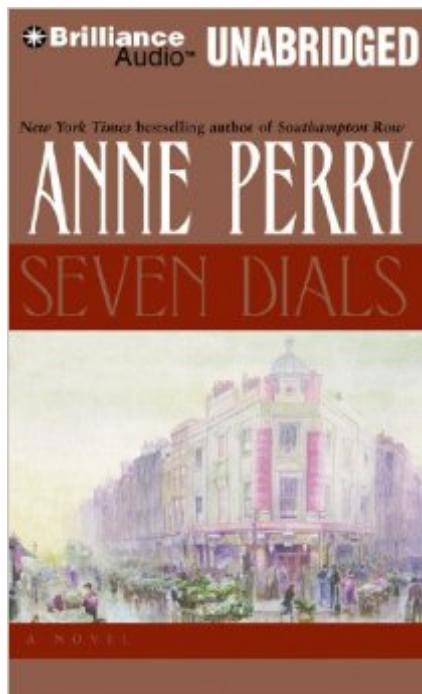


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Seven Dials (Charlotte And Thomas Pitt)



Synopsis

In the first gray of a mid-September morning, Thomas Pitt, mainstay of Her Majesty's Special Branch, is summoned to Connaught Square mansion where the body of a junior diplomat lies huddled in a wheelbarrow. Nearby stands the tenant of the house, the beautiful and notorious Egyptian woman Ayesha Zakhari, who falls under the shadow of suspicion. Pitt's orders, emanating from Prime Minister Gladstone himself, are to protect-at all costs-the good name of the third person in the garden: senior cabinet minister Saville Ryerson. This distinguished public servant, whispered to be Ayesha's lover, insists that she is as innocent as he is himself. Could it be true? In the dead man's less-than-stellar reputation, Pitt finds hope. But in ancient Alexandria, where the victim was once an army officer, hope grows dim. For there, Pitt receives intimations of deadly entanglements stretching from Egyptian cotton fields to Manchester cotton mills, from the noxious London slum known as Seven Dials to the madhouse called Bedlam. Meanwhile, in a packed courtroom at the Old Bailey, time is ticking away for Ayesha and Saville. With Pitt and his clients racing against the hangman, the trial reaches its pulse-pumping climax.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Pitt and his wife Charlotte have been at the center of many mysteries, many of which take them into the heart of the underworld of Victorian London. Nothing is ever as it seems on the surface, however, and it takes the married couple more than wits in order to solve a crime. The mystery which surrounds that in Seven Dials is no exception. This time, it's a case of diplomacy, as a

seemingly open-and shut-case occurs. Apparently, an Egyptian woman shot her lover in her back yard and then put it in a wheelbarrow in order to get rid of it. But it becomes increasingly clear to Pitt that Ayesha Zakhari, supposed mistress of a member of the Cabinet, is not the perpetrator of the crime, after all. For one, there is no blood on her white evening gown, and she was not strong enough to put the dead man into the wheelbarrow by herself. It soon comes out that cabinet member Saville Ryerson was at the scene of the crime not long after it occurred. Soon it becomes clear that the murder is linked to the riots that have been taking place at Manchester- where, incidentally, Ryerson is from. Victor Narraway sends Thomas Pitt to Alexandria to find out more about Miss Zakhari- and he learns a number of interesting things about the relationship between the woman and the deceased man. Narraway, however, has a much deeper reason for sending Pitt away- the case is becoming much more serious than anyone had suspected. Unrelated is the case of Martin Garvie, manservant to a Mr. Garrick. When Martin goes missing, his sister Tilda enlists Gracie's help to find him. It soon becomes clear to Charlotte Pitt that this is no simple case of a dismissed valet; his master Mr. Garrick has also vanished mysteriously, apparently taking Martin with him.

I think by this point in time it might be more appropriate to call Anne Perry's stunning Charlotte and Thomas Pitt Victorian mysteries a saga rather than a series. Her masterful exploration of the minutiae of 19th century manners and mores not only reminds me of Galsworthy or Trollope, but her overall vision of Pitt's world has evolved into something almost epic in scope. "Seven Dials" is an especially fascinating extension of her steadily intensifying image (most recently "Whitechapel Conspiracy and "Southhampton Row") of Thomas Pitt as Hero, struggling desperately and essentially alone to defend Queen and Empire against sinister political forces which seek to destroy them. This latest, enormously complex novel begins shortly after Pitt's recent forced reassignment to the Special Branch when he is dragged from his bed at dawn and ordered to report to Victor Narraway, head of Her Majesty's Secret Service, for briefing. Edwin Lovat, a junior diplomat, has been shot to death late at night in the garden at luxurious Eden Lodge; the owner of the weapon, its Egyptian tenant...beautiful, enigmatic Ayesha Zakhari...has been caught in the act of trying to dispose of the body, and her current paramour, senior cabinet minister Saville Ryerson, has inexplicably arrived on the scene within minutes of her apprehension. Pitt's charge is to investigate the matter but protect Ryerson if at all possible since even a whiff of scandal could jeopardize on-going negotiations in a potentially explosive labor situation in Ryerson's Manchester district (dependent on Egyptian cotton for its weaving industry) and might be disastrous to already fragile

Anglo-Egyptian relationships.

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