



***A Death of No Importance, by Mariah Fredericks***  
***Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, August 2018***

August, it's been said, is perhaps the laziest month of the year. There are no major holidays or national events in August. It's too late to plant a garden or start a diet for swimsuit season. Indeed, all that August warrants is a well-constructed murder mystery to read by the pool.

*A Death of No Importance*, by Mariah Fredericks, is a fine choice for a summer read. Set in posh Manhattan in 1910, at the twilight of the Edwardian age, the novel contains three elements essential to a good mystery: the super-rich, a doomed romance, and revenge.

As the story begins, lady's maid Jane Prescott has joined the *nouveau riche* Benchley family, who recently had arrived from Scarsdale. Mr. Benchley had made his fortune in trade, and Mrs. Benchley now wants to launch their two daughters into New York society. Jane, a no-nonsense Scottish woman, is tasked with getting mousy Louise and pretty but shallow Charlotte ready for their debuts.

Charlotte, willful and headstrong, has already set her sights on Robert Norris Newsome Jr., known as Norrie. The roguish scion of the prominent Newsome family, Norrie had promised to marry Beatrice Tyler, daughter of another wealthy society family.

The annual Newsome Christmas Ball at their *beaux arts* Fifth Avenue mansion is the highlight of the social season. Elderly Mr. Newsome Sr. is eager to show off his young trophy wife Rose, who is so beautiful that a bartender at the St. Regis Hotel had named a cocktail, "Rose Blush," after her.

The ball, however, is disrupted by a nasty incident. When Charlotte Benchley's dubious reputation is threatened, her intrepid maid Jane springs into action as an amateur detective. After all, who's better than a servant to quietly observe dastardly deeds? Jane sets out with reporter Michael Behan to solve the crime.

The author skillfully infuses *A Death of No Importance* with sumptuous period details. Actual events, including anarchists' bombings and the Triangle Factory Fire, are sprinkled here and there. But nothing in *A Death of No Importance* is too demanding. It's an entertaining read—just what August requires.