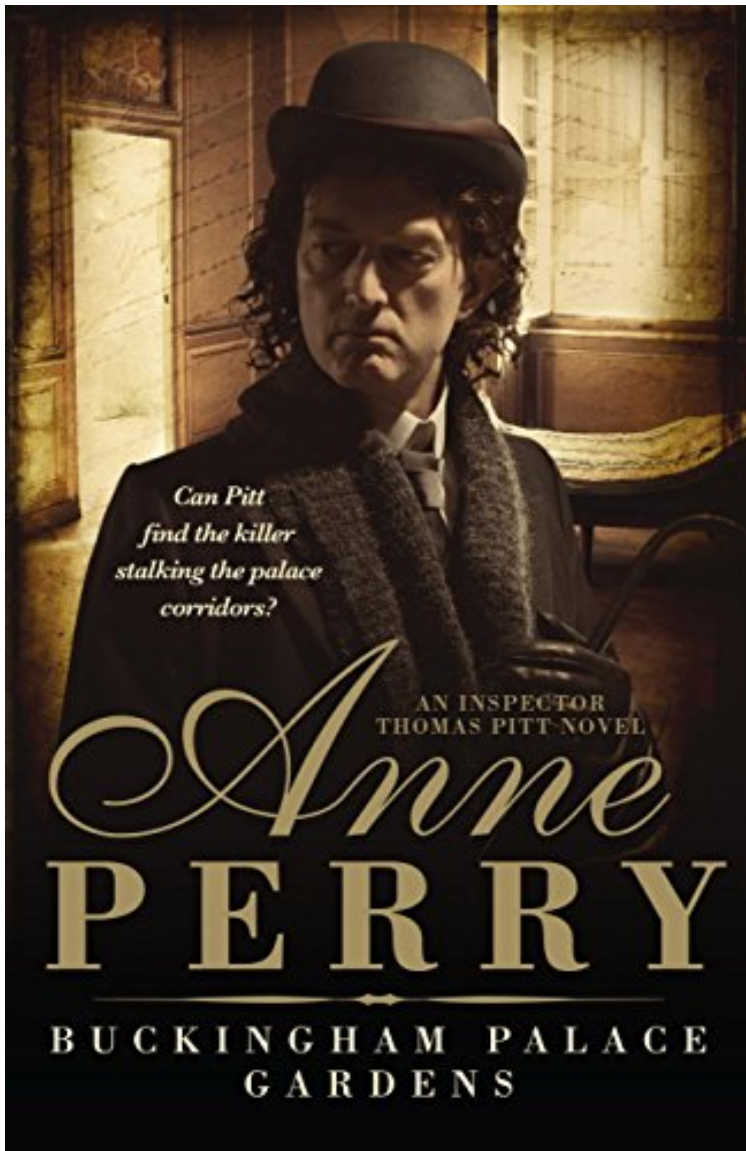


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Buckingham Palace Gardens (Thomas Pitt Mystery, Book 25): A royal mystery from the heart of Victorian London



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Can Pitt find the killer stalking the palace corridors? In the twenty-fifth compelling crime novel in Anne Perry's bestselling Pitt mystery series, Inspector Thomas Pitt must navigate the upper echelons of society if he is to find a murderer bold enough to kill in Buckingham Palace. Perfect for fans of C. J. Sansom and Sherlock Holmes.'Perry writes with an intelligence that's both refreshing and entertaining' -

Arizona Republic Early one morning, Inspector Thomas Pitt is awoken by a message from his boss, Narraway. A maid has been murdered. The maid worked at Buckingham Palace and Narraway needs his most trusted man to deal with the investigation. The suspects are narrowed down to a group of guests, meeting with the Prince of Wales to discuss the funding for a huge project: the Cape to Cairo railway. If the murderer isn't found, the Queen will veto royal support for the scheme. It rests with Pitt to solve the murder - in doing so he must reconcile his own concept of justice with those who feel it is within their right to make their own laws, whatever the consequences. What readers are saying about Buckingham Palace Gardens: 'A first class murder mystery, good solid characters and period detail'Keep you guessing until the end'Five stars'ExtraitChapter OneShe was apparently found in the linen cupboard, poor creature, Narraway replied, his lean face dour, his eyes so dark they seemed black in the interior shadow of the hansom cab. Then, before Pitt could say anything further, he corrected himself. One of the linen cupboards in Buckingham Palace. It was a particularly brutal murder.The vehicle jerked forward, throwing Pitt back in the seat. A prostitute? he said incredulously.Narraway was silent for a moment. The horses hoofs clattered loudly, the carriages wheels rattling over the cobbles dangerously close to the pavement edge.Surely thats a bad joke! he said at last as they swung around the corner into The Mall and picked up speed again.Very bad, Narraway agreed. At least I hope so. But I fear it is perfectly serious. However, if Mr. Cahoon Dunkeld proves to be wasting our time exercising his sense of humor, I shall take great joy in personally putting him in jailpreferably one of our less pleasant ones.It has to be a joke, Pitt said, shivering at the thought. There couldnt be a murder at the Palace. How could a prostitute get in there, anyway?Through the door, exactly as we shall, Pitt, Narraway answered. Dont be nave. And she was probably more welcome than we shall be.Pitt felt a little stung. Who is Cahoon Dunkeld? he asked, avoiding looking at Narraway. He had a reverence for Queen Victoria, especially now in her advanced age and widowhood, even though he was perfectly well aware of her reputed eccentricities and the fact that she had not always been so popular with her people. She had been in mourning too long, retreating not only from joy but also from duty. And he had gained some personal knowledge a couple of years ago of the extravagance and the self-indulgence of the Prince of Wales, and knew he kept several very expensive mistresses. Pitt had been superintendent of Bow Street then, and the conspiracy around the Prince had cost him his job and very nearly brought down the throne. That was why Pitt was now working for Victor Narraway in Special Branch, learning more about treason, anarchy, and other forms of violence against the State.But the thought of a prostitute in the Queens home was different. It disgusted him, and he had difficulty concealing it, even though he knew Narraway found him plebeian and faintly amusing for having such idealism.Who is Cahoon Dunkeld? he repeated.Narraway leaned forward a little. The dappled, early-morning sunlight