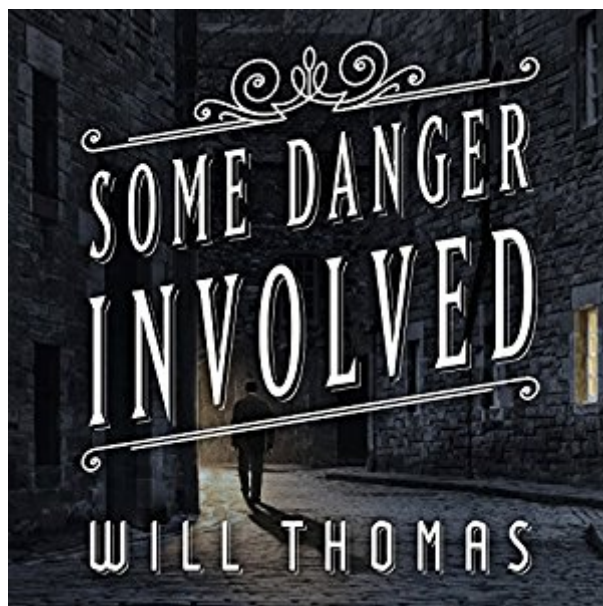


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Some Danger Involved: Barker & Llewelyn Series, Book 1



Synopsis

An atmospheric debut novel set on the gritty streets of Victorian London, *Some Danger Involved* introduces detective Cyrus Barker and his assistant, Thomas Llewelyn, as they work to solve the gruesome murder of a young scholar in London's Jewish ghetto. When the eccentric and enigmatic Barker takes the case, he must hire an assistant, and out of all who answer an ad for a position with "some danger involved", he chooses downtrodden Llewelyn, a gutsy young man with a murky past. As they inch ever closer to the shocking truth behind the murder, Llewelyn is drawn deeper and deeper into Barker's peculiar world of vigilante detective work, as well as the heart of London's teeming underworld. Brimming with wit and unforgettable characters and steeped in authentic period detail, *Some Danger Involved* is a captivating novel that introduces an equally captivating duo.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed this first in the Barker and Llewelyn series and I can say without reservation I will read more. The book was delightful and clever with both action and humor from beginning to end. What a great premise - an ad for an "enquiry agent" (which they prefer to be called) with the enticing line: "Some Danger Involved"! Llewelyn, especially, was a sympathetic and likeable character, but like some of my other favorite authors - Louis Bayard, Matthew Pearl, David Liss, and others - Will Thomas peppers the book with seemingly minor characters even more memorable than the main actors. At first I thought the book moved a little slow through the first third-to-half, but no sooner than

I thought so, came these two wonderful passages, as if the author (and agent Barker) could sense my fidgeting: "I may ask a question, sir, what skills should I develop to become a better detective or assistant?" "Patience, most of all," he said, swinging his stick to match his stride. "Patience is the essential quality of a man." - (p. 81) "I sat back against the plush cushions of Racket's cab and pondered the question. That is why the bullet that passed through the cab, shattering the window and spraying glass everywhere, didn't pass through my head as well." - (p. 137). And from there, it picked up dramatically (literally and figuratively!) Like David Liss, Will Thomas expertly weaves in social history as the backdrop of the narrative...in this case (and again, like David Liss in his Benjamin Weaver novels), the treatment of the Jewish community in London. And although their position in society had improved significantly in the 1880s when compared to Liss's setting of the early 1700s, the ant-Semitism that is described was a chilling foretelling of the Holocaust to come, and the influence of a single evil man and a mob: "I was in the pubs, agitating against the Jews, blaming them for stealing jobs and running up prices. It's amazing what one bloke can do." - (p. 262). Yet, against that evil stands some very heartwarming episodes involving Llewelyn confiding his personal history to Barker and another one towards the end when the plucky Peckinese "Harm" greets one of our healing heroes. It seemed to me that they still got more of their information from brute force than from using their noggins, but perhaps that changes in future installments. In any case, I can't wait to read more! Well done, Will Thomas!

This novel did a wonderful job of introducing 2 likeable characters in Barker and Llewellyn, and their menagerie of associates. For once there is a Victorian detective that isn't almost supernaturally observant, nor socially unconscious to the point of almost psychopathy. Barker is a likeable and not full of himself and I really enjoyed the banter between all the characters. It's not a page turner as far as mysteries go, but it was engaging and put me in the characters' world as a casual observer. Would highly recommend to fans of the genre.

"ASSISTANT to prominent enquiry agent. Typing and shorthand required. Some danger involved in performance of duties. Salary commensurate with ability." Young Thomas Llewellyn, seriously down on his luck, sees the ad in The Times. He doesn't feel at all qualified. He's a scholar whose studies at Oxford were cut disastrously short when he was sentenced to a term in Oxford Prison. He truthfully relates this on his c.v. and unsurprisingly has had no luck in landing a job in London. He's considering a leap into the Thames until he finds himself hired by Cyrus Barker, the enquiry agent (the term he prefers to private detective). And then he's off on his first ride in a hansom cab and on

an adventure that does indeed involve danger. The last assistant, he discovers, ended up shot through the head. It would be too easy to compare the mysterious and quirky Barker to Sherlock Holmes and Llewelyn to Watson. All the trappings are there--the cabs, the offices, the whole backdrop of Victorian London. It was a brilliant move to just set it up and get it out of the way, since Holmes looms over any and all mysteries set in the period (or any period). Almost immediately the personalities, the mystery, the adventures head off in their own direction and establish themselves almost effortlessly as something with a life of their own. Barker and Llewelyn are looking into the murder and crucifixion of a Jewish student on behalf of the Board of Deputies (influential men such as Lord Rothschild and Sir Moses Montefiore), who are concerned that it may be a sign of trouble like the pogroms that have been driving Jews out of their homes abroad and increasing the immigrant population in London. From the rag shops and poor lodgings of Petticoat Lane, to the rabble-rousing churches of the working class, to upper-class criminal psychopaths, to hidden Chinese restaurants, to serving as a Shabbes goy in a Rabbi's household, we follow Barker and Llewelyn across London on a search for the killer or killers. Even more fascinating is Llewelyn's initiation into his job as assistant, living in Barker's unique household, with its Chinese gardeners, Pekingese watch-dog, Jewish butler, arms/workout room, bath-house, finicky French chef (and former seaman), and stipulations about keeping windows open for the fresh air. There are mysteries enough just between Barker and Llewelyn and their pasts that are fun to explore in this book and hopefully in many more. I was delighted with these characters and the authors more than competent feel for the period and the place. It all comes alive convincingly and never stretches disbelief to the breaking point. This book added up to one great read. I'll look forward to reading all the books this author cares to write, at this point.

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