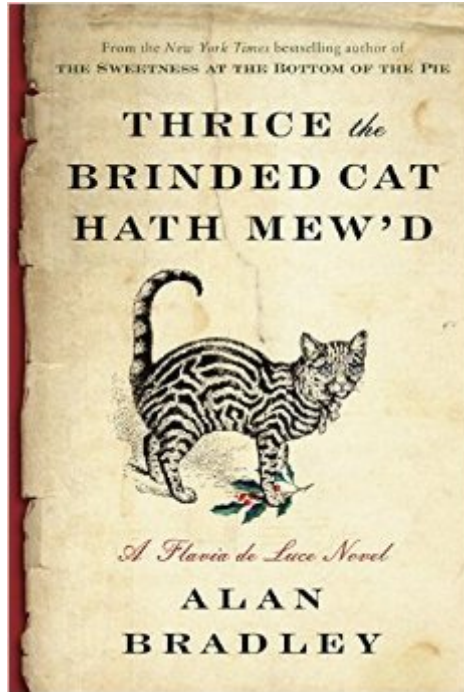


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Thrice The Brinded Cat Hath Mew'd: A Flavia De Luce Novel



Synopsis

Hailed as "the combination of Eloise and Sherlock Holmes" by The Boston Globe, Flavia de Luce returns in a much anticipated new Christmas mystery from award-winning and New York Times bestselling author Alan Bradley. In spite of being ejected from Miss Bodycote's Female Academy in Canada, twelve-year-old Flavia de Luce is excited to be sailing home to England. But instead of a joyous homecoming, she is greeted on the docks with unfortunate news: Her father has fallen ill, and a hospital visit will have to wait while he rests. But with Flavia's blasted sisters and insufferable cousin underfoot, Buckshaw now seems both too empty and not empty enough. Only too eager to run an errand for the vicar's wife, Flavia hops on her trusty bicycle, Gladys, to deliver a message to a reclusive wood-carver. Finding the front door ajar, Flavia enters and stumbles upon the poor man's body hanging upside down on the back of his bedroom door. The only living creature in the house is a feline that shows little interest in the disturbing scene. Curiosity may not kill this cat, but Flavia is energized at the prospect of a new investigation. It's amazing what the discovery of a corpse can do for one's spirits. But what awaits Flavia will shake her to the very core. Acclaim for Alan Bradley's beloved Flavia de Luce novels, winners of the Crime Writers' Association Debut Dagger Award, Barry Award, Agatha Award, Macavity Award, Dilys Award, and Arthur Ellis Award "As if ever there were a sleuth who's bold, brilliant, and, yes, adorable, it's Flavia de Luce." "USA Today " "Flavia is as addictive as dark chocolate." "Daily Mail " "Flavia de Luce is still the world's greatest adolescent British chemist/busybody/sleuth." "The Seattle Times

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When we last saw Flavia (As Chimney Sweepers Come to Dust), she was at a boarding school in Canada. I didn't think Flavia fit in Canada any better than she did and was pleased at her decision at the end of that book to return home to Bishop Lacey in the England of the 1950s. The big question was, though, whether she (and the series) would regain her old form. The answer is a resounding Yes! Flavia arrives home daydreaming about a big welcome from her family only to find that her father is gravely ill and in the hospital, and she is not permitted to see him. Fortunately, she soon finds a very interesting body, a local carpenter and woodcarver hung upside down in a frame on the back of his door. The challenge of resolving what led to his death perks her up immensely. When a local man sympathetically comments that finding a body must have been a shock, Flavia thinks, "How could I tell the dear man that murder made me feel so gloriously alive?" Her investigations eventually involve the works of a famous children's book author, a reputed witch, and, oh, yes, even a cat. The plot of *Thrice the Brinded Cat* is quirky and interesting, but as in the other books, the outstanding feature is the voice of narrator Flavia, the precocious twelve-year-old budding chemist and observer of human nature, along with her supporting cast: her rather difficult family, the cook and housekeeper Mrs. Mullet, her father's general factotum and all-round right-hand man Dogger, and her best and perhaps only friend---her trusty bicycle Gladys. Flavia is smart and irreverent and makes us smile, as when she comments about a local singer's performance, "I found myself wishing I had thought to bring a firearm with me---although whether to put Carla out of her misery or to do away with myself, I had not quite yet decided." As the series has developed and Flavia's character has achieved more depth, she increasingly evokes sympathy rather than simply comedy. Flavia sees the approach of adulthood: "Growing up is like that, I suppose: the strings fall away and you're left standing on your own. It was sad in a way that is hard to describe." She wants to reach out to others, like her little cousin Undine, but does not know how: "I was seized by the sudden and inexplicable urge to sweep this lonely little girl up into my arms and hug her until the jelly came out, but luckily, I was able to suppress it. The deLuce blood is stronger, after all, than sentiment." If you are meeting Flavia for the first time, Bradley gives enough background that you will have a good time, but you WILL want to read the other books in the series, and there are enough mild spoilers that I would recommend starting with *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*. With any popular series, readers approach a new book with

