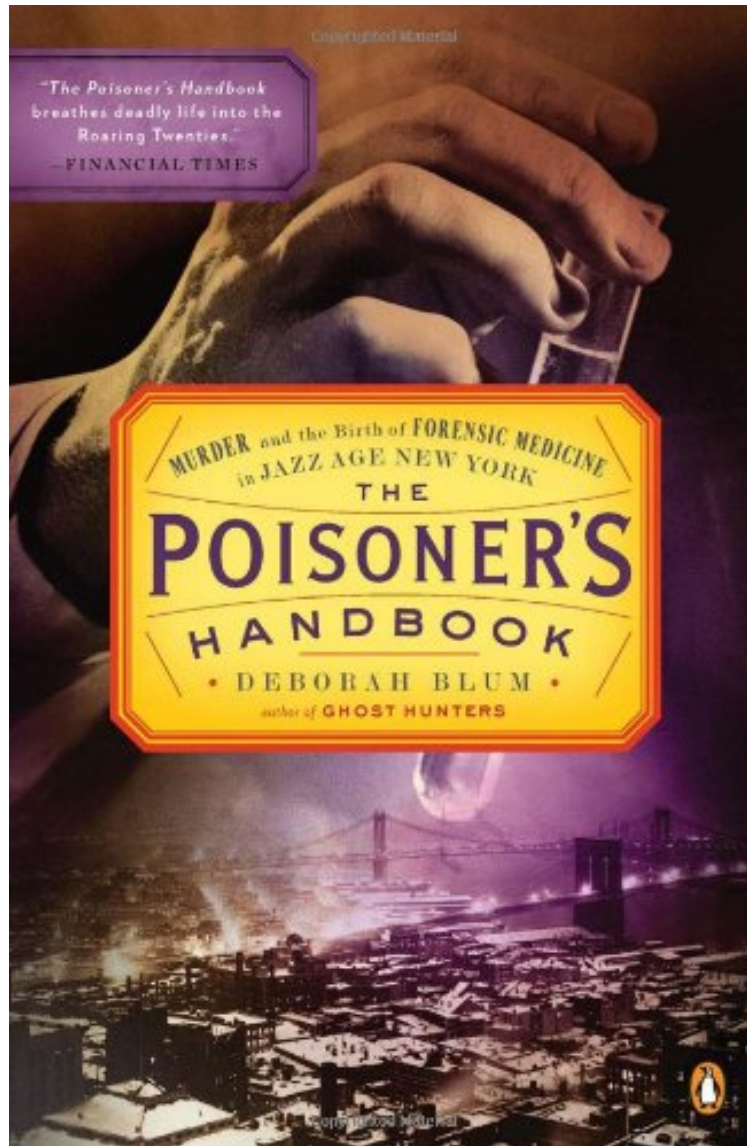


[Download] The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York

## The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York

Deborah Blum

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**Deborah Blum : The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York:

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or thriller novel--loved it! I hated to get to the end. Reminds me a lot of Erik Larson's terrific books---going back and forth between historical fact and the private lives of good guys. I learned a lot--might read it again soon.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent bookBy HelpThis book is set as the Cover says, in the Jazzy 1920's, But is also a testament to one of the American Chemist Heroes Gettler who tirelessly solved and fixed Americas Growing pains of the Big City life as it bulged at the seams sewn together by the Gilded Age with Gildings Depth in how far can you go proven every day in that illustrious world of America where some famous Nursery Rimes a books like the Wizard of Oz gave testament to Gilded Corruption, Every page of the Poisoners Handbook to the Section I'm at and cant wait to finish, walks you through a Decade of Deceitful people that gave rise to unsung Heroes,This is a Very good book, I've been through several Doctors offices not as a patient while waiting, reading bits a pieces of itSparking interest in several occasions in a quick review of the book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A good introduction in an easy-to-read formatBy Elaine L. OrrI thought this book read like a novel. I had bought it as a reference, and have used it as such, but read it from cover to cover. I've noted there are critiques that say some of the science is incorrect, so I suppose I'd check before I used a specific point in your own novel. I would not let the criticism deter you from buying it. The discussion of alcohol poisoning during Prohibition is enough reason to read this. I don't mention my own books in a review of others,' but in this case it's a compliment to Ms. Blum. Her Prohibition discussion helped me a lot as I wrote Rekindling Motives. Rekindling Motives (Jolie Gentil Cozy Mystery Series Book 2) I recommend this book for anyone who wants a broad overview of the topic.

Equal parts true crime, twentieth-century history, and science thriller, *The Poisoner's Handbook* is "a vicious, page-turning story that reads more like Raymond Chandler than Madame Curie" (The New York Observer) A fascinating Jazz Age tale of chemistry and detection, poison and murder, *The Poisoner's Handbook* is a page-turning account of a forgotten era. In early twentieth-century New York, poisons offered an easy path to the perfect crime. Science had no place in the Tammany Hall-controlled coroner's office, and corruption ran rampant. However, with the appointment of chief medical examiner Charles Norris in 1918, the poison game changed forever. Together with toxicologist Alexander Gettler, the duo set the justice system on fire with their trailblazing scientific detective work, triumphing over seemingly unbeatable odds to become the pioneers of forensic chemistry and the gatekeepers of justice.In 2014, PBS's AMERICAN EXPERIENCE released a film based on *The Poisoner's Handbook*.

