



When the Devil Doesn't Show

Christine Barber

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An intriguing contemporary mystery that exposes the dark side of life in historic Santa Fe by Hillerman Prize-winner Christine Barber.

Christine Barber's acclaimed mysteries explore not just the folklore, Indian heritage, and colonial history that draws people to Santa Fe each year, but also the lives of locals, from the rich retirees to the families that have lived there for generations. These mysteries take place in a modern city that still has strong, unforgettable connections to its history. In her new novel, *When the Devil Doesn't Show*, a housefire leads to the discovery of not just the bodies of the homeowners, but also a third, unidentified corpse. The search for the man's identity will lead Detective Gil Montoya not too far from Santa Fe to one of its notorious but rarely discussed neighbors, the Los Alamos National Laboratory. A DNA test reveals that the unknown victim is a native of Northern New Mexico, but Montoya has reason to believe that his ties to the infamous nuclear testing facility hold the solution. And when a second housefire is found to contain more bodies, he's determined to find out the answer no matter the cost.

"The insights that Barber, an Albuquerque resident, offers heighten the pleasure of reading her mysteries and give a fresh take on why Santa Fe is called the City Different." —*The Albuquerque Journal*

When the Devil Doesn't Show Details

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Author : Christine Barber

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From Reader Review When the Devil Doesn't Show for online ebook

Evgeny says

First things first: I need to mention I received this book from Goodreads giveaways.

A house in Santa Fe was burned down. Inside there were two bodies of its owners tied to the chairs and unidentified badly burned body hanging from the ceiling in another room. The police investigation is hampered by the fact that one of the owners worked in Los Alamos National Laboratory. This laboratory, being number 1 (or number 2) for the US Department of Defense is as secret and closed as they come. Before Gil and Joe, the police investigators, get any facts from people working in it - including the trivial ones like the deceased man's relationship with his colleagues, more dead bodies start showing up.

The book is a good fast-paced mystery. The plot is fine and interesting, the major characters (Gil, Joe, and Lucy) are nicely written and they feel like real life people. I even like the plot twist at the end. There is a lot of information about quite a number of subjects, including Santa Fe itself, Los Alamos National Laboratory, even original Spanish settlers; the way this information is presented is interesting (I learned some new facts) and is never out of place; it is not a simple space filler.

My only problem with the book is that it has one POV which was completely unnecessary and did not add anything to the story.

All in all, a good solid 4 stars.

S.C. Jensen says

I won *When the Devil Doesn't Show* in a First-Reads Giveaway a few months ago. I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised. Barber writes a good crime novel. The dialogue was snappy and believable, the plotline was interesting and complicated enough to keep me and the characters guessing. The characters themselves are mostly well-developed and realistic. But in the end the novel felt a little flat for me, which prevented me from giving it a three or four star rating.

One thing that bothered me was actually the blurb on the back of the book. Granted this is more her publisher's problem than Barber's, but the description is inaccurate to the point of being misleading. It's as if the blurb was written before the book was finished and Barber changed her mind mid-process. For example, there is no second house fire. The crimes are connected by a series of home invasions, the first of which ended in a house fire. Second, Montoya doesn't make the connection to the laboratory on the Hill until very near the end of the book, when things are starting to wrap up. In fact, he's not the one who makes the connection at all. Most of the book is spent following the path of an escaped convict and his possible cohorts.

Maybe this isn't a big deal for some, but to me a crime novel about thugs conducting home invasions has a totally different feel than one about a cover-up at a nuclear testing facility run by the federal government. If I had purchased this book expecting the latter, I would have been sadly disappointed.

However, Barber does deliver on her publishers promise in another way. She paints a vivid and enticing

picture of Santa Fe life and culture. Her characters are varied and interesting, from many walks of life. If she continues to use them in future novels they are the kind of characters that I would be interested in reading about as they evolve. I haven't read the novel preceding this *When the Devil Doesn't Show*, which she mentions a couple of times. One certainly doesn't have to know the first novel to follow this one, but I think I might seek it out just to fill in some blanks in the characters' relationships.

