



## Pardonable Lies

*Jacqueline Winspear*

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## **Pardonable Lies** Jacqueline Winspear

In the third novel of this bestselling series, London investigator Maisie Dobbs faces grave danger as she returns to the site of her most painful WWI memories to resolve the mystery of a pilot's death

Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone. Alexander McCall Smith's Precious Ramotswe. Every once in a while, a detective bursts on the scene who captures readers' hearts -- and imaginations -- and doesn't let go. And so it was with Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs, who made her debut just two years ago in the eponymously titled first book of the series, and is already on her way to becoming a household name.

A deathbed plea from his wife leads Sir Cecil Lawton to seek the aid of Maisie Dobbs, psychologist and investigator. As Maisie soon learns, Agnes Lawton never accepted that her aviator son was killed in the Great War, a torment that led her not only to the edge of madness but to the doors of those who practice the dark arts and commune with the spirit world.

In accepting the assignment, Maisie finds her spiritual strength tested, as well as her regard for her mentor, Maurice Blanche. The mission also brings her together once again with her college friend Priscilla Evernden, who served in France and who lost three brothers to the war -- one of whom, it turns out, had an intriguing connection to the missing Ralph Lawton.

Following on the heels of the triumphant *Birds of a Feather*, *Pardonable Lies* is the most compelling installment yet in the chronicles of Maisie Dobbs, "a heroine to cherish (Marilyn Stasio, *The New York Times Book Review*).

## **Pardonable Lies Details**

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Author : Jacqueline Winspear

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# From Reader Review Pardonable Lies for online ebook

## Nancy (essayist) says

Probably 3.5 stars. I'm of two minds about this series. I love the time period, the historical detail, the setting, the mysteries, and the idea of a self-possessed, intelligent woman finding a way for herself. But there's always something depressing about these books, too. Certainly there's an elegiac tone, but it's almost as if Winspear has decided no one can ever be happy again in the wake of the war. I'm sure that's true for some, but all the joy just seems sucked out of this world. Just once I'd like to see Maisie Dobbs . . . I don't know. . . laugh or something. This particular entry in the series struck me as better than some because Dobbs' cool demeanor at least slipped from time to time as she solved cases that hit close to home. And yes, it's multiple cases in "Pardonable Lies," which worked until the final chapters, where the ending of the last mystery felt a bit tacked on. I'll read more of this series in time, but I think I'll take a break from Dobbs' world for a bit.

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## Nancy says

I've now read seven of Winspear's Maisie Dobbs novels and, although I enjoyed all of them, this was one of the most satisfying.

Set in post WW1 Britain, Maisie was a battlefield nurse, injured during the war. The series takes us through her maturation and professional development as a psychologist and investigator. The strength of the series is the author's gift for recreating time and place. It doesn't take much imagination to stroll through post-war London and feel the pain of the families and the country that suffered so much in The Great War.

This book, the third in the series, really showcased Maisie's intelligence, sensitivity and rather inordinate sense of duty. She is one of those characters who is a bit too good to be true, but I know that as a reader I am totally swept into her universe.

Although they can be a little bit didactic at times (each book tends to include a social issue--this one was homosexuality), this series would be a wonderful way to introduce a young person into the study of history. The conflict in Europe; the development of the secret service; the lingering psychological damage on veterans; and a host of other topics are introduced seamlessly within these mystery stories. Well done, Ms. Winspear.

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## Marti says

As a teacher, it's interesting and delightful to see a writer's craft develop. I believe I am witnessing that development of art and skill in Jacqueline Winspear. With each book in the Maisie Dobbs series, she is just better. The plots have seemed to have more "pizzazz" and the characters just get rounder and rounder. I really liked that this book was in three sections, with the first section set in England, the second in France, and the last back in England. As in the previous books, the lingering ill effects of WWI loom large within the plot. With the trip to France, Maisie herself deals with her own "dragons" faced on the muddy fields of France as a nurse during the war. Issues of class remain a major element as well but this book also explores the difficulties of a gay man, the son of a knight, and his difficulties. There is also a bit of intrigue since of

course England had utilized spies and there was a French resistance movement during the Occupation. The book is in many ways an essay of the moral dilemma surrounding truthfulness, hence the title. It essentially asks the question of when is it more honorable to withhold the absolute truth. I haven't read a series of any sort since I finished the last Harry Potter back in 2008 or so. I'm really enjoying the feeling of truly getting to know the characters, how they view the world, how class and circumstances have affected them, and their relationships to the other characters. In a sense, they've become friends. Overall, I have found this book very satisfying and would definitely recommend it to a friend. Now, I'm off to start her new book, Messenger of Truth. Good Reading to all!

