



Deception

Denise Mina

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Things like this don't happen to people like us. That's what Lachlan Harriot thinks as he watches his wife, Susie, led to jail in handcuffs. Yes, Susie, a psychologist, was found covered in blood near the spot where one of her clients appears to have been murdered. But Susie is not a killer, Lachlan thinks. She's my wife. She's our child's mother. Secrets lurk behind closed doors, however, a dark truth made chillingly clear as Lachlan's efforts to prove Susie's innocence uncover an entire secret history--illicit affairs, false identities, unimaginable deception--and this brilliantly acclaimed, page-turning novel speeds toward a conclusion as shocking as it is ingenious.

Deception Details

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Cleo Bannister says

Susie Harriot, a forensic psychologist has just been found guilty of murdering a serial killer in her care, Andrew Gow. Susie's husband Lachlan (Lachie) believes her when she says she is innocent. What we read is Lachie's recently discovered diary or notes on the case. Lachie having been convinced that she would be found innocent now becomes obsessive, trying to understand his wife's relationship with Andrew Gow and he is in his element when he finds the notes she wrote about Andrew Gow when she was treating him along with a mountain of other documentation hidden away in her study. I couldn't help feeling that some of this effort should have been made before, rather than after, the trial. As Lachie digs he begins to realise that the life he thought they were living as a family, wasn't quite what it seemed.

In the aftermath of the trial Lachie's parents visit along with an Aunt of Susie's and he retreats to her previously private study to try to make sense of what has happened. He doesn't sleep but he has a daughter to care for which causes a stir amongst the staff and other mothers at the nursery she attends – more psychological studies as we observe their behaviour! Denise Mina has a keen eye for observation made all the more delicious because we get to observe the reactions whilst taking a different message from some of the encounters than the Lachie does.

The real beauty of this book is the fact that each of the characters, and the relationships they have, is an individual psychological study. The plot is an original one and I couldn't wait to see what Lachie would find next, and more intriguingly, what he would make of the information. Let's just say Lachie is not perhaps as clear-sighted as he might be. There are elements of dark humour as well for instance his dismay when seeing his photo is in the paper, not just because the media are on to him but mainly because it isn't a flattering picture. As the story progressed I became involved not only in his discoveries but his motivation and 'take' on what had happened.

The style of the book begins with a preface explaining the provenance of the document and the ending is in a similar style, ramming home the 'true-crime' feel that the book has, for instance the mini exploration around women who are attracted to and become romantically involved with murderers, their motivation and expectations, this device just increased the books appeal as far as I was concerned.

Whilst the characters are on the whole not too pleasant, the exploration of their lives was absolutely fascinating and I was completely hooked. It's true this isn't quite like the Paddy Meehan series, nor is it the exploration that I read most recently about Peter Manuel called The Long Drop but it has what I'd call a true psychological base which I love.

Jen says

I will say up-front that this was not my favorite Denise Mina book. I prefer her more straightforward mystery stories. This book is written in an interesting manner, though - it's the diary of a husband whose wife is currently in prison for murder. She is a psychiatrist, and she was accused and convicted of killing a serial killer she was treating while he was in prison. She swears she didn't do it, and her husband believes her. His diary reveals all of this thoughts - anger, confusion, changing his mind to think she did it and then back again - as he tries to discover the truth of what happened, searching for something that could set her free.

Mina sets it up as a true crime story - there is a foreword describing how she obtained the diary through perfectly legal means and has finally obtained permission to print it. This is all part of the story, of course, but it sets you up really well to believe it might be true. The best part about the story is how she really gets into the head of the husband writing the diary. It's totally believable, the ups and downs he goes through while trying to find the truth and decide what to do about it. It's very real and very human. And the ending was something I did not see coming. Well, I foresaw a part of it, but certainly not the biggest part of the twist. And I always respect an author who can do that for me, surprise me at the end.

I've read two other of Denise Mina's novels before this, and I think she is fabulous at taking a relatively ordinary paperback mystery kind of story and imbuing it with all kinds of character complexities and real human experience. She's fantastic, and I will keep reading her books!

Melanie says

2.5 (it was ok). The book jacket made it sound much more exciting. That's all. Moving on :)

Francine says

Ms. Mina takes us on a ride with the seemingly good-intentioned and apparently at some point wronged husband, Lachlan. Although I had occasional inklings of What Really Happened, I wasn't sure till the last chapter, and that's how a great mystery should be written! Loved the ups and downs and meanderings of Lachlan's mind, and wondering if so and so was involved, or not, or someone else, or not, or, or, or... great read and although the crimes have a gruesome commonality, we don't have to revisit and revisit the actual doing (as might be the case when excellent author Elizabeth George goes on one of her occasional tears). I launched into another Mina the day I finished Deception!