While I enjoyed Barber's setting and characterization, what I ultimately had an issue with was the plot. The initial plot, or what I thought to be the initial plot, had a lot of potential. But as the novel progressed, I felt Barber moved further and further from her intended story until it kind of became something else. It didn't feel like a smooth transition. The more we find out about the characters' motivations, the less the story makes sense until, in the end, the reader is left wondering what the hell actually happened to start the whole thing. The connections between the antagonists is pretty flimsy. We get a little glimpse into how they might be connected, but without understanding any of their motivations the ties are tenuous at best.

(view spoiler) This is the point at which the plot kind of loses some steam. Lack of characterization of the protagonists, combined with the cliff-hanger ending, culminated in a serious anti-climax. I felt a little let down at the end of this novel.

The pacing was great, and the plot flowed well right up to the end. Really the last chapter is the only one that I felt kind of bogged down, and part of that is because I started to realize at that point that the loose ends would never be dealt with. I also felt that we saw a bit too much of the tertiary characters. They interrupted the flow of the main narrative and often didn't add much to the plot itself. These extra snapshots would have been better used on the antagonists, to give a more well-rounded understanding of the characters and their motivations.

I will likely pick up a novel by Christine Barber again. At least to see if my issues with this book are consistent with the rest of her work. If *When the Devil Doesn't Show* is indicative of her usual writing style, I wouldn't try more than one more. But at this point, I felt her strengths outshone her weaknesses as a writer and she deserves another chance.

DAISY DISNEY says

I received an advance reading copy through a Goodreads Give-a-way for an honest review

Spoilers ahead

This is the first Christine Barber book I have read and I will be reading more of her work soon. *WHEN THE DEVIL DOESN'T SHOW* is a steady paced mystery that takes place in New Mexico. I really liked the cultural references made by the author on the people of New Mexico and their customs. Having never been there I felt like I was visiting there during Christmas time. She did an excellent job with that.

The story itself has a good pace that does keep the reader's attention. However this story is not mixed with a lot of twists and turns. It was easy to keep up with the storyline and the characters. I found the characters to be like-able. Gil and Joe made good partners. I also liked Lucy. She was an imperfect person with her issues but it made her all the more real to me. I did find a lot of the references on the Los Alamos National Lab to be interesting. I will be googling some of the things said, to see if they are facts or not. I think I would have

rated this book higher if there would have been more action. It felt like more than half of the book was spent on the investigation and I didn't get to really hear from the "bad guy". It would have made it more suspenseful and exciting had there been more crime scenes, or more details on the house invasions themselves.

I usually don't like when stories end as cliffhangers because it makes me feel I read all that for nothing. However, in this case it makes me want to pick up the next book. (I hope there will be a next one because I have so many questions).

As a side note- I loved the cover! The watercolors of the sky were simply dazzling!

Catherine Woodman says

This series, written by someone who has won the Tony Hillerman award, is set in Santa Fe and deals with issues related to culture, Native Americans, and New Mexico very well--there is a nice blend of the murder mystery and the personal in the book as well, which I personally like very much. The police detectives are Gil Montoya and Joe--they are working a series of deadly home invasions, trying to find out who is responsible for some escalating violence related to them. The book also includes Lucy, a volunteer fire fighter who is battling a serious alcohol problem, who also notes some things that are of interest in terms of who might be responsible. Enjoyable, especially if you love the setting of the southwest.

Brittany says

I won this book for free from the Goodread's First Reads giveaway.

This is the first book I have read by the author. My actual rating would be a 3.75/5. The first few chapters of the book start with a house fire with three corpses inside who were brutally tortured. The main characters, police officers, Gil and Joe are in charge of the case. The rest of the book is basically based on finding those responsible for the murders. This book seems to be number 3 of the series; it can be a stand alone book but I would prefer reading the previous ones to learn a little bit more about the characters. I did enjoy Gil and Joe and found them to be likeable but the rest of the characters were kind of just there. I never felt like I got to learn a whole lot about them.