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### **Denise says**

I am already a huge fan of the Maisie Dobbs' series, but this 3rd book was absolutely perfect. The narrator was excellent and pleasing to listen to throughout.

This book has so many mysteries with links to each other that the reader is "holding on for dear life" until the conclusion. I wasn't able to guess what would happen next - so had to keep listening!

I love the depth of Maisie's character. She is never silly or neglectful with her work or her personal life. Her past experiences of loss make her a character whom most readers will relate to at least on some levels.

In this 3rd book, Maisie must face her past nightmares from the war by traveling back to France as part of her investigations. This is a heart-wrenching trip for her, but she presses on towards truth. She is also being pursued by person or persons who want to see her dead.

Be prepared readers for an emotional conclusion to this book. I cried unashamedly as the story ended. Maybe you will too!

Brilliant writing by Jacqueline Winspear. I immediately purchased the 4th audio book and am going to be listening now!

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### **Saleh MoonWalker says**

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### **Hannah says**

#3 in the Maisie Dobbs mystery series, and this outing finds Maisie returning to Post-WWI France in a 2-fold mission to determine for a client that his son is, in fact, truly dead, and to help her friend to find out more about her brother's wartime activities.

While I liked this offering, I felt it was the weakest in the series so far. Maisie is beginning to grate. She's very unlikable IMO and has these strange new-agey powers that just don't mesh with the 1930's background. That being said, I still enjoyed this book, and will continue reading the series, but I wish I *liked* the main

character :(

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### **Lynn says**

Yet another amazing read in this series!! And there was not just one person following and/or attempting to stop Maisie--permanently! I appreciate perhaps the most about Winspear's writing the fact that Maisie herself sometimes decides to evade the "whole truth" when all parties will be happier and better satisfied with their lives not knowing everything... That requires such courage. I don't know if I could do that. It would be a tough decision, and although Maisie agonizes, she is quite satisfied with her decision. And I love the way WWII is inevitable, yet we see how everyone (not just those directly involved in fighting, etc.) is affected by WWI and, honestly, these books have helped me better understand the world's reticence to become involved in another worldwide battle against Hitler. Plus, this reticence/atmosphere definitely allowed him to gain the power and control he had... Such insights to be gained!

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### **Lynn Pribus says**

This is the third in the series and they get better as they go. While I found the first too heavy on backstory, this one moves along. At the end of the audio-book, there was a ten minute interview with the author who said she had always done non-fiction.

She was stuck in a traffic jam in London when Maisie walked up out of the underground and appeared to Winspear almost fully realized. There were scenes that came to her while she was writing the first book, that she knew belong in the second or third.

This one takes place in 1930 -- so it is considerably after the Great War. Nonetheless, two of her three cases involve that war's aftermath and she must travel to old battlefields. The author, whose grandfather was seriously injured in the Battle of the Somme, also travels to those battlefields.

I found the final scene, on the anniversary of Armistice Day, to be exceptionally moving.

Some reviewers complain that she spends too much time on the character's attire, Maisie's MG, buildings and furnishing, but in the interview she commented that she uses those detail to "anchor" the scenes in time.

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### **Kathy Davie says**

Third in the Maisie Dobbs historical mystery series revolving around Maisie, a detective using meditation and psychology to solve her cases. This story takes place over the summer of 1930 in England and France.

### **My Take**

Another pip from Winspear. It's hard to believe that Winspear is a contemporary author writing today as she really brings this period to life. She really knows how to dig in and write so that I felt as though I was there in 1930 England. The evolution of the telephone. The manners, dress, and mores of the time period. All

involving an independent woman who defied the odds and achieved an education and a career in a depressed economy.

