



The Cabinet of Curiosities

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In downtown Manhattan, a gruesome discovery has just been made-an underground charnel house containing the bones of dozens of murder victims. Research reveals that a serial killer was at work in New York's notorious Five Points neighborhood in the 1880s, bent on prolonging his lifespan by any means. When a newspaper story on the old murders appears to ignite a new series of horrifyingly similar killings, panic overtakes New York City. Now, FBI agent Pendergast, journalist Bill Smithback, and archaeologist Nora Kelly join forces to protect themselves from a vicious killer...before they become the next victims.

The Cabinet of Curiosities Details

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From Reader Review The Cabinet of Curiosities for online ebook

midnightfaerie says

The Cabinet of Curiosities by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child was a huge disappointment to me. Throughout this book I wondered why it was so revered in the mystery world. My husband picked up this copy almost a year ago for me and has been waiting patiently ever since for me to read it. After reading a particularly taxing book, I was looking for something lighter and exciting to read, so I picked this up. I'm still somewhat confused as to all the five star ratings on Goodreads, and if someone would like to explain it to me, I'd very much appreciate it.

So this book starts with your usual mystery type characters. A beautiful heroine, Nora, who is smart and sexy (because this is such an unusual quality) and ends up being drawn into a 100-year-old mystery because she just "can't seem to stay away" from it. (Do you hear the sarcasm?) Then you have your typical Sherlock Holmes-type-character, Pendergast, the FBI agent, who just doesn't quite pull off the arrogant and intelligent Holmes. Instead he comes off as non-talkative and moody. Then we have Smithback, the annoying - yes, really annoying - journalist who will stop at nothing to get the story (stop me if you've heard this one), and ends up getting himself in trouble. He left me wondering why Nora was dating him and wishing he could have died in some fantastically gory way. That leaves the brooding Irish cop, O'Shaughnessy, who was a walking cliché with his annoyed-at-everything attitude and bad boy past. He was actually my favorite character.

I won't go too much into the plot, it's pretty straight forward. A lot of bodies are found at a construction site to a new building. They turn out to be the work of a killer almost 100 years ago and are almost forgotten when suddenly the killings start up again. The idiot police captain is being pressured by the mayor and the building contractor (who, of course, donates a lot of money to various causes that affect key players) to get these murders solved quickly. While the police force stumbles around with loose ends, the four main characters I described earlier come together to start piecing together clues and eventually solving the mystery.

I found nothing exciting or interesting about this book. Some mysteries do well in following the standard type mystery plot, but this one fell short. There were some truly disgusting scenes coupled with some suspenseful moments that made me feel like I was reading a horror at times, but those were few and far between. When I finally found out who the killer was, I discovered that not only had I not even been trying to guess who it was (I do this in all good mysteries), but also, that I just didn't care. I wanted this 600 page book with some excitement in the last 100 pages to finally end.

In my husband's, and Preston's and Child's defense, this was not the first book of the series. My husband and I often share similar tastes in mystery and he had read several of these and wanted me to try one. He realizes now, that maybe he should have picked a different one. Although you don't have to read them in order, there might have been some more build-up or explanations of characters, such as the initial chemistry between Nora and Smithback in earlier books that might have made it more enjoyable for me. In any case, this review is getting too long for a book I really didn't enjoy. The best thing about it were two things. First, the last 100 pages held all the excitement for me. And second, the book is centered around these people from 100 years ago that used to have these things called "Cabinets of Curiosities". Back before T.V. or the internet, these places where museum-like buildings that held strange and unusual things that were very popular for people from all classes. It was the entertainment of the age. The descriptions and history behind these and some of the things they contained, as well as their strange collectors, were the most interesting part of the book. For

that, I give it a little credit.

ClassicsDefined.com

Emma says

4.5 stars. Definitely the best in the series so far. Gradually we are learning more about Pendergast. These authors know how to write a suspenseful story! Two nights in a row I was unable to carry on reading because I was finding it creepy and I didn't think I'd be able to sleep if I read any more. And I read quite a lot of grimdark and horror type books. I enjoyed the history in this book too. An all round thoroughly entertaining read.

