



# The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow

Books Reviewed:

[The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Ruth Williams](#) [3]

[Not on the Choice](#):

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

There's a spate of light-hearted historical whodunits at the moment: **Murder Most Unladylike** and **The Scandalous Sisterhood of Prickwillow Place** spring to mind. **The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow** is in a similar vein.

Fourteen-year-old Sophie has just started working in Sinclair's, the most famous department store in London even though it hasn't officially opened yet. The other shop girls think she seems a bit stuck up ? but then until two months ago, Sophie was still taking French and music lessons with her governess. It was only when her papa died abroad leaving her pretty much penniless that Sophie was forced to find lodgings and get a job.

When Sophie makes friends with apprentice porter Billy and shop mannequin Lily-Rose, life starts to look up ? but it soon goes wrong again. Precious things, including a beautiful ornate bird, glittering with gold and gems, are stolen from Sinclair's Exhibition Hall, and Sophie is the last person who was seen there. Both the store manager and the metropolitan police suspect her, Sophie's sacked, and then she's chucked out of her lodgings.

Luckily Sophie's a born optimist and Billy and Lil, as well as petty-criminal Joe, are on hand to help her out. They find clues, break codes, overhear crucial conversations, glimpse dodgy behaviour, and manage to open locked doors as they try to find out who's a goody, who's a baddy, why the Clockwork Sparrow is so important, exactly what the evil Baron is planning, and how they can save Sinclair's from disaster.

It's a thoroughly enjoyable romp, with some intriguing threads to (presumably) be resolved in subsequent books ? like the truth behind her father's mysterious will, and his relationship with the Baron. I loved the Edwardian period details, as well as the descriptions of the exotic Sinclair's (a ceiling ?painted with a mural of cherubs luxuriating upon soft pink clouds? and such like), juxtaposed against the grimness of Sophie's lodgings. The characters are great ? Lil's determinedly ?can-do? attitude, Sophie's cheeriness in the face of adversity, Billy's growing confidence, Joe resisting temptation. It's nicely presented too, with each of the five sections opening with an illustration and description of a different hat, and the odd newspaper cutting or press release scattered throughout to break up the text.

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-mystery-of-the-clockwork-sparrow>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/213>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ruth-williams>