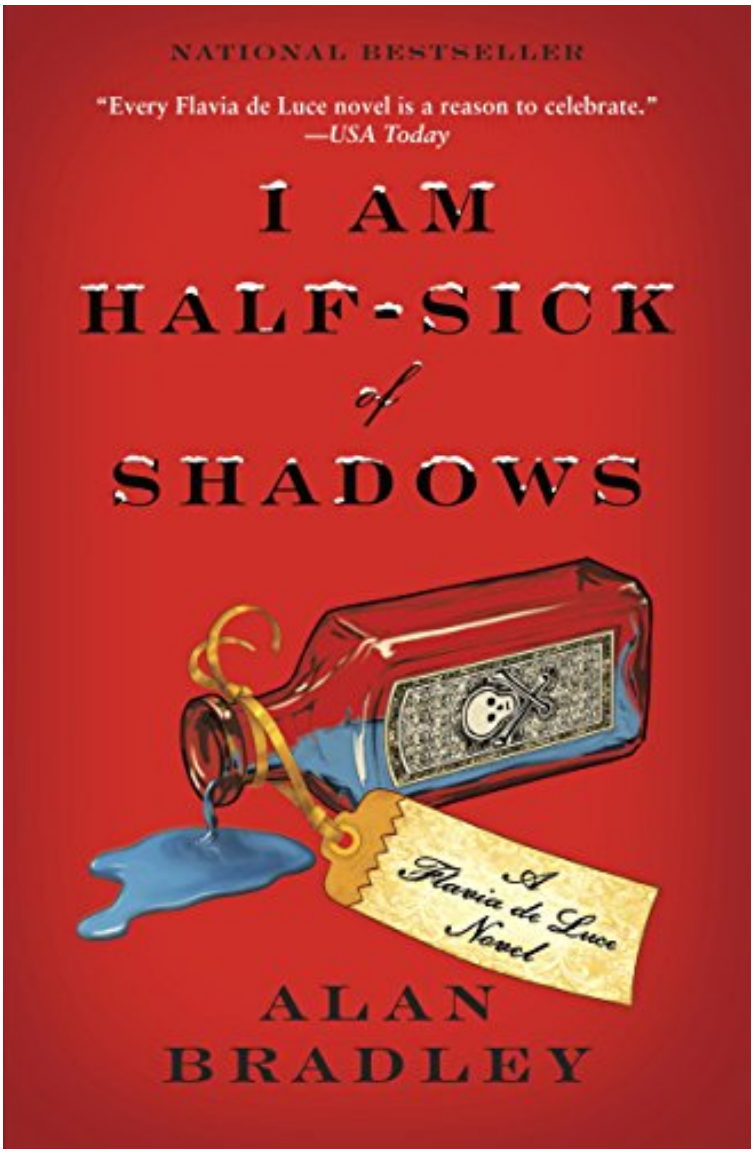
[FREE] File size: 27.Mb

I Am Half-Sick of Shadows: A Flavia de Luce Novel



Download Read Online

Par Alan Bradley
**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #102977 dans eBooksPubli le: 2011-11-01Sorti le: 2011-11-01Format: Ebook Kindle

[FREE] I Am Half-Sick of Shadows: A Flavia de Luce Novel

Par Alan Bradley : I Am Half-Sick of Shadows: A Flavia de Luce Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I Am Half-Sick of Shadows: A Flavia de Luce Novel:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurEvery Flavia de Luce novel is a reason to celebrate.USA Today ALAN BRADLEY, AUTHOR OF THE MOST AWARD-WINNING SERIES DEBUT OF ANY YEAR, RETURNS WITH ANOTHER IRRESISTIBLE FLAVIA DE LUCE NOVEL. [Alan] Bradley has created one of the most original, charming, devilishly creative and hilarious detectives of any age or any time.Bookreporter Its Christmastime, and Flavia de Lucean eleven-year-old sleuth with a passion for chemistryis tucked away in her laboratory, whipping up a concoction to ensnare Saint Nick. But she is soon distracted when a film crew