Terry says

The only thing I'm left feeling curious about is what took me so long to read this book, and the other Preston/Child's books?! This is a great mystery that includes tons of action, twists/turns and great horror moments. Special Agent Pendergast is such a fun, mysterious and always interesting character. I enjoyed getting more of his background in this installment. Thanks to Ginger and Matthew for the fun buddy read!

Kirsten says

Sadly, I've now read all of the Pendergast novels, at least until the new one comes out this summer. Fortunately, I seem to have inadvertently saved the best for last! *Cabinet of Curiosities* is definitely my favorite of all of them. At a construction site in New York City, workers unearth more than thirty skeletons, evidence of a serial killer operating more than 100 years ago. Soon afterward, a chilling series of copycat murders are perpetrated by a killer dubbed The Surgeon by the press. Agent Pendergast believes that there is a connection; in fact, he thinks the killings are the work of one man operating for more than a century...

This definitely kept my adrenaline going; I read it during my commute, and I kept having to put it down at seriously crucial moments, which led to me chomping at the bit to finish work so I could find out what happened next. It's totally the literary equivalent of a good scary movie -- you find yourself mentally shouting, "No! Don't go in there!" at the characters. Fantastic stuff!

Mike (the Paladin) says

Okay...I gave it a 5 star. Not many of those on my list, but I gave Relic a 4 and the only way to up that was a 5. I'm a little surprised at myself for the rating. This is a very good read and I have it on my shelf. I obtained it after listening to the audio (in a vehicle). I only do that if I figure I'll possibly reread at some point.

The atmosphere in this book combined with the imaginative story line is, if not great, just short of it. These

books seem to have a largely female readership... No reason for that guys. They're well done and this one is (in my mind) the best so far. They're not mystery genre but border on several genres from there to paranormal...possibly edging into urban fantasy. Good books, really. I recommend this one especially very highly.

Where the Pendergast character has at times verged on the absurd (not badly so, he's almost always readable) here I think Preston/Child hit their stride with the character. While the story edges along the border of horror and touches other story lines you may have seen elsewhere still, within it's own reality things hold together well.

Ginger says

5 creepy, terrifying stars!

Thanks Terry for the great BR on this book. I'm really enjoying our mutual trip down Pendergast horror lane. ??

Alright, where do I start? That's right, we start in New York City in an ancient tunnel full of 36 dead bodies! So, where did these bodies come from and why are they there? Great question and you're about to find out.

FBI agent Aloysius X.L. Pendergast (whew, what a name!) decides to investigate this site with the dead bodies and enlist Dr. Nora Kelly to help with the archaeology part of the investigation.

(Quick side note that I learned from one of my good friends here on Goodreads. Try reading Thunderhead before you take on The Cabinet of Curiosities.

In "Thunderhead", you'll meet Dr. Nora Kelly and how she meets Bill Smithback, our ambitious New York Times journalist. Reading "Thunderhead" before was worth it for me and helped with the flow of the book. Thanks Matthew for the great advice!)

Okay, back to these dead bodies. Mau ha ha ha!

The investigation goes into the direction of a "Jack the Ripper" type of serial killer, a new copycat killer in NYC that's duplicating the murders and learning all about curiosity collections back in the 1800s. Imagine two headed calves, mammoth penises, shrunken tribal heads to a creepy doll owned by a Voodoo priestess. Get the idea?

This book was great, creepy and super suspenseful. I had no idea where the plot twists were taking me. They were taking me for a tense and finger-nail biting ride, that's for sure!

One last thing, what an amazing house for a setting! Someone needs to take notes and make that come to life for Halloween! o.O

Shaina says

I've always been curious about the curiosities. Teehee. Cabinets to be exact. In these you learn quite a bit of history. I found it fascinating. The first 'museums' of a sort, imagine one so immense that it took more than one lifetime to gather. Imagine one that gave you long life. Imagine the curious cabinet of a serial killer... there is something for everyone in this book. Antiquities galore.

? Irena ? says

After a horrible discovery of a XIX century churnel house made by construction workers, people start dying. The manner of these recent deaths is the same as the old murders, so the press gave the killer a name - The Surgeon. Considering how weird all this is, it is no wonder Pendergast gets involved. There is a lot of him in this book.

