

**Praise for  
*When Gods Die***

‘Like Georgette Heyer, Harris delves deep into the mores of Regency England, but hers is a darker, more dangerous place. St. Cyr is a charismatic hero whose future exploits are eagerly awaited.’ — *Kirkus*, starred review

‘Fans of quality historical suspense . . . should find solace in the work of promising newcomer Harris, whose series is set in Regency England . . . political intrigue, cleverly concealed clues and vivid characters in a fast-moving story that will have readers eagerly anticipating future volumes in the series.’

— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

‘Harris knows her English history and has a firm grasp of how a mystery novel is supposed to play out. In this second Sebastian St. Cyr novel, she cleverly pulls the threads of her plot together, ending in a crescendo of suspense and surprise. Fans of historicals, especially those set in Regency-era England, will snap up this triumph.’

— *Library Journal*, starred review

‘Regency England comes to life in the second novel in Harris’s Sebastian St. Cyr historical suspense series, which will keep you reading and guessing. Beautifully written and engrossing, the novel offers intriguing characters, a well-told mystery and fascinating historical journey. If you enjoy historical suspense, don’t miss this. If you aren’t a big fan of historical fiction, this novel may just convert you.’ — *Romantic Times*, 4 stars

**Praise for  
*What Angels Fear***

‘Harris’s riveting debut delivers a powerful blend of political intrigue and suspense . . . This fresh, fast-paced historical is sure to be a hit.’  
—*Publishers Weekly*

‘The combined elements of historical fiction, romance, and mystery in this fog-enshrouded London puzzler will appeal to fans of Anne Perry and Will Thomas. Expect to hear more from Harris’s troubled but compelling antihero.’  
—*Booklist*

‘*What Angels Fear* is a masterful blend of historical detail, page-turning suspense, and good old-fashioned romance. I can’t wait for the next installment.’  
—Penelope Williamson, author of *Wages of Sin*

‘Page-turning suspense, memorable characters, and an intricate chess game of a story drenched in period atmosphere.’  
—Tracy Grant, author of *Beneath a Silent Moon*

‘A stunning debut novel filled with suspense, intrigue, and plot twists galore. Don’t start this one in the evening—you’ll be up all night!’  
—Victoria Thompson, author of  
*Murder on Lennox Hill*

‘Harris cleverly blends fact and fiction into a haunting debut mystery.’  
—*Romantic Times Book Club*

‘Appealing characters, authentic historical details, and sound plotting make this an amazing debut historical. Highly recommended.’  
—*Library Journal*, starred review

The Sebastian St Cyr Mystery Series

*What Angels Fear  
When Gods Die*

# WHEN GODS DIE

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*A Sebastian St Cyr Mystery*

C. S. HARRIS

  
ALLEN & UNWIN

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# Chapter 1

*The Royal Pavilion, Brighton, England.  
Wednesday, 12 June 1811.*

He knew she'd come to him. They always did.

His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales and for some four months now Regent of Great Britain and Ireland, closed the cabinet door behind him and let his gaze rove over the swelling curves and exposed flesh of the woman before him. "So you've had a change of heart, have you, madame? A reappraisal of your hasty rejection of my offer of friendship?"

She said nothing, the flickering candlelight throwing the features of her face into shadow so that he couldn't read her expression. She lay with one pale wrist curling provocatively over the gilded carving of the settee beside the fire. Most people complained about the warm temperatures at which George habitually kept his rooms, even on such a mild summer night. But this woman seemed to relish the heat, her gown slipping artfully from her shoulders, her feet bare and seductive. George licked his lips.

From the far side of the closed doors came the strains of a Bach concerto mingling with the murmur of his numerous guests' well-bred voices and, from somewhere in the distance, the faint trill of a woman's high-pitched

laughter. At the sound of the laughter, George felt his stomach twist with a spasm of uncertainty.

Tonight's reception had held a special lure, for the guest of honour was none other than the dethroned French King Louis XVIII. But they came here every night, all the snide, contemptuous ladies and gentlemen of the ton. They drank his wine and ate his food and listened to his music, but he knew what they really thought of him. They were always laughing at him, calling him a buffoon. Whispering that he was as mad as his father. They thought he didn't know, but he knew. Just as he knew how they would laugh if he allowed this woman to make a fool of him again.

*Why wasn't she saying anything?*

Warily, George drew himself up tall, his chest swelling. "What is this, madame? Have you lured me here simply to toy with me? To try to play me for a fool?"

He took a step towards her only to stagger, one plump hand flinging out to grasp the curving back of a nearby chair. It was his ankle, of course. The thing was always giving way beneath him like this. He could hold his wine. Better than most men half his age. Everyone said so.

The candles in the gilded wall sconces flared golden bright, then dimmed. He didn't remember sitting down. But when he opened his eyes he found himself slumped in the chair beside the fire, his chin sunk deep into the elaborate white folds of his cravat. He could feel a line of spittle trickling from one corner of his mouth. Swiping the back of his hand across his jaw, George raised his head.

She lay as before, one bare foot dangling off the edge of the settee's yellow velvet cushion, the shimmering

emerald green of her gown sliding seductively from naked shoulders. But she was staring at him with wide, curiously blank eyes.

She was such a beautiful woman, Guinevere Anglessey, the gently moulded curves of her half-exposed breasts as white as Devonshire cream, her hair shining blue-black in the candlelight. George slid from the chair to his knees, his voice catching on a sob as he took her cold hand in his. "My lady?"

George knew a tingle of alarm. He hated scenes, and if she'd had some sort of fit there would be a hideous scene. Slipping his hands beneath her bare shoulders, he drew her up to give her a gentle shake. "Are you—oh, my goodness, are you ill?" This new and even more horrifying possibility sent a shudder coursing through him. He was very susceptible to infections. "Shall I call Dr. Heberden?"

