



# A Woman Unknown

*Frances Brody*

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**A Woman Unknown** Frances Brody  
A Library Journal Best Book of 2014

A winning combination of both intricate plotting and nostalgic post-WWI English country setting, Frances Brody's *A Woman Unknown* will appeal to fans of both classic murder mysteries in the vein of Agatha Christie as well as readers of historical mystery series set in 1920s England, two popular subgenres.

**The Woman Unknown:** Deirdre Fitzpatrick is married to a man who wants to know where she really goes when supposedly taking care of her sick mother and calls on the expertise of Kate Shackleton, amateur sleuth extraordinaire to investigate.

**The Gentleman:** Everett Runcie is a banker facing ruin and disgrace. His American heiress wife will no longer pay for his mistakes, or tolerate his infidelity, and is seeking a divorce.

**The Murder:** When a chambermaid enters Runcie's hotel room, she is shocked to find that he is alone - and dead! Suddenly Kate is thrown into the depths of an altogether more sinister investigation. Can she uncover the truth of her most complex, and personal, case to date?

## A Woman Unknown Details

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Author : Frances Brody

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## **From Reader Review A Woman Unknown for online ebook**

### **Ann says**

Fans of the 1920s English countryside, manners and class, strong, smart women will enjoy this series featuring Kate Shackleton, an enterprising sleuth who solves mysteries in spite of cultural strictures that might keep another woman "in her place."

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### **Kimberly Ann says**

Kate Shackleton & Sykes are hired to keep an eye on a previous "client"....

Although she is no longer shoplifting Deidre Fitzwilliam is exhibiting suspicious behavior, disappearing off & on and being seen in the company of other men, all seeking incontestable divorces from their wives....

The last man she was seen with, was found dead in the hotel room they shared, but as she had been passed out, she remembered nothing.

The mistress of the dead man was shot in the arm, the photographer helping Kate is found hanged, and Deidre goes missing after her mother dies....

Kate is also at odds with the Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard she once dated as he attempts to shut her out of the case...

Very satisfying and tied up nicely at the end.

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### **Jan Duthie says**

Always a good read. I'm enjoying the series which are well written and have complicated plots. Having Kate become a detective in the period just after W.W1 was an inspired idea and throughout the series she shows the many aspects of women's' lives at that period in time. I'm looking forward to the next one.

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### **Carolyn Young says**

A Woman Unknown is book 4 in the Kate Shackleton series. I just happened upon this Brody book in a very interesting bookstore on Sanibel Island and always curious about female protagonists in this genre, I picked it up. I wanted to like it but I was never really taken with the characters and the story seemed a bit long, convoluted and very slow at times. I might pick up another of this series just to see if my opinion changes. It was an okay read for a lazy summer day.

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## **Elizabeth says**

Still so glad my grandma lent me these books. Although she didn't have the third I moved onto the fourth and I have to say it was the best yet. I still think we need to see less of Marcus, he is definitely not as nice as the first time we met him, but see more of Mr Sykes and Mrs Sugden. These books are really well written and I often find myself feeling as though I am there following Kate around. I like the things that you find out about her past and I think it might not be as clear cut as the writer leads you to believe. All in all super excited by the series and looking forward to the next one!

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## **Damaskcat says**

A man is found dead in the Metropole hotel in Leeds and Kate Shackleton's friend and erstwhile lover, Marcus Charles is sent from Scotland Yard to investigate. The dead man is someone with whom Kate is acquainted and his widow asks her to investigate his death for her.

Marcus does not seem keen to have Kate involved in the investigation even though she can ask questions and get answers where he might not be able to. Kate also has a case of her own to investigate – Deirdre Fitzpatrick – a young married woman who is causing her husband concern by disappearing for days at a time.

This is the fourth book in this intriguing mystery series set in nineteen twenties West Yorkshire. It is well written with an interesting heroine and the era is brought vividly to life. I like Kate's employee, Sykes the ex-policeman and he plays quite a big part in this episode.

The period details are well done and I enjoy the background because I used to live in the area myself and have stayed more recently in the Metropole. I like the way the author demonstrates the problems Kate faces as a single woman though her status as a widow gives her more options than she would have as a spinster. If you want a mystery series which is not set in London or the Home Counties then try this one – it is something a bit different.

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## **Lizzie Hayes says**

Kate Shackleton has accidentally become a private investigator. Receiving a telegram at the end of the Great War, informing her that her husband Gerald was 'missing presumed dead', Kate decided to try and discover exactly what happened to Gerald. In the course of her investigations she helped others by locating missing loved ones, and so has by reputation, become a private investigator.

Approached by Mr Cyril Fitzpatrick who is concerned about his wife Deirdre, and wants to know just where his wife goes when she is supposedly caring for her sick mother, Kate is wary of the job. She has come across Deirdre Fitzpatrick before.

Chief Inspector Marcus Charles of Scotland Yard asks Kate to meet him at the Hotel Metropole where a man

known to Kate has been found by a chambermaid, dead in bed and not from natural causes. The man Everett Runcie is a banker facing ruin and disgrace by some devious dealing. His American heiress wife tired of his infidelities is now seeking a divorce. But Everett Runcie had not been alone when he checked into the hotel, so where, and who, was his companion?