I have a feeling this book tried to cram as much as incompetent and corrupt people as it it possible. It certainly wins the prize so far. The first two had their own bureaucrats and jerks, but here it is a whole new level of ass-kissing, ruining other people or harassing normal ones. I am not satisfied how that played out. I cannot write more about it or I'll ruin the part of the story.

I don't have to write about how I love Pendergast either. If he was a bit of omniscient before, here he gets another, more human layer to his personality. We are allowed to see just how much human he is. His part in all this was great, albeit still insufficient for me to be satisfied. Still, the manner we get more, but still not enough, information about him is a good way to keep readers interested.

Of the three people involved in previous cases, only the journalist remained. I wish he too left somewhere. Authors usually reserve TSTL moments for their female characters. Here, I am happy (or unhappy as the case may be) to report Smithback could give those heroines run for their money. God, he was so stupid he almost ruined the story. There wasn't a single thing he did here to make me even like, let alone love him. He acted childish and selfish and even if he had those 'qualities' before, here they are more pronounced. The second person Pendergast enlists to help him is an archaeologist Nora Kelly, Smithback's girlfriend. The authors can't show the chemistry between the characters, so we get quite a few sentences telling us how he loves her. I don't mind romantic angle to a story. I like it even, but here it was out of place. She could have been just an archaeologist who just met them and it would still be the same story. And she wasn't really likeable either. The first part of the story she is wining about her job, then she gets angry for whatever reason. Margo Green and D'Acosta, they are not. Anyway, it isn't that pronounced to mess up the story.

The too long meditation that looks like time travel or a vivid dream would work in a film, but here they threw me in something that seemed like a different story. That, and one time it was even unbelievable considering the place the characters doing it were in.

Parts of this story were too hard to read. The suffering and the waiting were dragged a bit. I still enjoyed it though and would recommend this series to anyone who likes a thriller seasoned with weirdness.

Jaya says

One of the most creepiest books that i might have happened to have read in a long time.

I am a little scared still ©.©

kartik narayanan says

The Cabinet of Curiosities is an excellent serial killer based story. It is creepy, tense and intelligent. It has all the trademarks of this series - great writing, subtle humour, brilliant characters and an intricate mystery.

The Cabinet of Curiosities gives us a far deeper look into Pendergast than either of the previous books. He reminded me of Benedict Cumberbatch in Sherlock with his mannerisms, memory palace and coterie of smart assistants. I wonder how much inspiration Mark Gatis took from Pendergast when creating Sherlock - I am sure there would have been some influence at the least. Pendergast out-Sherlock's Sherlock.

In conclusion, this is a great read. Go for it.

Angie says

I loved this book and it was even better as agent Pendergst was in it from the beginning. as I've come to know now the book has a really creepy factor.. there's a murder site discovered from over 100years ago but some similar murders are happening. the book was so well written and I loved all the characters. it kept me fussing and that's one thing I like about these books, and they are hard to put down. one interesting is you find out a lot more about Pendergst and some of his family. if you like a mystery/crime its also horror. so a good combination. I can definitely recommend it

Matthew says

This book was fantastic! The Pendergast series has been awesome so far. Well researched. Twists and turns. Suspense. Gore. Diabolical bad guys. Perilous situations. Last minute salvation. I am so glad this series has a lot more books because I don't want it to end!

Shawn says

This is a great book and the best stand alone book of the series. With great research into the underworld of New York city, the environment for this novel is incredible both equally spooky as well as fascinating. This is the first true Pendergast novel. Up until then he has been one character in a cast of characters, now for really the first time, he is the focus of the novel. And he easily carries the novel, the character himself and his family history are fascinating. This also begins to elude to future novels specifically the Diogenes trilogy.

Rebecca (agirlirlblog, bekkilyn) says

I really liked the title of this book when I saw it as it reminded me of something that might be the name of a book in the 19th or early 20th century. Cabinets of curiosities are not necessarily cabinets in the sense of pieces of furniture with items in it, but can be whole houses or rooms filled with various things of interest...like exhibits in a museum. According to the book, they used to be fairly common and would usually charge some sort of admission fee, but were basically put out of business by public museums.

In this book then were both cabinets and museums as well as a serial killer on the loose!

There were times in this book that definitely had that horror feel of a character thinking about going into a place that we as readers just *know* to be bad, and so I was telling the book, "No, no don't go in there!" But of course people went in as I knew they would.

