



Flashback

Nevada Barr

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The five-week **New York Times** bestseller, now in paperback. Running from a proposal of marriage from Sheriff Paul Davidson, Anna Pigeon takes a post as a temporary supervisory ranger on remote Garden Key in Dry Tortugas National Park, a small grouping of tiny islands in a natural harbor seventy miles off Key West. This island paradise has secrets it would keep; not just in the present, but in shadows from its gritty past, when it served as a prison for the Lincoln conspirators during and after the Civil War.

Here, on this last lick of the United States, in a giant crumbling fortress, Anna has little company except for the occasional sunburned tourist or unruly shrimper. When her sister, Molly, sends her a packet of letters from a great-great-aunt who lived at the fort with her husband, a career soldier, Anna's fantasy life is filled with visions of this long-ago time.

When a mysterious boat explosion-and the discovery of unidentifiable body parts-keeps her anchored to the present, Anna finds crimes of past and present closing in on her. A tangled web that was woven before she arrived begins to threaten her sanity and her life. Cut off from the mainland by miles of water, poor phone service, and sketchy radio contact, and aided by one law-enforcement ranger, Anna must find answers or weather a storm to rival the hurricanes for which the islands are famous.

Flashback Details

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Annie says

I love learning about new places, and the Anna Pigeon series never disappoints. Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas National Park is officially on my bucket list of places to see. Great mystery, too!

Ralph McEwen says

The one thing I always count on and never fail to get is the wonderful descriptions of the state parks. I like to find maps on line of the sites and follow the tale. The stories are good too. I enjoyed listening to this one.

Nelson Pahl says

While certainly not a "disappointment" in and of itself, I did find *Flashback* to be...well...a bit disappointing. Barr has a clever *notion* for a story here, but it just doesn't work for me, for some reason. The setting is difficult to get a grasp on (it seems awkward and hard to imagine), and I found the motives for the crimes a bit far-fetched. I also thought it was a bit contrived, as it takes place in a national park, yet no one ever visits the park. Again, not a terrible offering, just one that I had a hard time getting into. Above all that, I don't understand the title, as there are only two or three actual "flashback" scenes in the entire book, and they're rather brief. Hmm.

Carla says

I read this book because it is about the Dry Tortugas - a national park I hope to visit. It was a combination mystery and historical fiction. I enjoyed it.

Jill says

I did not like this one at all. First I did not like double story line with the constant flipping back and forth between centuries and with the older one having been derived from some letters. I find it hard to understand why a woman would leave her fiance for months at a time as well as her dearly beloved pets. And this time Anna is truly the most amazing of superwomen, never pausing to eat anything, never suffering from her numerous injuries or having any lasting effects. This was one ridiculous book!

Lorraine says

I didn't know of these tiny low islands 70 miles off the Florida Keys - fascinating!

At first I didn't like the jumping back and forth between Anna in the present and her great great grandmother in the past, but as the story wore on each chapter ended with a surprise or a cliffhanger, which makes you keep on reading. Several claustrophobic diving sections. Not my favourite of her books, but then, they're all worth a read.

Tom Donaghey says

FLASHBACK is the 2003 offering from Nevada Barr in this long running series. Each book is set in a different National Park and they all star the intrepid Park Ranger Anna Pigeon. This time out she is running from a marriage proposal and lands at Fort Jefferson, an aging Civil War fortress that was out of date even before it was finished. Set in the Dry Tortugas National Park on Garden Key some seventy miles off shore, this is about as remote as you can get in the Park Service.

The story of an exploded boat, several dead bodies, a Ranger gone mad and his missing girlfriend is mixed with the ghost of Anna's great-great-aunt who lived here after the civil war along with her husband, the commander of the fort. By that time it had been turned into a prison for the men who aided and abetted John Wilkes Booth, including Dr. Mudd, as well as some Confederate prisoners.

A long way from the mainland with a several mysteries on her hands, Anna starts to question her own sanity when things start going bump in the night.

