



## The Bone Fire

*Christine Barber*

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## **The Bone Fire** Christine Barber

"Christine Barber is new to the Southwest in the sense that *The Replacement Child* is her first novel. But she has a great feel for the territory and for the family connections that enforce its strong community bonds."  
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Every year, the people of Santa Fe gather together for the burning of a four-story-tall figure called Zozobra, a local custom that takes place during the Fiesta de Santa Fe. Early the next morning, as the sounds of the Fiesta celebration still echo through the streets, a skull is discovered in the ashes of Zozobra.

As Detective Sergeant Gilbert Montoya starts to investigate the case, disturbing displays of human bones begin appearing at religious sites around the city. With a possible psychopath on the loose, Gil goes to newspaper editor Lucy Newroe for help to find the person responsible in a case that will take them into the highest and lowest levels of Santa Fe society.

Christine Barber was highly praised for her first book, *The Replacement Child*, which won the first annual Tony Hillerman Prize and was named a *New York Times* Notable Book. An intriguing, impressive new mystery, *The Bone Fire* captures the colorful New Mexican landscape and the unique world of Santa Fe.

## **The Bone Fire Details**

Date : Published July 6th 2010 by Minotaur Books (first published June 29th 2010)

ISBN : 9780312593506

Author : Christine Barber

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Emergency Services, Police

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## From Reader Review The Bone Fire for online ebook

### **Sandra says**

Not particularly a mystery fan, but wanted to read something set in New Mexico. Enjoyed that aspect of it, but otherwise found it pretty sloppy and implausible, and most of the characters lacked dimension. There were also some weird loose ends that bugged me.

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### **Wendy says**

My late husband would fondly describe New Mexico often. He was actually a State Trooper in Albuquerque. Christine Barber flawlessly describes the state's people, culture, land and architecture. The mystery is interesting with enough twists, turns and intrigue to keep the reader going. I am now in love with New Mexico.

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### **Monica says**

Well Lucy Newroe is a little too Nancy Drew, but with an alcohol problem and impulse control issues and Detective Sergeant Gil Montoya is a little too Dudley Doright. There's incest, child murder, a tow truck scam that targets immigrants and an ashram full of militant feminist Sikh wannabees. And I didn't totally hate it, (some of the Santa Fe stuff is interesting) but didn't like it much.

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### **Bondama says**

I picked up this book on a whim, primarily because it was set in my native New Mexico. I was surprised and delighted to find that Ms. Barber is not only an excellent thriller writer, she is obviously a native of New Mexico - who takes time to explain the many differences between the culture of this (to most) "Unknown" state.

She delights in a recipe for carne avovada, which I don't think anyone outside the state knows about (well-kept secret - how to enjoy the top of one's head blowing off!!) The differences in the languages spoken by the 22 tribes extant in New Mexico. (These are pueblo Indians, as opposed to Plains Indians.) New Mexico "Native Americans tend to stay put. I particularly loved the description of "Weird White People" to describe the influx of wealthy Californians, trying to navigate the narrow streets of a city that was old before California was even known of. With their ashrams, yoga classes, and other New Age beliefs, the locals are just about fed up.

I plan to read more from Ms. Barber. Apparently her first book, "The Replacement Child" won the Tony Hillerman award, which is given for the best novel either set in NM or about Native Americans.

I highly recommend this book, it's fun, the mystery aspect of it is very well crafted, and above all, reading it gave me some slight relief from my almost constant homesickness for my beloved New Mexico.

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### **Lucinda says**

The Bone Fire (Minotaur 2010) finds newspaper editor Lucy Newroe struggling to balance her job and her passion for volunteering as an Emergency Medical Technician in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The discovery of a small skull in the ashes left behind after the burning of Zozobra, Old Man Gloom, at the Fiesta de Santa Fe, prompts Detective Sergeant Gilbert Montoya to re-open the cold case of the disappearance of toddler Brianna Rodriguez, believed to have drowned in a flash flood over a year earlier. The lead detective in the Brianna investigation had committed suicide six months ago, so Gil decides to go through all the paperwork from the investigation himself. When displays of human bones begin appearing at religious sites around the city, Gil goes to Lucy to see if she can provide any clues from the files at the paper. Lucy is drinking too much, trying to deal with her guilt over the death of a woman in the last case she worked with Gil, and is reluctant to get involved. But when a disturbed neighbor of Brianna's family is arrested, Lucy is sure he can't be responsible. Lucy is a difficult person to like, but as pieces of her past gradually emerge, she grows into a more sympathetic character. The unique culture and atmosphere of Santa Fe provides a vivid background to this intriguing mystery.

