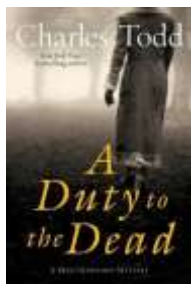


# THE BESS CRAWFORD WWI MYSTERY SERIES

## BY CHARLES TODD

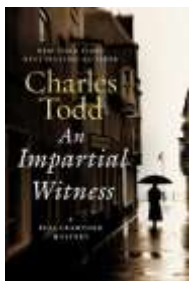


### **A Duty to the Dead** [2009] [Finalist: 2010 Macavity Award]

*England, 1916.* Independent-minded Bess Crawford's upbringing is far different from that of the usual upper-middle-class British gentlewoman. Growing up in India, she learned the importance of responsibility, honor, and duty from her officer father. At the outbreak of World War I, she followed in his footsteps and volunteered for the nursing corps, serving from the battlefields of France to the doomed hospital ship *Britannic*.

On one voyage, Bess grows fond of the young, gravely wounded Lieutenant Arthur Graham. Something rests heavily on his conscience, and to give him a little peace as he dies, she promises to deliver a message to his brother. It is some months before she can carry out this duty, and when she's next in England, she herself is recovering from a wound.

When Bess arrives at the Graham house in Kent, Jonathan Graham listens to his brother's last wishes with surprising indifference. Neither his mother nor his brother Timothy seems to think it has any significance. Unsettled by this, Bess is about to take her leave when sudden tragedy envelops her. She quickly discovers that fulfilling this duty to the dead has thrust her into a maelstrom of intrigue and murder that will endanger her own life and test her courage as not even war has.



### **An Impartial Witness** [2010]

Tending to the soldiers in the trenches of France during the First World War, battlefield nurse Bess Crawford is sent back to England in the early summer of 1917 with a convoy of severely burned men. One of her patients, a young pilot, has clung to a photograph of his wife since his plane went down, and Bess can't help but notice the photo every time she tends to him.

After the patients are transferred to a clinic in Hampshire, Bess is ready for her two-day leave, planning to return to her flat in London to catch up on some much-needed rest. But at the railway station, in a mob of troops leaving for the front, Bess

catches a glimpse of a familiar face. Could that be the pilot's wife? And why is she bidding a very emotional farewell to a soldier who is not her husband? Back in France, Bess discovers an old newspaper with a drawing of the woman's face on the front page. Accompanying the drawing is a plea from Scotland Yard looking for information from anyone who has seen her. The woman was murdered – the very day Bess saw her...

### **The Girl on the Beach** [2010 – eBook short story]

Limited availability only in 2010 as a publisher's premium.

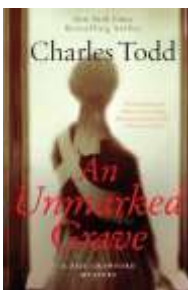


### **A Bitter Truth** [2011]

*While attempting to help a woman in distress, World War I battlefield nurse Bess Crawford learns a bitter truth, that no good deed goes unpunished.*

Returning to her London flat from the front lines in France for a well-earned Christmas leave, Bess Crawford comes upon a bruised and shivering woman huddled in the doorway. Propelled by pity, Bess takes her in. Yet despite the ill effects of a concussion suffered during a quarrel with her husband that erupted into violence, the woman decides to return home, and asks Bess to travel with her to Sussex.

At Vixen Hill, Bess discovers a family in mourning for an elder son who has died of war wounds, and a husband tormented by jealousy and his own guilty conscience. But when a troubled houseguest meets an untimely death, Bess finds herself the prime suspect, and on the trail of a vicious killer that leads back to war-torn France toward a startling revelation that will place her life in dire jeopardy.

