

Hugo DuChamp Investigates: L'ombre de L'île  
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978-1542921039

Hugo Duchamp Investigates: L'ombre de L'île represents a departure from Hugo's prior books in that the setting moves far from France as Hugo attempts to free a loved one from prison - an endeavor slightly outside of his usual investigative approach.

Hugo sees the world as a possible crime scene, so his observational skills are as finely tuned as those of Sherlock Holmes. But nothing has, so far, prevented the arrest and incarceration of his love - and nothing has, thus far, altered things. All this is about to change.

Every place he's lived has changed Hugo. In London, it was a life of self-imposed exile and solitude. France awakened him to new romance and family ties. Nostalgia leads him to momentarily wish he was again that loner who needed no-one, because the pain of having loved deeply and lost is nearly overwhelming - as is the idea that he can possibly regain this love by making an extraordinary effort outside his comfort zone.

Prior readers will know that Hugo is an extraordinary detective - but can his skills translate to achieving the one thing he wants most in life, against all odds?

From Ireland to Barcelona and beyond, the trail leads Hugo on an unexpected romp through different countries. Other characters such as Cathal, Brigit, Baptiste, Chen, Seamus and more round out the encounters as Hugo conducts his investigation and uncovers more and more to the mystery. But will his findings be enough to lead to his heart's desire?

One of the many pleasures of Hugo Duchamp Investigates: L'ombre de L'île is that it stands as well on its own as it does as part of a series. Much like Sherlock Holmes, Hugo needs no introduction for newcomers or constant reminders for prior fans in order to prove satisfying (although plots of different books are summarized in the beginning, for those who would receive a quick introduction to previous events). This allows each book to fully embrace Hugo's past and present worlds. L'ombre de L'île is no exception, deftly continuing the sagas of his love and professional lives and points where they intersect without requiring extensive explanation.

Another powerful facet of this title lies in the inclusion of many personal transition points which Hugo faces in the course of events. Hugo reflects on these possibilities and his role in them just as much as he reflects on perps, motives, and changing stories: "It reminded Hugo that he had promised himself his new home would be like this. Full of life, love and laughter, not the stark whiteness of his previous life and home in London. He was not sure how it was going to look now, but he knew it was something he had to strive toward."

Too many detective stories fail to impart a proper sense of place and perspective in their sagas, but Hugo constantly faces personal challenges

and changes in his quest for justice for himself, his friends, and his world; and these contribute an overall power to each of these books.

L'ombre de L'île is no exception: its additional perspectives and engrossing interplays of romance, personal evolution, and investigative procedures is simply delightful, and will offer not a few surprises in the course of exploring Hugo's constantly-expanding world.