Maisie has high standards and while she is disinclined to cut corners or do less than her best, she also knows when it's best to present the truth that people want to hear. But the two cases involving soldiers in this story bring too much of her own war experience to mind. Traumas she would prefer to avoid, to leave in the past. Although, she does intensely grieve her mother's death.

World War I was a horrible war from a soldier's perspective and we're already hearing the rumblings that will lead to World War II in this story.

Thank god, Avril has Maisie in her corner! The police have her convicted of murder and ignore the physical evidence under their noses.

While Maisie does employ her psychological observations, it seems less overt than in the earlier two stories. I'm not sure if it was because Maisie's emotional state was overwrought with her remembrances of France or if Winspear was simply off her game.

The negatives...how could Stratton and the doctors who examined Avril have missed something so obvious? Maurice would know how dogged Maisie is. Heck, he taught her. So why not just come clean? Then there's Maisie's discoveries in France. A little too easy. I'd also like to know how someone, or who, managed to get to Maisie's brake lines.

Side Note: There's a mention of Conan Doyle dying a few months ago. I had no idea he had lived that long into the twentieth century!!

### **The Story**

It's three different cases that Maisie obsesses over: Avril's pimp's murder; proving Captain Ralph Lawton's death; and, a favor to Priscilla to verify her brother's death.

Maisie has been doing well in her business and it's just when one is doing well, that the body, the mind, let down their guard, forcing one to deal with emotional issues of the past. It doesn't help that friends have been keeping secrets.

Nor does it help when enemies rise up, seeking revenge.

### **The Characters**

**Maisie Dobbs** is doing well with her detective agency. One in which she incorporates the meditative benefits of yoga and the psychology taught her by Maurice Blanche. She's still living in the Comptons' Belgravia mansion and still driving her little red MG.

**Dr. Andrew Dene** is the orthopedist at the hospital in Hastings whom Maisie is seeing. He's serious about her, but also smart enough not to push and to give her lots of leeway.

**Frankie Dobbs**, her father, is doing fine after his scare in *Birds of a Feather*, raising Derby winners in Kent with **Lady Rowena Compton**. She and her husband, **Lord Julian**, spend most of their time on their estate in Kent. Their son, **James Compton**, is overseeing family business in Toronto. **George** is the family chauffeur; **Eric** is the London footman who cares for the cars when George is in the country; **Sandra** is the most senior below-stairs employee with **Carter**, the butler, down at Chelstone; and, **Teresa** is the servant who was

poisoned.

**Billy Beale** is Maisie's assistant. He's married to **Doreen** and they have their sons. **Dr. Maurice Blanche** is the man who took her under his wing at the behest of Lady Rowena. **Basil Khan** is the Ceylonese wise man who taught her all about meditation and yoga.

**Priscilla Evernden**, now Partridge, was and is Maisie's best friend from college. She went off the deep end into a bottle of alcohol with all her losses just after the war, but then she met **Douglas Partridge**, a famous author and poet whom she married. They have three boys---**Timothy Peter**, **Thomas Philip**, and **Tarquin Patrick**---and live in Biarritz. *Her boys sound so lively*. Her parents died of flu and her brothers all died in the war. But Pris has no idea where her brother, **Captain Peter Evernden**'s body was buried or if he is missing in action. She does know where **Patrick** and **Philip** are buried. *How horrible war is. Losing one's entire family like this...*

**Detective Inspector Richard Stratton** hasn't quite given up asking Maisie out. **Detective Sergeant Caldwell** would prefer to shoot her.

**Avril Jarvis** is a thirteen-year-old girl accused of murdering her "uncle".

**Sir Cecil Lawton** is a QC and a friend of Lord Julian's. He's made his wife a deathbed promise to prove one way or another that their only surviving son is dead or alive. **Brayley** is Lawton's fiercely loyal manservant. **Captain Ralph Lawton**'s plane crashed in France and it burned to ashes. But there's more to it than that. The **Hon. Jeremy Hazelton** is an MP and a childhood friend of Ralph's. He came back from the war in a wheelchair and is ably supported by his wife, **Charlaine**. He does seem to be a politician with a heart. Even if he does cheat.

