

Murder at the Estate Sale

Lily Charles

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Complemented by a light romance, Lily Charles's cozy mystery *Murder at the Estate Sale* is set in the rare book world and uncovers rivalry in Atlanta's occult circle.

From reminiscing about the Bodleian to noting tanned pages and gilt spines, Emma and Molly's fervor for books permeates their lives. In this first entry of a fun bibliomystery series, the antiquarian booksellers meet at an estate sale, where a thief is murdered in a basement stocked with grimoires. Molly picks up a scrap of ephemera at the scene, and her bookseller instincts kick in: she finds it unthinkable that the note was separated from its source. Her humorous compulsion sparks her to trace an esoteric paper trail that's made lively by the women's enthusiasm for research.

Together, Emma and Molly locate the text that the paper came from, only to discover that a ceremonial magic circle also wants it, and that the crime centers on a bid for power within the group. The theme of witchery is mild, and the book's suspects are flashy outlines. More than the secretive tensions within the circle, Emma and Molly grab the limelight. Their combined resourcefulness—with Molly as the bolder, messier leader, and Emma as a serious-minded Renaissance scholar—propel the mystery through its logical deductions and entertaining gumshoeing. Their support for each other grows into believable tenderness that promises further series development.

The details of book collecting, from meetings with quirky colleagues, to the frisson of an unusual find—in this case, a pivotal C. S. Lewis title—are fresh and immersive. A compelling (fictional) story about Lewis and his eerie encounter result in a fascinating background for the magic circle's history.

Murder at the Estate Sale is a delightful cozy mystery thanks to Molly and Emma's reckless, brave aplomb.

KAREN RIGBY (September / October 2020)

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