Jacqueline says

While I normally enjoy Denise Mina, I liked this book less than others I have read, mostly because I didn't find any of the characters likable. Lachlan Harriot's life is falling apart. His wife has just been convicted of murdering recently released serial killer Andrew Gow and his wife. The trial alleged that Dr. Susie Harriot, a previously respected psychiatrist, fell in love with Gow while he was her patient and upon his release, she followed Gow and his new bride to the Highlands to kill them. Lachlan is first convinced of his wife's innocence, and once the trial is over he sets forth going through her records on Gow to try and find the proof that will clear her. Lachlan comes across as spoiled and whiny, and it's hard to empathize with him even though his life is in shambles. Susie seems distant and cold, and hasn't treated either Lachlan or their young toddler daughter very well. (actually both of them seem fine with hoisting their parenting duties on the nanny) The ending has an interesting twist, though I don't think it was explained very well and the killer went to some awfully implausible lengths to exact revenge, but then ends up working at a candy counter? Not a bad book, but not one of my favorites by this author.

Amy says

Well, I liked this book but didn't love it. I liked that it was different than other mysteries I've read and not the usual police procedural or detective (amateur or professional) novel. I liked that the story involved a forensic psychologist. I liked that the ending was ultimately satisfying. I just didn't like that it took so long to get there and I didn't like the narrator at all, which made it a little difficult to read. I have another of Mina's books to read and I'll try another for sure.

Laurel-Rain says

When a loyal husband and father searches through his wife's personal computer files and papers, he is trying to find evidence of her innocence in the case against her. A case that has resulted in her conviction for the murder of her alleged serial-killer patient and his wife.

So what is the story of Dr. Susie Harriot, and will Lachlan Harriot find what he needs for her appeal?

Sorting through the morass of these files, however, will lead Lachlan to unexpected secrets, twisted truths, and will finally convince him that he did not know his wife at all.

Throughout this story, I found that the best part was not knowing who to believe and untangling the many-faceted aspects of the case.

An intense psychological thriller, "Deception : A Novel" kept me tuned in until the surprising end, which is why I gave it five stars.

Craig Sisterson says

Twenty years ago, a young Scottish author burst onto the crime writing scene with **GARNETHILL**, a tale where incest survivor and former psychiatric patient Maureen O'Donnell finds herself the prime suspect for the murder of her boyfriend, a therapist. From those earliest authorial days - award-winning ones at that - Mina developed a reputation for insightfully blending the psychological and sociological into character-centric crime tales.

GARNETHILL grew into a trilogy starring O'Donnell, and Mina went on to write two further highly acclaimed and award-bedecked crime series; one starring 1980s Glaswegian reporter Paddy Meehan and another focused on Glasgow detective Alex Morrow. Along with graphic novels, stage plays, and television, Mina also recently wrote the true crime-inspired novel **THE LONG DROP**, which won last year's McIlvanney Prize. So it's been two decades of insanely high quality storytelling from Mina, on multiple fronts not just a singular detective.

But often overlooked among Mina's oeuvre is one of her earlier books, **SANCTUM** (sold as **DECEPTION** in the United States), a brilliant standalone that fell between the Garnethill and Paddy Meehan trilogies. I discovered it while travelling in North America, reading it while based in rural Canada, and was blown away. It's a hidden gem among Mina's dragon's hoard of storytelling gems.

Like many Mina protagonists, Lachlan Harriot is complicated, and not always likable. His wife Susie is a forensic psychiatrist who has been found guilty of murdering one of her patients, notorious serial killer Andrew Gow. Not because he was an evil man that she felt the world needed to be rid of, but because she was obsessed. She stole his prison files, was in love with him, and became fatally jealous when he married someone else. Lachlan just doesn't believe it. Each night he climbs the stairs of their house to Susie's study, working his way through her papers, transcribing and transferring case notes, interviews, and trial press clippings onto his own computer. He's looking for answers, hoping to find something the investigators and attorneys missed.

He's a man obsessed, and teetering on the edge.

Mina tells the story as if it's a true crime one, based on 'found documents' of Lachlan's diaries of his efforts, interspersed with excerpts of what he found in case notes and trial clippings etc. SANCTUM is exceptionally clever, a real delight for the mind, while also being full of emotion too. I was quickly drawn in, and found it a real stay-up-all-night page-turner. Mina's prose shines, and her characterisation is insightful and incisive. Lachlan is peculiar, but understandably so. At times you want to grab him by the collar and slap him silly, while still being able to get why he's thinking what he's thinking or doing what he's doing. Similarly Susie is a multi-faceted character that elicits strong, conflicting emotions. Mina does a superb job making us care and connect with characters that aren't necessarily that likable.

SANCTUM delves into some dark areas - longtime Mina favourites like family dysfunction and the overlaps between sex and violence, along with related issues surrounding the appeal some nasty male killers have with some women, the way relatives and others may seek to profit off notoriety, and the celebrity status 'enjoyed' by some of the world's worst examples of humanity.

There's a sordidness to much of what happens in SANCTUM; it's not always a comfortable read, but it is a brilliant one.

Babs Olujare says

excuse typos as it was typed on phone: This book bored the heck out of me and i stopped 80% of the way through. I literally could not waste any more minutes of my life and it was pure torture. I swear, all Lachie did the whole book was complain, sit, and eat.

His character was unlikeable and a waste of a human specimen. I have never read anything from this author before but I think that this may be my last as well.

