



The Dead Hand of History

Sally Spencer

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The first in a new series featuring Charlie Woodend's protege, DCI Monika Paniatowski - It will be no easy task to fill DCI Charlie Woodend's shoes, the newly-promoted Monika Paniatowski tells herself, but, given a little time, she thinks she can grow into them. Yet, with the discovery of a severed hand, time is the one thing she does not have. When her colleagues prove untrustworthy, the urge to call Woodend for help becomes almost irresistible . . .

The Dead Hand of History Details

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From Reader Review The Dead Hand of History for online ebook

Mrs Mary Curd says

Excellent

Marilyn says

Sometimes I just like a book because I'm acquainted with the characters. It is impossible to not cheer on Monica with her first ever case as a Chief Inspector -- and maybe one cannot be as critical of the writing when that is a factor. However, I enjoyed this little cozy even when I realized that there were some faults here and there regarding clues and what happened to Monica's nemesis. It was a nice transition after retiring Woodend.

Val Sanford says

I found the misogyny of Sgt. Walker difficult to get past, as he name called, betrayed, and fulminated against DCI Polianaski, a newly appointed remain DCI in northern England. Taking place in the late 50's or early 60's, women are just beginning to find a place in the hierarchy of power. In this first book of the series, a grisly murder is merely a backdrop for illuminating the power differential between men and women, and the lengths to which some might go to prove their hatred of women and minorities is justified.

Margaret Batchelder says

Good plot, and characters very believable. Will read much more.

Liked the book, guess the plot kept me wanting to read more, it twisted and turned, great procedural and I like stories set in England

Hilary Catron says

I was keen to read this series after it was recommended to me by a friend. The first few pages, however, showed me that the book would be returned to the library unread. The unnecessarily tortured sentence construction, coupled with condescending explanations of terminology known to any teen reader, and unnatural sounding dialogue, were enough to chase me away forever. Too bad, I was ready for a new-to-me series.

Karen Ford says

This mystery, set in Whitebridge, England, in 1973, deals with the appearance of a pair of severed hands belonging to a man and a woman. Catching the case in her first day on the job is DCI Monika Paniatowski, who is taking over from her retired predecessor and friend, Charlie Woodhead. Monika also has to deal with subordinates who are jealous of her rise to the position of authority and the fact that she is a woman.

The tale moves along nicely, identifying the victims and their relationship and leaving at least this reader guessing who the killer is at the end. It is also a terrific look into British society of the not so long ago past and the trials that Monika has to ensure from her own side and the press as she even questions herself as to whether she can adequately fill Woodhead's shoes.

Recommended for mystery fans and I am looking forward to reading a sequel.

Anna says

It's a pretty straightforward story and a very quick read, but disappointing on a couple of levels ... this is DCI Monika Paniatowski's first case on the first day of her promotion and she does not know if she can handle her new position effectively. Monika seems to be flailing with the investigation and with her team, but you never get more details, so these relationships will probably be fleshed out in the series. The story is also annoying because the author uses characters obviously from previous books, so you feel like you have walked in on a private conversation. Secondly, the author also has 2 characters who are Polish and continually misuses the masculine and feminine versions of their surnames, in addition to the misspelling of another man's name (I read the ebook version, so I am going to attribute this to poor editing).

?Trish says

Never read any of the books in Spencer's Chief Inspector Woodend series but this first in her new series featuring the retired Charlie Woodend's protégé, Monika Paniatowski, is a gruesome, yet thought-provoking, police procedural. As the series progresses and Monika has proven herself capable of leading a team and getting the job done, it will be interesting to see if the focus becomes more about solving a murder and less about male chauvinism, sabotage by disgruntled colleagues, and office politics.

Rachel says

Mmmmm..... not bad overall but room for improvement. Overall not a bad cast of characters except for the hackneyed token male chauvinist copper trying to bring down his female boss. I found this dull and unnecessary and it's been done to death. Pun intended. Yet another crime novel where the dog walker finds the body, in the case, part of it. Is it mandatory for a dog walker to discover the remains? It's the fourth book in a row where this has happened. I'm about to start the next book in the series so looking for a step up. Series has potential

Elizabeth says

This gets two stars because the author created an interesting puzzle and managed to tie up the loose ends fairly well. The procedural part of the novel didn't rise to the occasion (how come the lead detective didn't think of finger prints as soon as the first severed hand showed up? why is the reader not told about the various lines of inquiry that are being pursued?), while the reader is meanwhile given access to all sorts of info that the detectives didn't have (interior thoughts of various characters, including one of the victims just as she recognizes the perpetrator). There is a lot of attempt to give the characters depth, but it falls flat. (The lead detective is carrying with her the burdens of being a woman in a traditionally male job, being Polish-born and Polish-surnamed in England in the 1970s, having grown up in a rough public housing development, and having survived some sort of abuse, probably sexual, at the hands of her step-father, as well as being the single parent of an adopted non-white child. Somehow these seem like paper clothes on a paper doll, rather than life-shaping traits. Other characters get a similar smattering of life details. This makes the book read like a collision between a mystery novel and a social work student's class notes.)

Vic Lauterbach says

This mystery has a decent plot to compensate for its overall blandness. Heroine DCI Paniatowski is likeable although her persistent self doubt gets tedious. The supporting characters are all stock. Half came out of the author's 'likes' box (good stereotypes) and half from her 'dislikes' box (bad stereotypes). The labels are way too big to miss and they stick. I'm not sure why this novel is set in 1973, as there isn't any period atmosphere. The inflation, strikes and 'troubles' that made headlines are all missing, as is the impending transformation of the Lancashire Constabulary caused by the boundary and local government reforms of 1972. Ms. Spencer's fictional "Mid-Lancashire" is immune to all and lacks the sense of a society in transition that permeates British novels actually published at that time (Ruth Rendell's "Some Lie and Some Die" springs to mind). In spite of a shortage of good suspects and a cliché WWII backstory, seeing how this one unravels should hold your interest.

Monica says

Okay for the first book in a series...setting up the characters, building the plot. A bit slow moving at times, but a good enough story that I'll keep on with the next book.

Meredith says

Formulaic, full of cliched characters, lousy plot, presenting a successful, professional police woman as an insecure wreck was neither credible nor interesting. So she works in a man's world and does not get 100% support from her male colleagues. A real person would not let that damage her confidence.

Lori Anaple says

Having not read any of the previous books in this series (I didn't know it was a series until I was finished) this was a good place to start with a secondary character moving into the primary position. There were many times that I felt like I was missing some backstory and come to find out that I was!

The story was good, the development was solid but the pacing was off for me. I contribute that to being read out of sequence. I would read another.

Marilyn Shea says

I have to say, though it will make me sound sexist which I suppose I am, that I was delighted to find a female author that had such a command of the police mystery genre, and then I found out that Sally Spencer is actually a pen name for a male author. This surprised me. Usually, one finds the opposite, a female author who adopts a male pen name. The books are still good and there are many series by this author, so I look forward to becoming immersed in them.
