



## **An Artless Demise**

*Anna Lee Huber*

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November 1831. After fleeing London in infamy more than two years prior, Lady Kiera Darby's return to the city is anything but mundane, though not for the reasons she expected. A gang of body snatchers is arrested on suspicion of imitating the notorious misdeeds of Edinburgh criminals, Burke and Hare—killing people from the streets and selling their bodies to medical schools. Then Kiera's past—a past she thought she'd finally made peace with—rises up to haunt her.

All of London is horrified by the evidence that “burkers” are, indeed, at work in their city. The terrified populace hovers on a knife's edge, ready to take their enmity out on any likely suspect. And when Kiera receives a letter of blackmail, threatening to divulge details about her late anatomist husband's involvement with the body snatchers and wrongfully implicate her, she begins to apprehend just how precarious her situation is. Not only for herself, but also her new husband and investigative partner, Sebastian Gage, and their unborn child.

Meanwhile, the young scion of a noble family has been found murdered a block from his home, and the man's family wants Kiera and Gage to investigate. Is it a failed attempt by the London burkers, having left the body behind, or the crime of someone much closer to home? Someone who stalks the privileged, using the uproar over the burkers to cover his own dark deeds?

~ via USA Today's blog

Joyce Lamb at Happily\*Ever\*After

Anna Lee Huber is the Daphne Award-winning author of the national bestselling Lady Darby Mysteries and the Verity Kent Mysteries. She is a summa cum laude graduate of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she majored in music and minored in psychology. She currently resides with her family and is hard at work on her next novel.

### **An Artless Demise Details**

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## From Reader Review An Artless Demise for online ebook

### Melissa says

I recieved the book as an ARC. This was my favourite installment of the series. The use of real historical events in the plot of this book made the story interesting and enjoyable to read. The characters are well-developed and the secondary characters are just as interesting to follow as Kiera and Gage.

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### Betty says

In 1883 Lady Darby has returned to London with her husband, Sebastian Gage to London for the season. The city is uneasy as parliament is trying to pass the reform bill and the new police were formed to handle crime in London. Shortly after arriving, a couple of "burkers" have been arrested for killing people and selling their bodies to the medical field. Lady Darby past has come to haunt her and she is starting to be snubbed by polite society.

Keira and Gave become involved with the death of a young scion of the Nobility. A couple more death occurs on heirs to the peerage. In order to find the killer, Keira and Gage get caught in the mob scene at the hanging of two of the burkers. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK AND SERIES.

Disclosure: Thanks to Berkley Publishing Groups for a copy through NetGalley. The opinions expressed are my own.

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### Lorena says

I received a free ARC of this book via NetGalley.

Another fun read in this well-written series. This one focuses on the historical Italian Boy murder and subsequent resurrectionist trials in 1831. Kiera and Gage's return to London was a bit of a let-down, though...Kiera spent most of the time feeling persecuted and depressed, and her eventual "stand" against her detractors in London society was pretty tame and unsatisfying.

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### Robin says

4.5/5

Number 7 in the Lady Darby series and another winner from Huber! Rich in historical details and fact, this one revolves around the deaths of 3 noble heirs while also mixing in the resurrectionist trade and Keira's frightening history with it. I continue to ♥? the development of Keira's and Sebastian's love story...Huber does this especially well. The reader doesn't feel as if they are being presented with a full-blown romance but rather that they are watching a careful wooing unfold of what promises to be an epic love match.

Keira, as a heroine, is not perfect but rather heartbreakingly human, and that's what makes her so compelling to me. Yes, she's intelligent, yes she's strong, but there are nightmares and monsters in her past that can also render her afraid and guilt-ridden. And that's where Sebastian becomes her rock and her helpmate. They,

both separately and as a couple, are fascinating to watch as they grow.

I will never tire of reading anything by Huber...period. ????

Thanks to #NetGalley and #Berkley for the ARC. The opinions are strictly my own. Out 4/2.

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## **Robin says**

The seventh in Huber's enjoyable Lady Darby series, this novel finds the lovely and talented Kiera happily married to investigator Sebastian Gage and pregnant with her first child. At this point, the talented Huber is a nice cross between the romance of Tasha Alexander and the social commentary that Anne Perry focuses on in her novels. In 1830's London, there's plenty of social injustice to go around, though that is far from Huber's main theme.