As usual, the settings are exotic, the action is fast-paced, the whos and whys puzzling and Anna almost, but not quite, at a loss about it all. This is another in a ever growing list of great mysteries, and with so many parks left to visit, far from the last.

Kathleen Ernst says

I love the early Anna Pigeon mysteries by Nevada Barr (she's gotten too dark and gritty for my tastes with more recent additions). I recently returned to this one and enjoyed it as much as the first time I read it. Anna Pigeon is on temporary assignment to the Dry Tortugas National Park and quickly runs into trouble.

Interwoven among the contemporary plotline is an historical thread, presented in the form of letters written by one of Anna's ancestors who lived at the fort there with her military husband, soon after the American Civil War. An enjoyable read.

Sandra says

I hadn't listened to a Nevada Barr mystery in a long time, but remember them as being pretty good. This one was on sale on Audible.com, so I bit, and it's narrated by Barbara Rosenblatt, who is very good.

It takes place on Tortuga Island, off Key West, where there's apparently an old Civil War Fort and the National Park Service maintains it. Anna is subbing for a supervisor who's gone off the deep end, and has been sent some old letters written by an ancestor whose husband was stationed there during the Civil War when it was a Union prison. Two mysteries go on side by side, one that is told in the letters, and one in the present. Sounds like an intriguing device, but I found myself bored during the reading of the historic letters, and disoriented during much of the present day mystery as Anna has been given LSD, unknown to her. Thus I found myself drifting off to sleep during much of the book, and mostly was glad when it was finally over.

Sandi says

Adding to the usual formula of Anna being sent to National Park (this time the Garden Key in Dry Tortugas National Park) and finding an adventure, this book also had a historical aspect and wove in the story of the incarceration of the Lincoln conspirators. The historical plot was a bit better but both stories were pretty interesting and the narration of the audio by **Barbara Rosenblat** was to her usual high standard.

Peggy says

What to say? Anna Pigeon is a National Park Ranger who is stationed temporarily at Dry Tortugas off the Florida Keys. While I suppose she is supposed to be just a human, Nevada Barr insists on her experiencing near death multiple times in one book. Every time I turn around she is in mortal danger, but somehow prevails. It gets a little too fantastic to believe. This book also has Anna reading post Civil War letters written from Dry Tortugas by her great aunt when the fort was used a prison for Confederates being held by the victorious Union. I got so tired of the every other chapter being about the great aunt and the present day Anna that about half way through the book I started reading every other chapter. First I finished the story about the great aunt. Then I went back to read the present day Anna versus the smugglers story. It made it more enjoyable to read two complete stories rather than having to continuously shift gears between the two disparate stories. But, still, sheesh, enough is enough of Anna the Great. I am tired of her.

Sharon Archer says

Enjoyable read about one of my bucket list places, The Dry Tortugas. I know you can take the ferry from Key West for the day but I am trying to talk someone into camping there for two nights....anyone??

Destaleigh says

Downloaded this one on audible before we visited Dry Tortugas Nat'l Park, since the park is the setting for the story. This is my second listen of the Anna Pigeon series, maybe it's my love of National Parks that makes me tend to enjoy them but I look forward to more in my future.

Loved how Barr wove (is that a word?) extra history lessons in with the Lincoln conspirators being held at Fort Jefferson in the flashbacks.

Pamela McLaren says

Slow to start, once you're interested kicks into gear, this is a pretty good story with a historic twist to it. Anna Pigeon, the independent park ranger who seems to make it a career goal to work at every national park in the U.S., is now serving a temporary assignment in Dry Tortugas National Park, just off Key West. The Tortugas was the site of a union fort used as a prison for confederate soldier and the Lincoln conspirators and as such

was once the home of one of Anna's early relatives and the location of a mystery told in letters from her relative, the wife of the fort's commander.

