



Don of the Dead

Casey Daniels

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She sees dead people.

Beautiful, smart, and chic, Pepper Martin never had to work a day in her life — until her surgeon daddy was convicted of fraud, her wealthy fiancé took a powder, and the family fortune ran bone dry.

Suddenly desperate, the inexperienced ex-rich girl was forced to take the only job she could get: as a tour guide in a cemetery. But a grave situation took a turn for the worse when a head-on collision with a headstone left her with an unwanted ability to communicate with the disgruntled deceased... and now Pepper has a whacked Mafia don demanding that she hunt down his killers — and threatening to haunt her until she does.

Don of the Dead Details

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From Reader Review *Don of the Dead* for online ebook

Jessica Robbins says

For complete review check out my blog at <https://booksaplentybookreviews.blogs...>

Emily Crow says

This book was a blend of the cozy mystery, chick lit and paranormal fantasy genres that showed occasional potential, but ultimately did not work for me. I picked it up at the library because the blurb said that Pepper Martin, the heroine, works as a cemetery tour guide and decides to solve a mystery on behalf of a ghost (a mafia don murdered decades earlier), and that sounded like a fun plot. I love cemeteries. And ghosts. Mafia dons, not so much.

As it turned out, the ghostly Gus Scarpetti was my favorite part of the story, entertaining and likable. I ended up finishing the book (and giving it a two, rather than one star rating) because I did enjoy that character, and because I had no issues with the actual writing, dialogue and pacing. *Don* was a smooth, quick read, and could have been rather good if the rest of the plot was a bit better, and--here's my real bone of contention--protagonist Pepper Martin hadn't been such an insufferable idiot.

What to say about Pepper? She is cute, has large breasts (this is mentioned on the very first page and referred to constantly for the rest of the story), and had once aspired to be a rich "country club wife" until her fiance dumped her after her father went to prison. That's about it. No other hobbies, interests, friendships, hang-ups or childhood memories are ever mentioned, so "jilted girl with large breasts" is all I can recall about her. Except that she is also as dumb as a box of rocks. Really annoyingly stupid from start to finish.

Let's just say that 80% of the "investigation" could have been lopped off if Pepper had bothered to do some basic research. Everything she learns is either by lucky coincidence or by one of the other characters spoon-feeding her information that she should have known to ask about from the get-go. She repeatedly puts her life in danger, despite being warned, by being stupid and/or careless, and then has to be rescued by one of the love interests or by a word from Gus every time. This got really, really annoying after a while, especially as all the other characters kept telling her how smart she is! Which would be like telling the Shopaholic of Sophie Kinsella's series that she's thrifty and good with money.

The mystery itself was OK, and I was curious about one of the other characters, who seems to have a weird interest in Pepper, although that part was left hanging, doubtless to be picked up again later in the series. While I did see some real potential for something better from this author, I don't feel tempted to continue with the series.

Karen says

Chick-lit ain't my bag, baby. Speaking of bags... Pepper Martin likes bags. And shoes. And clothes. And make-up. And men (okay, I agree with her on that one.)

As for mysteries, I don't usually go for cozies. But I do enjoy a good paranormal. Mix in a little Mafia, and I was sold. Don of the Dead is book one in the Pepper Martin series. Pepper Martin is an ex-rich girl who due to a set of unfortunate situations ends up having to *gasp* work. The only job she manages to get is as a tour guide in a cemetery. One day she bonks her head on a headstone and starts seeing ghosts. Rather, she starts seeing one ghost: Mafia Don Gus Scarpetti, gunned down 30 years ago and insistent that Pepper find out who had him whacked.

Pepper is not the swiftest rabbit on the track. I was a little annoyed by her inner 'am I crazy or not?' struggle. I don't know, maybe I'm too accepting of weird occurrences. I would have known right away that I wasn't crazy and accepted my new "gift" a lot sooner. The good news is, after finishing Don of the Dead, I moved straight on to the second book in the series, The Chick and the Dead; Pepper does develop as a character and is a whole lot less infuriating.

The two love interests are Quinn the cop and doctor Dan the brain man. Gus ensures she gets off with neither one of them and readers are assured the two guys follow Pepper into the sequel. Personally, I didn't care one way or the other who she ended up with.

