

The Matchmaker's Lonely Heart: Proper Romance Victorian Series

Nancy Campbell Allen

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In Nancy Campbell Allen's novel, a murder brings an advice columnist and a stoic detective together in Victorian London.

Amelie channels her love of romance and idyllic marriages into a burgeoning career as a columnist at her aunt's newspaper. When she sees a perfect match forming in personal ads posted in the newspaper, she takes it upon herself to ensure that the strangers fall in love. She spies on their date to discover one of the anonymous pair is Harold, a widower and a charming member of her book club. Also observing the date is Michael, a police detective who's seeking to close a cold case involving Harold's drowned wife. Michael relies on Amelie's social connections to get close to Harold and discern his culpability.

An unofficial partnership forms as Michael and Amelie investigate Harold; it becomes the foundation for a lifelong partnership and, prospectively, a marriage. When another body is discovered during a book club event, Michael fears Amelie has a target on her back. Their personal feelings are set aside as they race to solve the murders and capture the killer.

Michael and Amelie's slow-burning romance combines well with the fast-paced tale of surprise, death, and heart. The core of the story is their relationship; it builds from a place of admiration and respect, and eschews any forced obstacles to being together. Amelie is a nuanced heroine who is both naïve and fierce as she gathers her knowledge of fictional crimes and joins Michael in his off-duty undercover work. And the endearing secondary cast of friends and coworkers results in humor and warmth; they support Amelie's headstrong nature and Michael's softening heart.

The Matchmaker's Lonely Heart is charming as it combines a Victorian murder mystery with an endearing romance between two like souls.

JOHN M. MURRAY (September / October 2021)

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