Meanwhile Anna, who has received a proposal of marriage from her boyfriend in Mississippi and fled the scene while she figures out whether to accept, is caught up in a mystery at the crumbling park site. Both mysteries have people from the past and present wondering who to trust and who not in situations that quickly get out of hand. Two stories building to a crescendo that will keep you riveted to your seat.

Lobstergirl says

Nevada Barr is not a good writer. As I've said in other reviews, sometimes her sentences are so convoluted, so idiomatic - with idioms of her own making, that no one else has ever come across before - that you have to read them three times to understand what her meaning is. She also is not good at varying sentence structure. About a billion times in every book you'll see the same sentence structure back to back to back, which dulls the reading senses and drags the reader into an unpleasant rhythm. Barr needs to take some serious writing classes and have serious teachers point out her flaws. But this isn't the reason for the one star.

The novel runs along parallel tracks; alternating chapters tell Anna Pigeon's story in contemporary times, as Anna, on temporary assignment in a national park close to the Florida Keys, tries to figure out why a boat blew up and who was on it and what they were up to. She then receives a packet of letters from her sister Molly - letters from their great great great aunt Raffia of the Civil War era, who coincidentally was stationed at Fort Jefferson in the same national park where Anna is living, with her husband. The Civil War is over and Raffia's husband is in charge of a regiment of men guarding the prisoners of Fort Jefferson, the most famous of whom is Dr. Samuel Mudd, given life imprisonment for aiding and abetting the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. (Mudd had set John Wilkes Booth's broken leg.)

I usually find historical fiction a hard pill to swallow. I also hate the alternating chapters gimmick. Inevitably you dislike one story line and enjoy the other, which makes half the book dreadful and painstaking. Raffia and her family's story and the story of the tenants of Fort Jefferson bored me utterly. Then, as you can imagine, Anna Pigeon starts to hallucinate the characters she is reading about in the letters. So, as she is wont to do, she runs around at night in complete darkness and is terrified to see a woman in white whom she thinks is Raffia. Needless to say, this is stupid. But this is not why I rated the book one star. There were enough plot elements - just barely - in the contemporary setting to warrant two stars.

Is the one star because Anna Pigeon spends an entire chapter wondering if two old lesbian lighthouse keepers are transgender? She looks for "signs of a vestigial X chromosome." When one lesbian rubs her cheek Anna ponders whether she is "checking for five o'clock shadow." No. Barr is kind of an idiot, so this is not entirely unexpected coming from her. Is the one star because Anna hopes that "Cuban Hispanics had the same cultural love of family and children she'd noticed in Mexican-American women"? No. Again, Barr has a screw loose. This screw often rattles around in her brain and causes her to place the thoughts of the demented in her characters.

The one star is for the unbelievable, stunning, really inexcusable number of typos and errors in the text. Does Barr have an editor? If so that person should have been fired for letting this book go to press. There were dozens of errors. I didn't even bother counting (I sometimes do) because there were so many. Words are spelled differently several pages apart (sergeant, sergent). Apostrophes were in the wrong place. Apostrophes

were inserted in words where they didn't belong. Sometimes "were" was spelled "where" and vice versa. Tolkien is spelled Tolkein. We come across the phrase "despite his straightened circumstances" - which of course should be "straitened circumstances." You expect these kinds of typos from self-published crap books. You don't expect it from a major publisher. What's up with that, G.P. Putnam?

Sharon says

This book gives the reader two mysteries - one set in the immediate post Civil War years and one in the modern day - as well as a slew of interesting factual information on a little known part of the National Park System - the Dry Tortugas. The two mysteries are tied together by the setting and by the familial relationship between Park Service Ranger Anna Pigeon and her great, great aunts who resided on Garden Key in the Dry Tortugas post Civil War.

I found this book educational and entertaining and intend to read more books by this author who was a Park Ranger and whose powers of description do justice to the wonders of nature.