I found the first half of the book a little hard to get into. I think that was based on the numerous characters that were added that didn't seem to have a necessary place in the story. The second half went much smoother and I did not want to put the book down! I found the references to the history of New Mexico to be a little much at times. I enjoyed learning about the prison riot (I never knew that before and looked into it further afterwards), but a lot of the other history dragged on a bit. I also didn't mind the ending (I read that other people felt it was incomplete). I liked that it didn't end in the typical norm like most crime stories.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone that enjoys an easy going mystery/crime. I would buy books from the author and look forward to reading some of her other work.

John Kues says

This is the first Christine Barber book I've read, and I will read the others. I didn't care for the ending particularly, and the character development was pretty good, but left me feeling like it could have been more. As far as the culture being part of the story, I liked it but I find myself missing Tony Hillerman all the more.

I don't consider myself much of a review writer, but I like Goodreads for tracking my readings and when using the stat feature I found out if you didn't fill in the date you finished the book it doesn't show up in the stats. So I write reviews now, even if they aren't very thorough.

PacaLipstick Gramma says

I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway.

I just didn't think this book was very good. The plot was ok, but at times just seemed to drag. The author included a lot of information about the culture of New Mexico and the beliefs of the Pueblos. At times it was interesting, but the segue into the culture was not pertinent to the story and I thought at times the author was trying to impress the readers with her knowledge (of that culture).

There were only two characters in the book that were even mildly developed. The rest of the characters were just thrown in. Just when you thought you might actually learn something about them, off we go in another direction. Instead of going off on a tangent explaining about the how and why of body language, how to conduct an interrogation, how to get a witness to say something, JUST DO IT. Sometimes explaining every little nuance is insignificant and detracts from the main storyline.

Not that life is all neat and tidy, but an epilogue would have been nice. Whatever happened to the characters in the book? *NOTHING. ZIP. NADA.* I certainly don't need everything spelled out for me, but there was no closure on anything. If the ending of the book was meant to be a cliff hanger, it sorely lacked. A sequel? I will not bother to read it, because frankly, I just don't care!

Mary says

This was OK, but doesn't hold a candle to Hillerman or Doss. The cultural information was interesting enough to get me through the book. Perhaps I should go back and read the first of Barber's books 'The Replacement Child', which won a Hillerman Prize for debut mystery.

Sharon Mensing says

Detective Gil Montoya is at the opening ceremonies to Santa Fe's celebration of the Christmas season when he receives a call regarding fatalities at a house fire. The balance between a sensitive presentation of the customs and Native American lore that underlie the town and high-intensity suspense is a hallmark of Christine Barber's third book, *WHEN THE DEVIL DOESN'T SHOW*.

Lucy Newroe, a volunteer EMT and firefighter who struggles with the potential conflict of interest between her volunteer work and her profession as a newspaperwoman, is busy at the fire. The intensity of the fire is matched by Barber's writing as the reader experiences the claustrophobia caused by the dense smoke while Lucy attempts to find any people caught in the burning house. The reader feels the depth of Lucy's exhaustion while she stores the fire hose as Gil and team arrive to investigate the bodies left behind when the fire was extinguished.

As it turns out, the dead homeowners were murder victims resulting from an earlier home invasion, not victims of the fire. Potential hate crimes, the New Mexico filming industry, Los Alamos, and crypto-Judaism all come into play as Gil and his team try frantically to figure out who is responsible for a series of deadly home invasions. The highly suspenseful scenes as the detectives move closer to finding the murders are balanced by gentler scenes of the town's preparations for Christmas.

Barber uses the intensity of some moments and the calmness of others to provide the depth of character that makes each of her detectives and Lucy feel like old friends. We come to know all of these crime fighters well. As Gil and his partner, Joe, make a final chase of the murder into the mountains surrounding Santa Fe, we feel, right along with them, the cold, the perilousness of the ground beneath the snow, and the futility of trying to find a man fleeing through blizzard conditions. The suspense that Barber provides, along with allowing us to see the more tender side of the characters, pulls us into the story.