I've always loved the premise of these novels. Kiera is a painter who was forced, under her first husband's tutelage, to create precise anatomical drawings from corpses he obtained probably through illegal means. At the time, the idea of an autopsy or of learning from a human body was considered something of a scandal. When Kiera's first husband dies, she's forced to retreat to her sister's home in Scotland because her work for her husband has made her notorious.

It gives Kiera a fabulous backstory – her first husband's treatment of her is always at the back of her mind, and her lack of acceptance by conventional members of the “ton” make every social occasion a minefield. Luckily, her present husband, Gage, is a model of kindness and they are a wonderful detecting pair.

In this novel, Huber draws on the actual Burke and Hare, notorious for murdering people and selling the corpses to medical schools or doctors. The term “Burking” comes from this nefarious Edinburgh criminal, and when a young boy is discovered dead not long before the discovery of an Earl's son, both of them appearing to be “burked,” the entire city is on edge and Kiera's past is raked up once again. She works as a portrait painter, and her commissions begin to be cancelled.

Nicely balancing the details of Kiera's and Gage's solidly upper middle-class life as well as their respective relationships with their maid and manservant, the story follows the pair as they try and solve an unfortunate string of murders of young men. They are desperate to figure out the connection between them, though it's ultimately clear they have not actually been “burked”.

Surrounding the story – I think the Victorians would have called it a “miasma” – are the squalid conditions of the London poor and the many, many children who are put to work on the streets, begging, stealing or much worse. The dead boy is one of these sad tales and the discovery of the details of his life leads Kiera to some personal insights regarding those closest to her, by dint of affection or relation.

There's a real heart to these books and a true sense of humanity that lights up Huber's well told stories. While Lady Darby may feel at the end of this novel that some of her emotional issues have been resolved, Huber lays the ground for her next adventure and I for one cannot wait to read it.

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## **Gail says**

One of the many pleasures of this series is seeing the evolution of Kiera and Gage, both as individuals and as a couple. An Artless Demise finds them investigating the death of a much hated society heir while also battling the re-emergence of Burkers who illicitly provide bodies to anatomists. Unfortunately, rather than grave robbing, the London Burkers are not waiting for death to occur naturally and are creating their own corpses, most famously with the notorious murder of the Italian Boy.

Naturally, these events dredge up the scandal brought upon Kiera by her abusive first husband who forced her to use her artistic skills to document the anatomy of the corpses he illegally acquired. Kiera finds herself the object of society gossip, unfounded rumors, and, ultimately, blackmail, even as she and Gage rejoice in her pregnancy and await the birth of their first child. Nevertheless, with Gage's support, Kiera begins to shed the role of victim and develops new relationships with those around her, especially Gage's disapproving father.

Author Anna Lee Huber expertly blends historical events with Kiera and Gage's pursuit of a serial killer who is using the Burkers as cover for his own crimes. The inequities of England's class system are also addressed in ways that drive home its injustices. This series is intelligent, respects its audience's intelligence, and is simply a joy to read.

Full Disclosure--Net Gallery and the publisher provided me with a digital ARC of this book. This is my honest review.

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### **Lorraine says**

Winning ARC copy of An Artless Demise (Lady Darby Mystery #7) from Anna Lee Huber was a very surprising and lovely Christmas present for me. Being an avid Anglophile and loving London, this book was a very special as well as educating read for me. The independent Lady Darby, who would much prefer to be called Mrs. Gage, but in 1831 society that is not done as one is called by their loftier title, and her new husband, Sebastian Gage, return to London where the newlyweds are to settle. Their happiness and Kiera's reception and her reputation are threatened by various members of the ton and eventually the citizens of London as the resurrectionists (body snatchers) offer too fresh a body to a medical college which is then reported to the police, and three of these resurrectionists are arrested. Lady Darby's past is catching up to her. Following the infamous Burke and Hare case in Edinburgh, these 'burkers' have 'set the stage' for Kiera and her past to become fodder for the newspapers and local gossip. Then a young heir of an earldom is murdered. Have the 'burkers' come to Mayfair? Is Lady Darby involved? Will Sebastian discover the answers in time? A fascinating read! Highly recommended! So well done, Ms. Huber! 5 stars.