Now I really want to create a cabinet of curiosities in a settlement in my current Fallout 4 game. :)

Some characters in the book were recurring from previous books, particularly Special Agent Pendergast, and it was fun getting to know a bit more about him in this book as he is a rather mysterious individual.

Well on to the next!

Zell says

Super Pendergast returns! Praise HIS might!

Yes, THAT was the worst part of this book. When I was reading about his "super powers" I thought something like: "What the hell?! Is that Marvel or something?". Meditation, ability to experience historical events and play chess or bridge in the mind. Pendergast is the type of person who knows EVERYTHING better than you and probably can speak fluently in more than 90% of known languages. Add to this incredible stamina and nearly absolute resistance to a pain and you have our Super Hero. I swear, in next books he'll be flying and killing hordes of Mbwuns with his laser sight. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it is SUPERPENDER!

Smithback was annoying. As always. Ah, and remember children: Nearly the whole police contains only mentally retarded, arrogant morons and we'll be lost without Super Pender.

So, why three stars? I like the plot more than the poor something which wants to be a plot in *Reliquary*. Less horror, more mystery in this tome. I'm not regretting reading the *Cabinet of Curiosities*. The only thing that really was irritating me was Super Pendergast. I know, this series isn't rational and realistic, but when authors create their main character as powerful, invincible superman, something inside me say **NO**.

Sean Gibson says

Thus far, I have, for whatever reason, been comparing the Pendergastian works of Messrs. Preston and Child to food (see, for example, [here](#) and [here](#)). It's entirely possible I have a tapeworm. That said, in keeping with

that theme, let's call *Cabinet of Curiosities* a pumpkin spice latte.

On a crisp late October day with the leaves overhead a blaze of orange, red, and yellow, there are few more sublime experiences than sitting outside and sipping a pumpkin spice latte while you enjoy that blaze of color (good company or a good book might, of course, further enhance the experience). The weather, flavor, and mood all mingle together perfectly, complementary parts whose whole is considerably greater than the proverbial sum of its parts. Sure, you know you're drinking something flavored with an artificial substance that's probably equal parts carcinogen, extract of gecko, and stray cat urine, but you're not worried about that—you're just enjoying the moment because you're exactly where you want to be doing exactly what you want to do while drinking exactly what you want to drink.

What happens, however, if we contemplate having that same drink on a sunny and sweltering mid-July day, when, in the immortal words of Meat Loaf (or Jim Steinman, really), the "skin on the streets is a-gleaming with sweat" and the redolent stench of rotting garbage stings your nostrils because the moment anyone puts anything curbside, it heats instantly to the point of putrefaction? Suddenly, not only are weather, flavor, and mood not happily mingling, but they're actually engaged in open hostilities (the PSL, of course, would be lobbing pumpkin bombs at the others, Green Goblin-style), and you want no part of any of them.

It should go without saying that this is, of course, solely my exceedingly subjective view, but *Cabinet* is the type of book that, when you're in the mood for it, is like that first pumpkin spice latte of the season that you just can't drink fast enough. If you're not in the mood, though, it's the kind of thing where, after a few sips, you want to dump the thing, kick yourself for essentially setting five dollars on fire, and then rectify the problem with an iced mocha (point of fact: an iced mocha can generally be used to rectify any problem regardless of severity, season, or circumstance).

Fortunately, I was, by and large, in the mood when I embarked on reading *Cabinet*, though that mood waxed and waned a bit as I read, which made the less superb parts of the book—flat characters, overly nefarious villains, lengthy descriptive passages, improbable coincidences—leap out more than they might have under other circumstances. That said, this is a thrilling addition to the Pendergast oeuvre, and the first book where he really takes center stage—which is good, because he's by far the most compelling character here. We get to see Pendergast in his Sherlockian mind palace (yes, I know the concept predates the BBC's *Sherlock*, but I don't think it's unfair to suggest that the show has popularized the idea a fair bit), learn a bit about his family's crazy history, and see him in a more human light than we have thus far.

