



# Murder Past Due

*Miranda James*

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**There's a cat in the stacks...**

**...and he makes the purr-fect partner for a librarian-turned-sleuth.**

Everyone in Athena, Mississippi, knows librarian Charlie Harris-and his Maine coon cat named Diesel that he walks on a leash. They also know his former classmate-turned-famous bestselling novelist, Godfrey Priest.

But someone in Athena took Godfrey off the bestseller lists- permanently, and with extreme prejudice. Now, Charlie and Diesel must browse through the history section of the town's past to find a killer.

## Murder Past Due Details

Date : Published by Berkley (first published August 3rd 2010)

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Author : Miranda James

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## From Reader Review Murder Past Due for online ebook

### Ryan says

a great start to a cozy mystery series. it is very entertaining and well written. the protagonist and amateur sleuth is a middle-aged librarian named Charlie Harris. he a kindhearted, likeable hero. he's also a book and animal lover. he works in the archives at the college library in his hometown of Athena, Mississippi. he also volunteers at the public library and frequents the towns only independent bookstore, the Atheneum bookstore. he also has a Maine Coon cat named diesel that he rescues as a little stray kitten. truly works hard to this job until his old high school rival/frenemy, a best-selling mystery/thriller author named Godfrey Preist. comes back home to Athena to accept an an award at his alma mater, the local College. he wants to leave the college all of his papers, for future generations. and needs to accept an award that evening at a fancy dinner, except in Godfrey's case, he gets into a fight at lunch and ends up dead by dinner, found by Charlie, and his 18 year old boarder, Justin.

the cases investigated by the daughter of Charlie's housekeeper, Azalea Berry. after attention turns Justin and his mother, mostly Justin because his cell phone is left at the crime scene. Charlie decides to do some sleuthing of his own along with his cat, Diesel. following leads, finding Clues, etc.

I'm a guy who happens to like cozy Mysteries and reading them, this is a good start but cozy series with the male protagonist, it also has it for the book lovers and the cat lovers. this is an entertaining and compelling whodunit, you may not be fast-paced or suspenseful but it does have a a well-planned out mystery to solve, with plenty of clues and suspects

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### James says

I chose this one because it takes place in the south and in a library setting. I was curious where the author would go with it given I read another series with a main character who is a cat (Lilian Jackson Braun's "The Cat Who Books") and another one with a library setting (Jenn MCKinlay's "Library Lovers cozy series")... fits right in.

I like the main character but I'm not overly fond of him where I feel the need to continue reading the next book in the series immediately. I would read more of them, but when it happens, it happens.

#### About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

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### Ian says

**DNF** 35% and as is my personal policy I don't rate books unless I have read at least 50%.

Everyone in this book is too stupid to live. Except the cat.

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### **Lorna Barrett says**

A Cat In The Stacks, Miranda James' debut in the Cat in the Stacks Mysteries, combines a kind-hearted librarian hero, family secrets in a sleepy southern town, and a gentle giant of a cat that will steal your heart. A great beginning to a promising new cozy series.

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### **Schnaue says**

I tried. I was only 11 pages in when I realized I really didn't like the protagonist, Charlie. He comes across as a fussy old coot. When his college freshman border leaves the kitchen a mess, he takes that and a few days of moodiness to assume that something is wrong and that the kid may have turned to drugs. Because God knows, when I was messy and in a bad mood for a few days my freshman year it was because I turned to drugs. Or something.

When Justin, his border, returns, Charlie deals with the messiness in a very passive aggressive way. After the kid apologizes instead of saying something like hey, it happens, but please don't let it happen again he instead says something along the lines of well, if the housekeeper had found it she would have been really unhappy.

Every interaction he has with Justin in the first five chapters (as far as I read) has Charlie acting with a condescending paternalism. He treats Justin more like an errant child than young adult. In fairness, no one seems to realize that part of college is learning how to be an independent adult. Everyone treats Justin more like a teenager at a boarding school rather than a college student. He's still expected to go home every weekend. In the first five chapters there's no mention that Justin has any friends or that he does anything but go to class and hang out with Charlie and Diesel when he's not at home with his parents. But it's really Charlie's smug paternalism that bothers me. You can be a mentor, a friend, even a substitute father figure without a constant air of "father knows best."

Justin aside, we next seem him whining about the violence in a murder novel. Imagine! Now, I understand there's violence and then there's violence, and I've stopped watching more than one police procedural because it seemed to revel in violence against women, but we need more context here. Otherwise he's really saying, I had to stop reading murder novels because there was violence.

The author of the book he doesn't like is a high school classmate who he refers to multiple times as a jerkwad, a term I don't think anyone over the age of 10 would actually use.

It's possible that some of my problems with the book are regional, it's set in Mississippi and I live in Washington state. Certainly the use of "sir" would be an example of that as would Mr. first name. Here it's

first name or Mr. last name.

The writing in general was not very good. I think this may be a first novel in which case perhaps there will be some improvement. I'll never know.

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### **Dawn Michelle says**

WOW!! What an amazing first read of a series for me. WOW.

