



The Gathering Dark

James Oswald

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THE DEAD DEMAND VENGEANCE in the **ALL-NEW compelling novel in the BESTSELLING Inspector McLean series.**

A truck driver loses control in central Edinburgh, ploughing into a crowded bus stop and spilling his vehicle's toxic load. The consequences are devastating.

DI Tony McLean witnesses the carnage. Taking control of the investigation, he soon realises there is much that is deeply amiss - and everyone involved seems to have something to hide.

But as McLean struggles to uncover who caused the tragedy, a greater crisis develops: the new Chief Superintendent's son is missing, last seen in the area of the crash . . .

The Gathering Dark Details

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From Reader Review The Gathering Dark for online ebook

Liz Barnsley says

Brilliant as ever. I love this series.

Full review to follow near publication.

Bruce Hatton says

Detective Inspector Tony McLean is one of the most original and likeable detectives in crime fiction and I always enjoy getting re-acquainted with him and his usual sidekicks: Grumpy Bob Laird, Janie Harrison, Jayne McIntyre, Charles Duguid, Madame Rose and, not forgetting, Mrs McCutcheon's Cat.

Tony witnesses a lorry tanker crashing into a bus stop on a busy Edinburgh street. To make matters worse, instead of carrying the organic waste specified in its manifest, its actual cargo is a highly toxic and corrosive chemical. Nineteen people are killed and many more injured.

However, James Oswald is far too accomplished a writer to make this a simple linear investigation into illegal dumping. Intertwined with this is another story of horrific abuse committed by powerful figures at an Essex children's home twenty years previously. On top of this, the Chief Superintendent's son is missing. Tony finds himself, unwittingly, at the sharp end of three investigations as well as having to deal with his troubled personal life.

As in some previous novels in the series, there is an almost supernatural element to some of the scenes. However, for me, it never strained credibility. There was also a very downbeat and tragic ending which made the whole novel more poignant.

Paromjit says

This is the latest in James Oswald's crime fiction series with a difference, set in Edinburgh featuring DI Tony McLean. This is a series that has really grown on me, and this addition has turned out to be favourite of mine. It all begins on the Lothian Road where a truck overturns smashing into a crowded bus stop in an RTA, spilling its horrific toxic load, melting the physical features of people, leaving 20 dead, including the truck driver, Bernard Wilkins. Coincidentally, on the scene and witnessing the carnage unfolding is McLean, taking control whilst suffering the ill effects from the poisonous chemicals. Unsurprisingly, this event is to have him plagued by recurring nightmares, and when he gets home, there are ominous signs with the return of the cats. The eccentric transvestite medium and book collector, Rose, warns of an imminent growing darkness. Rose is not a woman to be ignored with her rare prescient abilities that have a proven track record.

With the media speculating about a terrorist attack, the police are under pressure to identify the circumstances behind the incident, with McLean convinced it is not terrorism related. What is of concern is that the sign for hazardous materials was not displayed on the truck, and the load is not what it claims to be. Identifying the victims is no easy task but the remains of one man and two women pose particular difficulties. Detective Chief Superintendent Tom Forrester's son, Eric, is missing and McLean is asked to discreetly look into whether he could have been a victim of the accident. An NCA DCI Featherstonehaugh turns up interested in what the team are uncovering. As McLean with the help of DC Janie Harrison, Grumpy

Bob and others begin to unearth irregularities and more, pressure is put on them to cease investigating certain companies. However, there is no way McLean is a man that can be stopped. With further suspicious deaths in which victims are dying expressing terrifying fear on their faces, connections begin to emerge that begin to throw a light on the unbearable truth. In the meantime, there is a determined force intent on gaining vengeance for the dead. Included are the details of harrowing historical child abuse that occurred in Essex and the still existing dangers faced by two survivors.

This is a hard hitting case that takes its toll on Tony, physically and emotionally. His personal life is often on his mind with his inability to be there for Emma, now in the late stages of her pregnancy, although Rose tries to do her bit here. Professionally, McLean is placed in an awkward position by his boss, Forrester, which culminates in the horrifying possibility of him being promoted, something he definitely does not want. The relationships on the police team, the banter, the support they offer each other, is a wonderful highlight of this series. This is a great and gripping read, with its compelling multiple threads in a narrative that carries a growing sense of menace and darkness whilst incorporating the supernatural without verging on the ridiculous. Sadly, the desperately dark ending will have McLean having to bear extra burdens for the future. Highly recommended series!