of The Mall made bright patterns on the road. There was little traffic. It was not a residential area, and such horseback riders as were out would be cantering up and down Rotten Row on the edge of Hyde Park.An adventurer of considerable charm when he wishes, and undoubted ability, who is now seeking to become a gentleman in the more recognized social sense, Narraway answered. And apparently a friend of His Royal Highness.What is he doing at the Palace at this hour of the morning? Pitt said.That is what we are about to find out, Narraway snapped as they came out of The Mall in front of the Palace. The magnificent wrought-iron railings were tipped with gold. Guards were on duty wearing bearskin helmets, their red tunics bright in the sun.Pitt looked up at the sweeping faade itself and then at the roof. He saw with a flood of relief that there was no flag flying, indicating that Her Majesty was not in residence. At the same time he was inexplicably disappointed. He was quite aware that Narraway would find it gauche of him, but Pitt would like to have caught another glimpse of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. In spite of all common sense, there was a quickening of his heartbeat. Even inside the hansom cab he sat straighter, lifted his chin a little, and squared his shoulders.If Narraway noticed, he did not allow himself even the slightest smile.They swung round to the right, heading for the entrance where tradesmen and deliveries would go. They were stopped at the gate. Narraway gave his name, and immediately the guard stepped back and saluted. The cabdriver, startled into respect, urged his horse forward at a newly dignified pace.Ten minutes later Pitt and Narraway were being conducted up the wide, elegant stairs by a manservant who had introduced himself as Tyndale. He was of slight build but he moved with suppleness, even some grace, although Pitt judged him to be well into his fifties. He was courteous enough, but quite obviously distressed beyond any ability to maintain his normal composure.At any other time Pitt would have been fascinated to think that he was inside Buckingham Palace. Now all he could think of was the enormity of what lay ahead of them. The magnificence of history meant nothing.Was this an idiotic practical joke? Tyndales pallid face and stiff shoulders said not, and for the first time since Narraway had

made his extraordinary statement in the hansom, Pitt considered the possibility that it might be true. They were at the top of the stairs. Tyndale walked across the landing and knocked on a door a little to the left. It was opened immediately by a man of much greater height than he, with broad shoulders and a dark face of remarkable dynamism. He was severely balding, but this in no way diminished his handsomeness. His gray hair must once have been black because his brows still were. His skin was burned by sun and wind to a deep bronze. Mr. Narraway has arrived, Mr. Dunkeld, Tyndale said quietly. Good, Dunkeld replied. Now please leave us, and make sure that we are not interrupted. In fact, see that no staff come up onto this floor at all. He turned to Narraway as if Tyndale was already gone. Narraway? he asked. Narraway acknowledged it, and introduced Pitt. Cahoon Dunkeld. The big man held out his hand and shook Narraways briefly. He ignored Pitt except for a nod of his head. Come in, close the door. He turned and led the way into the charming, highly overfurnished room. Its wide, tall windows overlooked a garden, and beyond them the trees were motionless billows of green in the morning sun. Dunkeld remained standing in the middle of the floor. He spoke solely to Narraway. There has been a shocking event. I have never seen anything quite so . . . bestial. How it should happen here, of all places, is beyond my comprehension. Tell me exactly what has happened, Mr. Dunkeld, Narraway responded. From the beginning. Dunkeld winced, as if the memory were painful. From the