



The Pure in Heart

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A boy disappears waiting for a lift to school. A child miles away in the North of England, is abducted while walking to swimming baths near home. A girl and her harassed single mother become close to their next door neighbor Ed. Simon Serrailer has very distressing cases, while still raw after a close shocking bereavement.

The Pure in Heart Details

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Author : Susan Hill

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Sue says

If you are looking for a mystery with a difference, then Susan Hill's series featuring DCI Simon Serraillier may be for you. The series so far (I've read the first two) features police procedurals that are marked by sharp descriptions of character, including secondary characters and family, details of plot, private emotional details of both felons and protagonists. As in the first volume, there are unexpected plot twists.

I'm not going to give many plot details--wouldn't want to spoil anyone's reading of this book. Let's just say there is a lot here: kidnapping, car thefts, birth and death, and so much human emotion exposed by so many different people, all trying to live their lives, do their jobs. And all this in a mystery format. Ahhh---paradise for this reader.

Judith Lewis says

Sorry, but this was a disappointment. I had quite enjoyed the previous book in the series, *The Various Haunts of Men*, which I suspect was written as a stand-alone novel but then developed into a series. I suppose I had expected a quality PD James/Ruth Rendell style crime novel and found something different - which didn't quite work, unless we find the issues are resolved in later volumes... As in the previous book, Hill tampers with various "givens" in detective fiction. In that book, a key character died. In this one, there is no resolution to the central plot and very little clue as to the story behind it. I suspect that Hill is trying to mirror what might happen in true life and the difficulties of a crime never being solved, the impact that that has both on the family and the investigating police. But I'm not sure that it quite worked.

Most of the characters struck me as poorly drawn. And the book lacked the spirit of place that was the redeeming feature in its predecessor. Simon Serraillier seems set fair to become yet another policeman/detective who is the idealised man in his female creator's mind. Some of the other characters, most notably his sister Cat, are also terribly idealised. And, totally unconvincing, is the action of their mother towards her youngest daughter. I think it could have been made to work, if in a different context and explored differently - but, as it is, the time and setting of her actions are never entirely accounted for.

I will try a third of this series, but won't move onto a fourth unless things improve.

Jennifer says

This is the second of a series -- my bookstore sells it as a "staff pick." That's just crazy. The ending is so bad that I feel cheated of my time and money.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

Susan Hill, I love your Simon Serraillier series.

This is the second book in the series I have read and thoroughly enjoyed. Please read the series in order, otherwise you might be a bit lost as to relationships, etc.

DCI Simon Serrailier is on a painting holiday in Venice when he is called home to the bedside of his dying youngest sister, Martha.

Returning to work early, he is thrust into a case where a little boy disappears from outside his home while waiting to be collected from school.

The Pure in Heart is neither a thriller nor a whodunnit, but a crime novel arising out of character and circumstance. Susan Hill says she is intrigued by the psychology of crime, and this definitely shines through in her writing.

If you like a novel that careers through its plot at 100mph, then this is probably not for you.

But if you like cleverly crafted stories with wonderful character development, you will love this one!

Ova - Excuse My Reading says

This book was beautiful but so sad, and it crushed my heart. I am unsure about reading the next book. I love this series but so upset about reading missing children etc.

Please, I beg you writers, don't harm children!

Who enjoys reading children suffering? Who?!

Anyway... I love that Hill lays out Simon's life, his family relationship, makes him a real character almost in flesh and bone. She writes about the darkness in this world, so beautifully, so neat...

p.s: I wish I had an older sister like Cat :)

Alicia says

What a hugely disappointing followup to yesterday's book. I should note that although yesterday's was billed as a "Simon Serrailier Mystery", he wasn't the main character. Here he was, and he just wasn't as compelling. Plus the book felt a little lazy--like in the first one Simon is described as having striking light hair and dark eyes, but in this his eyes are blue! Come on, editors. Not to mention that the story of a kidnapped boy managed to have absolutely no dramatic tension, and the vast majority of plotlines were completely unresolved--I can only assume there's another book in the works. I won't be reading it. C-.

