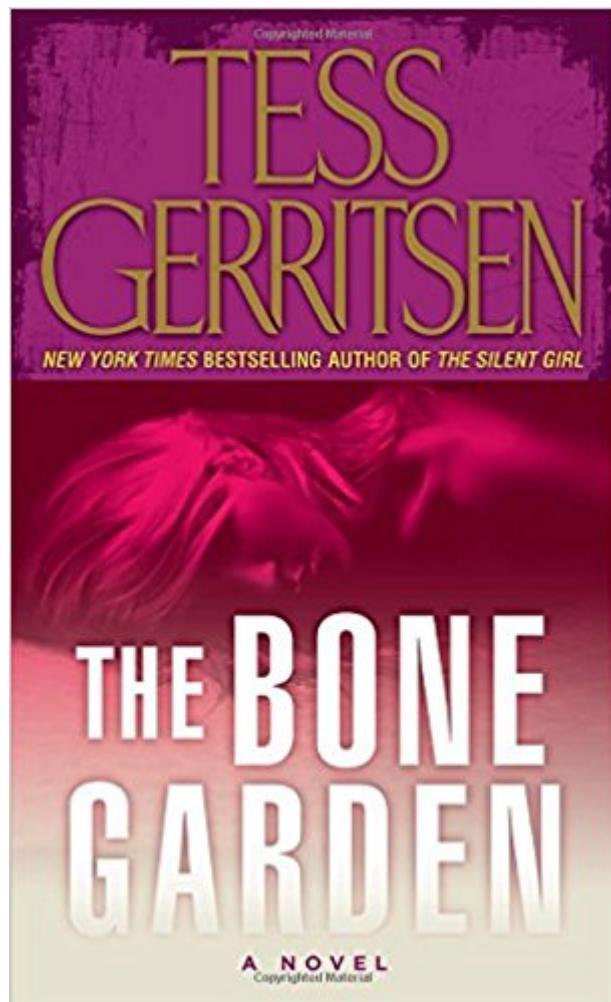


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The Bone Garden: A Novel



Synopsis

Unknown bones, untold secrets, and unsolved crimes from the distant past cast ominous shadows on the present in the dazzling new thriller from New York Times bestselling author Tess Gerritsen. Present day: Julia Hamill has made a horrifying discovery on the grounds of her new home in rural Massachusetts: a skull buried in the rocky soil—human, female, and, according to the trained eye of Boston medical examiner Maura Isles, scarred with the unmistakable marks of murder. But whoever this nameless woman was, and whatever befell her, is knowledge lost to another time. . . . Boston, 1830: In order to pay for his education, Norris Marshall, a talented but penniless student at Boston Medical College, has joined the ranks of local “resurrectionists”—those who plunder graveyards and harvest the dead for sale on the black market. Yet even this ghoulish commerce pales beside the shocking murder of a nurse found mutilated on the university hospital grounds. And when a distinguished doctor meets the same grisly fate, Norris finds that trafficking in the illicit cadaver trade has made him a prime suspect. To prove his innocence, Norris must track down the only witness to have glimpsed the killer: Rose Connolly, a beautiful seamstress from the Boston slums who fears she may be the next victim. Joined by a sardonic, keenly intelligent young man named Oliver Wendell Holmes, Norris and Rose comb the city—from its grim cemeteries and autopsy suites to its glittering mansions and centers of Brahmin power—on the trail of a maniacal fiend who lurks where least expected . . . and who waits for his next lethal opportunity. With unflagging suspense and pitch-perfect period detail, *The Bone Garden* deftly interweaves the thrilling narratives of its nineteenth- and twenty-first century protagonists, tracing the dark mystery at its heart across time and place to a finale as ingeniously conceived as it is shocking. Bold, bloody, and brilliant, this is Tess Gerritsen’s finest achievement to date. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

At the start of this disappointing stand-alone thriller from bestseller Gerritsen (*The Mephisto Club*), 38-year-old divorcee Julia Hamill discovers a skeleton buried in the garden of the Boston house she's just moved into; the ring found with the remains was in fashion in the 1830s, the fractured bones suggest murder. Flashback to 1830: medical student Norris Marshall, an outcast among his wealthier classmates, meets Rose Connolly in a Boston maternity ward, where Rose's sister recently died of childbirth fever. When several gutted bodies turn up in deserted alleyways, Rose and Norris are the only ones to catch a glimpse of the killer, dubbed the West End Reaper. Norris, Rose and Norris's fellow student, Oliver Wendell Holmes, race to uncover the truth behind the slayings, which will remind many of Jack the Ripper's crimes. In the present, Julia is able to trace their progress with the help of a relative of the house's former owner. Unfortunately, neither the present nor the historical story line maintains the suspense necessary for a whodunit spanning several generations. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Medical examiner Maura Isles returns in another thriller that joins past and present. In the present, in the backyard of Julia Hamill's old Boston house, a long-buried body is unearthed. In 1830, long before the invention of the term serial killer, medical student Norris Marshall is accused of being a mass murderer. To dig himself out from under suspicion, Norris seeks help from a fellow student, one Oliver Wendell Holmes. Together they pursue the cold-hearted killer, while, in the present day, Julia Hamill tries to find out the identity of the body buried in her backyard. As her fans well know, this is not Gerritsen's first shot at combining the modern and the historical. Yet it reads as though it might be: it's clunky, with overly familiar plotting and an attempt at 1830s-era dialogue that's often painful to the ear. Incorporating real people into historical fiction is a well-worn device, and while the author succeeds in bringing Holmes vividly to life, she doesn't really do anything particularly special with him; a fictional character would have served the story just as well. This is a passable thriller; Gerritsen does generate a fair amount of suspense; but it fails to come together on any level beyond plot. Recommendable, finally, only because the author's many fans will want to