beginning? I woke early. I . . . Deliberately Narraway sat down in one of the large overstuffed chairs covered in wine-colored brocade. He crossed his legs elegantly, if a little rigidly, at the knees. The beginning, Mr. Dunkeld. Who are you, and why are you here at this hour of the morning? For Gods sake . . . ! Dunkeld burst out. Then controlling himself with obvious difficulty, body stiff, he sat down also and began to explain. He had the air not of having grasped Narraways reasoning so much as being given no choice but to humor a lesser intelligence. His fingers drummed on the arm of his chair. His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, is deeply interested in an engineering project that may be undertaken by my company, and certain of my colleagues, he began again. Four of us are here at his invitation in order to discuss the possibilities the details, if you like. Our wives have accompanied us to give it the appearance of a social occasion. The other three are Julius Sorokine, Simnel Marquand, and Hamilton Quase. We have been here two days already, and the discussions have been excellent. Pitt remained on his feet, listening and watching Dunkelds face. His expression was intense, his eyes burning with enthusiasm. His left hand, gripping the chair arm, was white at the knuckles. Yesterday evening we celebrated our progress so far, Dunkeld continued. I assume you are a man of the world, and do not need to have every detail drawn for you? The ladies retired early. We sat up considerably longer, and a certain amount of entertainment was provided. The brandy was excellent, the company both relaxing and amusing. We were all in high spirits. Not once did he glance at Pitt as he spoke. He might have been as invisible as a servant. I see, Narraway answered expressionlessly. We retired between one and two in the morning, Dunkeld went on. I awoke early about six, I imagine. I was in my robe, not yet dressed, when my valet came with a message that he had received over the telephone. It was a matter His Royal Highness had asked to be informed of immediately, so, in spite of the hour, I took it to him. I returned to my room, shaved and dressed, had a cup of tea, and was on my way back to see His Royal Highness further about the matter, but passing the linen cupboard in the passage I saw the door slightly open. His voice was harsh with tension. That in itself, of course, is of no interest, but I became aware of a curious odor, and when I pulled it wider . . . I saw . . . probably the most dreadful thing I have ever seen. He blinked and seemed to need a moment to compose himself again. Narraway did not interrupt him, nor move his gaze from Dunkelds face. The naked body of a woman, covered in blood, Dunkeld said hoarsely. There was blood all over the rest of the linen. He gulped air. For a moment, I could not believe it. I thought I must have taken more br... From Publishers Weekly The detecting and diplomatic skills of Thomas Pitt, now assigned to the Special Branch, are tested as never before in bestseller Perry's solid 25th novel to feature the Victorian sleuth (after 2005's Long Spoon Lane). In 1893, the discovery of a prostitute's mutilated corpse in a Buckingham Palace cupboard after a stag party presided over by the prince of Wales could spell political disaster for the monarchy. Pitt soon eliminates the members of the sizable household staff as suspects, narrowing his focus to the prince himself and his close friends, who, it turns out, have been planning a major construction project in Africa a railway that would run from South Africa to Egypt. Though the sensitive nature of Pitt's assignment precludes any active involvement by Charlotte, his wife and partner in earlier cases, he's able to place her maid, Gracie Phipps, on the palace staff to assist him. Perry does a nice job with some plot twists, even if most readers will quickly discount the heir to the throne of England as a viable suspect. (Mar.)