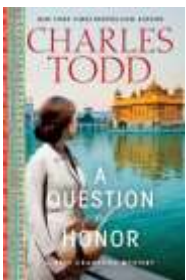


### **An Unmarked Grave** [2012] [Winner: 2013 Macavity Award, Finalist: 2012 Agatha Award]

In the spring of 1918, the Spanish Flu epidemic spreads, killing millions of soldiers and civilians across the globe. Overwhelmed by the constant flow of wounded soldiers coming from the French front, battlefield nurse Bess Crawford must now contend with hundreds of influenza patients as well. But war and disease are not the only killers to strike. Bess

discovers, concealed among the dead waiting for burial, the body of an officer who has been murdered. Though she is devoted to all her patients, this soldier's death touches her deeply. Not only did the man serve in her father's former regiment, he was also a family friend.

Before she can report the terrible news, Bess falls ill, she is the latest victim of the flu. By the time she recovers, the murdered officer has been buried, and the only other person who saw the body has hanged himself. Or did he? Working her father's connections in the military, Bess begins to piece together what little evidence she can find to unmask the elusive killer and see justice served. But the tenacious and impetuous nurse must be vigilant. With a determined killer on her own heels, each move she makes may be her last.



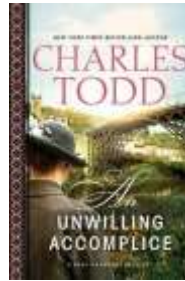
**A Question of Honor [2013]**  
**[Finalist: 2013 Agatha Award]**

Bess Crawford enjoyed a wondrous childhood in India, where her father, a colonel in the British army, was stationed on the Northwest Frontier. But an unforgettable incident darkened that happy time. In 1908, Colonel Crawford's regiment discovered it had a murderer in its ranks, an officer who killed five people in India and England yet was never brought to trial. In the eyes of many of these soldiers, men defined by honor and duty, the crime was a stain on the regiment's reputation, and on the good name of Bess' father, the Colonel Sahib, who had trained the killer.

A decade later, tending to the wounded on the battlefields of France during World War I, Bess learns from a dying Indian sergeant that the supposed murderer, Lieutenant Wade, is alive-and serving at the Front. Bess cannot believe the shocking news. According to reliable reports, Wade's body had been seen deep in the Khyber Pass, where he died trying to reach Afghanistan. Soon, though, her mind is racing. How did he escape from India? What drove a good man to murder in cold blood?

Curious to find answers, she uses her leave to investigate. In the village where the first three killings took place, she discovers that locals are certain that the British soldier was innocent. Yet the present owner of the house that was the scene of the crime believes otherwise, and is convinced that Bess' father helped Wade flee. To settle the matter once and for all, Bess sets out to find Wade and let the courts decide. But when she stumbles on the horrific truth, something that even the famous writer Rudyard Kipling had kept secret all his life, she is shaken to her

very core. The facts will damn Wade even as they reveal a brutal reality, a reality that could have been her own fate.



**An Unwilling Accomplice [coming in August 2014]**

World War I Battlefield nurse Bess Crawford's career is in jeopardy when a murder is committed on her watch, in this absorbing and atmospheric historical mystery from **New York Times** bestselling author Charles Todd.

Home on leave, Bess Crawford is asked to accompany a wounded soldier confined to a wheelchair to Buckingham Palace, where he's to be decorated by the King. The next morning when Bess goes to collect Wilkins, he has vanished. Both the Army and the nursing service hold Bess negligent for losing the war hero, and there will be an inquiry.

Then comes disturbing word from the Shropshire police, complicating the already difficult situation: Wilkins has been spotted, and he's killed a man. If Bess is to save her own reputation, she must find Wilkins and uncover the truth. But the elusive soldier has disappeared again and even the Shropshire police have lost him. Suddenly, the moral implications of what has happened – that a patient in her charge has committed murder – become more important to Bess than her own future. She's going to solve this mysterious puzzle, but righting an injustice and saving her honor may just cost Bess her life.

*The mother/son writing team known as Charles Todd is also responsible for the "Ian Rutledge" series of mysteries, featuring a Scotland Yard inspector suffering from shell shock following the events of World War I. The "Ian Rutledge" series, starting with A Test of Wills in 1996, has had 16 volumes as of 2014.*



**This booklist prepared as a handout for the Just Desserts mystery fiction discussion group**

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