Mary Gilligan-Nolan says

The Simon Serrallier series are in the words of the author herself, neither a thriller nor a whodunnit, and while they have these elements and the main thread of the story is based on a crime that Simon is investigating, they are just as importantly about his family and the other people their lives may cross. This is a beautifully written story, which deals also for the first time with their youngest sister, Martha, who is a newborn baby in a 26 year old woman's body, severely handicapped since birth and living in a care facility deals with the issue of whether or not Martha has any real quality of life and how the family and her carer have different views on her situation. It also deals with the abduction of a little eight year old boy from the gate of his home and how his family fall apart as a result of their loss. The investigation leaves everyone involved saddened and frustrated and at a loss to find any clues. There is also a story of a young man just released from a four year prison sentence and his struggle to make a life outside the prison system, and how easy it can be to stray back onto the wrong path, despite his hopes for a better future. Cat is almost due her new baby and her husband Chris is having a hard time to keep the practice running smoothly without her. Simon takes refuge at their home more often than his own apartment, but you get a real sense of his closeness to his triplet and his unconscious need for a family of his own. It's a very sad story, but not so that it will leave you feeling too depressed, as there is also a clear message of hope. I would highly recommend this series, and this story continues on into the next two books, so read in the correct sequence.

Terri Lynn says

This was very disappointing to me in a lot of ways. We see a lot more of Simon Serrallier in this second book in the series but he is not very likable other than his love for his sister Martha.

This was not exactly a mystery or suspense. In fact, I don't know what the hell to call it. It was more of a British soap opera inside two covers than anything else.

Here is what happened-

(1) Simon the cop, Cat the doctor, and their triplet brother in Australia had a sister Martha who was born 10 years after them and was seriously handicapped at birth. She has lived like a baby in a care facility and apparently Simon adored her and visited her frequently as did his cold hateful father. She suffered from a bad infection and was cured with an antibiotic then the day after her 26th birthday, her mother (and Simon and Cat's mom) decided to murder her by injecting her with potassium and though she tells her husband, no one else gets to know including Simon. Apparently the author's viewpoint (the way it was written) is that those born less than perfect really don't deserve to live and this is more than a little creepy. If she had been my daughter she would have been living home with me. The Serralliers are wealthy doctors. They could afford help at home which would be cheaper than a facility.

(2) On a totally unrelated topic, Karin, from the first book, somehow is cured of raging, spreading, severe cancer just by eating healthy, doing some visualizations, and other alternative things. Right. Like that would do it. I have seen a lot of people die that way and seen others get cured with the usual treatment that we know can work. This is a dangerous message to send out to people and irresponsible.

(3) On yet another unrelated note (everything in this book was unrelated) a rich 56 year old moves to town with his sexy 22 year old wife, buys a stately house, gives a million pounds to Simon's mom's charity to fund

a respite day care for those caring for the elderly and the wife wants Karin to help her with her gardens. Uh huh.

(4) Simon is pining over Freya's death (from book 1) and the woman Diana in London who is 10 years older than him who he has had as a sex toy when he feels like it begins stalking him, calling, writing, emailing, showing up at his place, humiliating herself, going on that she loves him and even shows up at Cat's then at the end is planning to go see his mother.

(5) A 9 year old boy disappears while waiting for his ride to school. This part of the story pisses me off the most. We have chapters marked David and we never see who has him or why only that he is old, hungry, and thirsty and begs to go home. At the end we just see that his body is buried in a hole. Though the police hunt him, we are not told who has him, why, or what happens.

(6) The boy's doctor Dad commits suicide. The 12 year old daughter runs away because her lawyer mom ignores her. We discover when the mom was pregnant with the daughter, all she wanted was a boy- who knows why- and didn't care about the girl. Two years later she had David and he was all she cared about.

(7) Andy, a guy who went to prison for several years, gets out and has to stay with his shrew of a sister, her vile husband, and their nasty brats in their old poor housing neighborhood. She's knocked up again and these are some foul people. Poor Andy was trained to be a master gardener and she makes him crazy. He thinks he got a good job with a friend but finds out it is a criminal operation. A man who owns a cafe gives him a job and place to stay but Simon got him a job yet we never see him get it.

(8) Cat is very pregnant then has a son Felix and sits around nursing all the time, even in front of strangers, and wants to stop being a doctor because it is such a thrill to sit home with screaming kids, a baby puking on you, changing shitty diapers, watching soap operas, and cooking. Yee haw, don't we all pine for THAT.

See what I mean? A lot of weird stories, none with a decent ending, and all about people it is hard to care for except the poor ex-con Andy.

Laura says

Another fantastic novel in the Serrailer series by Susan Hill. For me, I had to dock a star because any time a child is abducted, I have a tough time with the book. However, this was a solid follow-up to *The Various Haunts of Men*, with the same setting and main characters, and of course Hill's terrific characterization and writing.

You can't help but be disturbed by Susan Hill's novels; her psychological insights are too strong and her people too human, the situations all too real. Having said that, though, I've requested the third installment of the series from the library and may be reading it fairly soon. The ending to this, like the first novel, is not at all cookie-cutter, and seems to lead directly to the third book in the series. Looking forward to it!

