



Die Upon a Kiss (A Benjamin January Mystery Book 5)

Barbara Hambly

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In **A Free Man of Color** and **Sold Down the River**, Benjamin January guided readers through the seductive maze of New Orleans' darkest quarters. Now January joins the orchestra of the city's top opera house — only to become enmeshed in a web of hate and greed more murderous than any drama onstage.

In 1835, the cold February streets glitter with masked revelers in Carnival costumes. An even more brilliant display is promised at the American Theater, where impresario Lorenzo Belaggio has brought the first Italian opera to town. But it's pitch-black in the muddy alley outside the stage door when Benjamin January, coming from rehearsal with the orchestra, hears a slurred whisper, sees the flash of a knife, and is himself wounded as he rescues Belaggio from a vicious attack.

The bombastic impresario first accuses two of his tenors, then suspects his rival, the manager of New Orleans' other opera company. Could competition for audiences really provoke such violent skulduggery? Or has Belaggio taken too many chances in the catfight between two sopranos, one superseded by the other as his mistress and his prima donna?

But burning in January's mind and heart is a darker possibility. The opera Belaggio plans to present — a magnificent version of *Othello* — strikes a shocking chord in this culture. Is the murderous tragedy of the noble Moor and his lady, the spectacle of a black man's passion for a white beauty, one that some Creole citizen — or American parvenu — would do anything to keep off the stage?

Bloody threats and voodoo signs, poison and brutal murder seem to implicate many strange bedfellows. And Benjamin must discover who — in rage, retribution, or an insidious new commerce in this beautiful cutthroat city — will kill and kill ... and who will **Die Upon a Kiss**.

From the Hardcover edition.

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