As for the mystery, it ended up having more depth than I thought it would given the superficial nature of Pepper and her superficial life. As is usual for me with these types of books, I enjoyed the supporting characters more than the main character. I was satisfied with the mystery and didn't mind the cliffhanger ending as I did like the book enough to read the sequels.

Nikoya says

I'm not sure why I'm not overly crazy about this book. I think the main character bothers me because she still has that rich girl mentality who wants the best shoes to go along with her SAKS outfit; even though she is no longer rich. I don't know if she is because she is clinging onto any guy that is "hot" so that she can hop in the sack with him or get married. Pepper is written, to seem like she's a strong independent woman, but I'm just not feeling it. There is something missing to this story and I really do not have an urge to read any of the others. I might still read them though just to see if Pepper changes into a more interesting character; but I think I'll go to the other books on my list.

For wacky "girly" characters I like the Stephanie Plum books a lot more because Stephanie does really try to pretend to be anything but a lousey bounty hunter who is trying to pay her bills. While Pepper is just a boring woman who gets a head injury which makes her able to communicate with the dead...blah. I guess I'm not into the whole Country Club woman who lost everything and now has to work like the rest of us.

Jenia says

I have read this novel multiple times since discovering the series back in 2009. Yet, every single time that I have read it, I remember the reason that this is one of my favorite series. This novel kept my attention from very beginning, to the very end of the novel. There is so much action in this novel, so much adventure. At each page, it kept me wondering what's going to happen with Pepper next. I loved her attitude, her dedication to case, no matter what. This is type of mystery novel that keeps you guessing till the very end, I

love those type of novels.

Don of the Dead is the first book in Pepper Martin Series. *Pepper Martin* is a tour guide in cemetery in Cleveland, having got a job after her father goes to jail for Medicare fraud, her mom goes to Florida and her fiancée dumps her. While on one of her tours, Pepper trips and hits her head on tombstone. Not long after her incident while doing another tour does Pepper come across Gus Scarpetti who she knows for fact was shot over 30 years ago. Trying to convince herself that she's just hallucinating, she goes back to ER and the doctor reassures her that she's okay. That's where Pepper meets Dan, another doctor who seems really fascinated with her brain.

When Pepper finally realized that Gus is real, she begins to investigate, in attempt to figure who shot Gus all those years ago so that Gus can rest in peace. It's during those investigations that she meets a cop; Quinn who tells Pepper to mind her own business, dealing with this is dangerous. However, as always, Pepper doesn't listen and begin interviewing people who were around the time that Gus was alive. However not everyone is happy with all these questions, putting Pepper in danger

I first came across this novel while volunteering at library in 2009. From the moment that I read the description, I knew that I would like this novel. I was right, I loved it. In beginning, I wasn't sure if I really liked Pepper, she had that spoiled rich girl sort of attitude and she was pretty stubborn as well. I grew fond of her as the book progressed and I could tell that by end of the book, Pepper had changed, her attitude. Well maybe not towards the ghosts but in general, she seemed like a completely different person. Yet, I knew she was still stubborn, mostly because no matter how many times Quinn warned her, she still kept on going. Pepper seems the sort of girl who won't let a guy tell her what to do and I like that about her. Even though Pepper complained a lot with Gus, I could tell that after time, she actually grew fond of him, even if he was from mob and a ghost.

Gus, now him I had mixed feelings about. I hated and loved him at same time. I hated him in beginning, in way that he treated and talk to Pepper and way he kept popping up at most unexpected times. I loved him, pretty much after he rescued Pepper, even though he didn't do it for her, I knew that he did, I knew that he cared about her. That was confirmed in middle of book when he got upset, telling her that she wasn't supposed get hurt, it was then I knew that he cared about her.

Quinn & Dan, I loved them both. Dan surprised more though, especially towards the end, I did not see him coming, I would never imagine him being able to do that. That was another thing that I loved about the book, there were a lot of unexpected twists. I loved the cliffhanger in the book, when I read the first time, it came as surprise because I had no idea it was series when I first read this novel. I couldn't wait to read the next book. I would recommend this book to anyone who's into ghosts and mysteries, it keep you guessing till very end. Pepper Martin is worth reading.

Melliane says

3.5/5

Mon avis en Français

My English review

Don of the Dead is the first volume of the Pepper Martin series. The basic idea is not necessarily original, thus putting in scene a woman who suddenly has the gift to see the dead. You surely suspect that now they want her to help them pass into the afterlife. Her first client is none other than a former godfather of the Mafia, murdered many years ago.

