ring true. Nevertheless, Corridors of Death is an engaging and entertaining read that I felt was ready made for adaptation to the small screen. I certainly intend to read other books in the series.

Susanne Clower says

I got this recommendation from Overdrive, I think. (I use my local library's Overdrive ebooks constantly.) These are quick reads, and so much fun! Each book in the series skewers some aspect of British society, but in a gently humorous way - it is not vicious satire. The characters do progress with each installment but it's not terribly important to read them in order, and I say this as someone who absolutely insists on reading mystery series in order. I am burning through the series.

Lexxi Kitty says

Just a quick note: This is a quite interesting humorous mystery from the early 1980s. I was drawn to it as British politics is bouncing around a lot at the moment, so - while this specific book isn't timely, it is interesting to read at the moment.

There are two main characters - a police guy, Superintendent Jim Milton, and a government guy, Robert Amiss. Both work together to solve the mystery of the dead government minister (Robert's boss Sir Nicholas Clark, a real bastard of a guy - personality wise).

There have probably been other books I've read that involved informants, and books involving non-police helping the police solve crimes, but this might be the first with this specific fact pattern: Amiss helping Milton weave and wiggle through the shifting and complicated world of the government, specifically both how people like talking around an answer instead of giving one, and in job titles (everyone kind of has goofy job titles - everyone is some form of minister or secretary or both; the people who do the typing and the like are Personal Secretaries (which is different from Private Secretaries, which is Robert Amiss' title)).

Competently written. Both humorous and serious. Quite good book. It is a sign of something or other, not sure what exactly, that I immediately purchased the next book in the series after finishing this one (course, the prices on the first two books were quite nice, something like \$1.99 for the first and \$0.99 for the second).

Oh, one last thought before I go - no, Amiss and Milton are not gay for each other. That's not why gay shelf has been added, or the LGBT one - no, one of the side characters is gay and has a boyfriend. Amiss himself is single, and somewhat determined to stay that way (as his life doesn't lend itself to women accepting his odd hours); while Milton is married to a rather nice woman who actually helps him on occasion.

July 18 2016

Beth says

This is a "who-dun-it?" in the classic mode.

A civil servant is killed and the investigation gets under way with considerable input from a junior public servant who explains the workings of the public service to the investigating officer. It's quite clever and funny at this point--something like the "Yes, Minister" and "Yes, Prime Minister" television series.

The rest of the book is more conventional, as they try to work out who, amongst all his colleagues, actually *didn't* want to kill him.

Richard Howard says

I came to this book via John Connolly and Declan Burke's 'Books To Die For', a wonderful tome in which authors discuss their favourite crime novels. It is a different and refreshing read. In particular it is nice to have a detective who isn't manifestly broken in some way. It also sheds a critical and satiric light on the workings of government, revealing very much a House of Cards. Well written, well researched and with a satisfying resolution. I shall certainly be seeking out more in this series.

Tracyk says

This is more of a 4.5. I liked it a lot (characters, setting), and I thought the mystery was good, with a very surprising ending.

Matt Larsen says

I'm not sure how many Ruth Dudley Edwards stories I have actually 'read'. Not many.

The fact is that I have been charmed and seduced by the voice of the late, great Bill Wallis in his excellent narration of the series as audio books. He was able to create the most wonderful characterisations and keep them in their correct niche and did a wonderful Baroness Jack Troutbeck (outrageous character in the later books)

If you find the books hard to read, go to your library and try and get them in audio format. Magic. (But only by Bill Wallis, one lady narrator pronounced the word Featherstonehaugh phonetically, shock horror)

I have to say though the main protagonist seems more like Robert Aimless than Robert Amiss, but then if he had a real career he wouldn't end up in all these different establishments investigating murders.

Eadie says

This is the first book in the Robert Amiss Mystery Series which captures the Machiavellian and homicidal world of the British Civil Service. I learned a lot about British governmental hierarchy within the complex bureaucracy of Whitehall. It's a social satire with engaging characters and a murder investigation under the direction of Detective Superintendent James Milton of Scotland Yard. Sir Nicholas Clark is dead and all the suspects clearly wanted him dead, including his wife. It's not until a very surprising ending do we find out what really happen to Permanent Secretary, Sir Nicholas Clark. I found this to be a page turner and can't wait to read the next book in the series. I highly recommend the book to those who like British police procedurals with satire and wit.

Joyce says

I read later books in the series first, and I'm glad I did. This is a great series, and this is the first book, where Dudley Edwards is still developing what she's doing. This is not a bad book, and the wit is there, but it is not as fully developed as later books in the series are. It's worth a read if you like the series and haven't gotten to this one first. If you've just read this one, keep going. The series gets better and better.

John says

I would have liked to have given this book two and a half stars as I don't think it merits three but it is better than two.

It could have done with a cast of characters at the beginning like Ngaio Marsh used to have. Quite confusing at the beginning as to who was who.

I found it more about the civil service network than about detection. The beginning is slow and plodding and the ending is VERY unsatisfactory and disappointing.
