



The End of the Wasp Season

Denise Mina

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When a notorious millionaire banker hangs himself, his death attracts no sympathy. But the legacy of a lifetime of selfishness is widespread, and the carnage most acute among those he ought to be protecting: his family.

Meanwhile, in a wealthy suburb of Glasgow, a young woman is found savagely murdered. The community is stunned by what appears to be a vicious, random attack. When Detective Inspector Alex Morrow, heavily pregnant with twins, is called in to investigate, she soon discovers that a tangled web of lies lurks behind the murder. It's a web that will spiral through Alex's own home, the local community, and ultimately right back to a swinging rope, hundreds of miles away.

The End of the Wasp Season is an accomplished, compelling and multi-layered novel about family's power of damage-and redemption.

The End of the Wasp Season Details

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From Reader Review The End of the Wasp Season for online ebook

Mark says

I'm an admirer of Denise Mina's writing, and I wish I could have given this larger praise, but I felt the ending was a bit anticlimactic and not quite as shocking as I think she meant it to be.

In this novel, Glasgow detective Alex Morrow is pregnant and faced with the brutal slaying of a young woman in her recently deceased mother's house. Her face has been obliterated by someone stomping on her, and bloody tennis shoe footprints abound. In the home's kitchen, police discovered several hundred thousand euros, wrapped in neat bundles. As she pursues the case, she encounters an old childhood friend who helped care for the victim's mother, and whose children will fall under suspicion for the killing, largely at the insistence of Morrow's thoroughly vain and dislikable boss, Bannerman.

As her fellow officers lead an underground revolt against Bannerman, she doggedly pursues leads that eventually take her to the suspects.

And without needing a spoiler alert, I should say that this is really not so much a whodunit as a whydunit, so you are able to follow the sad tale of the two young men who become the main suspects, and her excellent ability to get you to feel sympathy for the boy whose plutocrat father has just committed suicide, whose mother is irresponsible and self absorbed and whose younger sister is suicidal herself.

There are a couple minor surprises at the end, but the intent of the book seems to be much more to explore the inner lives of a working class family, a nouveau rich family and the police officers who maneuver between them than it is to keep you guessing with plot twists.

Sarah says

Every other book which I have previously read and rated 5* ought to be forthwith down-graded to a 3* in order to put this amazing novel into a class of its own!

This novel is extremely impressive and powerful on many levels.... Graphically (wasps), symbolically, as a psychological study, as a comment on social behaviour, on relationships both professional and familial. Interest is compounded by the contrasts and comparisons highlighted in the characters from different geographical regions where events occur, from those of different social backgrounds, class, money (those with, those without, those who have made fortunes and those who lose one)Those in the middle..(the police), It is almost subtly gothic in the way the plot is driven not by chronological cliff-hangers but by an exploration into people's souls- mostly tormented, flawed and dark to different degrees. On the other hand, it also follows quite a traditional format in that the novel examines the fundamental consequences of love or the lack of love on people. At its essence the message in the novel is that demonstrative love is good and is ultimately rewarded. Those in the novel who are not nurtured cannot thrive and turn bad.

The plot is quite unusual in that it is inverted from the more commonplace detective novel in that the novel begins with the crime and the reader knows from the start who has perpetrated it. Rather than the author lead the reader on the more predictable 'whodunnit', we are taken on a journey into the dark world of cause and effect, of what motivates people to behave as they do. The author examines the behaviour of all her characters in the book, and how one persons behaviour impacts directly or indirectly on others either

intentionally or not.

What a find, DENISE MINA.....Cannot wait to read more of her earlier books.