**Mrs. Browning**, **Miss Darby**, and **Miss Hartnell** are all psychics pandering to those who are grieving. It's only with **Madeleine Hartnell** that Maisie feels a chill down her spine. **Harry Price** is head of the Laboratory of Psychical Research; his assistant **Archibald Simpson** is quite helpful.

**André Vernier** is the Parisian concierge who still remembers his clientele from thirteen years before. **Madame Eva** is a Vietnamese woman who runs Café Druk, a club that caters to a particular clientele; **Captain Henri Desvignes** is in charge of the police in Sainte-Marie just outside Reims; **Madame Thierry** runs the pension in Sainte-Marie; **Madame Chantal Clement** and her thirteen-year-old granddaughter, **Pascale Clement** are the village's first family. **Suzanne** was Madame's daughter who was executed by the Germans. **Patrice** was their crippled gardener. **Daniel Roberts** is an excellent mechanic. **Brian Huntley** is an Englishman involved in the secret service. **Ted Tavistock**, an Australian, and his French wife **Josette** run a pension near Bailleul where Maisie was stationed during the war.

### **The Cover**

The cover is in Art Deco style with Maisie in a dark blue cloche and coat, perched at the rail of a ship, its yellow funnel highlighted against the subdued, yet brilliant blue sky.

The title refers to those *Pardonable Lies* told us by friends who believe they have good reason to withhold the truth.

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## **Barbara says**

I have long intended to read this series, because it was recommended by a respected GR Friend. I was going to start with #1; but this book jumped out at me from the shelf in the library. How could I deny it a chance? (I hope that I don't regret starting at #3!)

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As I had feared, I think I should not have started with Book 3 of this series. I cannot say much about this novel because it did not move me. As most of my friends know, I do enjoy mysteries, but I would not classify this as a more compelling read.

One of my problems was that I did not gain much appreciation for Masie. She was too cool, emotionless and restrained. It would have been nice to see her become more invigorated by some of the events which surrounded her. I also felt that her sense of intuition was barely credible. This would include the final solution of one of the criminal activities in the story.

Winspear did impart a good sense of the period and the atmosphere rather well. Many times I lost the thread of the tale when she introduced another one of the many characters.

It was a fairly pleasant interlude reading Winspear's opus, but I wonder if I would feel differently if I returned to Episode #1?

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## **Jo says**

My fifth Masie Dobbs novel and the best so far containing some fantastic and intricate plotting as Masie investigates two cases at the same time, with red herrings, secrets and intrigue. (I don't want to say too much about the actual story as it would spoil the experience of it unravelling as you read.)

Although I can't confirm the veracity of the historical context and information, Jacqueline Winspear, as always, seems to do a fantastic job of creating 1930's England, with references not only to WWI, the fashions of the time and the look and feel of London, but to the political and cultural events of the time - here there are some poignant references to a guy called Adolf.

This novel in the series becomes very personal to Masie as she returns to France where she was stationed as a nurse and the scene in the graveyard is especially emotive. The role of psychics after the First World War is also part of the novel and brings up an element of all that death that I hadn't given much prior thought to. I seem to never tire of reading about the fictional experiences of the major wars as a way of gaining insight into individual experiences, as I believe we should never forget those same, very real individuals, who lived through that time.

Many of the usual suspects are featured in this book; Maurice, Billy, Priscilla but others such as Masie's father and Inspector Stratton play a more minor role. This is very much Masie's book, opening up old wounds, testing friendships and providing a thrilling read.



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## **Dany says**

3,5 stars! Three stars for the "mystery" part of the book, but 4 stars for character development. No matter how painful it is, we must truly mourn and experience the grief that horrible events bring to our life. There's no use in running away, and Maisie finally learns that.

