



Charles Todd

A Pale Horse
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Q: Can you describe your creative process of collaboration?

A: We had no guidelines when we began to write together, and so we developed our own. It's consensus, the sharing and discussion of ideas that lead to each scene, and while we don't outline, the characters themselves lead us step by step to the conclusion. And whodunit is often as much mystery to us as it is to the reader. That's why we find writing together so exciting.

Q: What are some of the complications in writing mysteries set in an era before the advent of cell phones, DNA testing, and photocopiers, faxes, and email?

A: We like the fact that Rutledge is dependent on his own wits, his knowledge of human nature, and an instinct for putting pieces of the human puzzle together. And so the lack of modern detecting tools hasn't been a problem—watching Rutledge work towards a solution is what makes each book so different from any of the others in the series: each case, each list of suspects, each setting is fresh and involving. We just have to remember that without superhighways, it takes longer to get anywhere,

and that what we sacrifice in "speed" allows Rutledge time to think.

Q: Who are some of your antecedents in the mystery genre who have influenced your style?

A: We grew up on Holmes and Sayers and Christie, but there are modern authors we have learned from. Dorothy Dunnett made history accessible, and that affects our style. Jack Higgins and Geoffrey Household were masters of suspense and pace. Frederick Forsyth was a master at plotting. But we love contemporary authors also, and since you never stop learning, we feel our ideas stay fresh and accessible to modern readers, without in any way betraying our period.

Q: In preparation for *A Pale Horse*, what kind of research did you do on English and German work on poisonous gases for wartime use?

A: We read a number of books on the subject, and talked to people who knew something about the chemistry involved. A fan we met at Malice Domestic turned out to be a wonderful asset in learning about and understanding what went on in WW1 and is still going on today. And we knew someone deeply involved in the American program after WW2. Research is everything, because the more you know, the better your story line will be.

Q: How do you see Rutledge's character evolving over the course of the series?

A: He's changed a great deal—and so has Hamish. Remember, *A Pale Horse* takes place almost a year after *A Test of Wills*, the first Rutledge, and we've watched Rutledge slowly learn to accept the darkness in his mind. He's had to relearn his skills, rediscover his intuition, deal with the loss of his fiancé Jean and an antagonist superior at the Yard. He's beginning to connect with friends again. He's fragile still, but he's developing the tools of coping. The question now is, if/when he finds love, will he be able to trust his own heart?