Karen says

In another classic example of reader blindsightedness (okay so that's probably not a word), I'd filed SANCTUM somewhere at the back of the bookcase and promptly forgot it was there. Such a relief to unearth it during a recent tidy up and to move it straight to the top of the reading pile. Interestingly, as I sat down to write up this mini-review I can feel the hairs on the back of my neck rising slightly as I think about Lachlan in particular again.

Originally published in 2002, if you've not read SANCTUM for whatever reason, now is as good a time as any to rectify the miss. From the author of the much acclaimed Garnethill trilogy, this is a very different sort of a book. It's written in first person perspective, and whilst some readers are a bit leery of that, it works unbelievably well here. As SANCTUM explores the thinking of a husband whose wife is guilty of a murder, the use of Lachlan's own voice provides an intimacy that's disconcerting. It creates an insulated, personal, very intimate relationship between the character and the reader, and provides an author with Mina's skill with some serious options for manipulation (of the fairest possible kind mind you). Lachlan starts off very much as a man in grief, but it's not long before he becomes profoundly creepy, controlling and complaining. Other characters who come and go from his life astutely comment on him at points in the book. Susie, his wife, is distant, perfect, ethereal, extremely suspicious. There are others within the story - relatives, Susie's colleague, the live in help but ultimately this book is about Lachlan - even more so than it is about Susie and the man she murdered.

Lachlan, frankly, makes the reader extremely uncomfortable in his presence and you'd be excused for having some sympathy for Susie - as extreme an escape plan murder of another may well be. Sympathies ebb and flow, as ultimately the truth behind the murder is revealed. The Garnethill Trilogy remains one of my all time favourite sets of books - but SANCTUM is a fantastic stand-alone that was just absolutely un-put-downable.

Kirsty Darbyshire says

After the superb *Garnethill* trilogy I couldn't wait to see what Denise Mina would come up with next and I had my fingers, toes and every other extremity I could find crossed that I wouldn't be disappointed by *Sanctum*.

On some levels this book explores the same areas as the previous books, we're still in Glasgow and we're still dealing with the mental health system one way or another. But this is a very different style of book than before.

This book is written as the diary of Lachlan Harriot, an unfortunate twenty nine year old ex-Glaswegian who's psychiatrist wife "Dr Susie" has just been convicted of murdering a serial killer and his wife. One thing that really bugged me about the book was the way it was bookended with prologue and epilogue that wrap it up as a true crime style of story. I don't like authors using themselves as characters in their fiction though it does work pretty well and the story is obviously fictitious. I just find it a bit creepy, but maybe making me feel that way is good storytelling.

I really enjoyed this read though I didn't think it was as moving as Garnethill, but if every book was that moving I'd be an emotional wreck. I'm not really being fair holding this book up to be judged by the trilogy that preceded it, it's a good read and I enjoyed it very much, and if this had have been written by nearly anybody else I'd be praising it no end. Garnethill is a hard act to follow, but this doesn't do badly.

Bookmarks Magazine says

Deception marks a departure from Mina's earlier work, award-winning crime novels set in the dark underbelly of Glasgow. Most critics agree that her use of the "unreliable narrator" is masterful. She slowly reveals that all is not as it seems; even self-deception abounds. As Mina peels away the onion, the househusband with tenacious loyalty to his convicted wife has his own questionable agenda. *Deception* keeps you guessing, yet manages to be much more than a mere whodunit, thanks to Mina's strong psychological characterizations. These create a story, as it unfolds in the form of the protagonist's diary, which is "car-crash irresistible" (*Washington Post*).

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Dewdrop says

Very slow, very dull.

P.R. says

This has, for me, been a very strange read. I really struggled with the first half: hated the characters, hated the rather coarse modern prose, hated the graphic descriptions of the murders. The only way I could carry on with it was to hurry across the murder descriptions, and in so doing I became more interested in the narrator and the characters. I still didn't like any of them - and even now, when I've finished it, I don't like any of them. I found the read, from this viewpoint, similar to my impressions of 'The Girl on the Train' in which the characters were unlikeable. There seems to be a trend, which I have found in other modern crime novels and notably in 'The Cuckoo's Calling' for coarse descriptiveness peppered with current expletives which I find obnoxious and hard to read around. It's probably just me being fussy and 'older', but I feel it to be unnecessary. Perhaps younger people speak like this now? I don't know. Sorry for the rant!

I find myself none the wiser, at the end, as to how the future will pan out for Susie. Yes, I understand what was going on, but it seems that she may be doomed to incarceration simply because the real murderer cannot be found, and the authorities doubt the narrator's explanation anyway. Maybe I've got this wrong... ?

Anyway, I am glad to have finished the book. It was cleverly constructed (if you like reading diaries and first person narrative) and to some extent very well written. But... would I read it again? As you can probably guess, the answer is a most definite NO!

Sandi says

Usually I try to steer clear of any books with the words serial killer in the description but I am very glad I

made an exception for this audio. Great psychological suspense with memorable characters this was extremely well written and the narration by **Richard Matthews**, with some help from **Donada Peters**, was top notch.