I have had this book for quite some time and with all the other series that I read, I had just not gotten around to it. I think I have started 6 new series this year alone and 2 were really complete duds, one I enjoyed immensely and three I have loved completely from the beginning sentences; this was one of those three.

What I love about this book/series:

1. The main character is a man.
2. The main character is not a willy-nilly school boy; he is a man of a certain age [50] and has known serious grief in his life. He is a very **real** character.
3. The main character is a **LIBRARIAN**. 'Nuff said. ;-)
4. The main character has the best name ever - Charlie.
5. Charlie is owned by a very large Maine Coon names Diesel.
6. Charlie is extremely loyal and loves deeply. This man oozes empathy.
7. I read a LOT of cozies and mysteries and I **never** saw this one coming.
8. There is a real genuineness to this [and hopefully the rest of the series]book; you believe that you would actually know and hang out with people like this. This makes the book even more fun to read.

I highly recommend this book; it was so much fun getting to meet Charlie and Diesel and the cast of characters that come with them.

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### **Sharon says**

I was in two minds about this book, I got to the halfway mark and it was not really grabbing me but I decided to stick with it. I am glad I did as the story gained more momentum as it got closer to revealing who the killer was. With a variety of characters, all with a motive for murder, it makes for an interesting mystery to solve, as usual, I had no idea who the killer was until it was revealed.

If you like cozy mysteries and cats then this book is a great start to hopefully an interesting series.

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## **Brittany says**

What started out as simply a search for a book cover featuring a cat on it in an attempt to fulfill a Goodreads Book Cover Bingo "stamp" requirement has instead introduced me to a fun series! This book is part of A Cat in the Stacks Mystery and is the first of the series.

The book is told from the perspective of Charlie, who works with rare books at the local college. He inherited a house and always has a couple of college boarders living there. He is also the friend and provider for a wonderful Maine Coon cat named Diesel.

I loved the way the author wrote about Diesel and how he has charmed most all of the town. Charlie takes him almost everywhere and it is fun to read about how Diesel interacts with others.

I found the mystery that needed to be solved in this book to be very interesting. It is a murder and there are so many suspects because the person murdered really had a lot of enemies. I thought I had it figured out, but I didn't. The author truly surprised me at the end when the murderer was arrested and even added another twist to the story that I didn't anticipate.

I am glad to have found out about this series. Murder Past Due was a fun read.

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## **Julia says**

A fun cozy mystery with a good ending. I read this book in only two sittings. Not a real brain-teaser, but a perfect curl-up-and-read mystery.

A few things bored or frustrated me enough to consider putting the book down (though obviously I didn't, so they weren't too bad ... still a good read)

In the third quarter of the book (between the halfway point and the climax), the novel hits a dead spot. The plot moved very slowly. There are pages about the main character gardening (which has nothing to do with the mystery) and sitting home alone. Every detail of his day is explained. That's typical of mysteries (it allows authors to slip clues by unnoticed), but in my opinion, this book had a few too many extraneous details in the scenes where the main character was by himself without any contact to clues or suspects.

Aside the dead spot in the novel, I was put off by the way some of the characters spoke: as though they were textbooks, not people. The main character is an older man, which might explain away some of the formal speech, but to me the following conversation was ridiculous:

"One has so little desire to embroil oneself in such a sordid happening."

'I quite understand,' I said, 'But still, one must do one's duty.'

"Thank you for your forbearance."

My husband's 93 year old grandma doesn't come close to speaking like that. I can't think of anyone I know who does. The conversation went on like that for pages. Thankfully, most of the rest of the novel wasn't so bad.

Also, the main character treats an 18 year old boy the same way I treat my four year old girl. Would an 18 year old boy really stand for that? It would probably depend on the boy, but for my part, I could have done

without the over-protection.

Because of the dated writing and the coddling of the 18 year old, I'm not in any hurry to read the sequel, but I enjoyed this book, and I would recommend it to others.

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### **Lois Bujold says**

Well, I enjoyed this one, too, being in the mood for a cozy mystery, which this very much is.

Written first person from the POV of a gentlemanly 50-something small Southern town college librarian (widowed male with adult kids). It was very much the same headspace and tone as the much more over-the-top gentlemanly Southern gay vampire in small-town England series by the same author (under a different name), except without the vampire, gay, and England parts, and adding a cat. (

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2...> ) I've no idea which series sells better, but if you liked the one you'd probably like the other.

I was interested enough to obtain volume 2; we'll see how long this lasts. If I weren't head-down in proofreading some of my own old work this week, I'd probably be reading it now.

Ta, L.

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### **Ronna says**

Charlie Harris is a part time collage librarian in Mississippi. He's a recent widower with a pet Maine Coon Cat named, Diesel, who walks on a leash everywhere with Charlie. Charlie also boards a couple of students from the college.

When a former classmate, Godfrey Priest, comes to town to promote his latest bestselling book, not everyone is pleased with his visit. Godfrey is a bit of an arrogant bastard who has hurt and angered a number of people. He's also coming to claim a son who is rooming with Charlie. But someone has killed Godfrey in his hotel before he can give his talk. Now Charlie finds himself researching more than old college documents so he can help find the killer before his friends become the prime suspects.