arrives at Buckshaw, the de Luces decaying English estate, to shoot a movie starring the famed Phyllis Wyvern. Amid a raging blizzard, the entire village of Bishops Lacey gathers at Buckshaw to watch Wyvern perform, yet nobody is prepared for the evenings shocking conclusion: a body found strangled to death with a length of film. But who among the assembled guests would stage such a chilling scene? As the storm worsens and the list of suspects grows, Flavia must ferret out a killer hidden in plain sight.BONUS: This edition includes an excerpt from Alan Bradley's Speaking from Among the Bones. [Flavia is] the most intrepid and charming adolescent chemist/detective/busybody in all of rural, postWorld War II England.The Seattle Times Quirky and delightful . . . Flavia is a classic literary character who manages to appeal to both young and old readers equally.Wichita Falls Times Record News Bradleys plot twists and turns delightfully.Fort Worth Star-Telegram NAMED ONE OF THE BEST MYSTERIES OF THE YEAR BY THE SEATTLE TIMESExtraitTendrils of raw fog floated up from the ice like agonized spirits departing their bodies. The cold air was a hazy, writhing mist.Up and down the long gallery I flew, the silver blades of my skates making the sad scraping sound of a butchers knife being sharpened energetically on stone. Beneath the icy surface, the intricately patterned parquet of the hardwood floor was still clearly visible even though its colors were somewhat dulled by diffraction.Overhead, the twelve dozen candles I had pinched from the butlers pantry and stuffed into the ancient chandeliers flickered madly in the wind of my swift passage. Round and round the room I went round and round and up and down. I drew in great lungfuls of the biting air, blowing it out again in little silver trumpets of condensation.When at last I came skidding to a stop, chips of ice flew up in a breaking wave of tiny colored diamonds. It had been easy enough to flood the portrait gallery: An India- rubber garden hose snaked in through an open window from the terrace and left running all night had done the trick that, and the bitter cold which, for the past fortnight, had held the countryside in its freezing grip.Since nobody ever came to the unheated east wing of Buckshaw anyway, no one would notice my improvised skating rink not, at least, until springtime, when it melted. No one, perhaps, but my oil- painted ancestors, row upon row of them, who were at this moment glaring sourly down at me from their heavy frames in icy disapproval of what I had done.I blew them a loud, echoing raspberry tart and pushed off again into the chill mist, now doubled over at the waist like a speed skater, my right arm digging at the air, my pigtails flying, my left hand tucked behind my back as casually as if I were out for a Sunday stroll in the country. How lovely it would be, I thought, if some fashionable photographer such as Cecil Beaton should happen by with his camera to immortalize the moment.Carry on just as you were, dear girl, he would say.Pretend Im not here. And I would fly again like the wind round the vastness of the ancient paneled portrait gallery, my passage frozen now and again by the pop of a discreet flashbulb.Then, in a week or two, there I would be, in the pages of Country Life or The Illustrated London News, caught in mid- stride frozen forever in a determined and forwardlooking slouch.Dazzling . . . delightful . . . de Luce, the caption would read. Eleven- year- old skater is poetry in motion.Good lord! Father would exclaim. Its Flavia!Ophelia! Daphne! he would call, flapping the page in the air like a paper flag, then glancing at it again, just to be sure. Come quickly. Its Flavia your sister.At the thought of my sisters I let out a groan. Until then I hadnt much been bothered by the cold, but now it gripped me with the sudden force of an Atlantic gale: the bitter, biting, paralyzing cold of a winter convoy the cold of the grave.I shivered from shoulders to toes and opened my eyes. The hands of my brass alarm clock stood at a quarter past six.Swinging my legs out of bed, I fished for my slippers with my toes, then, bundling myself in my bedding sheets, quilt, and all heaved out of bed and, hunched over like a corpulent cockroach, waddled towards the windows. It was still dark outside, of course. At this time of year the sun wouldnt be up for another two hours.The bedrooms at Buckshaw were as vast as parade squares cold, drafty spaces with distant walls and shadowy perimeters, and of them all, mine, in the far south corner of the east wing, was the most distant and the most desolate. Because of a long and rancorous dispute between two of my ancestors, Antony and William de Luce, about the sportsmanship of certain military tactics during the Crimean War, they had divided Buckshaw into two camps by means of a black line painted across the middle of the foyer: a line which each of them had forbidden the other to cross. And so, for various reasons some quite boring, others downright bizarre at the time when other parts of the house were being renovated during the reign of King George V, the east wing had been left largely unheated and wholly abandoned.The superb chemical laboratory built by his father for my great- uncle Tarquin, or Tar, de Luce had stood forgotten and neglected until I had discovered its treasures and made it my own. With the help of Uncle Tars meticulously detailed notebooks and a savage passion for chemistry that must have been born in my blood, I had managed to become quite good at rearranging what I liked to think of as the building blocks of the universe.Quite good? a part of me is saying.