I loved the idea of solving the murder of a Mafia godfather. As I said the basic story is quite common but this framework allows us to think outside the box. Indeed, our heroine will mingle with colorful characters and her questions will put her in serious danger. It must be said that this environment does not like someone who puts her nose in their affairs. Yet Pepper is determined to find out what happened to Gus.

In addition to this investigation for which I confess, it took me the last moments to understand who the culprit was, we also follow the love interest of our young heroine. It must be said that the two men she crosses the path with are really intriguing. First, there is Dan, this shy man who wants Pepper to enter his clinical trial but seems to hide certain things. Quinn is another character we are interested in (Team Quinn!). He is a policeman who will help Pepper several times and I hope to see him again very soon I have to say!

It was a very nice volume to read and I had a good time with the story!

Valerie says

I really liked this book.

Reading over some of the reviews, I had to laugh, only because their take is a bit dramatic? She doesn't hop into bed with anyone..... yet..... she hasn't had feelings for anyone in a long time.... she has great assets, which she has learned to use! Jealous? Uhmhhh, oh, she is a rich snob and the best thing she says about herself is....

All because I never dreamed that someday I might have to take care of myself. I never knew I'd need it, so I'd never developed the self-confidence or the sense of self-worth that would make it possible for me to boldly go where I should have known I'd have to go all along-- off on my own.

She has always only used her looks, she was filthy rich!! She is learning now otherwise, but, you can't give up some of those things you love!!

The writing flows so well, I was caught up in the beginning and swept away to the end. I think all questions that she needed to know were answered, and her promise was kept.

On to the next one!!!!

BookNerdette says

Warning: Language

I received this book from SwapTree.com my favorite book trading website. This is the first in the Pepper Martin Mysteries.

Genre: Fiction | Paranormal | Ghost | Mystery & Detective | Historical | Suspense |

I began this book in the week and never really seemed to have time to sit and read the book. So finally today after all the morning runs I got time to sit and read the book and to really focus on the book.

I am really understanding the women sleuth definition the more I learn of these different women's mysteries books. I love them!

This woman character "Pepper" was a bore. I was so tired of her referring to her large breast as the ultimate tool. I put the book down several times with no problem. I finally finished it today only because it finally picked up in pace in the middle. I have high expectations for the second book in the series.

I may wait till I read book 2 before I trade for book 3 – but then again... if you know me well enough you know if I like 2 I will have 3 before I'm done with it. lol

Now Pepper didn't let her family's dark cloud or other negativity hold her back. She didn't go on welfare or crawl in a box. Nope she went out and got a job to pay her bills.

She didn't fall in love in the book or become dependant on a guy to save her or come sweep her off her feet.

The beginning was slow for me but once I reached the middle it started going at a good pace. There is some language in this book and more by her than I wanted to read. She refers to her breast a lot and you want to pop them so they will go flat. lol

I loved that she run into different acquaintances throughout the book and the men she meets makes for interesting reading. But again I was glad she didn't become attached. Maybe I was silently jealous of her large breasts and beautiful long hair and couldn't handle it if she got the guy too. grrrrr

The mystery in the book is awesome, just like a nice "Murder She Wrote" episode. All wrapped at the end of the hour. I was onto who it was but was a little slow on why. It was an awesome END.

So I must rate the book a 4star. I rate it 4 because the beginning was slow but the book lead up to the end.

There was NOTHING to explain to me and I'm ready for book 2.

Linda Rawlins says

Loved the first book of the Pepper Martin Series. Pepper, who is forced to get a job as a cemetery tour guide, trips and hits her head on the mausoleum of a famous Mafia Don - mobster Don Scarpetti. A short while after that, the deceased mobster begins to appear to Pepper, urging her to solve his murder. A fast paced, interesting cozy mystery. Fully enjoyed the story and can't wait to read more in the series!

Yodamom says

This book really reminded me of the Teagarden Mystery books by Charlaine Harris. Some sexual attraction, some humor, and some great characters. I got involved enough to read the rest of the series, there were enough unfinished things to keep me coming back. A fast read, I finished in one day...

Cassandra says

Für mich geht es sofort weiter ... :)

Debrac2014 says

Paranormal cozy mystery! Re-read, I enjoyed it!

