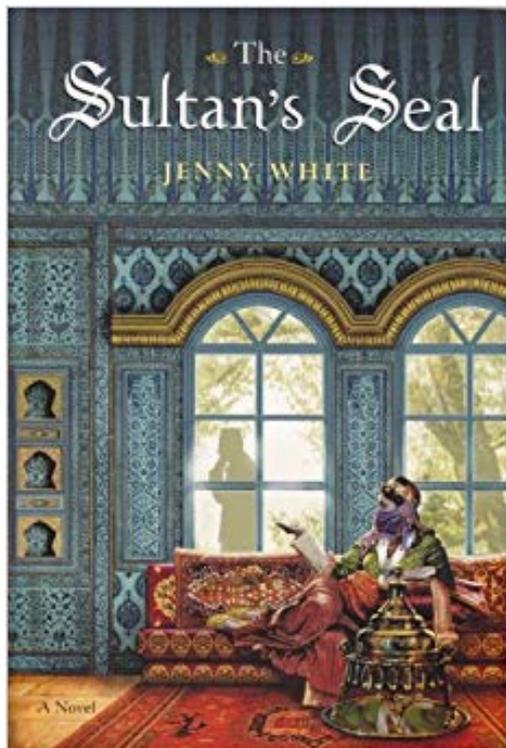


The Sultan's Seal *by* Jenny White



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Some light edge wear, back cover has a couple top corner creases. Last few pages have some slight curling on the top. Front cover has a tiny tear on bottom edge. Very clean and tight. Ships very quickly and packaged carefully!



Reviews of the *The Sultan's Seal* *by* Jenny White

Stoneshaper

As a scholar of the Ottoman Empire and a fan of 19th century detective fiction, I am delighted with Amazon's recommendation of Jenny White's "Kamil Pasha" mysteries, Set in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, Smith (an Ottoman expert and scholar) has a command of not only the cultural and geographic details of Istanbul (Constantinople), but also skill in writing a first-rate murder mystery.

The plot revolves around the discovery of a young European woman's body that washes up on the shore of the Bosphorus. What quickly turns a possible accidental drowning into a dangerous case of political intrigue is an amulet containing the sultan's personal seal on the body. Tasked with investigating the case (and its relation to a career-ending murder of similar circumstances some 15

years earlier), is Kamil Pasha, a Cambridge-educated minor official whose position within the Ottoman administration (and perhaps his life) hang in his ability to solve the case without ruffling too many official feathers. This becomes increasingly difficult as clue after clue indicate that powerful persons are acting behind the scenes to obstruct the investigation, which may point to involvement of Topkapi Palace itself.

As much fun as the mystery is to read, the details White provides of Ottoman (and Turkish) culture and history not only provide an element of authenticity to the story, it also points to the magnitude of changes the Sublime Porte was experiencing at the time. This flavor is as much an attraction to the genre as the crime fiction itself - and White does this brilliantly.

For fans of historical detective fiction, this is a recommended read. Of a similar flavor (in terms of place and time and genre), I also recommend *The Janissary Tree: A Novel* (Investigator Yashim), or for a more contemporary (and genuinely Turkish) voice, *The Sultan of Byzantium*

Kalv

This book has some interesting historical tidbits but most of the information is inaccurate. The "amber" worry beads discussed are the famous jet from central Turkey. Tea is a big part of the story but Turks didn't drink tea until the 20th Century when they started growing it in the Black Sea region. The story itself I found not very interesting, far fetched, disjointed. I read this while traveling in Turkey, hoping it would add to the trip, but it was mostly a frustrating read.

Ffrlel

"The Sultan's Seal" was a well-plotted, beautifully written novel set in Istanbul in the last days of the Ottoman Empire. Kamil Pasha is a magistrate trying to introduce Western methods of investigation and prosecution in a rigid and arthritic culture. He is hampered both by being unable to operate within the place and by his own internal doubts about some of the methods he applies.

I visited Istanbul earlier this year and bought this book with the idea that it would painlessly teach me more about the history of the city. (This has worked well with other novels I read.) Instead I read an intricately plotted mystery populated by well-rounded and interesting characters. I did get insights into what Istanbul must have been like shortly before the turn of the 20th century, but I got much more than that in the way of plot and character building.

You don't have to have visited Istanbul to thoroughly enjoy this novel. I'll be reading more in this series.

Nafyn

Jenny White's well-written novel set in the waning Ottoman empire falls somewhat short of its literary ambitions but is a worthwhile read nonetheless.

She attempts not one but four literary artifices that I generally don't care for. The main narrative is in the present tense; hard to do, not sure why anyone tries. She shifts from third-person narrative to first-person narrative (in past tense); always jarring. She intersperses that with yet another first-person, epistolary narrative. All this makes a woman writing about a male character the least of her offenses.

While the writing itself is of a very high quality, all this jumping around makes the narrative jerky and sometimes confusing.

I read this because I am a fan of Jason Goodwin's mysteries, also set in Istanbul. While Goodwin's *Yashim* is set in the 1830s, White's *Kamil Pasha* is set in the 1880s. The half-century time difference permits Goodwin to keep much more of the Oriental exoticism. *Yashim* dresses in robes and turban, while Kamil wears a coat and fez. Goodwin manages some scenes in Topkapi palace while White

must move on the newer, less exotic palaces.

Both writers, however, glory in the charm of Istanbul and the wonders of the Ottoman culture. White's language is even more elegant and powerful in rendering this other time and place.

But I have some other criticisms of this book. Kamil Pasha, unlike Yashim, is not a eunuch, and yet is not particularly virile or convincing as a male character. This book dwells far too long on an incipient romance between Kamil and the daughter of the English ambassador in ways that neither move the plot along or really give us more depth of character. As a result, important allies or would-be allies of magistrate Kamil, the police surgeon and the daughter's American cousin, get short shrift and are never satisfactorily developed for the roles they play. The overlapping, jumbled narratives leave us wondering about motivation, and at the end of the book it's fair to say the reader is not really sure who killed whom or why.

White has since produced two more Kamil Pasha novels and presumably has overcome some of these first-novel jitters. If I do go on to read the subsequent novels, though, it will be for her lyrical descriptions of this period rather than any love for Kamil Pasha.

Andronrad

I wish I could write reviews like the others, but I was sadly disappointed by this book. After enjoying the Inspector Yasim books so much I was looking for something else to bring me back to the shores of Istanbul, and this book was not it...just feels like it tried to hard and missed the target. Sorry, wish it was better.

Onath

I was surprised at how good this book was. It was complex, unpredictable, filled with historical information that revealed the political conflict of the time. It also developed characters who were interesting and multi-dimensional. I highly recommend this book.

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