



The Devil's Breath

Tessa Harris

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Eighteenth-century anatomist Dr. Thomas Silkstone travels to the English countryside to unravel a tangled web of mystery, medicine, and murder--in this captivating new novel from Tessa Harris. . .

A man staggers out of his cottage into the streets of Oxfordshire, shattering an otherwise peaceful evening with the terrible sight of his body shaking and heaving, eyes wild with horror. Many of the villagers believe the Devil himself has entered Joseph Makepeace, the latest victim of a "great fog" that darkens the skies over England like a Biblical plague. When Joseph's son and daughter are found murdered--heads bashed in by a shovel--the town's worst suspicions are confirmed: Evil is abroad, and needs to be banished.

A brilliant man of science, Dr. Thomas Silkstone is not one to heed superstition. But when he arrives at the estate of the lovely widow Lady Lydia Farrell, he finds that it's not just her grain and livestock at risk. A shroud of mystery surrounds Lydia's lost child, who may still be alive in a workhouse. A natural disaster fills the skies with smoke and ash, clogging the lungs of all who breathe it in. And the grisly details of a father's crime compels Dr. Silkstone to look for answers beyond his medical books--between the Devil and the deep blue sea. . .

The Devil's Breath Details

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From Reader Review The Devil's Breath for online ebook

Darcy says

Definitely my least favorite of the series so far. It was an interesting choice of historical setting, but it took so long to set that scene and get to the plot, I almost gave up. In addition, while the doctor is an enjoyable character, his love interest is a wuss. She shows little strength or depth at all, and it makes for a lopsided relationship. And yet, I would still read the next installment. Just from the library, not the bookstore.

Michael says

Another book I really tried to like. There is a murder to solve but it didn't occur until halfway through the book and it never seemed to be an important part of the story. For some silly reason, I think if you write a murder mystery, the mystery should be the main plot and everything else be subplots. This book got it all backwards. By the end of the book, I really didn't care who the killer was or why. I can't give this book a good recommendation.

Siobhan says

The Devil's Breath is the third Silkstone read, and will probably be my last.

I came into the series hoping for historical mysteries, only to be given a BBC drama. I came to enjoy the books, to a certain extent, when I accepted this fact. However, I cannot say I enjoy them enough to see where things are going. I brought the first three books in a pack, telling myself I would buy the rest if I was truly engaged and wanted to see where things are going... as it stands, I doubt after reading a couple more books if I will even remember half of the details that I have been given in the first three stories.

For me, this third book felt a lot like the first. What I mean, is that the level of enjoyment decreased. The second book threatened a four star rating from me, but just missed out. I had hoped things would continue on the up, yet this book regressed.

As I've already stated, just like the first two books, I believe that it shouldn't really be deemed a mystery. Of the first three books, this has the least mystery to it. The level of drama from the first two books has been multiplied, leaving us with a story where the mystery aspect seemed to be an afterthought. Even though it was obvious who was behind the crime, I still found this aspect of the book to be the most enjoyable (without it, I probably would have dropped my rating to two stars), yet it seemed rushed and shoved in after the drama.

I don't think it helps matters that certain things that were said in book two seemed to be ignored to increase the drama. I could be recalling incorrectly, yet I do not believe such to be the case considering it has been mere days since my read of book two, yet it is as though certain things never happened. Things that were said are brushed aside so that the one specific breed of drama can continue. Specifically, the romantic breed of drama. The kind I care the least about.

I admit that we went to new places in the book, and I'm sure some people will love this. If you're truly pulled into where the character's stories are heading, then this will be a really pleasing book. However, I was awaiting an actual mystery. Thus, I was disappointed.

In short, the first three books were interesting to show me what I could expect from Tessa Harris, yet I will not be continuing on with the series. It simply isn't what I had been hoping for.

LemontreeLime says

I tried, but can't finish it. It's that insipid Lady Lydia character that just drives me right up the wall, Silkstone is wasted on her. This series is not for me.

Linda Lou McCall says

"TESSA HARRIS HITS OUT OF THE PARK AGAIN!"

I can't say enough good things about the Dr. Thomas Silkstone stories. I downloaded this one without even reading the synopsis. Last year, I read Harris first book in this series and was blown away. I immediately downloaded the second one. Again, a great book. It's been about 6 months and I stumbled upon her latest book by accident. "The Devil's Breath" is outstanding. Dr. Thomas Silkstone continues to be a well-developed character. We get a good understanding of the leading edge of what would eventually become good medical practices (not guess work, superstition, bleeding, and/or forms of witchcraft) and the advent of forensic medicine. Plus the deadly catastrophic event which kills many people during this era is a little known natural disaster that reared its ugly head again in THIS millennium! That is the true villain here. You will be shocked and frightened because it can happen again!

(As an audio book, this work is enhanced by the incomparable narrator Simon Vance. He can make the active ingredients on the label of a can of AJAX sound enjoyable. Always a definite asset if you choose the audio format!)

I can't wait for book #4 in this series, due out in June in print form. Get on it, Audible - don't make YOUR Members wait too long for the audiobook! Tessa Harris has devoted fans who are ready to buy the next Dr. Silkstone book as soon as it is released! I hope this will be a 20+ book series!

Barbara Cochrane says

Very disappointed. I had never read any of the series but such books should be able to stand on their own. I felt I was missing things.

The book started out as an exciting description of an historical disaster. I was hooked...but then the author introduces her story and it was like hitting a pothole. There didn't seem to be any connection between the two at first. It seemed to take forever for the story to connect with what was happening all over England. It just dragged.

