



## The Lost Boys of London

**Mary Lawrence**

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Bianca Goddard, an alchemist's daughter living in the last years of Henry VIII's rule, is called upon by the local constable to help solve a murder in Mary Lawrence's *The Lost Boys of London*.

The victim is a boy, found hanging at a church with a rosary wrapped around his neck. Bianca, who stays busy concocting medicines while her husband fights in Scotland, finds her investigation complicated when a second victim is discovered only a week later. Then Bianca's involvement becomes personal: Fisk, the young son of a friend, goes missing.

In a race against time, Bianca seeks the connection between the first two murders to help catch the killer before it's too late for Fisk. She discovers the initials YHS on the rosary found on the first victim and infers that a cultish Catholic organization may be involved in some way. Her investigation is marked by rivalry between Lutherans and Catholics, and an extortion plot complicates the entire situation.

This gripping mystery is filled with sharp details, as of stinking back alleyways and cacophonous taverns where barmaids tempt and tease those they serve. It preserves the infighting of rival churches and priests, too. Because the boys died clutching a rosary and hanging from a church, such details become essential to contextualizing the mystery. Sixteenth-century London is a compelling backdrop for the crimes, and its citizens' Tudor vernacular, complete with "ayes" and "prithees," adds to the atmosphere.

No detail is lost when it comes to setting up the murders, resulting in the perfect trail for Bianca to follow. She does what the men around her cannot, and her strength and self-reliance are empowering and gratifying. *The Lost Boys of London* is an exciting and memorable historical whodunit.

ANGELA MCQUAY (May / June 2020)

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