C. says

I like this author, pen-named '**Casey Daniels**'. Amongst an array of series, often similar despite being numerous; this one is original. Even the theme of ghosts is approached in the delightfully bizarre setting of graveyard tourism! **Casey** created a lead character '*Pepper*', who is uneducated about the afterlife. Readers learn as she does. She is a fashion-conscious daughter of a ritzy family, made relatable due to their fall from financial grace. More people see eye to eye with her struggle to support herself. The opening premise is that in her privileged upbringing, she didn't develop career skills with self-sufficiency in mind. Graveyard tourism was 'better than nothing' in her situation.

She suddenly finds herself able to communicate with an old time mobster ghost, who wants his murder figured out. The twists and second-guessing in this novel are fantastic and even when we know who is behind *Gus's* death; there is an emotional history that reaches several people. Poignancy was rare and the tale should have ended on that note, instead of introducing the next volume.

I find the protagonist's attraction to men exaggerated and shallow. I don't go nuts over accessories and clothes and thus, there are a few areas in which I don't relate to the heroine. I'd love to work in a historic location! However I appreciate enough about the character to care about the outcome of the plots. One often grows more attached after another book, in a setting with increasing familiarity as well. I don't find the paranormal atmosphere scary or enchanting enough, perhaps because it takes *Pepper* a long time to confirm she was seeing a ghost and isn't insane. I think the novels would be stronger with more mysticism and wonder and I look forward to seeing if **Casey Daniels** adds such a tone.

Erin *Proud Book Hoarder* says

Don of the Dead is the first book in cute, quirky cozy mystery series. At first I was a bit put off by the overly fluffy tone and how the main character and writer seems to take everything so lightly, but I soon fell into the story and ended up enjoying myself.

After Piper hits her head on a long-dead mobster's gravestone, she can now see and communicate with the ghost. The don wants her to solve his death because he's ready to move on, and there's a mystery in itself on the real reason behind that. As would be expected with the mobster type, he only reveals what he thinks he has to, keeping a lot of secrets close to his chest. Piper goes back and forth between freaking out she can see a ghost, doubting her sanity, and starting to get into the investigating.

The story was a good one - once you get past Piper's obsession with her looks and the fluffy writing style, it was interesting that she had to meet with some former mobster's, surviving children, interview people of a crime long past, and juggle between a suspicious scientist who is following her around and yummy but irritated cop who wonders where she's getting her information from.

I found Gus's character endearing, especially when he's protective over her with the men she dates. He's not a "good guy", but he's an enjoyable character. I've read four books of the series so far, and the first book and ghost remain my favorite of the lot, with the third coming in behind as a close tie.

If you like cute cozies, you'll probably enjoy this one as much as I did. Sometimes Piper comes across as borderline airheaded, but throwing in the contrast of her personality being gifted with this unusual talent makes satisfying, humorous clashes. The cemetery tour guide stuff and chipper boss who sees no wrong in her employee also paints a fun touch. The mystery itself is intriguing and the ending is excellent, wrapping it up with a few surprises that I wouldn't have previously guessed.

Jennifer says

The first Pepper Martin mystery.

Pepper Martin is a tour guide at a cemetery in Cleveland. Shortly after taking the job she fell and hit her head on a tombstone. The doctors assured her everything was all right with her bruised up brain - so she was pretty surprised when during a tour Gus Scarpetti joined the group. Gus was the Al Capone of Cleveland and had been gunned down 30 years ago - in fact - he was on her tour of "Cleveland's Famous Dead". It quickly became clear that nobody else could see or hear Gus - was Pepper cracking up?

Pepper goes back to the doctor to make sure she isn't broken or crazy. The Doctor assures her she is fine - but she runs into yummy Dr. Dan on the way out of the ER who is very interested in her giant..... um...brains. Yeah. Brains.

So Pepper is finally convinced that Gus is a ghost and in true haunting/ghost fashion - Pepper has to settle the question of who murdered the Don before he will leave her in peace and fade into the light. Along the way she does a flirty dance with the hot cop Quinn, tangles with some goodfellows, and is Dan interested in her - or just her brain?

I thought this was a really enjoyable read. Pepper is not a strong woman but you can see some strength peeking out of her naive veneer and I have real hope for her to grow into a stronger character in future books. I liked the tension with cop Quinn and the annoyance I had with her being involved with Dan and not seeing his shenanigans flipped for me at the end.

I seriously had a hard time putting this down and I finished it in two sittings.