Merely quite good? Come off it, Flavia, old chum! Youre a bloody marvel, and you know it!Most chemists, whether they admit it or not, have a favorite corner of their craft in which they are forever tinkering, and mine is poisons.While I could still become quite excited by recalling how I had dyed my sister Feelys knickers a distinctive Malay yellow by boiling them in a solution of lead acetate, followed by a jolly good stewing in a solution of potassium chromate, what really made my heart leap up with joy was my ability to produce a makeshift but handy poison by scraping the vivid green verdigris from the copper fl oat- ball of one of Buckshaws Victorian toilet tanks. I bowed to myself in the looking glass, laughing aloud at the sight of the fat white slug-in-a-quilt that bowed back at me.I leapt into my cold clothing, shrugging on at the last minute, on top of everything else, a baggy gray cardigan I had nicked from the bottom drawer of Fathers dresser. This lumpy monstrosity swarming with khaki and maroon diamonds, like an overbaked rattlesnake had been knitted for him the previous Christmas by his sister, Aunt Felicity.Most thoughtful of you, Lissy, Father had said, deftly dodging any outright praise of the ghastly garment itself. When I noticed in August that he still hadnt worn the thing, I considered it fair game and it had, since the onset of cold weather, become my favorite.The sweater didnt fit me, of course. Even with the sleeves rolled up I looked like a baggy monkey picking bananas. But to my way of thinking, at least in winter, woolly warmth trumps freezing fashion any day of the week. I have always made it a point never to ask for clothing for Christmas. Since its a dead cert that youll get it anyway, why waste a wish?Last year I had asked Father Christmas for some badly needed bits of laboratory glassware had even gone to the trouble of preparing an itemized list of fl asks, beakers, and graduated test tubes, which I tucked carefully under my pillow and, by the Lord Harry! he had brought them! Feely and Daffy didnt believe in Father Christmas, which, I suppose, is precisely the reason he always brought them such dud gifts: scented soap, generally, and dressing gowns and slipper sets that looked and felt as if they had been cut from Turkey carpet.Father Christmas, they had told me, again and again, was for children.Hes no more than a cruel hoax perpetrated by parents who wish to shower gifts upon their icky offspring without having to actually touch them, Daffy had insisted last year. Hes a myth. Take my word for it. I am, after all, older than you, and I know about these things.Did I believe her? I wasnt sure. When I was able to get away on my own and think about it without tears springing to my eyes, I had applied my rather considerable deductive skills to the problem, and come to the conclusion that my sisters were lying. Someone, after all, had brought the glassware, hadnt they?There were only five possible human candidates. My father, Colonel Haviland de Luce, was penniless, and was therefore out of the question, as was my mother, Harriet, who had died in a mountaineering accident when I was no more than a baby.Dogger, who was Fathers general roustabout and jack- of- all- trades, simply hadnt the resources of mind, body, or finances to lug round lavish gifts secretly by night in a drafty and decaying country house. Dogger had been a prisoner of war in the Far East, where he had suffered so awfully that his brain had remained connected to those horrors by an invisible elastic cord a cord that was sometimes still given a jerk by cruel Fate, usually at the most inopportune moments. E ad to eat rats! Mrs. Mullet had told me, wide-eyed in the kitchen. Rats, fancy! They ad to fry em! With everyone in the household disqualified for one reason or another as the Bringer of Gifts, that left only Father Christmas.He would be coming again in less than a week and, in order to settle the question for once and for all, I had long ago laid plans to trap him.Scientifically.Birdlime, as any practical chemist will tell you, can be easily manufactured by boiling the middle bark of holly for eight or nine hours, burying it under a stone for a fortnight, and then, when it is disinterred, washing and pulverizing it in running river water and leaving it to ferment. The stuff had been used for centuries by bird- sellers, who had smeared it on branches to trap the songbirds they sold in the city streets.The great Sir Francis Galton had described a method of manufacturing the stuff in his book The Art of Travel; or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries, a signed copy of which I had found among a heavily underlined set of his works in Uncle Tars library. I had followed Sir Franciss instructions to the letter, lugging home in midsummer armloads of holly from the great oaks that grew in Gibbet Wood, and boiling the broken branches over a laboratory Bunsen burner in a stew pot borrowed without her knowledge from Mrs. Mullet. During the final stages, I had added a few chemical twists of my own to make the pulverized resin a hundred times more sticky than the original recipe. Now, after six months of preparation, my concoction was powerful enough to stop a Gabon gorilla in its tracks, and Father Christmas if he existed wouldnt stand a chance. Unless the jolly old gentleman just happened to be traveling with a handy bottle of sulfuric ether, (C2H5)2O, to dissolve the birdlime, he was going to stay stuck to our chimney pot forever or until I decided to set him free.It was a brilliant plan. I wondered why no one had thought of it before.Peering out through the curtains, I saw that it had snowed in the night. Driven by the north wind, white flakes were

