



Dandy Gilver and a Most Misleading Habit

Catriona McPherson

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A delightful Dandy Gilver mystery by Catriona McPherson, set in 1930s Scotland. For fans of PG Wodehouse, Dorothy L Sayers and Agatha Christie.

Scotland, 1932. Aristocratic private investigator Dandy Gilver strikes again with her witty sidekick Alec Osbourne to solve sinister goings on at a convent on a bleak Lanarkshire moor. The convent was set alight following a mass breakout at a neighbouring psychiatric hospital on Christmas Eve, resulting in the death of the mother superior. Most patients were returned safely but a few are still at large... As Dandy interviews each nun in turn she senses a stranger is still lurking in the corridors at night - could they be the same person who left blood-red footprints in the sacristy? One of Catriona McPherson's creepiest – and funniest – mysteries yet.

Dandy Gilver and a Most Misleading Habit Details

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Author : Catriona McPherson

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From Reader Review Dandy Gilver and a Most Misleading Habit for online ebook

Rog Harrison says

This is the fourth book I have read in this series and I do like the character of Dandy Gilver. Dandy is a female private detective in Scotland and this mystery which takes place in 1933 is set in a convent in South Lanarkshire. The author has a charming style and I stayed up late to finish this. The plot and characters are outlandish and I am not quite sure that the solution to the mystery quite worked but this is an enjoyable read.

TishBee says

Another deliciously good page turner of a cozy mystery server up by Catriona McPherson. The writing, as usual, is a cut above the genre and I'm still chuckling at the little bit of misdirection artfully thrown in as things were picking up pace toward a conclusion that made me very smugly presume to have guessed whodunnit before the end. I admit, I was fooled and the author suddenly changing gears on me made for a very satisfying ending.

I love Dandy Gilver, I just wish more than just the first in the series was available on audiobook in Australia!

Katrina says

I didn't enjoy this one as much as her previous books but I will still read the next one in the series - if there is one.

Stuart says

Audience: Those who would enjoy a complex murder mystery set in 1930's Scotland.

Summed up in one word: Challenging

Author Bio: Born in Scotland in 1965. PhD in Linguistics from Edinburgh University. Author of the successful Dandy Gilver series (11 instalments). Full time writer who divides her time between Southern Scotland and Northern California.

First Impression: I had never heard of Catriona McPherson despite her significant presence in the crime/mystery scene in the U.K. So I entering her Dandy Gilver series at number 11 was a bit concerning, but by the end I was so impressed with the writing and events in this story that I actually forgot it was not a stand alone. It is the juggling of 30+ different characters all in the same place that impressed me the most, making each character stand out in a different way and not losing sight of the end game. There are several issues I had with this book as well so onto the review!!

Summary of the Story:

Scotland 1932. Christmas Eve. A breakout at a mental hospital. A convent set on fire. The leader of the convent, Mother Superior is killed. Some prisoners managed to evade capture and are still at large. The police work the case, find a suspect and sentence him to the gallows.

6 weeks later, the new leader, Mother Mary is still concerned about the events of Christmas Eve. She calls in Dandy Gilver, a well known Private Investigator to look into several issues that she cannot put to rest herself. Why was profanity painted across the wall of the store room? Who really started the fire? Where are the escaped mental patients? What do Mother Superior's last words mean...?

Review

Plot: This is a murder mystery at its heart and a complex one at that. Mother Superior is dead and though they have a suspect in a mental patient called Tony Gourlay, who was found near the scene with incriminating evidence upon his person, events still don't add up. Once Dandy arrives and starts gathering information, it becomes clear that this may not have been the work of a patient, but it might have been an inside job. What follows is an excitingly intricate plot that is slowly divulged over the course of 25+ interviews with staff at the convent. The writing style here is very polished, unfortunately I did find it dizzying at times, losing my place in the conversations and who was involved in scenarios as people seemed to pop up out of nowhere.

Once information is gathered, Dandy and her partner Alec have to act on it, going out into the community and turning up rocks to find what they are hiding. People's faces and behaviour tell the pair that there is a lot more to be told, but the tight lipped community make their job almost impossible. When the pressure builds though, the cracks start to show. I enjoyed the depth to this mystery, CM has written it so well, it is nearly impossible to guess the events of the book before they are revealed to the reader. The plot is most likely the best part of this book, keeping everything hidden, throwing the reader off and mixing up the stories until the satisfying and surprising ending.

