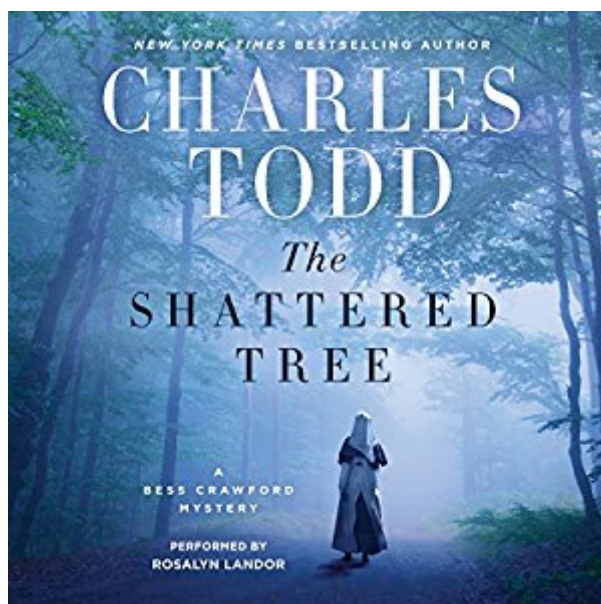


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The Shattered Tree: A Bess Crawford Mystery



Synopsis

World War I battlefield nurse Bess Crawford goes to dangerous lengths to investigate a wounded soldier's background - and uncover his true loyalties - in this thrilling and atmospheric entry in the best-selling "vivid period mystery series" (New York Times Book Review). At the foot of a tree shattered by shelling and gunfire, stretcher bearers find an exhausted officer shivering with cold and a loss of blood from several wounds. The soldier is brought to battlefield nurse Bess Crawford's aid station, where she stabilizes him and treats his injuries before he is sent to a rear hospital. The odd thing is the officer isn't British - he's French. But in a moment of anger and stress, he shouts at Bess in German. When Bess reports the incident to Matron, her superior offers a ready explanation. The soldier is from Alsace-Lorraine, a province in the west where the tenuous border between France and Germany has continually shifted through history, most recently in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, won by the Germans. But is the wounded man Alsatian? And if he is, on which side of the war do his sympathies really lie? Of course Matron could be right, but Bess remains uneasy - and unconvinced. If he was a French soldier, what was he doing so far from his own lines...and so close to where the Germans are putting up a fierce last-ditch fight? When the French officer disappears in Paris, it's up to Bess - a soldier's daughter as well as a nurse - to find out why, even at the risk of her own life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

How difficult it is to write a 2 star review, particularly of the latest book in a long, on-going series, but

Charles Todd's "The Shattered Tree" is a mish-mash of a book. The series is Todd's "Bess Crawford" and while their other series, "Inspector Ian Rutledge", still has some life in it, poor Bess is now at the end of WW1 and still seeing bad guys among her wounded soldiers. In "The Shattered Tree", the soldier goes from her at-the-front nursing station to Paris, where Bess is also convalescing from a sniper shot. The same fellow seems to be involved in shady operations. Long ago murders, possible suicides, traitorous acts by...is he a Frenchman, a German, or a Belgian? And how many shady guys are there, anyway? Bess is aided in her search by various officers who either think Bess is a moron in need of protection or are possibly seeking the guy themselves. Oh, and there's also a stabbed nurse-nun."The Shattered Tree" is a poorly plotted book with old, tired characters. The only good thought is that the book takes place in November, 1918, and peace should be declared soon and maybe Bess will go back to England and marry her dishy Sargent-Major who's been hanging in much too long.

I read the Bess Crawford book when they come out, as well as the Ian Rutledge ones. I admit, though, to often overlooking the more annoying features of Bess the character in order to fully enjoy the books. Annoying things like the number of other characters who seem romantically attracted to her despite her apparent lack of even a scintilla of sexual interest in anyone at all. She also goes haring off on investigatory adventures on the flimsiest pretexts, which works as long as the investigation is interesting. Unfortunately, this latest addition to the canon has the most farfetched pretexts and the most egregious puzzle yet. I kept shaking my head as she left her recovery-hospital-nursery-room time after time with no kind of accountability to the hospital staff in order to pursue a vague mystery set off by an equally vague suspicion of a man who was fleetingly a patient of hers, and an hard-to-read nun she (of course she does) encounters in a plot-advancing sort of way. She keeps reopening her (literal) wounds and pooh-poohing her reinjuries to those inattentive nurses at the rehab hospital as well as to the several somewhat smitten guys who borrow cars to take her where she needs to go on her obsessive journeys in pursuit of The Truth. She befriends a char at the rehab facility who turns out to be a former actress, perfect for a role Bess has in mind for her. Simon also shows up at a critical point, and perhaps the author is setting them up for an eventual partnering, but the most believable partnering would not involve marriage, but perhaps an investigative agency, a la Kate Shakleton or Maisie Dobbs. I was pretty disappointed, I was also hoping the war would end before the book did. Guess that'll be the setting of the next one.

Love the Charles Todd books! Therefore I was a bit distressed when I pulled it up on my kindle and

paperwhite and the font was super large. Yes I changed to a smaller font but it would only decrease so far. Annoying!!! This is the second book by this publisher I have read in the past week. The other book had the same issue. So instead of 5 stars I rated it 4 stars.

I have read all the Bess Crawford books, and although they are sometimes uneven, I've enjoyed them. I can't say the same for this one. The plot is plodding and pedantic, and it feels like we are going over the same material time and again without making any real progress. I had been waiting for this book to come out, but it was a major disappointment to me.

I always wait impatiently for the next Charles Todd to come out and was eager to read "The Shattered Tree". It's a good novel, but certainly not one of Todd's best. This is a Bess Crawford book and, as in previous entries in the series, Bess is curious about a patient she believes may not be what he seemed when under her care. Ordered to Paris to recover in a clinic for military personnel, Bess comes across information about her patient that prompts her to investigate the man and find him. For me, the book was much slower than previous Crawford novels: much time is spent on Bess finding rides and going back and forth from Paris to nearby small villages, it takes awhile to get all of the military personnel straight, the mystery itself is a bit confusing and requires careful attention to sort out the players in both old and new crimes, and recurring characters, who add much interest in the previous books (Simon, Bess's parents) have very small roles. Still, Todd gives an interesting and detailed picture of Paris and of the feelings and concerns of people during the last stages of WWI. Some of the characters are a bit too "stock" for a Todd book and the interaction between some of the characters some of the time seems a bit too one-dimensional or simplistic. So on to the next...

I have read all of Charles Todd books and enjoyed them all. This book however was not one of his best. Bess gets personally involved in this cat and mouse criminal scenario which became tedious and long. Bess is a nurse not a detective!. I felt she was almost intrusive getting involved with the French Captain's life. She should have reported her suspicion to the Military and let them deal with it. I was disappointed with this book.

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