trepidation and the hope that this will not be the last. As is his wont, the author ends *Thrice the Brinded Cat Hath Mewed* with a life-changing event that guarantees Flavia will not be facing a tranquil future. Whatever lies ahead for her, though, it is clear that Bradley and her legions of fans will be with her.

Whether or not you enjoy this latest installment of the Flavia de Luce novels is going to depend on whether you read them for the plotted mystery in each book or if you read them simply for the enjoyment of Flavia herself. If you read them looking for sophisticated mystery plots, you'll likely be disappointed. But if you're like me and fall into the latter category, you'll love this new installment. Flavia is back home at Buckshaw and the town of Bishop's Lacy where she belongs! After a short foray over to Canada in the last novel, our favorite girl detective is home and all of my beloved peripheral characters are back in force (with one notable exception, but no spoilers). It probably goes without saying that of course Flavia stumbles upon a corpse and a mystery ensues. I long ago stopped expecting great mystery plots in these novels and just learned to enjoy Flavia, one of the most quotable characters in literature today. And *Thrice the Brinded Cat Hath Mew'd* serves up Flavia-observations in spades. Our young protagonist never seems to age but she does indeed mature. And she'll need all the maturity she can summon for the next book.... Bradley delivered quite the cliff hanger once again. If you haven't read this series yet, start at the beginning please. These books fall in the "cozy mystery" sub-genre and are one of the cutest series to be published in a long, long time. Highly recommended.

I have been accused of revealing too much when I review one of Alan Bradley's books, because he packs so much into the first ten pages that someone reading the review would assume the reviewer had just given away every precious detail. My warning is this: nothing I say as part of the synopsis comes from anything past page 30. If you read that as a spoiler alert, so be it. In *THRICE THE BRINDLED CAT HATH MEW'D*, Flavia returns (banished) from Miss Bodycote's Female Academy in Canada. Dogger, her father's faithful manservant and closest friend from the war, awaits with bad news: Father is in the hospital, gravely ill, with pneumonia. When she rides her faithful bicycle (Gladys) to visit the vicar's wife, Flavia is sent on an errand and discovers a dead body. And so the 8th book of Bradley's series begins. If you've not read the first seven, I urge you to do so before embarking on the 8th. The background, history, character interactions, murder, mayhem and fun in the prior books make this book all the more enticing. What's great about *THRICE THE BRINDLED CAT HATH MEW'D*? Here's the top ten list.

10. Alan Bradley gets better and better. The first book

was a delight, but over the course of the series he has added so many layers of personalities and past histories and relationships and disasters. This, I think, is a much denser book than the first.⁹ Flavia finally has some friends. As an incredibly smart and perceptive adult-in-a-child's-body, this has been a challenge.⁸ Another bizarre death for Flavia to (secretly) investigate, hopefully leaving no telltale signs that she has again done some forensic investigating on her own.⁷ You'll learn some chemistry. And it will be painless.⁶ Trouble in paradise. Flavia's sister and her fiancé, the German pilot who was so in love with English literature that he was captured because he did a flyover of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's home, are not the blissful couple they were when Flavia left for Canada. What's going on??⁵ Flavia's character. She's a precocious chemist (who inherited her chemist talents and lab from her long deceased Uncle Tar). As the youngest of three daughters, she is in a constant battle with her two older sisters. Though her mother Harriet died when Flavia was just a baby, she has much of her mother in her. She lives to discover and investigate murders... and torment her sisters.⁴ Flavia might have a plan to save her beloved Buckshaw, a rambling estate deep in arrears on taxes and upkeep.³ Antlers as a weapon of destruction.² Flavia's bending of the truth and impersonations would put Kinsey Millhone to shame.¹ There's another Flavia book in the works. Thank you, Alan Bradley.

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