Setting: The setting is important here. It is set in a convent, where the nuns are in charge, they run the show and they decide when information is shared and when it is hidden. This makes Dandy's job 10 times harder but makes for great reading. Having the orphanage attached to the convent added some youthful excitement to all the nuns heavy, elderly presence. The town and its villagers were very infuriating, all knowing the truth but intentionally hiding it to protect their own way of life. The fact that it is set in the 30's adds another layer of respectability, set in a time where things were stricter and there was less interference from the outside world.

Characters: There are so many characters here, all with their own solid personalities and involvement, so I will stay general here. The nuns are all very diverse, infuriating and amusing. The villagers are all suspicious, interfering and unhelpful and the other staff members of the convent/hospital are funny, meaningful or bold. Everyone had their place and a contribution to the story. The main event here is of course Dandy Gilver and her partner Alec. I loved their chemistry, they were so tuned into each other and they were impressive to read. Dandy is a decent Investigator, though I sensed a lot of self doubt at times. She is smart, witty and cleverer than most. Alec is by no means the tag along, he pulls his own weight, pushing deeper into this conspiracy and even pointing Dandy in the right direction at times. Together they were a lot of fun in this book.

Themes: Religion, Murder, Death, Conspiracy, Love, Secrets and Community Solidarity.

Likes: Depth and Quality of the plot. Dandy and Alec working together. The finale was a secret till the very end. Management/Quality of all those characters involved. Book art work stands out.

Dislikes: Not much back story on Dandy, though this is the eleventh book in the series, so may have to try

some more books. Infuriating cast at times. Writing style was difficult at times and I lost my place in the story and who was involved in what.

Rating: This is a solid murder mystery. It makes me want to check out CM's other material and I enjoyed myself while reading this book. The quality characters and well dispersed plot were the highlight of this book. Though the writing did get disorientating at times. it did not ruin my time with Dandy and I will be back for more.

8/10

Jane Irish Nelson says

Probably 3.5 stars. This is an enjoyable cozy mystery series. In this book, Dandy and Alec are separately contacted regarding related mysteries. Dandy receives a letter from the Sisters of St Ultan's asking for her help after their house is vandalized and the Mother Superior killed in a fire. The same night several patients at a nearby hospital for the mentally disturbed escaped and two are still at large. But one of those recaptured was in the war with Alec, and his family requests Alec's help in proving his innocence. Naturally these cases are interrelated, so the two work together to try to fit together just what happened that night. Dandy's husband Hugh even provides an essential clue. The final solution is both surprising and logical. Recommended.

Tredaran says

Never having read any of the ten previous Dandy Gilver and Alex Osborne books, I felt a bit like an interloper at an exclusive club, with no concept of the relationship or skills set of the two investigators. Even with the cast list at the start of the book, I found it difficult to remember the names, roles, personalities and relative seniority of the 20 or so nuns in the book, which made the plot difficult to follow and the characters difficult to care for. Probably only for devoted fans of the series.

This was a Goodreads giveaway.

Lori Rader-Day says

I could read these books forever, so, Catriona, just freeze time inside the stories and keep going.

Diane Close says

This book was difficult to rate, because it was off to a slow but interesting start, then kept the slow, methodical pacing most of the way through. I almost set it aside and not bothered to come back, as the story plot was basically Dandy interviews nun, consults with Alec, repeat, for dozens of nuns. I was hoping for more of a split, or at least insight into the workings of, the mental hospital, but the story and 'action', such as it were, focused almost exclusively on the convent and its inhabitants.

I raised my rating a notch, though, when the ending was not as I expected. Yes, the basics of it was there ((view spoiler)), but I was focused on the (view spoiler) and not on the (view spoiler).

It was nice to see Hugh take part in the case, even if it was just at the very end, and I wasn't sure why Grant was thrown in as well by that point, other than to have an 'everyone is here' moment.

The rather lengthy expository villain ending scene was overly-dramatic, in my opinion, but characteristic of those types of books of that time and I suppose you could build a case that it was a nice homage to Dame Christie.

Still, it was nice to have Dandy take center stage again, even if she had little to do but observe and interview. I hope the next book is more interesting, but this proved a nice change of pace diversion in the end.

Beth Lawson says

So many nuns, so much confusion! Keeping the characters straight was the key problem with this book. The author seemed well aware of this potential difficulty, as she had Dandy and Alec lament the proliferation of nuns as the book progressed. That said, it was a very enjoyable bedtime read. It was my first Dandy Gilver book, but won't be my last.