Cleverly plotted, could seemingly unrelated events be connected? As Kate investigates she recalls what was put down to an accidental shooting at the start of the grouse season a few weeks back, and begins to wonder if there could be a tie up. The more she delves, the more convoluted and sinister do matters appear. Can Kate untangle the complex threads and get to the truth?

The story is told by Kate in the first person, and by third person narratives from Kate's assistant Sykes and Deirdre Fitzpatrick. Whilst Frances Brody has weaved an intriguing set of events for the reader to unravel, much of the pleasure in the book is in the period in which it is set, and which the author portrays brilliantly. The story also highlights the difficulty of the divorce laws of the time.

A marvellous instalment, in this excellent series, this book is highly recommended.

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Reviewer: Lizzie Hayes

Earlier books in the series are, *Dying in the Wool*, *A Medal for Murder* and *Murder in the afternoon*.

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### **Nancy Reynolds says**

I totally enjoyed this latest in the Kate Shackleton mysteries. My biggest complaint: Since I came to the series as it was being started, I've had to wait patiently (or NOT so patiently) between each book. And now that I've finished the latest, I will have to once again wait, like everyone else, for the newest book to be released. Woe is me. But all that aside, I enjoyed that Kate was able to show Marcus up and get to solve the mystery before Scotland Yard. Way to go, Kate. I love the period setting, and the location, and keeping track of all the suspects or characters of the story. Great story. Thanks Ms. Brody!!!!

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### **Barbara says**

Kate Shakleton mysteries are always fun---and this one is no exception. The author's plotting skills are improving with each book. We had several "murders" for Kate to investigate, and some intricate relationships to untangle!

I think the libraries in the US are way behind in this series so will have to wait to read the next books!

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### **Johanne says**

A good historical mystery, not gory, well detailed, no mystic muppetry. It doesn't bring anything earth shattering to the genre but if you want a straight forward mystery that plays fair with the reader and has competent writing and research I'd recommend it

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## David Gilchrist says

I am rapidly becoming a fan of the author. This outing is set mainly in 1920,s Leeds, all the descriptions are very accurate. Kate Shackleton PI is investigating a murder at the Hotel Metropole and a disappearing women, plenty of twists and the culprit is not known until the last chapters. Her sidekick Sykes is playing his part in full. Plenty of historical detail, the Jowett motor car manufactured in Bradford and others facts that are correct. I look forward to her next book.

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## Faa says

How could I not love Kate more and more. This book is about a mystery woman who worked to free herself and another aristocratic woman who lost a husband to another woman. There were few murders and Kate was in action with Marcus Charles.

I noticed the ups and downs in Kate and Marcus relationship. Honestly, I don't think she was ready for a commitment other than works. Marcus could be a pompous police officer at times; and Kate hates it when he did. Who was better from the other? It would definitely be Kate, always! Thankfully Mrs Sugden and Mr Sykes were always there in cahoot with her :-)

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## Beaumont says

This is one of my favorites of this series so far. I enjoyed the mysteries a lot.

I was also glad of several other things. I liked the way Kate reacted to working with Marcus (and I am so incredibly relieved she never married him and that she is glad she never did - it's refreshing to see a protagonist react that way), though I'm not a big fan of Marcus (he's all right as a side character who isn't glammed up to be anything but what he is - a pretty good cop and a misogynist).

I like how Kate is a smart, accomplished character who is also not that fond of very many people. She's a little cranky and I think it suits her really well. Usually women protagonists are either 'shrews' or they're stoic yet fainting damsels (it sounds contradictory but I've seen it several times).

Also, the sole LGBT character wasn't a villain, which was excellent. Casting LGBT characters as villains isn't bad, and can be important for good representation. However, an LGBT character shouldn't be a villain BECAUSE they're LGBT (which happens a lot), they shouldn't be LGBT because they're a villain (also very common), and they shouldn't be a villain if they're the ONLY LGBT character (it implies one of the first two things is true). When we as humans are at the point where LGBT characters aren't treated so badly in entertainment media, then this may not be an issue any more. Until then, people have to be careful that they don't use negative anti-LGBT entertainment media stereotypes even by accident.

All in all, very fun mysteries and I look forward to reading more of the series.

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### **Eirwen Powditch-remick says**

So far very disappointed as was expecting the early 20th century speech clothing atmosphere to be captured better. Will finish as I started and to give author fair chance. Picked up as I needed something light for a journey. To be fair I do enjoy period fiction (Conan Doyle, Somerset Maugham) so my expectations of period authenticity are demanding perhaps. I do think more effort could go into such research of this era. Post WW1 etc. The concept of a woman detective in this period being so original, the treatment seems vague and disinterested.

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### **Catie says**

I love this series, set in Yorkshire in the 20s, it features private detective Kate Shackleton and her sidekick, Sykes. The story telling, the mystery, the characters are spot on, but what really adds the cherry to the cake for me is the excellent world building. This is built up of little details that never interfere with the story but only add to it; superb.

I have already pre-ordered the next in the series which comes out in October and look forward to it keenly.

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