Simon says

Another quality episode in a series which delivers a real hard edge of the modern world alongside whispers of the creepy supernatural while somehow wrapping them up in a cuddly blanket. There are true elements of horror here but with devices like Madame Rose and Mrs McCutcheon's cat as well as the warmth invested in his characters Oswald achieves an excellent balance.

Of course some of that warmth comes from the deliciously smooth tones of Ian Hanmore who will surely always be the voice of Tony McLean and company. His is a voice I could, in fact, have listened to for hours.

I wouldn't say it is always as intense as some of the earlier books but it's very engaging throughout and the various parts of the ending draw it together very impressively. In fact for anyone who is invested in these characters it doesn't just drift off; it delivers a smart punch to the jaw to jolt you out of any complacency and leaves you wanting the next book to come quickly!

Colin Mitchell says

Detective Inspector Tony McLean, the main character in James Oswald's series of detective novels. Previously he has been the butt of derision by his senior colleagues, now with them gone he is waxing and he is the lead officer. Walking in Edinburgh one morning he witnesses a horrendous crash as a tanker overturns onto a crowded bus stop. The question is who is the mysterious young man he sees at the sight, why is there a toxic substance when the tanker is supposed to carry slurry. Why are the cats gathering at his house and what is Madame Rose doing on the scene?

I have enjoyed this mixture of a detective novel with the underlying presence of the supernatural. One of those books, if the mixture is right for you, that is difficult to put down. Turned the final page at 3 a.m.

David Snape says

A large scale crash with damaging consequences

A crash that Inspector McLean saw in front of his eyes. The version of events detect certain powerful individuals and some big name companies as well. Once again, a story that was slowly building up to a worthy finish. It gained up to a 4 star because of an ending I wasn't expecting at all, making it a very good story to read.

Sandra says

I tried to read this slowly and make it last. Unfortunately, I got so caught up in the story this didn't happen. I've been a fan of Inspector McLean since Natural Causes (#1); the well-drawn characters, great storytelling and strong sense of place make this crime series stand out from the crowd. Look forward to reading the next one!

Trevor Snape says

James Oswald has done it again. This book is magnificent!!! Inspector Tony Mclean once again finds himself caught up in an investigation and subsequently leading this investigation into a tanker lorry crashing into a crowded bus stop in Edinburgh. This lorry was supposed to be carry slurry to be spread upon farmers fields. However, part of the load was toxic waste and the crash results in 20 deaths including the driver and many injured. The toxic waste melted the flesh of 3 people to make them unrecognizable giving the police problems in identifying them. This is far from the whole story, no spoilers here. As you would expect there is an element of 'dark forces' at work, when is a dead person actually dead, which gives this police mystery that added touch to this series. Mrs McCutcheon's cat as usual has a role to play as does Madame Rose. The ending is very sad and leaves the reader wanting the next book to arrive quickly to find what happens next in Inspector Tony McLean's private and professional life. This series just keeps on getting better and better. Just remember to leave plenty time once you start reading this book, you will not want to put it down.

Angela Blackwell says

I had to get this shipped from the UK because books 7&8 don't have a US publisher, which is really too bad for US readers. This is a great series. Very gritty tartan noir with a bit of mysticism thrown in the mix. This volume continues the journey of McLean and Emma. After the last volume the personnel at the station have changed and we see many new characters in this volume as well as some older characters with new roles. Emma's department has been outsourced so she is a contract worker now, which adds some issues into the mix.

As usual, McLean always ends up with bloody, horrific crime scenes and spends half his time dealing with his friendly pathologist. This one involves a chemical spill due to a truck accident which Tony watches happen.

McLean is finally showing some signs of having emotions without having a shutdown and possibly a somewhat ordinary social life since his best friend has moved back from the US.

However, the cliffhanger at the end of this volume will leave you going for the tissues!

