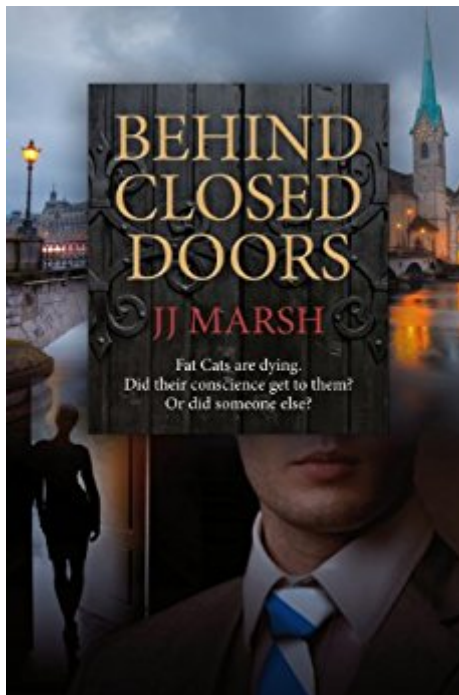




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Behind Closed Doors: A European Crime Mystery (The Beatrice Stubbs Series Book 1)



Synopsis

Never underestimate a beautiful woman. You might not live to regret it. Suicide – the act of taking one's own life. Homicide – the act of taking someone else's. An unethical banker suffocates. A diamond dealer slits his wrists. A media magnate freezes in the snow. A disgraced CEO inhales exhaust fumes. Four unpopular businessmen, four apparent suicides. Until Interpol find the same DNA at each death. Beatrice Stubbs, on her first real case since the incident, arrives in Switzerland to lead the investigation. But there's more to Zurich than chocolate and charm. Potential suspects are everywhere, her Swiss counterpart is hostile and the secretive world of international finance seems beyond the law. Battling impossible odds by day and her own demons at night, Beatrice has never felt so alone. She isn't. Someone else believes in justice. The poetic kind. "Wow. Wow, wow, wow. This is a GREAT book." - Sheila Bugler, author of *Hunting Shadows* "Behind Closed Doors crackles with human interest, intrigue and atmosphere. Beatrice and her team go all out to see justice is done. And author JJ Marsh does more than justice to the intelligent heroine who leads this exciting and absorbing chase." • Libris Reviews "I hate giving five star reviews because they should go only to the very best books - five stars should mean 'This is a superlative read and there are very few like it'. Well, this is a superlative read and there are very few like it. 5*." - The Bagster, reviewer

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Customer Reviews

International crime seeking justice in a corrupt wealthy community while team of investigators track the killers thru time and countries. Wait it gets better when the target becomes a team member. The team races to save there own, catch the killers and save the day. Partial success, the story continues unresolved.

Love that it took place in Zurich, Switzerland. Crazy ending.

Behind Closed Doors introduces us to a new detective - one that I hope is going to feature again and again in future books. Beatrice Stubbs came to life for me in a way few fictional characters do. She irritated me at times, but not because she wasn't well written, quite the opposite in fact. She annoyed me in exactly the same way a close friend would. I wanted to yell at her when she did something I considered dumb, hug her when she felt down and cheer her on when she got things right. In other words, J J Marsh has created a living, breathing person with whom readers can identify. The plot is well crafted and original. DI Stubbs has been seconded to Zurich to uncover the truth behind a series of supposed suicides, which are, in fact, carefully crafted murders - each one designed to fit the 'crime' for which the killer has deemed the victims guilty. We know fairly early on who is orchestrating everything, but not how or why, and it is this need to know which keeps the reader turning pages. Behind Closed Doors straddles the boundary between literary fiction and crime writing, but it sits comfortably in both camps. It is, quite simply, a very well constructed crime novel written by an author in total control of her material. I can't wait for the next Beatrice Stubbs novel. My only concern is that the author has set the bar so high this is going to be a hard act to follow.

I really enjoyed this book. It had lots of twists and turns which kept you guessing the whole way through the book. Lots of mystery and suspense throughout, definetly worth a read!

I enjoyed the mystery and how the reader was kept in suspense right to the end. Loved the international aspect of the story.