Gillian Ashton says

A suspicious fire in a convent leaves a nun dead. Prime suspect is an escapee from the local Psych Hospital. Dandys called in to help.

A great dynamic duo, the relationship between Gilver and Osbourne works well. Its light and Funny. I did feel some of the interviewing went on a little but all in all a fun book.

Jay says

On some level, I question why I read this series. Many times I spend the length of book trying to figure out what the fuck the author is hinting at because she's such a genteel writer at times, I can't tell what's happened, or what she's trying to say without saying. Then there's the Scots culture on top, that I also don't understand, along with life in the 1930s. So there's a lot of barriers to entry for me. But for some reason I enjoy the hell out of this series and jump through international hoops to procure myself copies of the latest book rather than waiting for it to get published in the US, whenever that may be.

What made this book confusing was all the nuns. Yes, they included a cast of characters in the front matter but flipping back to that on a kindle isn't that easy. Although McPherson did a good job of differentiating the different nuns' personalities, there were just too many of them to keep track of. The fact that they left before solving the mystery was a bit odd to me, but I thought the big confrontation was well done. I had had an inkling of who the villain was early on but dismissed it, so both yay, and womp womp to me.

Mystica says

I like anything with a church, convent, monastery background and have had this book for ages. I cannot understand why I never came to it sooner as I enjoyed the story very much. I think it was the name Dandy Gilver which put me off!

A 1930s setting so it is a slower paced mystery murder detective series. There is a bit of women not being able to talk about stuff which can get irritating to someone in the 21st century but other than that once you get into the swing of the book it was most enjoyable.

The setting of a convent in Lanarkshire on a bleak moor was very descriptive and set the tone for the happenings which were unusual for a convent. That the convent was set almost alongside a mental asylum for men was also unusual. The benefactors of all this was a family eccentric in themselves - three sisters all unmarried.

The convent has been set alight, a murder of the Mother Superior has been committed and the investigation has reached an impasse. The nuns though seemingly co-operative all seem to be holding vital clues back, there is a scandal of epic proportions lurking in the background, the village wants to have the convent and the asylum closed and so many open ended statements and ends that bringing them to a cohesive whole seems very tough indeed.

The original suspects are three escapees from the asylum but when two bodies turn up the focus turns to anyone and everyone.

The story had stuff for everyone. It was very well told and the story got more and more interesting the more it went on. I liked all the characters as they were all different and like all humans just because they are nuns, did not make them saintly at all.

I will come back to this author as I found this book very good.

Tracy Shephard says

I loved this novel.

Set in a convent in 1933, Catriona McPherson's delightful tale has a bit of everything. Mystery, murder and even a bit of fun.

Dandy Gilver is a fabulous character. a cross between Nancy Drew and the Australian crime cracker Miss Fisher. She is both relentless and brilliant.

After receiving a letter from 'Mary', Dandy is asked to sort the 'mischief' that has befallen the Order of the Little Sisters of St Ultan. She sets about to discover the prowlings along with her sidekick Alec.

This pleasantly descriptive read with fabulously named folk such as Chick Tiddy is one that moves along at a steady pace and is a thoroughly enjoyable read.

This is the 11th Dandy Gilver novel, but is the first that I have read. I feel as though I have missed out on something gratifying and I aim to read all of the titles in the series.

Abbey says

Most enjoyable. I always enjoy the relationships in the Dandy Gilver books. The really solid friendship between Dandy and Alec is very refreshing. And Dandy's marriage, which couldn't be described as happy, but isn't filled with horrible misery either. It's all very down-to-earth and pleasing.

I was also pretty impressed that I didn't get too confused with all the nuns floating about, not to mention nurses and random extras too! A bit of skilled storytelling there, I think. The book is well plotted - and pretty much minus the slightly bonkers denouements that Dandy Gilver's cases tend to end with!

In conclusion, quietly enjoyable.

Jannelies says

This was my first Dandy Gilver book and I would have loved to learn something more about her character. Although it is not necessary to have read the previous books, I sometimes wondered about why Dandy was thinking or doing something because I didn't know the character before.

I loved the title!

The book is very well written with a sharp eye for atmosphere but all in all I found it sometimes difficult to keep track of the story because there are so many characters in the book and the story seems to go on and on before finally there are some clues that lead to the heart of the story. In the end, everything becomes clear but I prefer a story where the clues are more evenly spread throughout the story. Now, some things came as a surprise to me and I had to go back to see what I'd missed.
