



The Big Dig

Linda Barnes

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Carlotta Carlyle, the six-foot-tall redhead private investigator, thought that working undercover searching out fraud on Boston's Big Dig would be a challenging assignment. After all, the Big Dig, the creation of a central artery tunnel running beneath crowded downtown Boston is an engineering marvel, the largest urban construction project in modern history, a fourteen billion dollar boondoggle in the eyes of protesters. Playing a mild-mannered secretary working out of a construction trailer is not quite the thrill ride she had in mind.

Carlotta decides to moonlight, taking on a missing persons case, but the search for Veronica James turns up one dead end after another. So do her fraud investigations on the Dig, and soon it looks like Carlotta has dug herself one big hole. But then a break-in at Veronica's coupled with the mysterious death of a construction worker on one of the sites stirs up a storm, and soon enough Carlotta is in over her head in more ways than one.

Suspenseful, unpredictable, and vivid, *The Big Dig* is a startling return to form for one of the masters of the crime genre.

The Big Dig Details

Date : Published August 18th 2003 by Minotaur Books (first published March 1st 2002)

ISBN : 9780312989699

Author : Linda Barnes

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Big Dig for online ebook

Jerry B says

Barnes back after 4 years off - story is fair but not great...

We include ourselves in the Linda Barnes' fan club having read her previous dozen books (4 - Sprague, 8 - Carlyle); so naturally we awaited this latest in the zany P.I. Carlotta Carlyle series with great interest despite the 4-year hiatus since her 1999 "Flashpoint". Set against the multi-billion dollar Boston highway/tunnel project of the same nickname, "Dig" offers just enough of our familiar characters to please, but a somewhat convoluted plot left us a little hollow for much of the story. Carlotta is pretty much her usual self, although there's no cab driving / taxi firm hijinks in this one. Her tenant Roz and her cop friends barely put in an appearance either, as she temporarily works for an ex-cop Eddie Conklin to investigate potential contractor fraud on the Project, while at the same time privately working a missing person case for a wealthy Bostonite lady. That the two efforts intertwine about halfway through is a bit of a stretch, and before it's all over, the FBI is all over the place with issues that connect back all the way to the Waco incident. All in all, the plot generated suspense, but also considerable implausibility.

We don't know what Linda was doing her last four years. If it was to make this story zing, in our opinion she might have been better to stick to the familiar terrain of her previous tales and save us much of the torture. We don't want Carlotta turned into V.I. Warshawski - we'll read about her if we want frenetic action from start to finish. Rather, we expected a bit more shrewd street work from Carlyle, a little more humor, a little more running around with her usual friends. So - our fond friend is back, but perhaps not in the best of form. The fan club won't skip it, but to the uninitiated, hardly the best Carlyle episode.

Lauren says

Carlotta Carlyle is an ex-cop, current private investigator. Needing some extra cash, she decides to help out a friend and is put undercover as a secretary for the big dig, a huge over budget in Boston to put roads underground. Carlotta is searching for fraud on the worksite, and ends up working in the same trailer as those running the entire project. She's also taken on a missing persons case, hired by her landlord. Carlyle has her hands full working on both these cases.

I do most of my reading on the train and find that a good measure of how interesting a book is is how often I find myself snoozing off on the train. If I'm very interested in the book, I'll rarely fall asleep. For this book, every time I was on the train reading it, I was falling asleep. Needless to say, I didn't find this book the most exciting.

My main problem with this book is how boring Carlotta was!! You'd think as an ex-cop she'd say and do interesting things but that's not the case at all. I couldn't even really get behind her as an older sister because that part of the story is never really flushed out.

Unfortunately, I couldn't finish this one.

Maddy says

PI Carlotta Carlyle is having a string of bad luck. She's still recovering from a gunshot wound to her leg, and her financial situation isn't good. An old friend, Eddie Conklin, who runs a successful security firm, hires her to investigate fraud on the Big Dig construction project in Boston. She gets a second job from a wealthy woman whose tenant has gone missing. I've always enjoyed the Carlotta Carlyle books, but this one is weak. The 2 investigations don't go very far until the book has almost concluded. And there's an improbably link between the 2 cases that I just didn't buy.

Judy says

Never read any of her books before, but it wasn't too bad, if you like crime and the FBI, you will like it.

Dobby0390 says

This was a fairly fast-paced, easy read. The author does a great job keeping Carlotta's character real - that is, an imperfect human being doing the best she can at the moment. I admire the way Barnes can take something familiar and look at it from a different perspective. I know I'll never think about missing persons the same way again.

I read this book immediately after finishing *Flashpoint*, the only other Barnes novel I've read. While I truly like Linda Barnes' writing style, I did not like the Paolina character in that book. A surly, hostile teen with attitude ... um, no. The author did such a great job of making Paolina seem real that I wanted nothing more than to get far, far away from her. Alpha Centauri sounded appealing. The Paolina conflict was a big part of *Flashpoint*, so much so that I almost did not read *The Big Dig*. That would have been my loss, because I did enjoy this book.

Carol says

Enjoying this author

David says

I've read one other mystery written by this author and featuring this female private investigator. This one features the P.I. going undercover on a big freeway tunnel project in Boston.

First, regarding the setting. I don't get the same feel for Boston as I do in Dennis Lehane's novels. Perhaps Lehane lives in a grimmer and grittier Boston than Barnes-- but I just don't feel Boston as she writes-- on the other hand, never having visited Boston, her depiction of Beantown may be a bit closer than Lehane's dark

novels of underworld culture.