I finally finished the book but I felt cheated of the tale with which the author started. I really wanted to read a fictionalized, but accurate, version of the disaster that started the book.

I was not expecting a romance though the writing was good, however, I cannot recommend this book to either readers of romances or readers of histories. They will both be disappointed.

Khalia Hades says

The whole journey was amazing and spooky. I would love to read the rest of the mysteries of Dr. Thomas Silkstone. This was the kind of writing that we all please to read.

Kathy Jund says

Tessa Harris returns once again to bring us the third installment in her Dr. Thomas Silverstone mystery series! Tessa brings forward a mysterious incident from the past to enlighten her readers along with suspense surrounding an unknown suspect (or suspects as it may be) responsible for four murders that draws her Dr. Silverstone to the forefront in gathering clues to not only solve the murders but also provide an answer to the strange phenomena which surrounds their small town of Oxfordshire with only his wits and the resources surrounding him in 1783 England.

Thomas Silkstone a doctor in his own right, trained in America, although living in England these past nine years as apprentice to the renowned and highly respected anatomist Dr. Carruthers (who to Thomas' great fortune had come to be not only his mentor but a very dear friend) was still looked upon as that "upstart doctor from the colonies" by all the locals. Considering that the events of late have also branded him with a reputation of using science to also solve murder cases that he unwittingly found himself embroiled in, to his credit not only performing post-mortems, but also searching out the clues as to the guilty party. Thomas, in preparing to leave London to visit the love of his life, the recently widowed Lady Lydia Farrell felt uneasiness come upon him that he could not explain. Thomas would not be deterred however, because he had made a promise and nothing would keep him from it. How soon he would find upon arriving at Boughton Hall the country estate of Lady Farrell, nestled in the small village of Oxfordshire that the events there would test all his training. While searching for clues to the missing child he has sworn to find, although feeling thwarted at every turn it is the sudden arrival of a mysterious acrid fog causing death and destruction to anything in its path; whether it be man, beast or vegetation; thick enough to block the light of day had settled in for a long stay. As Thomas attempts to try and alleviate the suffering and come up with an explanation the small shire also falls victim to two murders which once again becomes a call to action for the young anatomist to find the truth.

A returning cast of endearing characters make this an outstanding series to follow! Readers can't help but be compelled to find out how the good Doctor will solve the cases at hand!

KJ, Madame Librarian says

I'm done with this series. Too much work, too little reward.

Serene Morticia says

Character development is definitely the authors weakness in this novel. Take Lydia - no depth with such a fluid character. The narrative made me cringe a little too hard. It's a shame really - the concept with historical background is intriguing but I don't think Harris put a lot of effort to use it. Research was obviously put into it but the text is quite reminiscent of essays I used to rush to hand in for a deadline. I didn't actually finish this book simply because I couldn't withstand Dr Silkstone's sloppy, badly built personality. Disappointed...

Npldirector says

Great historical mystery, highly recommend this series if you like reading about this era in England and enjoy the country manor and bustling London settings. Dr. Thomas Silkstone and Lady Lydia Farrell are thoroughly enjoyable characters and there is just enough of the history of science and medicine in these books to temper their rather soap-opera like romance.

In particular this book features a mysterious cloud of sulfur plaguing England and killing people and livestock: of course Dr. Silkstone can't really know what is causing it but his medical and scientific techniques I found very interesting. At times Lady Lydia can be just a bit too melancholy for me but in portions of this book she manages to overcome that and contribute a bit more to the plot than giving Dr. Silkstone someone to wring his hands over.

Barbara says

A burning fog drifts over England in summer 1783 sickening and killing those exposed. Dr. Thomas Silkstone, a colonist transplanted to London, is in the country visiting his fiance Lady Lydia Farrell when the deadly fog hits. A scientist at heart, Silkstone studies the phenomenon and tries to devise treatments.

At the same time, Lady Lydia learns the son she thought died in infancy - now six years old - is still alive. Anxious to find her son, Lydia and Thomas set out to look for him. Unfortunately, nefarious parties bent on controlling Lydia and choosing the heir to her estate are also on the trail of the boy.

Meanwhile, in the chaos of the deaths from 'fog disease' several murders occur. Victims include a married temptress, a corrupt estate steward, and a brother and sister accused of being possessed by the devil. Reverend George Lightfoot, whose wife succumbs to the illness, is sure God's wrath is responsible and preaches fire and brimstone (there's a little too much of this for me).

Though the historical atmosphere and characters are interesting, and the saga of Lydia and her son is compelling, I became bored with the book. For me it doesn't measure up as a mystery story. I've grown accustomed to modern detective stories with scads of forensic evidence, and in this book the culprits are discovered as much by luck as anything else. To me this seems more like a historical novel than a historical mystery.

Debbi says

A two and a half actually. Not nearly as good as the last one and I think I'll take a break with this series.

Robert Johnson says

Another great book by Tessa Harris in the Dr. Silkstone series. I was totally unaware of the Icelandic volcano in the late 1780's and how it devastated Europe, enveloping them with a sulfuric acid cloud. It was a clever use of a historic event. 3 books in the series read and enjoyed, three more to go!

Janet says

Oh, Doctor Silkstone! Must you be so gosh darn perfect? I liked this one very much, and the addition of the mysterious fog was very interesting and entertaining. But my goodness, this man makes my teeth hurt, he is just too good.