He wanted to move away from her immediately, but she lay at such an awkward angle, half on her side, that he had a hard time manoeuvring her. "Here, let me make you more comfortable, and I'll have someone send for—"

He broke off, his head jerking around as the double doors to the salon were thrown open. A woman's gay voice said, "Perhaps the Prince is hiding in here."

Caught with the Marquis of Anglessey's beautiful, insensible young wife clasped clumsily in his arms, George froze. Hideously conscious of his ludicrous pose, he licked his suddenly dry lips. "She's fainted, I daresay."

Lady Jersey stood with one hand clenched around the doorknob, her cheeks going white beneath their rouge, her eyes wide and staring. "Oh, my God," she said with a gasp.

The doorway filled with shrieking women and stern-faced men. He recognised his cousin, Jarvis, and Lord Hendon's murderous son, Viscount Devlin. They were all staring. It was a moment before George realised they were staring not at him but at the jewelled hilt of a dagger protruding from the Marchioness of Anglessey's bare back.

George screamed, a high-pitched, feminine scream that echoed strangely as the candles dimmed again and went out.

## Chapter 2

A cooling breeze skimmed across the Steyne, bringing with it the salty scent of the sea. Sebastian Alistair St Cyr, Viscount Devlin, paused on the flagging outside the Pavilion and drew the sweet air deep into his lungs.

All around him, the dark streets echoed with panicked shouts for carriages and the running feet of sedan-chair bearers as bejewelled ladies and gentlemen in evening breeches streamed from the Pavilion's open doors into the night. A few threw Sebastian frightened, speculative glances. All gave him a conspicuously wide berth.

"The fools," said a harsh, angry voice from behind him. "What do they think? That *you* killed that woman?"

Sebastian swung around to look into the heavy, troubled features of his father, Alistair St Cyr, the Fifth Earl of Hendon. Sebastian gave a wry smile. "Presumably they find that a more comforting explanation than the alternative, which is that their regent just stabbed a beautiful young woman in the back."

"Prinny's incapable of that kind of violence, and you know it," snapped Hendon.

“Well, someone certainly killed her. And I, at least, know it wasn’t me.”

“Let’s walk,” said Hendon, waving away his carriage. “I need the air.”

They turned together towards their hotel on the Marine Parade. Neither spoke, their footsteps echoing softly in the darkness. The familiar scents of sea-bathed rocks and wet sand hung heavy in the warm night air, and the moon-flooded streets were haunted by shared memories neither father nor son cared to confront. For years now they had both avoided Brighton whenever possible. But Hendon’s position as Chancellor of the Exchequer combined with the present visit to England by the dispossessed French royal family had made the Earl’s presence here in Brighton unavoidable. Sebastian himself had made the trip down only for the occasion of Hendon’s sixty-sixth birthday. The Earl’s other living child, Amanda, had stayed away for reasons that were not discussed.

“That woman . . .” Hendon began, only to pause, his jaw working back and forth as it did when he was thoughtful or concerned. In the faint glow of the nearby streetlamp, his face was pale, his hair a shock of white in the moonlight. He cleared his throat and tried again. “She looked oddly like Guinevere Anglessey.”

“It was the Marchioness of Anglessey,” said Sebastian.

“Good God.” Hendon wiped a splayed hand across his grief-slackened face. “This could be the death of Anglessey.”

For a moment, Sebastian kept his silence. It was a common enough occurrence in their world, beautiful young women marrying wealthy and titled older men.

But even amongst the ton, the forty-five-year difference in age between the Marquis and his young wife was considered excessive. “I must admit,” said Sebastian, treading carefully in deference to the long-standing friendship between Hendon and Anglessey, “I wouldn’t have thought her the type to join the ranks of Prinny’s paramours.”

Hendon’s eyes flashed. “Don’t think it for an instant. She was no easy tumble. Not Guinevere.”

“Then what the devil was she doing in his cabinet?”

Hendon expelled a harsh breath. “I don’t know. But this isn’t good. Not for Anglessey or for Prinny—or for you, either,” he added. “The last thing you need is to have your name linked with another murdered woman.”

Sebastian frowned, his gaze caught by the royal crest emblazoning the panel of a carriage drawn up before their hotel. “Believe me, I have no intention of being involved in this.”

Hendon looked at him in surprise. “What makes you even suspect such a thing?”

Wordlessly, Sebastian lifted his chin in the direction of the liveried servant standing beside the carriage’s restless team.

“What is this?” said Hendon.

The footman stepped forward and bowed. His livery was unmistakable; the man, like the carriage, came from the Prince’s household. “My lord Devlin? Lord Jarvis would like a word with you, my lord. In his chambers at the Pavilion.”

Officially, Lord Jarvis was no more than a distant cousin of the King, a wealthy nobleman with a ruthless reputation for shrewdness and a legendary omniscience

that came from his wide network of private spies. But in practice, Jarvis was the royal family's brains, a Machiavellian intriguer fiercely devoted to both England and the monarchy with which he identified it. "At this hour?" said Sebastian.

"He says it's most urgent, my lord."

Given his previous interactions with Jarvis, Sebastian's first impulse was to send the servant back to his master with the curtest of messages. Then he thought about Guinevere Anglessey lying pale and lifeless in the Prince's candlelit cabinet, and he hesitated.

"Tell your master Lord Devlin will receive him in the morning," snapped Hendon, his jaw working back and forth in annoyance.

Sebastian shook his head. "No. I leave for London at first light." Wary but intrigued, he leapt into the carriage before the steps were let down. "Don't bother waiting up for me," he told his father, and sank back into the plushly upholstered seat as the footman closed the door.