Oswald loves to torture his Scotsman and his readers! His characters and his Edinburgh are so interesting they suck you into the story while they are being tortured.

Ellen says

The Gathering Dark (Inspector McLean, #8) by James Oswald.

It's my pleasure to write this review.

The main issues that keep me coming back to a series is (1)the main character. In this case it's DI Tony McLean. I find him to be a no-nonsense detective. Someone bossing or bullying him around is on short notice and that bully knows it. (2) The supporting cast of characters. Once again McLean is in charge of whom he can trust whether it meets with anyone else's approval or not! (3) This Detective doesn't hold back even if it means not getting the go ahead from another authority figure. He plays his hunches as he sees them.

McLean is on his Lothian road when he is witness to a sudden horrific crash. A lorry has jackknifed into a crowded bus stop. It should have been an easy turn if done properly. This lorry either didn't have working brakes or the driver was busy on his phone and not watching the road. The bodies were everywhere, but that's not all. The deadly fumes made it almost impossible to breathe. That lorry was hauling lethal chemicals. Chemicals it had no authorization to carry.

Tony calls in to emergency for immediate response to this disaster. He covers his nose in order to breathe while he attempts to find any of the victims that may still be alive. Then he realizes this poisonous substance has eaten away many of the peoples features making it almost impossible to identify. That meant working closely with Cadwallader, the Chief in Forensic's and one specialist tony could always count on.

Madame rose appears on two occasions which lends another dimension to this tale and makes it all the more interesting.

Lastly I must include how inattentive the publishers(?) have been in not releasing this marvelous book in the States. They released it in Europe several months ago, but in the States they've continued putting off the availability month after month after month. I finally (after having the library staff watching for a release date) ordered it from the U.K. IT WAS WORTH THE WAIT!

Rodrigo Acuna says

"Comfortable read but so repetitive. "

Finally, the supernatural is openly supernatural but for a very short spell, what has not changed is the pandering to the new readers; we are told about the car, his wife and Madam Rose (A character that contributes very little to the plot but political correctness) and the cats at noxious.

This is book eight and the conspiracy theories have not advanced one bit, also the characters are becoming

stuck in a groove that seems to just go on repeat.

I had looked forward to this book but find it disappointing and repetitive, time to develop characters and storyline, time to take a chance, the Alfa Romeo is parked in the garage and readers are very forgiving; no need to fear losing it.

Kate says

What an exceptional series this is, one of my very favourites, and this is a fine addition to it. But blimey is it dark...

Ronja says

Fan-bloody-tastic. Recommend the Audible version performed by Ian Hanmore. As brilliant as the book itself!

Jen says

It is another little known fact about me (it actually is this time) but when I was a nipper, so many many decades ago, I was somewhat obsessed with horror stories and movies and I would lap up anything and everything paranormal or vampire, spook or monster related. That is something I do less of these days but is part of the reason I was drawn to the Inspector McLean stories. They sit just on the other side of your standard police procedural, with something more than just the story at hand always on the periphery. Some of my favourites in the series walk that fine line perfectly, and *The Gathering Dark* is one such book, making it perhaps one of my favourites. There is something, as the title would suggest, quite dark about this book. Madame Rose can feel it. Tony McLean can feel it. But just what, be it animal, vegetable, mineral or otherwise, remains to be seen.

Unwittingly forced into action at the scene of a catastrophic tanker crash in the heart of the city, DI Tony McLean finds himself charged with investigating the cause of the RTC, and the origin of the contents of the tanker, a chemical which has as great an impact upon the victims as the crash itself. So much so it renders identification of some of the victims almost impossible. Whatever the tanker had been carrying, it wasn't what was manifested and finding out not only the source but the destination, will cause untold misery for many, McLean included.

To anyone reading this book, the idea of a vehicle crashing with such devastating consequences would be a hard thing to read. It is not without precedence unfortunately, and as a Transport Manager myself, I know the amount of devastation that RTCs can cause both directly and indirectly. But beyond this, James Oswald has added a layer of real danger, adding to the confusion and tension of the piece. And this is where reading this book almost became like a busman's holiday to me. Not in a bad way I must add, but it was an element of the book that I can absolutely relate to. ADR legislation - carriage of dangerous chemicals to the lay person - and the relevant tanker markings, dangerous goods notes (DGNs), manifests and all other route planning and required notifications ... Argh ... This is all stuff I am currently working on at work. A side note and not

especially relevant to this review, but I can tell you that everything in this book rings true. Very much so.

