



THE LAST  
CONFESSION

ANTONIA HODGSON

A NOVEL

OF  
THOMAS  
HAWKINS



I much prefer to read a series from the start. However, life doesn't always cooperate. So I dove into "The Last Confession Of Thomas Hawkins," the second mystery set in London in the early 1700s and starring the rogue-ish gentleman Hawkins. About three chapters in, I stopped. This is too good, I thought, placing it aside and rushing out to buy "The Devil In The Marshalsea," the FIRST in the series. "Marshalsea" is set in a debtor's prison where Hawkins is tossed one day -- unfairly but not without reason. Laden with debt (gambling, whores, drinking, gambling with whores and so on), Hawkins is very much in danger of dying. Marshalsea is a cesspool of treachery and deceit and he is burdened with solving the mystery of a prior inmate's debt if Hawkins is to have any hope of getting out alive. It's a grim but very good tale. That done, I returned to the sequel. It can be enjoyed on its own but this is definitely not one of those series where adventures happen and characters end up essentially where they began. You'll appreciate it a lot more if you read them from the start. Here, Hawkins is scandalously shackled up with a woman who runs a bookstore that specializes in erotica. Once again caught up in shenanigans, Hawkins is dragooned into the service of a powerful patron. He must resolve the prickly problem of a belligerent nobleman loudly insisting the king return the nobleman's wife, rather than keeping her as a mistress. Oh and Hawkins is accused of murder and the book is mostly a flashback while he proceeds to the hangman's noose, praying for a last minute pardon. This book is even better than the first and the characters are complex, fascinating and great fun, from Hawkins to the righteous officer of the law determined to see justice done right down to my favorite, the taciturn and clever son of a criminal who Hawkins tutors in the ways of a gentleman. This series is a keeper. -- Michael Giltz