Behind Closed Doors by JJ Marsh is an international thriller that revolves around the deaths of unscrupulous businessmen. It's a well written novel that engages the reader from the offset and keeps us guessing right until the very last page. The bulk of the novel is set in 2012 when Scotland Yard Detective Beatrice Stubbs is despatched to Switzerland to head up a team of multi-agency staff investigating a spate of seeming suicides amongst the echelons of power and money. It's a high profile case with the potential to ruffle lots of important feathers. However, Detective Stubbs is nothing if not tenacious and thorough, refusing to take the easy route of accepting the deaths as suicide. It is Beatrice Stubbs who is the heart of the novel and she makes a compelling protagonist. Middle-aged and frumpy, Beatrice is a refreshing champion for ordinary working women. She is the perfect mix of hard working, courageous and neurotic. I applaud the way that Marsh examines mental health issues through Beatrice who has Bipolar and has regular telephone counselling sessions to keep her afloat. Beatrice's Swiss counterpart is the middle-aged, grumpy Karl Kalin who, in his own way, is just as dysfunctional as she is. Their initial encounters are hilariously brusque and prickly but over time a mutual respect develops and by the end a tentative friendship emerges. The rest of the team are made up of experts from throughout Europe. Chris Keese is from Europol, Sabine Tikkenson is an Estonian crime analyst, Conceicao Pereira da Silva is a DNA advisor and Xavier Racine, a young Swiss detective. All of the team are likeable and the procedural police work is offset by hints of the team's personal lives. Although the novel is in parts quite dark, there are flashes of humour which prevent it from becoming too heavy. Beatrice for example is a creature of habit whose main concern at taking a job overseas is that she will miss her daily fix of The Archers. Chris Kees is a hapless womaniser whom the reader realises is barking up the wrong tree long before he does. Marsh makes the most of the setting and her descriptive language is very visual and filmic which is particularly effective. As the team travel around Switzerland and further afield to visit murder scenes, the landscape plays a huge part. Also as the plot involves the world of big business and wealth, the sense of opulence and extravagance is never far away. There is no doubt at all that Marsh is an accomplished writer and she skilfully navigates the different threads of the story before bringing them together in a successful denouement. A technique that she uses to give background to the murders is to intersperse the ongoing narrative with flashback chapters. In doing this she allows us to get to know the victims and see the murders take place. This adds to the mystery but also slowed the story down somewhat and

for me felt a bit intrusive each time my attention was diverted away from the primary story. I really enjoyed that Marsh uses her story to ask questions about morality and retribution. The victims of the crimes are all despicable people who have caused much harm to others, people who we might say deserve what they get. Marsh explores the corrosive nature of vigilantism however and the fine line between wrongdoer and executioner – does setting ourselves up as judge and jury not lead us into becoming the very people we are trying to punish? The novel on the whole is a reflection of Beatrice who stresses to her team that it's the "daily slog of solid police work" that solves cases. The plot builds slowly and with each layer our tense anticipation mounts until by the end we are desperate for answers which Marsh provides in a very satisfactory manner. I really enjoyed Behind Closed Doors and warmed to Beatrice Stubbs who also features in other JJ Marsh novels. If you like an intelligent police procedural thriller with realistic, down to earth characters then you'll love this one.

Always good to discover the first in a new series and to enjoy it so much that you look forward to continuing in the company of the characters in later books, and this is what happened with "Behind Closed Doors". I don't usually read modern police procedurals, preferring cosy crime and stories from the Golden Age of detective stories, but I was drawn to this one by its pan-European setting and international cast of characters. It is also driven more by character than by crime for its own sake, and although it followed the story of a serial killer, it was not graphic or gratuitous in its descriptions of the murders. I also really liked the central character, DI Detective Stubbs, a police officer with a troubled past that is gently trickled into the main story while leaving plenty more to explore in future books. She reminded me of Dorothy L Sayers' Harriet Vane when she first encounters Lord Peter Wimsey - smart, self-knowing and self-protective, but vulnerable. I'll be interested in seeing how her relationship with her apparent partner Matthew, seen in this book largely through his reassuring phone calls, develops in future adventures. As well as enjoying getting to know more about life in Switzerland, where most of the action is set, I liked the flashbacks throughout to each of the murders, which almost felt like short stories embedded within the novel, building detailed profiles of the victims and their personalities. In less capable hands, that could have been a risky structure, but in Marsh's safe hands it works well. Like other reviewers, I was surprised to realise that this was her debut novel, because it's accomplished, deft and confident without being showy. Now looking forward to working my way through the rest of the series, of which the sixth is about to be launched. I may be some time... (less)

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