

The Grave Tattoo

By Val McDermid

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In a novel reminiscent of *The Rule of Four*, *The Dante Club* and *The Historian*, suspense master McDermid spins a psychological thriller in which a present-day murder has its roots in the eighteenth century and the mutiny on the *H.M.S. Bounty*. After torrential summer rains uncover a bizarrely tattooed body on a Lake District hillside, long discarded old wives' tales takes on a chilling new plausibility. For centuries, Lakelanders have whispered that Fletcher Christian staged the massacre on Pitcairn so that he could return home. And there, he told his story to an old friend and schoolmate, William Wordsworth, who turned it into a long narrative poem--a poem that remained hidden lest it expose Wordsworth to the gallows for harboring a fugitive. Wordsworth specialist Jane Gresham, herself a native of the Lake District, feels compelled to discover once and for all whether the manuscript ever existed--and whether it still exists today. But as she pursues each new lead, death follows hard on her heels. Suddenly Jane is at the heart of a 200-year-old mystery that still has the power to put lives on the line. Against the dramatic backdrop of England's Lake District a drama of life and death plays out, its ultimate prize a bounty worth millions.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
An intriguing, 200-year-old mystery propels this multilayered stand-alone from British author McDermid set in England's Lake District. Scholar Jane Gresham pursues her theory that HMS *Bounty* mutineer Fletcher Christian returned secretly from exile to his homeland in the late 18th century. A shriveled body found in a bog seems to bear resemblance to this dashing hero, right down to the South Sea tattoos that blacken his buttocks. Jane searches relentlessly for a lost manuscript by the poet Wordsworth that relates Christian's tale in tantalizing excerpts between chapters. Various subplots complicate her quest, including a fraught friendship with precocious 13-year-old Tenille, a lonely, mixed-race girl who also loves Romantic poetry. With a feminist, socially conscious spin, McDermid (*The Distant Echo*) vividly contrasts marginal subsistence in London's dismal Marshpool neighborhood with the Lake District's bucolic lifestyle. Boasting blurbs from such notable authors as Harlan Coben, Tess Gerritsen and Joseph Finder, this could be McDermid's break-out book. *100,000 printing; author tour. (Feb.)*
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From School Library Journal
Adult/High School—During an English summer of record-breaking rains, a peat bog in the Lake District opens to reveal a 200-year-old body bearing South Pacific island tattoos. The area, home to Romantic poets, is where Jane Gresham, Wordsworth scholar, grew up, and she finds her interest piqued by the news. She has long believed that Fletcher Christian, HMS *Bounty* mutineer, didn't die on Pitcairn Island but returned to England. She has theorized that Christian recounted his adventures to his old schoolmate Wordsworth, who wrote them down, and those documents and a related poem, now worth millions, lay forgotten in a local home. In the race to retrieve the valuable manuscripts, Jane finds herself competing against sinister forces that would stop at nothing, including murder, to reach them first. The suspenseful story and its subplots, which include Jane's friendship with 13-year-old poetry-loving Tenille, who lives in Jane's London public housing project, create an absorbing thriller. McDermid establishes a strong sense of place in the atmospheric and pastoral Lake District that contrasts sharply with the sprawling housing project. Historical and literary references to Wordsworth's life and work and to the South Pacific adventures of the *Bounty* mutineers all help to make this novel come alive. Teens will enjoy the lively characters, brisk pace, and careful unraveling of the centuries-old mystery with its satisfactory conclusion.—*Susanne Bardelson, Kitsap Regional Library, WA*
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Oxford graduate and erstwhile journalist Val McDermid, grand dame of the British psychological mystery (Peter Guttridge describes her as "Thomas Harris crossed with Agatha Christie") since the publication of *Report for Murder* two decades ago, has written a clever puzzle of a book that bridges history and mystery and demonstrates the author's range. *The Grave Tattoo* combines scenery, story, and spot-on characters into one of her most engaging efforts yet. The author's strength has always been her ability to evoke atmosphere, and the Lake District comes alive in all its unsettling beauty. *Grave Tattoo* is a solid entry for veterans—and a real treat for newcomers, who will enjoy discovering the four books in McDermid's Tony Hill series (start with *The Mermaids Singing*) and three previous stand-alone novels.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Betty Lavery:

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Matthew Ramey:

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Rosemary Lafleur:

On this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability in doing something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become considered one of it? It is just simple approach to have that. What you should do is just spending your time not much but quite enough to experience a look at some books. On the list of books in the top collection in your reading list is actually The Grave Tattoo. This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Hillsides can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking up and review this reserve you can get many advantages.

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