Maureen M says

Barr alters her customary structure in this mystery, weaving two story lines 150 years apart. Ranger Anna Pigeon has taken a temporary gig at Dry Tortugas National Park where she distracts herself from a marriage proposal by reading letters from a great-great aunt who'd been stationed there during the Civil War. Strange occurrences arise in the letters and real life, putting Anna in need of solving old and new mysteries, if she survives. Barr fans will enjoy watching Anna's derring-do on land and sea, as she employs lessons learned in previous tight spots. Particularly enjoyable this time is the virtual visit to a park I didn't know about and the distinctive voices of the two narrators in alternating chapters.

Bill Currie says

I'm sorry I don't have another Anna Pigeon series book to read. I read this one 10 years ago for no other reason than she was a NPS law enforcement officer. Since I had volunteered with the NPS in Yosemite I was pulled to her stories along with Auburn State Recreational stories by another author. But Nevada Barr's fictional character is so believable and forth wit that I have been a fan ever since. Waiting for the next episode. And congrats to Anne on her engagement.

Jerry B says

Two Stories from Dry Tortugas - murder and mayhem mark both!

Barr's 11th Anna Pigeon story, like all her books except her last ("Hunting Season"), which took place in the same locale as "Deep South" {in the Natchez Trace}, has a most unusual setting: the Dry Tortugas National

Park in the Florida Keys. Little more than a placeholder for Fort Jefferson, a Union Prison from Civil War days, this small strip of land becomes temporary duty for Pigeon while the former supervisor is on mental health leave. Soon, Anna is embroiled in danger and intrigue - a diving incident nearly proves fatal, and in quick succession she is drugged and locked up by thugs to keep her out of the way of a smuggling operation.

Meanwhile, the current story alternates with one Anna is reading from some hundred-year-old letters of a distant relative who is similarly telling a story about alleged Lincoln assassination prisoners befriended by her younger sister at the fort. Suspense builds as we begin to wonder how both stories turn out, which naturally enough occurs in the last two chapters.

Barr has a track record of telling a good tale, with a non-stereotypical, believable leading lady, with more than a modicum of risk-taking, crime, and escape as a dominant theme. "Flashback", referring to both the modern and the old story, is no exception and reveals our heroine at her best, while treating us to the old story as a pastime. While at first we were a little irritated at one story constantly interrupting the other, we were soon enough captivated by both to overlook the somewhat disjointed plot flow. Moreover, in the end, not everything turns out peaches and cream; while both stories come to a logical conclusion, both have factors that dissatisfy and disappoint, a reflection of true life instead of Hollywood. We suspect this latest Nevada Barr will find favor with both her extensive fan club as well as new readers. For a somewhat different forty-ish heroine in wildly different geographic settings, with danger at every turn, give Anna Pigeon and Nevada Barr a try!

Lynne says

It's a pretty good sign that you can read eleven of an author's books and love every single one of them. This time Anna Pigeon has been dispatched to the Dry Tortugas due to the medical leave of the commanding ranger at Fort Jefferson National Park. While there, her sister sends her a box that contains letters from her great great aunt Raphaella that were written just after the Civil War when she lived at Fort Jefferson as the wife of the commanding officer. The incomplete fort was being used as a prison, housing a conspirator of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, as well as Dr. Mudd, who professed his innocence until the very end of his life.

Anna is suddenly confronted with the disappearance of one of her rangers while he was out on a routine night time patrol. Diving into the deep finds the damaged park service boat, as well as a cigar boat - a very fast boat preferred by smugglers and drug runners. The cigar boat, however, wasn't finished wreaking damage, and additional fuel tanks in the bow blow up underwater.

Thus begins the mystery. What happened to the ranger? (They find him alive.) What happened to the sickened park superintendent? Why is Anna hallucinating?

The chapters alternate between Aunt Raffia's letters and Anna's adventure, which might be bothersome to some people, but Nevada Barr's skill at interweaving the stories creates a selva at the end that I found as barely untidy as any piece of handwoven material.

And that is where I am leaving this. Read it. It's an interesting tale, and Anna Pigeon is just plain the bee's knees.