Diane Barnes says

This is the second book in the Simon Serrailer series, and like the first one, is an excellent read. The crimes

and situations engendered by both books are riveting in themselves, but add a Chief Inspector who has commitment problems, along with family members struggling with their own personal demons, a police force doing their jobs under trying circumstances, and peripheral characters whom you come to care about, and you have more than a mystery, more like a real village you get to visit each time you open the pages. There are 7 novels in this series so far, with another one due to be published this summer. These books remind me a bit of the early Elizabeth George Inspector Lynley mysteries, but I think Susan Hill is better. I'll be reading #3 very soon.

Sophie says

It makes no sense to call this a mystery. Or to call it a Simon Serrailler mystery. This book is basically several short stories whose only common bond is that they occur in the same community. Any "action" in the book is designed to develop characters rather than resolve any story lines. There's the story of the kidnapped child (no spoilers follow - this is all on the book jacket), never developed, never resolved. There's the story of the young ex-con trying to go straight. It's really pretty pedestrian. There's the story of Simon's handicapped sister, told and sort of resolved in the first part of the book. And there are several other little stories thrown in which add nothing and seem to be included gratuitously. The central three "characters" in the book are really Lafferton, the town where the stories take place, the Serrailler family, and in lessor fashion, the county police force.

This book kept me turning pages. I kept hoping for a single thread to connect everything. It never happened. I gave it two stars for the excellent writing. But the book left me angry and feeling deeply dissatisfied.

Claire says

Less magical and compelling than *The Various Haunts of Men*, but I still enjoyed it, if for no other reason than it upends some very common detective story conventions. This book concerns the aftereffects of the crime solved in *The Various Haunts of Men*, and focuses a significant bit on Simon's family's life - specifically the life of his sister, Martha, who has been in a care home for most of her life. She was born with a mental defect, and never will be able to talk, walk, feed herself, etc. At the start of the book, Martha becomes ill with pneumonia, and Simon rushes home from an Italian sketching vacation to be with her. We see the effects of Martha's condition and her illness on her family, even as Simon is drawn into another crime - the kidnapping of a small boy, David Angus, as he waits for his ride to school one day.

The police struggle with the crime, since there were apparently no witnesses, and the crime itself devastates the Angus family, as much as it frightens the Lafferton residents, especially coming so soon on the heels of the serial killings in the first book.

The Pure in Heart explores the relationships we all have with family - our natural impatience, love, good humor, grumpiness, anger that we share every day with those people we see most often. This is still an enjoyable read, it's just not as gripping as *The Various Haunts of Men*. It feels slightly smaller, since its world really is the world of family...and, of course, crime.

Melanie says

This was pretty darn good! I would say 3.5 to 4 stars. It's a mystery in that a child abduction is the heart of the book but where it differed from a lot of other mysteries I've read is that there is a lot of focus on surrounding characters. You get to know the detective's family and some other people of the smallish town where the crime takes place. I will definitely be seeking out the next installment.

Mike Gabor says

The main theme of this book is about a young boy who is kidnapped from in front of his house while awaiting a ride to school but this novel is much more than your standard whodunit. The main character in the book is DI Simon Serrailier. We also meet his family, his sister Cat, a GP, his parents who are also doctors, his niece and nephew. The author explores the relationship Serrailier has with these people. She also delves into the lives of the parents and sister of the missing child. She brilliantly shows how this crime affects not only the victim but the victims family as well. We also have two sub plots. One involves a young man recently released from prison and his struggles to keep on the straight and narrow. The other involves Serrailier's younger sister who is profoundly handicapped. I'm not going to give away too much about these various story lines as I don't want to ruin it for future readers. I will only say that the author has painted a magnificent picture of all involved. I have moved the rest of the books in this series from my To Be Read list to my Must Be Read list. I suggest you do the same.

Bill says

An interesting mystery. This is the first Susan Hill mystery I've read, but I had previously enjoyed her *The Woman in Black*, a gothic ghost story. I liked her writing style very much. Reading this 2nd in her Simon Serrailier mysteries, I found that I still enjoy her style. It was an interesting story, the disappearance of a 7 year old boy and the police investigation led by DCI Serrailier to try and find him. It's a meandering sort of story, many interesting plot lines; Simon and his family, Simon and his sister, Martha, a young lady who has never had an opportunity to become an adult due to medical difficulties on her birth, various alternate story lines that enrich and enhance the story. Not your typical police mystery, well worth the read and I do plan to find the remaining stories in this series to find out more about Serrailier.