Christine Barber page at SYKM

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### **Jennifer says**

I wasn't sure about this book during certain parts but it was worth it in the end (and overall). The descriptions of the landscape, of Santa Fe and the people and culture was nicely written into the story.

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### **Julie says**

I wish Goodreads had half stars. So many times I want to give a book 3 1/2 stars, this book included. I love her descriptions of Santa Fe and the culture, people, etc. The suspects in this book are all kind of creepy in their own way, with one very dysfunctional family at the center, but she weaves a nice tale and I really enjoyed the book.

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### **Donny Hilgeman says**

I love finding another writer I can add to my favorites. Barber writes a good procedural set in amazing Santa Fe. I'm now heading straight for her third book in the Montoya series. Relatable human characters, a beautiful setting, and great story-telling makes for a read that is hard to put down.

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### **Chris Schmidt says**

The book clearly establishes the crime and the suspects. Then, for 3/4 of the book, the author develops the plot creatively, using the mystery of the bones to intrigue the reader. With only a few chapters left in the

book, the detectives realize they have all been making erroneous assumptions that have invalidated everything that has come before, and the bones have indeed been used as a bizarre art form rather than as a lurid mutilation. With this discovery, the plot shifts in a totally different direction with shallow development and lack of credible resolutions for the main plot as well as subplots.

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### **Catherine Woodman says**

This is an average murder mystery--where the plot is reasonably straight forward--two threads to the mystery--who killed the toddler and who was her father--the two are related, and there is a lot of baggage that goes with the answer to that question, as well as an examination of childhood sexual abuse and the effect on those around the victims, but the writing is average--I would definitely read another by this author.

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### **John Kues says**

A good read, I like her style of writing, though I found multiple typos. She writes from several characters viewpoints, and as usual with this type of story it is frustrating when you wish they would talk to each other, but it sort of lends a bit of believable tension to the story.

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### **LeeAnne says**

This is the second book in this series and so far, there isn't a third. I REALLY hope the author continues because this is an excellent series. It may be that my love of New Mexico colors my opinion but there is a lot of really good stuff going on in this one. I love that the characters are so deeply drawn and very human. The cops don't have all the answers and occasionally, the reporter actually has a moral compass. This book is gritty and hard to take at times (theme-wise) with lots of twists and turns that keep you guessing. There was one storyline that was thrown in that was...weird. It didn't go anywhere and served no real purpose but likable characters and witty (occasionally laugh out loud) dialogue keep this one on the win shelf for me.

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### **Candace says**

I enjoyed the second book in this series more than the first, largely because the author felt much more confident and comfortable in her story-telling. A good yarn, with a not-so-obvious resolution.

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### **Tom M says**

(3.5)

At the New Mexican Fiesta de Santa Fe, an effigy of Zozobra is burned. Zozobra symbolizes gloom and at its base, people burn the effigy and in a box at its base, things that make them sad, depressed, etc. Except this year, in addition to the ashes of the petitions of the people, bones of a young child are found. Following

the Zozobra bones, more arrays of human bones are being found at various religious displays around Santa Fe.

The Bone Fire is a whodunit without the Colonel Parker in the study with the candlestick vibe and it's pretty straightforward as this type of novel. As mentioned, it's set in Santa Fe which Barber uses as a character in the story, down to such details as linguistic quirks of New Mexican Spanish, Santa Fe/New Mexico Folklore, and detailed inner workings of law enforcement and interrogation techniques. I found that latter component, while nothing groundbreaking, an interesting view into the psychology of interrogation. The ending contains multiple twists, and when you think you may know the perpetrator, there's another under the finger of blame.

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### **Elizabeth McIlhaney says**

A must-read for anyone who wants to know more about Santa Fe in great detail! What a wonderful guidebook to the history, culture, atmosphere, geography, and lots more -- all while riding a wild roller coaster of a detective mystery, driven by both the cops and the press, especially one detective, an Hispanic husband and father from a Santa Fe-founding family, and one editor, an Anglo single woman not from the American Southwest.

This book meets the high expectations for enjoyment set by the author's first book, "The Replacement Child."

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