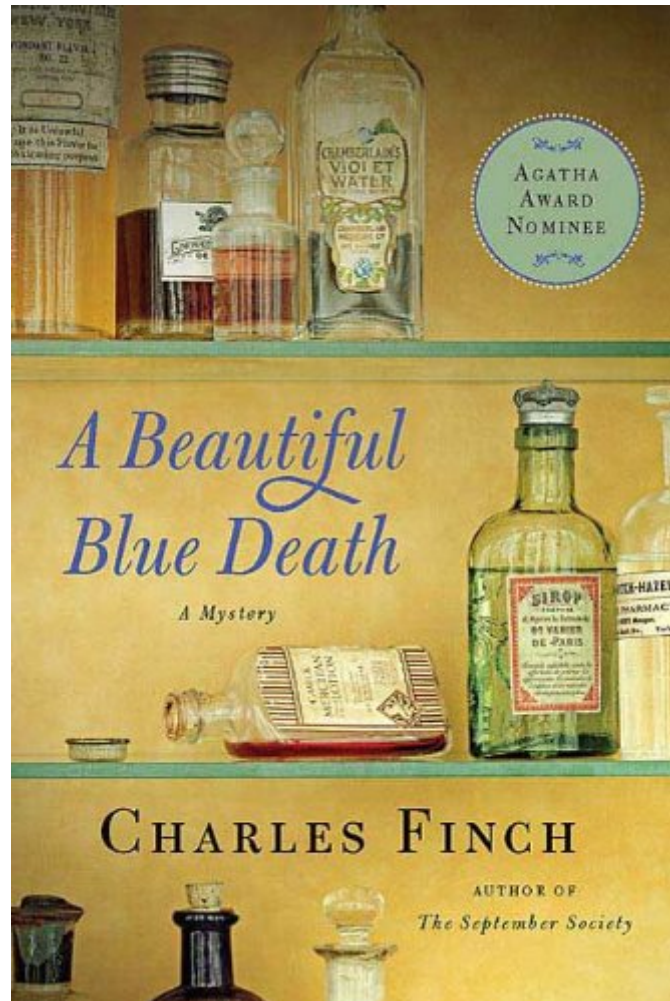


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A Beautiful Blue Death (Charles Lenox Mysteries Book 1)



Synopsis

On any given day in London, all Charles Lenox, Victorian gentleman and armchair explorer, wants to do is relax in his private study with a cup of tea, a roaring fire and a good book. But when his lifelong friend Lady Jane asks for his help, Lenox cannot resist another chance to unravel a mystery, even if it means trudging through the snow to her townhouse next door. One of Jane's former servants, Prudence Smith, is dead – an apparent suicide. But Lenox suspects something far more sinister: murder, by a rare and deadly poison. The house where the girl worked is full of suspects, and though Prudence dabbled with the hearts of more than a few men, Lenox is baffled by an elusive lack of motive in the girl's death. When another body turns up during the London season's most fashionable ball, Lenox must untangle a web of loyalties and animosities. Was it jealousy that killed Prudence? Or was it something else entirely, something that Lenox alone can uncover before the killer strikes again – disturbingly close to home?

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Customer Reviews

Victorian gentleman Charles Lenox recently assisted Scotland Yard in solving the Isabel Lewes

case; a simple case the Yard should have easily solved despite their appalling lack of imagination. Now, on a bitterly cold late afternoon, all Lenox wants to do is sit in his library and enjoy the bliss of a warm fire. So when he receives an urgent message from Lady Jan Grey, his closest friend and next door neighbor, he ventures forth to brave the cold, despite his inadequate boots. Lady Grey's former servant, Prue Smith, has apparently committed suicide-by-poisoning at the home of her new employer, George Barnard, the current director of the Royal Mint. At Lady Grey's request, Lenox visits the crime scene and is quickly convinced that Prue's death is murder, despite assurances from the Yard and Barnard that it is suicide. Thomas McConnell, a surgeon and close associate of Lenox, determines the cause of death to be a rare poison called bella indigo (beautiful blue). The Yard does not welcome Lenox's assistance, and that leaves him little access to the Barnard household, forcing him to investigate discreetly and utilize the services of Graham, his butler and friend. It is not until a second death occurs that Lenox begins to piece together the puzzling crime. *A Beautiful Blue Death* is Charles Finch's delightful debut novel. The pairing of Lenox and Graham brings to mind Lord Peter Wimsey and his valet Bunter. Similar to Dorothy Sayer's creations, Lenox and Graham share more than a purely professional relationship. Despite the friendship and amity they feel for each other, the barriers of class keep them separated. What elevates *A Beautiful Blue Death* is the relationships Lenox has with the people around him.

If Charles Lenox were to have his way, all he'd wish for are warm boots, a blazing fireplace, some tea and sandwiches, and an hour or two spent with his maps. But the aristocratic amateur sleuth is always in demand in Victorian London. His childhood friend, Lady Jane, appeals to his innate curiosity and investigative skills. Her upstairs maid, Prudence Smith, who'd moved to the household of Royal Mint director, George Barnard, died under suspicious circumstances. Believed by Barnard and Scotland Yard to be a suicide, Lenox isn't much convinced, and neither is Lady Jane. With the help of his friend, Dr. Tom McConnell, they conclude that she'd been poisoned by the rare and expensive potion called bella indigo, the titular "beautiful blue." Suspects abound, from Prue's lovers to Barnard's houseguests to Barnard himself, but motives are scarce and flimsy. What to make of this motley crew and their secrets? Soon, Lenox discovers that there's more to this poisoning than meets the eye, and when a second murder is committed, he realizes he'd been looking at this puzzle quite the wrong way. *A Beautiful Blue Death* is the first of the new Charles Lenox Mysteries. Much of its appeal is Lenox himself, an affable, debonair intellectual very much like Dorothy L. Sayers' creation, Lord Peter Wimsey. He even has his own Bunt--Graham, his butler-cum-spy--who's every bit as smart. Mr. Finch's pleasure in bringing 1865 London to life is

evident, and it really does come to life, from the fashionable abodes of his upper crust sleuth and associates to the shady apothecaries, sinister alleys, and stuffy anterooms of posh clubs.

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