Second, the main character doesn't seem to have any pizzazz. Okay, she was once a cop. She once dated the son of a local organized crime czar-- but there is nothing really intriguing about her except she is a bit of a tomboy-- able to fit in as a chick working in the construction industry and equally at home working undercover as a secretary. In fact, in many ways, she is almost a Kinsey Milhone clone. (not that it is bad)

Finally, the plot.. The author takes two mysteries and contrives to twine them together in a coincidence that makes me feel like I'm watching a re-run of the old *Rookies* television show. You know what I mean.. The nurse chick wife of one of the officers befriends the girlfriend of this week's bad guy. Or the other officer has a cousin come to town who is involved in criminal activity. Or the off duty cop just happens to get shot-- again!

Despite that, Barnes does a credible job building a fair mystery that has some clever ideas and plot twists that make the book worth reading. A little bit above average, in my opinion, but not by much.

Spuddie says

Another solid entry in this series featuring Boston PI Carlotta Carlyle as she sub-contracts to a big investigation firm to look into problems on a construction site on 'The Big Dig.' She's also hired by a wealthy society woman to find her renter who has disappeared with her Jeep. The reader for this one was different from past books and at times I found her inflections a bit annoying...also, all the characters EXCEPT Carlotta, who is indeed Boston-born and bred, had the Boston accent, and they all sounded kind of the same. Strange.

Elaine says

This book is fiction but I'm thinking there is fact in there. I'm interested in reading it cos I visit Boston regularly.

Good story line with a twist. The ending stunk.

This \$6.99 Kindle version has poor editing to the point where it's sometimes difficult to know who is speaking as there's no delineation at those times. This Kindle edition was so messed up, it repeated the last several chapters more than once.

3 1/2 stars

Marleen says

I love the dynamics of the Carlotta Carlyle books. She is definitely one of my favorite PI. She's such an

interesting character. Complex, smart and generous.

The Big Dig deserves the 4 stars I give here because it's fast-paced & interesting. Most of all because it's main character is the city of Boston, a city I love very much and that I just visited again this Summer (traveling from Belgium to the US each year). I love the city more each time I'm there.

Barbara says

Boston's answer to Kinsey Milhone, Carlotta Carlyle, returns in a slippery adventure that sees her going undercover on the world's largest construction project. However, she gets a second job from an elegantly dressed woman who asks her to find her roommate named Veronica James (Veejay). Her fraud investigation on the Dig stalls, but then a construction worker with ties to the company's owners turns up dead, and a break-in at Veronica's home up the stakes considerably.

This is the second Carlotta Carlyle mystery I've read, and I'm looking forward to reading more. Barnes makes the city come alive, much like Dennis Lehane does, and her characterizations are sharp and witty. A suspenseful, can't-put-it-down read.

Bob says

Carlotta Carlyle, ex Boston Cop and now a self employed PI and some time Cab driver gets a job working undercover with various companies working on the Big Dig in Boston. There have been rumors of kickbacks, overcharges etc and she is poking around to see if it's true. She is also approached by a woman who hires her to look for her missing brother, a young woman who just took off and left her things and dog behind. After doing several jobs she ends up working in the field office of one of the contractors and things start to happen, one of the workers is found dead at the bottom of a scaffolding and things begin to heat up on both jobs as trails lead together and to something all together different.

ISBN - 0312-28270-2, Mystery, Pages - 275, Print Size - R, Rating - 4

Rachel says

I liked this okay. I was intrigued by the mystery portion enough to continue reading but I thought it was a bit too intertwined. How many private investigators start with two clients and separate searches only to find out they are not only linked together but basically the same search. I don't know, not as believable as I like. I also didn't love the language etc so common in these types of books. I guess I should give up finding some good, well thought, clean, mysteries.

Kirsty Darbyshire says

A bit disappointing on the whole. After a long wait for the latest of Carlotta Carlyle's adventures I wasn't as thrilled as I hoped to be.

I was pleased with the way Barnes is taking Carlotta's character forwards and the directions that some of the recurring characters are going off in wasn't what I would have expected - this is a good thing. Whether it's true or not I'm not sure, but it feels to me like this series has used the 'two unrelated plotlines veering together on a collision course' thing too many times before. It's not an unbelievable coincidence that drags the two halves of the story together really, just as it hasn't been before, and I did enjoy it, it just wasn't quite as plausible as I'd have liked.

Ed says

#9 in the Carlotta Carlyle series.

Carlotta Carlyle series - Carlotta Carlyle, the six-foot-tall redheaded private investigator, thought that working undercover searching out fraud on Boston's Big Dig would be a challenging assignment. After all, the Big Dig, the creation of a central artery tunnel running beneath crowded downtown Boston is an engineering marvel, the largest urban construction project in modern history, a fourteen billion dollar boondoggle in the eyes of protesters. Playing a mild-mannered secretary working out of a construction trailer is not quite the thrill ride she had in mind. Carlotta decides to moonlight, taking on a missing persons case, but the search for Veronica James turns up one dead end after another. So do her fraud investigations on the Dig, and soon it looks like Carlotta has dug herself one big hole. But then a break-in at Veronica's coupled with the mysterious death of a construction worker on one of the sites stirs up a storm, and soon enough Carlotta is in over her head in more ways than one.