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### **Lori says**

An Artless Demise takes place in London during a time when people were selling corpses to medical schools for the study of anatomy ("Burking.") Lady Darby has a reputation in society, associating her with these criminals, although she was not directly involved. Her first husband's corruption made her the subject of gossip and prejudice. She is now happily remarried, and expecting her first child.

A burking incident at the beginning of the novel causes many people to gossip about her and speculate that Lady Darby must be the cause. Meanwhile, she and her husband work hard to solve this murder, as well as a few more.

I enjoyed the characters, dialogue, and descriptions enough to look for the first six titles in the series, so I can start from the beginning. I would recommend this to anyone interested in historical mysteries.

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### **Kristin says**

This was the best one in the series, which has had its ups and downs at times. Well plotted and thrilling, the story also greatly highlighted the main character, who continues to grow. I'm curious how many more of these there will be. This particular story, while dark, was done really well, and I could see more being written without exhausting the premise.

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### **Pat Dupuy says**

Pregnant and happy, Kiera returns to London with her husband Gage. Unfortunately the spectre of her late husband, Lord Darby, rises when London is beset by disappearances and murders attributed to bodysnatchers. An Artless Demise is a very twisty, emotional story that is impossible to put down.

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### **Susan says**

Review to follow.

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### **GG says**

Anna Lee Huber's 7th trip into the Lady Darby mysteries is as thrilling as the first, THE ANATOMIST'S WIFE. Only more so. Kiera and Gage's mysteries (yes, plural) in ARTLESS DEMISE have everything: murder, blackmail, kidnappings, forbidden love, riots, hangings, need I say more. I loved the expanding roles of reoccurring characters. Yet there is even more character growth, especially between Kiera and Gage. My heart hurt for Kiera and the emotional pain she is still not free of.

Of course, Ms Huber leaves her readers with a trail of breadcrumbs leading us to Lady Darby #8. Which seems a long way off. I most definitely recommend ARTLESS DEMISE.

I received this book free from NetGalley as an ARC reviewer in exchange for a true and honest review. And so it has been.

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### **Pamela Priest says**

This series continues to get better and better as Gage and Kiera return to Londa during the Italian Boy

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murder and subsequent resurrectionist trials in 1831. . Kiera is faced with having to deal with her past and first husband's 'activities.' It's great to see how it all comes together - real history colliding with Kiera's history and how the family comes together towards the end. I definitely recommend reading this!

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### **Meghan says**

This book was received as an ARC from Berkley Publishing Group in exchange for an honest review. Opinions and thoughts expressed in this review are completely my own.

We have been searching for Historical Fiction for our library collection and the one's that are most popular are the mysteries and this one really lived up to that expectation. It is always wonderful to return to your hometown especially after you married the love of you life but when stranger things started to happen, a well deserved homecoming is short-lived. This book had drama, action and really leaves you thinking on your feet. Our readers love it when books have a bit of a twist to them and really keeps them attentive throughout the story. An enticing novel that is sure to leave you speechless in excitement.

We will definitely consider this title for our Historical Fiction collection at our library. That is why we give this book 5 stars.

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### **Linda L. Dodd says**

The story opens with Kiera and Sebastien back in London. Kiera's past raises its ugly head when a gang of body snatchers are arrested and the scandal associated with her first marriage resurfaces. The body for sale was that of a child and, upon investigation, it comes to light that other children in London are missing. Fear runs rampant throughout London and Kiera's father-in-law assumes the worst of Kiera as do many of the ton. Things intensify when a debauched young man, heir to an Earldom, is found murdered. Within a few weeks, two more heirs from different families have been murdered, as well. In the meantime, Kiera gets a threatening note as an attempt to extort a reward from her for not releasing damaging information to the press whether it be true or not. The author does a good job at masking the identity of the murderer and creating a compelling mystery.

I loved the fact that many of the characters that we were introduced to in prior books make an appearance (alas, no Bonnie Brock but then again we are in London not Edinburgh). We also find out more about Sebastien's valet, Anderley, and his background. However, what I loved most of all was Kiera's ever evolving relationship with those around her. I can't wait to see where the author takes in the future, particularly with the impending birth of a child. I was fortunate enough to receive an advance copy of this book; however, the views expressed in this review are my own and was in no way influenced by the fact that I received the ARC.

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