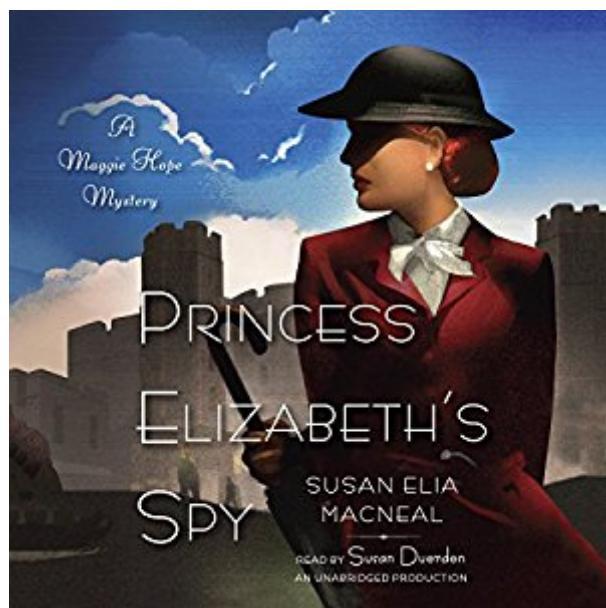


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Princess Elizabeth's Spy: A Maggie Hope Mystery, Book 2



Synopsis

Susan Elia MacNeal introduced the remarkable Maggie Hope in her acclaimed debut, Mr. Churchill's Secretary. Now Maggie returns to protect Britain's beloved royals against an international plot - one that could change the course of history. As World War II sweeps the continent and England steels itself against German attack, Maggie Hope, former secretary to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, completes her training to become a spy for MI-5. Spirited, strong-willed, and possessing one of the sharpest minds in government for mathematics and code-breaking, she fully expects to be sent abroad to gather intelligence for the British front. Instead, to her great disappointment, she is dispatched to go undercover at Windsor Castle, where she will tutor the young Princess Elizabeth in math. Yet castle life quickly proves more dangerous - and deadly - than Maggie ever expected. The upstairs-downstairs world at Windsor is thrown into disarray by a shocking murder, which draws Maggie into a vast conspiracy that places the entire royal family in peril. And as she races to save England from a most disturbing fate, Maggie realizes that a quick wit is her best defense, and that the smallest clues can unravel the biggest secrets, even within her own family.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 2 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: October 15, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B009RFH4OY

Best Sellers Rank: #60 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers > British Detectives #292 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Historical Fiction #393 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > British Detectives

Customer Reviews

I enjoy the Maggie Hope series for their setting - WWII, mostly London, also Germany, the US, Scotland - and for the characters, who are sympathetic and interesting. The detail in Ms Macneal's stories is historically accurate & quite interesting. The stories themselves are compelling, with

surprises and suspense adding to the fun. For an easy-to-read romp that doesn't make you feel like you're totally wasting your time - give these books a try!

It's a rattlin' good yarn; very enjoyable for the most part. Worth staying up late to finish. Our heroine is a little too bullet-proof to be real; but less so than in the first book of the series. I am a submariner's daughter (that's "sub-ma-REE-ner" on the west side of the Pond). I have been a WWII History Nerd for over 40 years; and I can see that the author did a good job researching her land-based historical details, as well as the British Military details. Not so the Naval details. I can willingly suspend my disbelief for most of this story, except for one pivotal part concerning the layout of a U-boat that just plain does not work. Also, it took me a while to figure out the connection between a murderer at Windsor and his victim. Maybe that was the lateness of the hour; but I do want a little more clarity about why (suspect) did in Lady Lily.

Maggie has been sent to a secret training camp to learn how to be a secret agent, but the physical requirements are more than she can manage, and she is sent back to London. Upon her return she is called in to a meeting with the head of MI-5, who gives her a new, domestic mission. She is to join the Royal Princesses at Windsor Castle, overtly to tutor Elizabeth in maths, but covertly to discover who is plotting to assassinate the King and to kidnap Elizabeth. This novel, the second in this series, maintains the high standards of the first. Maggie continues to develop as a person and as an investigator/spy. The plot is complex, and satisfactorily so.

Okay, so nobody in the 1940's, even a gay man, would have said, "That is so -- last month." I suppose the inclusion of that little anachronism reflects the relative youth of the author. (I was born in the 1950's and certainly never heard that expression until the late 1990's.) It is the only blatantly out-of-place expression I have noticed in the first two Maggie Hope books. For the most part, the books are evocative of the wartime period, which (with its rationing and air raid shelters) seems a world away from our experience today. Small quibbles aside, the main storyline of this novel is suspenseful and engrossing, and the book is overall a good read. MacNeal's writing style is always clean and clear. This book does not have as many turns and twists as the first book, which means it does seem slightly more predictable. But even though you can more-or-less predict when the characters will run into trouble, there is still a fair amount of suspense in seeing how Maggie will get out of it this time. Because Maggie's girlfriends are out of the picture for most of the story, this book has less of a "chick-lit" feel to it than the first (which is fine with me!) The only truly jarring note is at

the very end, after the main mystery has been resolved, when some foreshadowing of the next book in the series introduces some rather unbelievable coincidences. (One really could end the book a chapter or two early without harming it.) Still, I enjoy the Maggie Hope character so much that I fully intend to go on to read the third book in the series. Incidentally, I do recommend that you read the two books in order if possible. Otherwise I suspect some of the references in the second book to people and occurrences in the first book could be confusing.

(3.5 stars) This second book in the series opens with Maggie at a training camp for women spies. While she excels at the language and intellectual espionage skills, her physical skills/clumsiness keep letting her down. She is let go from camp, but goes to being placed on a special assignment. While at first reluctant and disappointed, she realizes how important her new role will be. Maggie is going to Windsor Castle, posing as a mathematics tutor to Princess Elizabeth, and is on the look-out for an inside person working for the Germans. The Germans are attempting to put Nazi-sympathizer, Prince Edward, back on the throne. In order to do this, they must control the Princesses. A separate investigation involves a spy at Bletchley Park, and when a young woman who works there is found murdered with incriminating paperwork, the case heats up. Maggie has many possible suspects, and struggles to fit in with the staff and ladies at the castle. She is also dealing with the fact that her fiance's plane was shot down, and he is missing, and presumed dead. Maggie begins to make a connection with her spy handler, but feels guilt about this. When a gruesome murder occurs on the castle grounds, Maggie knows that she must find the truth before it is too late. This continues the drama and suspense of the prior book, and Maggie also learns more about her family.

As a child, I found the biography "The Little Princesses", by Marion Crawford (Elizabeth and Margaret's Scottish governess) utterly fascinating. As this book is set in the same time frame, I was curious to see how the author would weave a mystery around the historical facts of life at Balmoral Castle during WWII, I was not disappointed. The characters are well drawn, the plot twists kept me guessing and I was especially taken with the author's portrayal of young Elizabeth (known as Lillibet by her family) who plays a significant role in the story. While the plot is pure fiction, I feel that the personalities of the young royals rang true. I wouldn't be surprised to hear that the Queen has read and enjoyed this one herself -- and perhaps wished some of her fictionalized exploits had been real! If you enjoy English mysteries, like your heroines thoughtful yet spunky and appreciate a bit of history in the bargain, give this book a try. I liked it and plan to read more by this author.

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