.com Exclusive: Author Deborah Blum's Top Ten Poisons On a recent radio show, I heard myself telling the host "And carbon monoxide is such a good poison." We both started laughing--there's just something about a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist waxing enthusiastic about something so lethal. But then he became curious--"Why?" he asked. "Why do you like it so much?" These days, as I travel the country talking about *The Poisoner's Handbook*, I'm frequently asked that question or variations on it. What's your favorite poison? What's the perfect poison? The answer to the latter is that it doesn't exist--except in the plots of crime novels. But in reality, poisons really are fascinatingly wicked chemical compounds and many of them have fascinating histories as well. Just between us, then, here's a list of my personal favorites. 1. Carbon Monoxide (really)--It's so beautifully simple (just two atoms--one of carbon, one of oxygen) and so amazingly efficient a killer. There's a story I tell in the book about a murder syndicate trying to kill an amazingly resilient victim. They try everything from serving him poison alcohol to running over him with a car. But in the end, it's carbon monoxide that does him in. 2. Arsenic--This used to be the murderer's poison of poisons, so commonly used in the early 19th century that it was nicknamed "the inheritance powder". It's also the first poison that forensic scientists really figured out how to detect in a corpse. And it stays in the body for centuries, which is why we keep digging up historic figures like Napoleon or U.S. President Zachary Taylor to check their remains for poison. 3. Radium--I love the fact that this rare radioactive element used to be considered good for your health. It was mixed into medicines, face creams, health drinks in the 1920s. People thought of it like a tiny glowing sun that would give them its power. Boy, were they wrong. The two scientists in my book, Charles Norris and Alexander Gettler, proved in 1928 that the bones of people exposed to radium became radioactive--and stayed that way for years. 4. Nicotine--This was the first plant poison that scientists learned to detect in a human body. Just an incredible case in which a French aristocrat and her husband decided to kill her brother for money. They actually stewed up tobacco leaves in a barn to brew a nicotine potion. And their amateur chemical experiments inspired a very determined professional chemist to hunt them down. 5. Chloroform--Developed for surgical anesthesia in the 19th century, this rapidly became a favorite tool of home invasion robbers. If you read newspapers around the turn of the 20th century, they're full of accounts of people who answered a knock on the door, only to be knocked out by a chloroform soaked rag. One woman woke up to find her hair shaved off--undoubtedly sold for the lucrative wig trade. 6. Mercury--In its pure state, mercury appears as a bright silver liquid, which scatters into shiny droplets when touched. No wonder it's nicknamed quicksilver. People used to drink it as a medicine more than 100 years ago. No, they didn't drop dead. Those silvery balls just slid right through them. Mercury is much more poisonous if it's mixed with other chemicals and can be absorbed by the body directly. That's why methylmercury in fish turns out to be so risky a contaminant. 7. Cyanide--One of the most famous of the homicidal poisons and--in my opinion--not a particularly good choice. Yes, it's amazingly lethal--a

teaspoon of the pure stuff can kill in a few minutes. But it's a violent and obvious death. In early March, in fact, an Ohio doctor was convicted of murder for putting cyanide in his wife's vitamin supplements. 8. Aconite--A heart-stoppingly deadly natural poison. It forms in ornamental plants that include the blue-flowering monkshood. The ancient Greeks called it "the queen of poisons" and considered it so evil that they believed that it derived from the saliva of Cerberus, the three-headed dog guarding the gates of hell. 9. Silver--Swallowing silver nitrate probably won't kill you but if you do it long enough it will turn you blue. One of my favorite stories (involving a silver bullet) concerns the Famous Blue Man of Barnum and Bailey's Circus who was analyzed by one of the heroes of my book, Alexander Gettler. 10. Thallium--Agatha Christie put this poison at the heart of one of her creepiest mysteries, *The Pale Horse*, and I looked at it terms of a murdered family in real life. An element discovered in the 19th century, it's a perfect homicidal poison--tasteless and odorless--except for one obvious giveaway--the victim's hair falls out as a result of the poisoning! Now that I've written this list, I realize I could probably name ten more. But I don't want to scare you. --Deborah Blum

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Pulitzer Prize-winning science journalist Blum (*Ghost Hunters*) makes chemistry come alive in her enthralling account of two forensic pioneers in early 20th-century New York. Blum follows the often unglamorous but monumentally important careers of Dr. Charles Norris, Manhattan's first trained chief medical examiner, and Alexander Gettler, its first toxicologist. Moving chronologically from Norris's appointment in 1918 through his death in 1936, Blum cleverly divides her narrative by poison, providing not only a puzzling case for each noxious substance but the ingenious methods devised by the medical examiner's office to detect them. Before the advent of forensic toxicology, which made it possible for the first time to identify poisons in corpses, Gettler learned the telltale signs of everything from cyanide (it leaves a corrosive trail in the digestive system) to the bright pink flush that signals carbon monoxide poisoning. In a particularly illuminating section, Blum examines the dangers of bootleg liquor (commonly known as wood, or methyl, alcohol) produced during Prohibition. With the pacing and rich characterization of a first-rate suspense novelist, Blum makes science accessible and fascinating. (Feb. 22) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Bookmarks Magazine

Deborah Blum's book contains plenty of crime-drama stories for readers who are fans of CSI, and the several critics who structured their reviews around this comparison heartily recommended the book. Those who evaluated the book as a work of history or popular science were also generally pleased; with her extensive experience as a science writer, Blum knows how to humanize molecules and atoms. What some reviewers asked, though, was whether Blum's decision to structure the book's chapters around the Jazz Age toxins of choice made it more difficult to focus on her human characters and their motivations. That weakness doesn't overshadow the overall high quality here.