

natjustin@hotmail.com

# Fountain of Blood

*A Lady Lyttle Murder Mystery*

By

**NJ Bayley**

*A Lyttle Murder* never hurt anyone...

When Lady Rosemary Lyttle travels to Rome on a Grand Tour with young friend Lady Amelia Pearce and butler Mr Brooks, little does she suspect that she will be tipped into a gripping mystery involving the Church, the Mafia and a powerful figure from her own past...

Book two of the *Lyttle Murders* Series

## Prologue

Lady Rosemary Lyttle  
Trevi Fountain, Rome, Italy  
May 1905  
*Fountain of Blood*



We had not been in Rome for more than a week when Amelia ran towards me across the Piazza di Trevi *screaming like a banshee*. Well no, Amelia is not a screamer, but she was shouting and waving her arms about in a most un-Amelia like fashion. While I'd dallied to study an enticing display of lovely shoes and wonder what time the shops deigned to open here in Rome, she'd trotted over to throw a coin into the famous fountain. This is apparently the thing to do here and my young friend was keen to make an offering to the water gods in remembrance of her brother.

Thinking she might prefer to be left alone with her memories I'd left her to it, but as I was craning my neck to see the heel of particularly pretty pair of red, beaded evening shoes she came tearing back to me across the empty square. As soon as she caught her breath she explained her hysteria; she'd seen a body in the fountain, floating on its back, surrounded by rose petals.

Although sure she must be mistaken, I rushed over to have a look and to my horror there *was* the body of a man lying in the water. I almost screamed myself; the face was horrifically contorted by a mouth twisted into a wild, tortured grimace. The sightless eyes were open and blank and the skin as pale as the carved statues that looked down pitilessly upon it. This chap was clearly as dead as a doornail. The body was dressed in some kind of dark, red robes and all around, in the splash and plash of the fountain, swirled thousands of blood-red rose petals. It was macabre, like a scene from a particularly gruesome Wagnerian opera.

I looked wildly around the square, but we were so early that the place was quite deserted apart from a couple of rangy cats, picking over some scraps. Amelia and I stared at each other for a moment, then by one accord dashed back to our hotel to fetch Mr Brooks. The Hotel Hassler is located next to the Spanish Steps and we ran every one of the nine hundred yards there and back.

No more than twenty minutes can have passed before we were back at the fountain with my indomitable butler in tow, but the body of the dead man had completely disappeared.

natjustin@hotmail.com

Only the myriad of rose petals remained, swirling like tiny fish and tinting the water blood red....