read it. Pitt, David --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Julia Hamill bought a house contrary to advice, solicited and unsolicited, of others. All she wanted to do was plant a garden. This required some digging, heavy work she was not accustomed to. And now she had found a body. True, the realtor selling her the house had warned her of rumors that she might hear about the history of the house. A ninety-year-old woman, the previous owner, had died in the house and her body hadn't been discovered for several weeks. Surely this was not her body. So who was buried here? Mystery one was quickly solved. The body came complete with a ring that dated the body to around 1840. Still, who was it? Chapter two takes us back to 1830 and the book continues organizationally in this fashion. Chapters alternate in time telling a story in the past and in the present. The story in the past presents us with a mystery to solve. Who is the West End Reaper? People are being killed seemingly systematically. The story plays out in a medical environment that involves doctors struggling with new ideas, students struggling to be doctors, and grave robbers struggling to supply bodies for study by the medical community. The story of grave robbers both as individuals and as an occupation is fascinating and gruesome. The reader might agree with a basic tenet that bodies are needed for anatomical study. It should be easy to see the questions that will occur. Where do you get the bodies? Obviously from the graves, but what happens when supply is scarce and demand is high? How about from the poor and homeless population? Nobody would really miss them, it would be a kindness to relieve them of an existence of suffering, and medical research would advance. There is the nasty problem of a criminal act, not to mention that such killing would be at least immoral. Dr. Crouch is a mentor doctor in charge of four central character medical students, one a notable historical figure, Oliver Wendell Holmes. More important than Holmes is student Norris Marshall, a romantic interest for Rose as well as a necessary helper. Rose, Aurnia, and Margaret are the center pieces of conflict in the novel. Aurnia is disposed of easily, she dies in childbirth in the first few pages. Rose is a definition of abject poverty. She can't rely on brother-in-law Eben. Prior to Aurnia's death Rose had worked as a seamstress at Eben's tailor shop, but after Rose discovered the avarice and sense of ownership of all things that had belonged to Aurnia on the part of Eben, she knew continuing employment with him was no longer a possibility. Any guesses as to where Aurnia's body will end up? Rose wants to care for her sister Aurnia's newborn, saving the baby from a life in a government home. Rose has no faith in systems, government or medical. The doctors had not listened to her when she told them to stop bleeding Aurnia and Aurnia had died. She was not going to let the baby die from governmental

neglect. The problem was Eben, Aurnia's husband. He saw the baby as the property of Aurnia along with everything else Aurnia had prior to her death, such as a necklace she had given Rose. Eben wanted the baby but wanted the necklace more. Why? In the present, the identity of the skeleton Julia found was not difficult. Hilda had died and left behind several boxes, close to a hundred, of documents, pictures, and news clippings. The stories in this novel will be related as the elements are discovered. There are also accounts of the daily lives that people of different classes lived during the 1800s. This novel explores the horrible poverty, filthy hygiene (out of economic necessity), resistance to new medical ideas (bleeding, really), and crime developed around a grave robbing industry of the 1800s. And there is almost a romance. There are also some really startling surprises that make the book well worth reading. And finally, there is a tie-in to present day medicine. This is not a spoiler, so if you want to follow this up even prior to beginning reading, feel free. This novel has a great, and factually true, great last line. Going to it first will not affect your enjoyment of the book.

I thought it was a very well written book. She switched easily between the historical past and the present day story. I learned a lot about Boston in the 1830s and what it was like for poor Irish immigrants. Her descriptions of maternity hospitals in the 1830s were very vivid. Her medical background is certainly evident, but the only criticism I would make is that in this, and other of her books, the medical procedures are detailed more than is necessary for the plot or a reasonable understanding of what is happening. I was glad to be reading on my Kindle so I could easily look up some of the terms she used. I just finished all the Rizzoli and Isles books (which were excellent) before reading this and "Harvest". I haven't been disappointed by any of her books yet.

Marvelous writing! I discovered Tess Gerritsen books are as good (some ways better) as the TV hit series. This book has a cameo appearance of the forensic Dr. Maura Isles. The rest of the story is a fantastic picture of lives lived in 1830 and a contemporary generation that have a passing of the ages. Characters come visually and emotionally alive through the words of this author. The settings are as visual as the filmed television episodes of Dr. Isles and her partner in solving crime on TV, Det. Rizzoli. The swanky lady cop does not appear in this novel. The TV series (Gerritsen among the screenplay writers) sent me looking for the books. This is my first, not last. I enjoy reading; I was mesmerized with the TV tales, and now drool for more books. She's written plenty to keep me happy. More are being manuscripted. In "The Bone Garden" a body is uncovered in modern times which prove to be a murder, but so ancient it is of no police interest. Exit Dr Isles. The search for the

body's history falls to the new owner of the house, Julia, and the trail falls well back in history to a period of Boston's medical school evolution. It is "About the strange affair of Oliver Wendell Holmes and the West End Reaper." Readers experience revolting, belly-curdling dissection descriptions of 1830 labs. Like the TV show, you get a mix of suspense and humor. Quote: "The intoxicating pleasure of authorship." Only a skilled writer could create that euphemism. Well done! Another proof of this delightful literary beauty: "You are allotted only a limited number of planting seasons in your lifetime..." I must remember that one. A most charming poetic line buried in a murder mystery. Not a reader? Try this, then. *Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Fourth Season*

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