Now if this was simply the story of a lorry crash in central Edinburgh, as devastating as that would be, it wouldn't feel like an Inspector McLean novel. Not really. And true to form it doesn't stop there. James Oswald has taken a simple story and kicked it up a notch. What starts out as a mere accident takes a sinister turn as someone seeks revenge upon the owner of the business which operates the tanker. The circumstances are suspicious but not conclusive, but as to who stood to gain from what happened, if indeed it was more than a mere accident, is not necessarily clear.

From here on in the story starts to take a very dark turn. More incidents linked to the crash, and the overwhelming stench of a cover up, a stench much stronger than even the chemicals which have damaged all they touch. Beyond the corruption rife throughout this investigation, beyond the devastating death toll, you have two elements to the story which add both mystery and a growing sense of unease. Firstly the disappearance of the Chief Superintendent's son. Victim of the crash or entirely unconnected? Then there is also the unknown voice. A young man who left the scene of the crash and yet who is seeking his own kind of vengeance. His story goes way beyond that of the crash itself and is as harrowing as the constantly evolving investigation.

One thing really makes these stories for me is the strength of the characters who carry them. McLean is a fantastic character, as caring about justice as he is for his friends and family. He has no time for corruption or injustice and he will stop at nothing to find the truth, even if it puts his life in danger, something which happens all too often. But he has strong support around him, once again aided in his investigation by DS 'Grumpy Bob' Laird and DC Janie Harrison. I love Grumpy Bob. So understated, so laid back, so unwittingly efficient without seeming to do anything at all. And Janie is young, enthusiastic and a perfect complement to McLean in terms of her tenacity and resolve. Take it beyond the immediate investigation team, outside of the squad room, and McLean is backed up by a who raft of people, from Madame Rose to his partner, and mother of his unborn child, Emma. Even Mrs McCutcheon's Cat is as unique and important a part of the story as any other. I wouldn't be the same without them.

But when you look beyond all of that, of the camaraderie, the humour, even the pain which they share and support each other through there is no denying the developing sense of menace which permeates the story. With each page you can feel the skin begin to prickle, the sense of the unspoken, unseen threat which is ever present. There is a clever use of not only the elements, but also setting to create this sensation, as well as the reappearance of some rather unusual tokens of an ominous nature. You would have to read to understand but when they appear, nothing good is set to happen. And the ever-growing darkness, be it felt through McLean's recurring nightmares or the ominous warnings of Madame Rose, there is an almost electric undercurrent which keeps the reader on edge. Knowing that something is not quite right but never being able to put your finger on it. That feeling of something ... else. Something that cannot quite be articulated but you just know it is there. Lurking. This ... this is what makes this a terribly hard book to review and do justice but is also what really makes me love it.

That and the transport element. No denying, rightly or (mostly) wrongly, that part did make me smile. Not the crash, that was a tragedy, just the simple fact that it brought this story worryingly close to home.

If you love the Inspector McLean series then you will love this. Highly, highly recommended.

Iris says

I could not read this until the end.

He waits 2 years before this Emma person comes back from her "worldwide" mission. Who has paid that trip? I guess he did (In real life she would be mugged and raped and worse alone as a woman in India or Africa only within hours when she gets there!). This traveling is so absurd and ridiculous, I cannot describe my repugnance against this sort of bullshit story.

Does Tony not deserve better? At home he has now to obey his girlfriend and comply with her aggressive nature and her whole impudent behaviour. Before he could not sleep because she came into his bed all night and waking him up, and now he cannot sleep because she takes every night the whole bed and snores like a swine. While he is working like a mad man, without sleep, without love, without any appreciation. I do not feel any love or appreciation in this book.

I have so enough, enough, enough. He is a good man, abused from everybody around him. A part of Mme. Rose and the cat. And now this awful Emma person is pregnant. It could not get worse. This is it for me. No McLean anymore.
