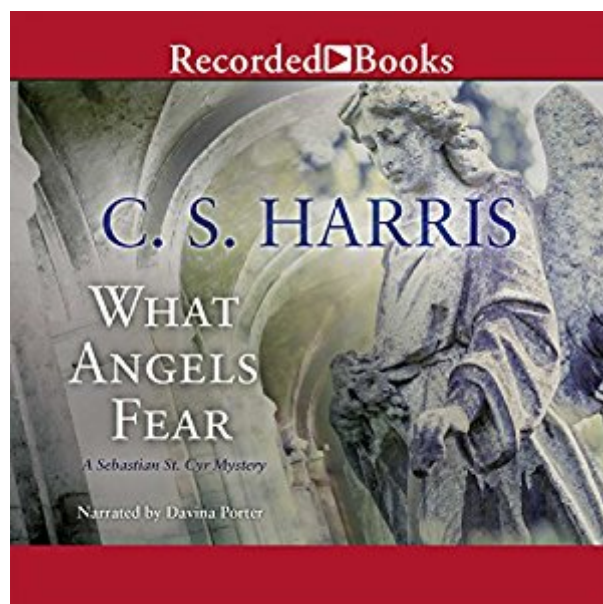


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What Angels Fear: Sebastian St. Cyr, Book 1



Synopsis

It's 1811, and the threat of revolution haunts the upper classes of King George III's England. Then a beautiful young woman is found savagely murdered on the altar steps of an ancient church near Westminster Abbey. A dueling pistol found at the scene and the damning testimony of a witness both point to one man - Sebastian St. Cyr, Viscount Devlin, a brilliant young nobleman shattered by his experience in the Napoleonic Wars.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am especially partial to historical mysteries set in England; and my interest was piqued when I noticed C. S. Harris' "What Angels Fear" on the bookstore shelves. But I was also a little wary -- after all I had heard nothing about this book -- no advance praise or early review blurbs in magazines/web sites heralding the book's upcoming publication. Fortunately, because I work at a bookstore, I was able to borrow the book, which turned out to be a really good thing 'else I'd have missed one of the most thrilling reads of the year. What an absolutely riveting and breathtaking read "What Angels Fear" proved to be! In 1811, George III is sinking deeper and deeper into the madness, as his politicians question the wisdom of carrying on England's war with France, as well as whether or not they should support the move to make the profligate Prince of Wales, Regent of England. But for the newly returned ex-soldier, Sebastian St. Cyr, Viscount Devlin, and heir to the powerful Earl of Hendon, the all important question is how he's going to survive an upcoming duel of honour without getting killed or killing his opponent. Having survived that ordeal however, the last

thing Sebastian expected later that morning was to have a chief magistrate and a couple of constables at his doorstep, ready to arrest him for the brutal rape and murder of a young actress, Rachel York. Knowing full well that he had no hand in the young woman's murder and realising that the only way for him to clear his name is if he were to investigate the murder himself, Sebastian escapes from the constables and disappears into the bowels of London's poverty stricken streets.

Some years ago I read the Thomas and Charlotte Pitt mysteries and the Monk mysteries by Anne Perry. I didn't read the whole series, though, because by book 5 of the Pitts and book 2 of Monk I figured out what Perry was up to. Although she was great at dialogue and atmosphere, once you understood that Perry was out to unmask the hypocrisy of Victorian Britain, it was always pathetically easy to figure out "whodunit." The murderer was always the prim, religious, conservative person. All the people living in "open sin" were really innocent. But beware the Salvation Army, etc. So I came into the St. Cyr mysteries with some trepidation. Set in Regency England, six to nine years before Victoria's birth and more than 25 years before her reign, this England is pre-Industrial Revolution (hovering on the brink at best), a land where twenty people live in a room in the poor parts of town and thank their gods that they are still above the ground, as dead dogs, cats, and babies flow through the sewers and women are raped with astonishing regularity. One of my best friends--a writer with several books of analysis and literary criticism to his credit--once told me that the best mysteries are not "whodunits," but "what-the-heck-is-going-on." This book is a "what-the-heck-is-going-on" book. Sebastian St. Cyr is a nobleman, son of Lord Hendon. Third son, to be exact, and least-liked of any of Hendon's children, but he was the only son who lived to adulthood, so he's sole heir to his lordship. He's a veteran of multiple campaigns against the French, Italians, and Portuguese, with all the accompanying nightmares.

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