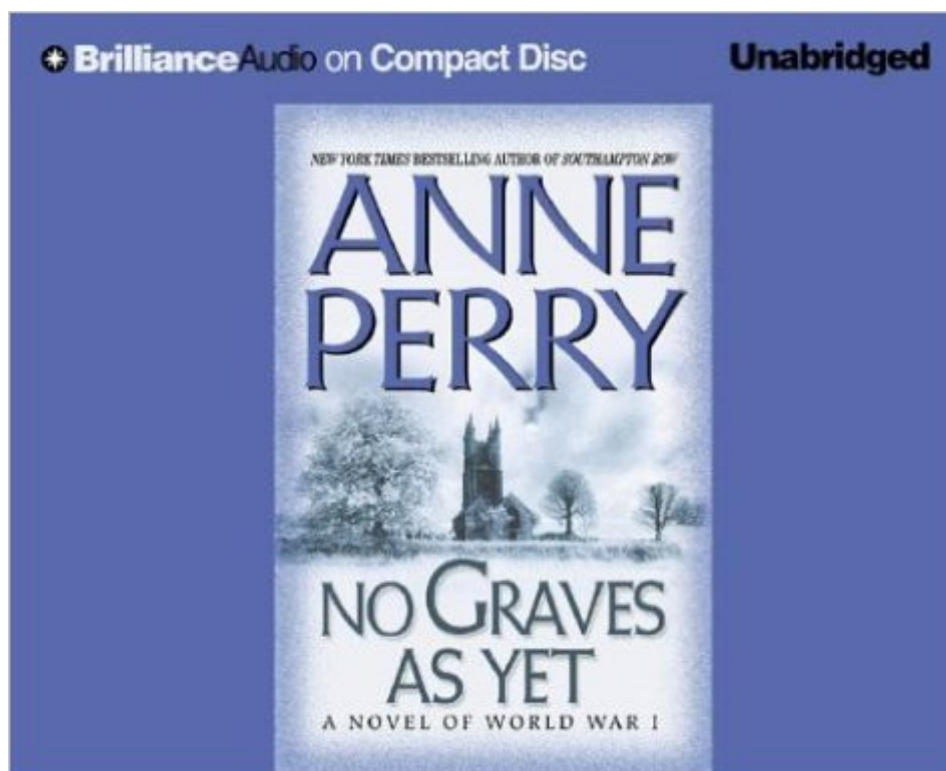


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No Graves As Yet: A Novel Of World War I



Synopsis

On a sunny afternoon in late June, Cambridge professor Joseph Reavley is summoned from a student cricket match to learn that his parents have died in an automobile crash. Joseph's brother, Matthew, an officer in the Intelligence Service, reveals that their father had been en route to London to turn over to him a mysterious secret document—allegedly with the power to disgrace England forever and destroy the civilized world. A paper so damning that Joseph and Matthew dared mention it only to their restless sister. Now it has vanished. What has happened to this explosive document, if indeed it ever existed? How had it fallen into the hands of their father, a quiet countryman? Not even Matthew, with his Intelligence connections, can answer these questions. And Joseph is soon burdened with a second tragedy: the shocking murder of his most gifted student, handsome Sebastian Allard, loved and admired by everyone. Or so it appeared. Meanwhile, England's seamless peace is cracking—as the distance between the murder of an Austrian archduke by a Serbian anarchist and the death of a brilliant university student by a bullet to the head becomes shorter with each day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For a very long time, I read Anne Perry's ongoing series of mysteries set in Victorian England. It didn't matter if they were centered around the husband and wife team of Thomas and Charlotte Pitt, or the enigmatic William Monk. But after a while, they started to pale -- after all, the mystery genre

fits into a formula of a body is found, an outsider is brought in to find the clues and the people associated with the killing, and eventually justice is served, usually to the delight of the reader who is assured that good will triumph. Read enough of these, and after a time, you can start to pick out what will be happening in the first hundred pages or so. And so, with a sigh of regret on my part, I stopped reading Anne Perry quite so much. But in 2002 or so, Ms. Perry started a new series of mysteries that are more of historical novel than a set of ongoing whodunits. Set in and around the events of the First World War, and more specifically, one family's survival in the tragedy, there would be a definite beginning and end to the series. *No Graves As Yet* is the first novel of the five. It begins in the rich days of June 1914. Joseph Reavley is a teacher at Cambridge University, watching a match of cricket when news arrives of a terrible accident involving his parents, John and Alys, a prosperous middle-class couple. As his siblings gather for the funeral, Joseph realizes along with his brother Matthew that their parents' death may have actually been a murder -- but with little proof, and even less motive, the family has little go on. Joseph returns to Cambridge, Matthew to London, both of them searching for something to make the horror of the deaths have some kind of sense.

It somewhat dismays me that some of the readers' reviews for this book seem to be more concerned with comparing it to the author's Pitt series rather than evaluating it on its own terms. I'm sure the Pitt books were very good, but the fact remains that Anne Perry has chosen to move on. Nostalgia for that series should not cause *No Graves As Yet* to be treated more harshly than otherwise would be the case. In any event, I found *No Graves As Yet* to be a good if not outstanding work. The author's strongest point is her ability to capture a time and place so well with what's usually a fairly brief description. Consider the opening paragraph: "It was a golden afternoon in late June, a perfect day for cricket. The sky burned in a cloudless sky, and the breeze was barely sufficient to stir the slender, pale skirts of the women as they stood on the grass at Fenner's Field, parasols in hand. The men, in white flannels, were relaxed and smiling." I'm not a particularly imaginative sort, yet I had no trouble at all picturing myself at a Cambridge cricket field in 1914, thanks to just three descriptive sentences. Other examples of terse yet vivid descriptions abound throughout the book. Ms. Perry also does a fine job at portraying the atmosphere of fear and suspicion pervading the college where much of the action occurs, as well as the apprehension - often expressed through denial - of upcoming war. As for the story itself, it was a reasonably interesting mystery with the requisite number of twists and turns, though things were thrown at us very quickly near the end, making for some confusion. I had to re-read the last chapter just to make

sure I had it right. Ms. Perry also was able to blend in a little bit of history into the story without making it all seem contrived.

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