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## **Margaret H. says**

I just can't get behind these books. I keep reading them because I am a sucker for mysteries set in England between the two wars, and because Maisie is definitely a lovable character. I also enjoy them because Winspear has the good sense to describe in detail all the beautiful period clothing. The mysteries themselves, however, are thoroughly unsatisfying. I don't like Maisie's empathy method, where merely by mimicking people's posture, she suddenly knows their innermost thoughts. I don't like that Winspear doesn't play fair and give us the facts to toy with ourselves, like a confident mystery writer would, but instead holds them to her heart because she assumes that's the only way she can surprise us. And last but not least I don't like the sort of new agey, feel-goody, meditation and spiritualism angle of the books, which is especially bad here. Early on in the book Maisie leaves a spiritualist acknowledging that the woman has a "true gift" and I just... can't get behind that nonsense.

Sherlock Holmes would never have stood for it. Neither would Mary Russell, even though she does believe in God.

I will, however, probably keep reading these books when I encounter them in libraries, because I am dying to see the inevitable relationship between Maisie and Inspector Stratton.

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

EXCERPT: The young policewoman stood in the corner of the room. Plain whitewashed walls, a heavy wooden door, a wooden table with two chairs, and one small window with frosted glass rendered the room soulless. It was a cold afternoon and she had been in the corner since coming on duty two hours ago, her only company the rumpled and bent girl sitting in the chair that faced the wall. Others had come into the room to sit in the second chair: first Detective Inspector Richard Stratton with Detective Sargeant Caldwell standing behind him; then Stratton standing while a doctor from the Maudsley Hospital sat before the girl, trying to get her to speak. The girl - no one knew her age or where she had come from because she hadn't spoken a word since she had been brought in this morning, her blood-stained dress, hands and face showing a month's worth of dirt - was now waiting for another person who had been summoned to question her: a Miss Maisie Dobbs. The policewoman had heard of Maisie Dobbs, but from what she had seen today, she wasn't sure anyone could get this young scrubber to talk.

THE BLURB: In the third novel of this bestselling series, London investigator Maisie Dobbs faces grave danger as she returns to the site of her most painful WWI memories to resolve the mystery of a pilot's death

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Ramotswe. Every once in a while, a detective bursts on the scene who captures readers' hearts -- and imaginations -- and doesn't let go. And so it was with Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs, who made her debut just two years ago in the eponymously titled first book of the series, and is already on her way to becoming a household name.

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In accepting the assignment, Maisie finds her spiritual strength tested, as well as her regard for her mentor, Maurice Blanche. The mission also brings her together once again with her college friend Priscilla Evernden, who served in France and who lost three brothers to the war -- one of whom, it turns out, had an intriguing connection to the missing Ralph Lawton.

Following on the heels of the triumphant *Birds of a Feather*, *Pardonable Lies* is the most compelling installment yet in the chronicles of Maisie Dobbs, "a heroine to cherish (Marilyn Stasio, *The New York Times Book Review*).

**MY THOUGHTS:** *Pardonable Lies* is my first encounter with Maisie Dobbs, a very pleasurable encounter. This novel covers a lot of different topics, including homophobia and mysticism.

Set in 1930, Maisie is a seemingly strong willed woman who has carved out a career for herself as a Psychologist/Investigator. But during the course of her investigations, Maisie is forced to confront some of her own demons, and some of her past actions may be placing her in danger.

Jacqueline Winspear has created a wonderful cast of characters and a deliciously compelling plot. Maisie Dobbs has a new fan in me.

I listened to the audiobook of *Pardonable Lies* by Jacqueline Winspear, narrated by Orlagh Cassidy via OverDrive. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com) for an explanation of my rating system. This review and others are also published on my blog [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com) page [https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/...](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/)

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## **Alyson says**

I picked this up on a whim because I thought I'd give Maisie Dobbs one more chance (I was *really* annoyed with the last book, but I *really* love historical mysteries and want to love this series). On the plus side, Maisie herself was a LOT less irritating and condescending this time around (in other words, I didn't want to punch her every five pages, like last time). Unfortunately, the new-age, woo bullshit is just utterly pervasive in this one, with Maurice babbling on philosophically to distraction, and so I have to give up on this series. The actual mysteries in these books are interesting, as they are tied to post-WWI England, but the meditation/woo/sensing-"hands"-on-backs nonsense just utterly ruins this for me.

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