"Cabinet of curiosities" was the term used to describe private collections of esoteric natural history miscellanea (often of dubious origin) that men of means and a scientific bent as well as hucksters of the first order put on display in the days before natural history museums existed (they were, in fact, precursors to those worthy institutions); such collections might include everything from a giant whale bone to the shrunk head of a cannibal to a yeti penis (see previous comment re: dubious origin). The book introduces us to perhaps the creepiest (and most comprehensive) cabinet of curiosities ever assembled (well, fictionally, anyway), and while I don't want to spoil anything, let's just say that it's not a place I'd like to hang out despite my affinity for natural history.

The book is not without flaws, and it drags at times for being a fast-paced thriller, but, by and large, Preston and Child are master craftsmen who continue to build a phenomenal series around a Sherlock-type who's rapidly evolving into a character worthy of his place in the pantheon of great fictional detectives.

I'm not sure when I'll be ready for my next pumpkin spice Pendergast, but rest assured that I'll be in the mood at some point, and will continue the journey.

Kathi says

Another great read from one of the best pair of authors around!

Rade says

A thrill ride from start to finish. I loved everything about this book, except the chief of police or whatever the hell he was who was in charge of the whole case involving the murders. He was really annoying and even me, a regular guy who watched a lot of crime shows and read some books on those subjects, knows that you do not arrest people on murder charges just because you got few loose clues on their actions during the murders. He was as dumb as sack of potatoes.

Other than that, the whole idea of owning a cabinet of curiosities was highly interesting concept for me. I gleamed each time the authors described the various objects found throughout the museum and other places the characters visited (not mentioning where so I don't spoil it). My biggest complaint was the character of Pendergast. He was likable but maybe a little too damn likable. He has an answer for every situation, has a solution for every obstacle, and knows things about every topic brought up by those around him. He's like a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. I also had a praise for Smithback who was cocky and annoying but I got to give him points for knowing how to do research and get his hands on relevant resources for his articles, even though he tends to be a bit too risky and stupid.

All in all, a highly recommended book. This could be a stand alone novel but I do recommend you read at least the first book in the Pendergast series.

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

“One can reach the gates of hell just as easily by short steps as by large.”

Staying in New York, this third novel deals with the museum and archaeological finds again. This time it's closet to home when tearing down structures for new business reveals hidden bones and horrors beneath cement walls, telling a tragic story of the past. A modern killer is up to no good, however, bringing out Special Agent Pendergast, returning character journalist Bill Smithback, and struggling archaeologist Nora Kelly.

While the mystery angle is different, this book has a lot in common with the previous two, Relic and Reliquary because of so much time spent in the museum, using similar research to unearth mystery, and trailing New York City to unmask a killer. Unlike the other two, Pendergast is more front and center focus. There's something about the detective that's addictive - he's unique and in some cases downright odd. He has an almost unrealistic uncanny ability to determine the truth of the matter and smooth his way past conventional legal channels. Still, even if he's not wholly realistic, he's just awesome and steals every page scene he graces. Kudos to the author for making him more of a focus and regular. He stood out in the other books but he just wasn't there enough before. As inhuman and otherly than he could appear in previous books, he gets a fuller fleshing out this time, even with glimpses of his personal life and family.

The new addition of a down-on-his-luck cop was a gift. O'Shaughnessy was my favorite when you remove Pendergast from the story. At first he seemed like he would be another one layered addition to the corrupt, laziness of the system, but it's a pleasant surprise to find instead that he was pretty epic in his own, slower manner.

The killer is a demented being and the big reveal of what's at stake is intriguing. It certainly raises the implications of this being another mass murderer killing for mere psychosis out of the bag. There's a horrible death at the end that soured the taste of the of the book for me, though - I was just sitting there with a no, they didn't go there face. Cleverly twisted with suspenseful spots, I can't fault the mystery story itself other than the pacing of the book lagging, waxing and waning at random times.

I started getting weighed down with Nora and Bill especially. I think if a lot of the scenes with Bill were removed, the book would have improved its pacing and interest because he went from annoying to boring. Nora wasn't really that interesting either - I dug some of her inner political struggles and liked how the ending of the book worked out for her, but she didn't hold a high degree of chemistry with me.

The mystery element isn't bad and I enjoyed learning about the Cabinet of Curiosities, but the book was weighed down by inconsistent pacing. If it were shorter, it would have worked better.

J.K. Grice says

THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES still remains one of the best books that I have ever read. This is such an impressive novel.