still swirling madly in the light of the downstairs kitchen window.Who could be up at such an hour? It was too early for Mrs. Mullet to have walked from Bishops Lacey. And then I remembered!Today was the day the intruders were arriving from London. How could I ever have forgotten such a thing? It had been more than a month ago on November 11, in fact, that gray and subdued autumn day upon which everyone in Bishops Lacey had mourned in silence all those whom they had lost in the wars that Father had summoned us to the drawing room to break the grim news.Im afraid I have to tell you that the inevitable has happened, he said at last, turning away from the window, out of which he had been staring morosely for a quarter of an hour.I neednt remind you of our precarious financial prospects . . .He said this forgetting the fact that he reminded us daily sometimes twice in an hour of our dwindling reserves. Buckshaw had belonged to Harriet, and when she had died without leaving a will (Who, after all, could even imagine that someone so brimming over with life could meet her end on a mountain in far- off Tibet?) the troubles had begun. For ten years now, Father had been going through the courtly steps of the Dance of Death, as he called it, with the gray men from His Majestys Board of Inland Revenue.Yet in spite of the mounting pile of bills on the foyer table, and in spite of the increasing telephonic demands from coarse- voiced callers from London, Father had somehow managed to muddle through.Once, because of his phobia about the instrument, as he called the telephone, I had answered one of these brash calls myself, bringing it to rather an amusing end by pretending to speak no English.When the telephone had jangled again a minute later, I picked up the receiver at once, then jiggled my finger rapidly up and down on the cradle.Hello? I had shouted. Hello? Hello? Im sorry Cant hear you. Frightful connection. Call back some other day. On the third ring, I had taken the receiver off the hook and spat into the mouthpiece, which began at once to give off an alarming crackling noise.Fire, I had said in a dazed and vaguely monotonous voice. The house is in flames . . . the walls and the floor. Im afraid I must ring off now. Im sorry, but the firemen are hacking at the window.The bill collector had not called back.My meetings with the Estate Duties Office, Father was saying, have come to nothing. It is all up with us now.But Aunt Felicity! Daffy protested. Surely Aunt FelicityYour aunt Felicity has neither the means nor the inclination to alleviate the situation. Im afraid shesComing down for Christmas, Daffy interrupted. You could ask her while shes here!No, Father said sadly, shaking his head. All means have failed. The dance is over. I have been forced at last to give up BuckshawI let out a gasp.Feely leaned forward, her brow furrowed. She was chewing at one of her fingernails: unheard of in someone as vain as she.Daffy looked on through half- shut eyes, inscrutable as ever.to a film studio, Father went on. They will arrive in the week before Christmas, and will remain in full possession until their work is complete.But what about us? Daffy asked. Whats to become of us?We shall be allowed to remain on the premises, Father replied, provided we keep to our quarters and dont interfere in any way with the companys work at hand. Im sorry, but those were the best terms I could manage. In return, we shall receive, in the end, sufficient remuneration to keep our noses above water at least until next Lady Day.Revue de pressePraise for the cosy crime Flavia de Luce Mysteries - perfect for fans of Agatha Christie and Midsomer Murders: The Flavia de Luce novels are now a cult favourite (Mail on Sunday)Certain to become a national treasure (Daily Mail)Delightfully entertaining (Guardian)Flavia is enchanting (New York Times)A breath of fresh air to the world of period-piece sleuthing (Independent)Flavia is mercilessly addictive (New York Times)A clever, witty and totally gripping read with lots of surprises (Essentials)At once precocious and endearing. Flavia is a marvellous character. Quirkily appealing, this is definitely a crime novel with a difference (Choice)It's like entering the lost world of the Mitford sisters where the girls are allowed to run completely wild (Crime Squad)Hilarious, eccentric and mischievous (Deadly Pleasures)Engaging, entertaining, bright and breezy; and above all, great fun! (Good Book Guide)What makes this work is a deftly crafted plot, crisp dialogue, and an unusual - but nonetheless believable - main character. (MYSTERY SCENE)I cannot think of a happier choice of gift either for a bright ten-year-old or for someone now grown up or even old who remembers the magic of those books that freed us from the ordinary world of adults and school to take absurd and glorious risks in the pursuit of truth. (REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE.COM)Flavia's spirited intelligence and vivid imagination make her an original character, and this story, with its authentic period setting and typically fresh, vigorous narrative, will appeal equally to fans of the earlier books in the series and readers discovering the young heroine for the first time (GOOD BOOK GUIDE)I loved Alan Bradley's first book, 'The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie' but haven't read any of his books since. I was therefore a bit apprehensive about picking up this latest offering as I may have missed some important developments but happily I was easily able to slip back into the world of Flavia de Luce. She is this writer's greatest asset, an eleven year-old going on thirty who blithely goes about her investigations without heed to danger or the finer subtleties of adult life.

The book is written in a humorous tongue-in-cheek style, which I don't normally enjoy reading but absolutely loved here. Flavia's encounters with her elder sisters are particularly well done. (CRIMESQUAD)This story conveys Flavia's daring and inquisitive nature, whilst her interactions with Aunt Felicity and Dogger, the general factotum who pops up when needed, show levels of maturity and insight that add depth to her personality and warmth to the story. Recommended. (HISTORICAL NOVELS REVIEW)This book is unique. It is deceptively simple and yet unusual and creative and a wonderful lightness pervades the writing. (REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE.COM)