This story revolves a great deal around the cat, who seems a bit like a recovery service cat. Diesel seemed to always know when someone needed extra attention and love. This aspect of the story was very subtle and well done, which I really liked. On the other hand, I found it a bit difficult to believe that everyone, and all places, appreciated having a cat around, especially food places. That being said, this story was captivating and intriguing. The well developed characters and theme of book writing made this a fun mystery.

The narration was well done, but since the story was written in a first person male voice, I might have preferred a male narration. Though I liked this audio version well enough that I definitely plan to listen to the next book in this fun series too.

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## **Tari says**

I've been waiting for awhile to finally read this and I'm so glad I did, actually thanks to a book club I'm in. This book definitely didn't disappoint. I just love Charlie and his cat Diesel, such a great team. Diesel is probably the most interactive cat of any series I've read so far. He doesn't really help with the mystery but I love how he senses when people need him. The mystery had my interest from the get go, the twists had me definitely not sure who the killer was, although I did guess another person who did something else. I will definitely be continuing this series!

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## **Nikki says**

Murder Past Due is a reasonably fun but unremarkable cosy mystery. The main draws would be the cat, Diesel, who is a main character, and the fact that it's set partially in a library. But the cat isn't the detective and isn't the main character, and the library is just where the main character works, so it's not that niche. I didn't find any of the characters or their relationships particularly compelling, though the small-town USA atmosphere was kind of interesting — I kept being surprised when there were computers and email, because it seemed more old-fashioned than that in terms of the way people related. More Agatha Christie than Val McDermid et al.

I was not, however, surprised by the resolution of the mystery.

Overall, this was fun brain candy, but I'm in no hurry to read more of the series, and I wouldn't particularly recommend it unless you're a connoisseur of cosy mysteries.

Originally posted here.

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## **lethe says**

This was my bedtime reading for the past week. I made it to page 172 before I started skimming. I found both the writing style and the (human) protagonist extremely annoying.

Just 3 pages in we get an exposé of what a Maine coon cat is. Furthermore, every. single. action is described in minute and often redundant detail. Some examples:

After logging in to the cataloging module of our integrated library system (or ILS, in library parlance), I began to examine the book. (...)

I turned to the computer and called up the record I had previously downloaded into our system from a bibliographic utility. All the basics were there — title, publisher, date, and so on — and I added the notes to identify the copy in hand. (p.14-15)

I'm a librarian and even I get bored reading this.

"I'll just open this [envelope] and have a quick look, if you don't mind."

"Sure thing," Rick said. "Here." He handed me a penknife.



I took it and slit open the envelope with the blade and returned the knife to Rick. (p. 136)

With the blade! Wow. Not with the handle?

I found an oversized mug in the cupboard and filled it from the cooler. (...) Diesel lapped at the water. When he was finished I would wash out the mug in the sink. (...)

Diesel was finished drinking. I took the mug to the sink and turned on the hot water. (...)

I squirted a little dish soap in the mug and scrubbed it with a brush. I gave it a quick rinse and set it upside down on the draining board.

As I dried my hands on a towel, (...) (p. 149-150)

etc. etc. etc.

Since this is all first person narrative it makes the protagonist seem very dull, but apart from that, he also behaves in a stupid way. He holds back information and evidence and then is surprised when the Deputy is suspicious and thinks he's either covering for himself or someone else.

The only redeeming feature is Diesel the cat, but he doesn't help with the sleuthing, as I had expected. He just chirps and warbles a lot and offers comfort to people in distress.

If my library stocked this series I would maybe try a later volume to see if the writing had improved, but since they don't, I won't bother with this author anymore.

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## C. says

Is it a coincidence '**James**' has twice been a pseudonym for males posing as female? '*Rebecca James*' was another. If it is to stop readers from overlooking them: it worked and I'm glad. I don't often read male authors, especially 50 year-old male protagonists but **DEAN James** (as per copyright credits) is talented and his character '*Charlie*', a delight. I adore cats, libraries, and mysteries and am rewarded threefold.

Widowed, with a grown son & daughter out-of-state, *Charlie* works part-time in an archives department. His leash-walking cat, '*Diesel*' joins him everywhere. With involved, intelligent cats in my life; I like obliterating stereotypes of feline aloofness and limitation perceived by us. Mine rode in cars more than any dogs I know and all of our cats 'sit' when asked.

Letting rooms in a house bequeathed by his aunt, supplies interesting storylines. A student tenant in this first novel becomes associated with murder. He and his Mom, known since high school, give *Charlie* reason to look into the situation. I say four stars because the victim is disliked and has no personal poignancy for *Charlie*, nor we readers. Acclimatization to a setting in a series début takes time to gear up as it is.

'**Miranda James**' is a pleasure to read. His wonderful, vibrant, black culture names like '*Kanesha*' and '*Azalea*' resonate strikingly. The strong-willed dignity is astutely conveyed and so too, a man content in his middle-age.

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