When dealing with the home invaders, however, Barber is less able to guide the reader to an understanding. With one exception, the motives behind the invaders' moves are unclear. This lack of a sense of why the killings are taking place sucks some of the life out of the plot. This one fault of the book is dwarfed by Barber's otherwise strong characterization and well-realized sense of place and history.

And, I loved the ending. You will have to read the book to see what I mean...and I'll be going back to read the first two books to revisit Gil, Lucy, and Santa Fe.

C.L. Hoang says

Well written, clever dialogue. But the scenes and characters (lots of them!) seem a little disjointed the way they are presented without any apparent relations to each other. That makes it hard for me to follow the story line.

Cerenity says

I got this book free through a First Read Giveaway. "When the Devil Doesn't Show" was a book that kept me interested from the beginning til the end. This the the first book i have ever read by Christine Barber and I hope their is more to come in this series. I have not read any of the other Gil Montoya mysteries but after reading this i am definitely going to be adding them to my reading shelf. I loved all the characters and wanted to find out more about them. I loved her description of the beautiful landscape of New Mexico, holiday traditions, and superstitions. And with all that it was still a really good mystery novel. This is a very well written story that i would recommend to anyone that loves a good mystery.

Grace says

I love reading books set in New Mexico, where I lived for a few years, and this excellent mystery is more

than just a police procedural. Christine Barber, a former newspaper reporter who also served as an volunteer emergency responder, seems to get all the details right. Also, she sneaks into the narrative small but important lessons. There is a subtext about one of her protagonist's changing role in the age of the shrinking newsroom. She also makes clear, in relating info on Hispanic names, on usage of the Spanish language, and on why "The City Different" (Santa Fe) is so different. The state of NM as a whole, too. When you read her opening description of EMTs crawling into a house on fire to see if anyone is alive is so vivid you can smell the smoke. She published two titles with the same lead characters in them that preceded this one; I read "The Replacement Child" and in some ways it was even better in terms of plotting. But the ending of this book is a shocker; I don't think I've ever read a mystery with an ending like this one has. Any of her books would make great company on your next trip to New Mexico.

Janet Newport says

"Honey, please don't lick baby Jesus."

I really liked this book - I need to find Christine Barber's other books.

I enjoyed the Santa Fe setting and local lore. I didn't think it caused the book to "drag" (whole book is less than 300 pages), but found it to be part of the book and necessary to the story. While it wasn't the fastest paced book I have ever read, it was by no means a "slow" book. While some of the minor characters weren't fully "developed", they were fleshed out enough to be credible.

I especially enjoyed Ms. Barber's sense of humor. It just came out of left field and ambushed me...disappeared just to do it again and again.
Loved it!

Michelle says

Good story with a lot of references to New Mexico culture, landscape, food, and traditions that I really enjoyed. I grew up in Espanola and Albuquerque. I am very interested in reading the rest of Christine Barber's books. This one ended on a cliff hanger. Well done.

Elizabeth McIlhaney says

The northern New Mexico cultural tour continues in this book, third in the series. This time the focus is on Christmas in Santa Fe, and life and work year-round at the Los Alamos National Laboratories. Yes, quite a combo for fun and celebration along with murder and mayhem. The title doesn't make sense until the last sentence in the book. Even so, for me, the ending disappointed, not just the last sentence, but the too-quickly-wrapped-up ending, unusual given the standards set with the author's first two books, where detailed story-telling was meticulous to the very end.

Few authors create thrilling page-turners, John Grisham being one of the best, and my favorite in that respect. The pages turn themselves so that I have to schedule my life when I pick up one of his books, knowing it will be hard to put down until the end. Barber's books are like this, the first woman writer I have read as an adult who has this gift. This, her third book, was even more thrilling page by page than her

previous two! I hope it isn't her last, it was published more than four years ago! This series is so unique to Northern New Mexico in ways no other series to my knowledge has captured, and the crime-writing style so thrilling, this writer needs to continue sharing her gift with many, many more in this series.