Note to self: In Glasgow a wealthy single woman(Sarah Erroll) wakes up to find two lads(Thomas/Squeak) in her house...catholic, public school, detective pregnant with twins(Alex Morro), single-mother cleaning-lady (Kay Murray), Sevenoaks...Lars Andersen, Moira, Ella....Thersa,

Susan says

Denise Mina gives a blow-by-blow analysis of who the victims of the UK's financial crisis are, from the perspective of a pregnant detective in Glasgow who grew up in difficult circumstances. The difference between Mina's excellent book and say OR THE BULL KILLS YOU is that Mina includes relevant psychological details rather than writing a relatively superficial film treatment. Here DI Morrow has a hard time getting her staff to take seriously the grisly murder of a call girl; as she doggedly pursues the few clues Morrow develops an unlikely sympathy for the perp. Mina has assimilated the good qualities of Joyce's DUBLINERS and PORTRAIT -- sympathy, a gimlet eye, and appreciation for interconnectedness, as well as Sarah Kane's delight in the hideous. Her close observations make the book feel universal, or at least as if Glasgow, despite its relative homogeneity, is not very far from New York.

Nikki-ann says

With great quotes on the cover from Ian Rankin and The Guardian promising an exciting read, I was looking forward to reading The End of the Wasp Season. However, I came away disappointed.

The book starts off with the thrill of moments leading up to the kill. The first chapter is tense and gripping, but I thought the story lost it's grip from there. I couldn't make up my mind... There were times when I thought the story was going slow and I didn't find it engaging, but then at other times I found myself enjoying it.

This isn't your conventional crime story, you know "whodunit" from the start and I found it lacking in twists & turns and cliffhangers. Maybe this is why I didn't find it so exciting.

With an exception of DS Morrow and possibly Kay, I didn't really warm to any of the characters either (although with this type of book I don't think you're supposed to). You don't normally get a detective who's pregnant with twins being the investigator in a brutal murder in crime thrillers. Morrow isn't soft though, she doesn't take any bull, though she does have her moments. All of the main characters are created well, you feel like you know them even if you'd prefer not to in some instances.

There are many story strands in this book which weave themselves together, but I was disappointed with the end of the book. It didn't feel like the story was wrapped up to me. DS Morrow has featured previously in a Denise Mina book and I'm sure there's more to come too. I'm slightly curious to read more about the DS Morrow character, but I might need some convincing to pick up another book. So, please let me know if you've read any of Denise Mina's other books and what you thought of them.

Sadly, The End of the Wasp Season wasn't one for me. Have you read it? If so, what did you think?

Becky says

The reader is present at the extremely suspenseful opening scene of this book which culminates in a brutal murder. We know who “did it” and watch while Scottish Detective Alex Morrow, female and pregnant with twins, patiently reconstructs the crime. The disturbing “why” of the crime is at the crux of this novel and Mina reveals this by developing strong, complex characters and exposing the psychological motivations behind their actions. (Fathers do not come off particularly well in this book).

Set almost entirely in Scotland, this book has a strong sense of place, which is greatly enhanced in the audio version by a wonderful narrator. Jane MacFarlane reads most of the book with a Scottish brogue, but inserts regional and class accents of the UK into the dialog where appropriate, giving further dimension to the characters --particular their class. I would give 5 stars to the narrator.

This is Mina’s 2nd book featuring Alex Morrow. The first is “Still Midnight”. I didn’t know of (and have not yet read) the first title when I picked up “The End of the Wasp Season”, but thought this second book stood well on its own. I expect the first book would provide more background on Detective Morrow.

This book was reminiscent of Kate Atkinson’s Jackson Brodie mysteries, also set in the UK, where disparate plot threads come together unexpectedly and Tana French’s books, which are set in Dublin, and have much to say about the psychology of family.

Wyma says

SPOILER ALERT***

We never doubted that she would catch him. She being DS Alex Morrow of the Glasgow polis and him being Thomas, one of two culprits known to us from the beginning of the novel. In fact, we meet Thomas first, see him and his friend Squeak as they kill and follow Thomas and his thoughts in the days after.

Two stories: that of the Scottish woman detective and that of the young son of a wealthy and powerful man, Thomas who is also the killer. The book begins with the funeral of DS Morrow's father and soon reveals the sudden death of Thomas' father.

The stories are told of these two parallel lives until they intersect, Thomas is caught and jailed.

Choosing Thomas to tell his story, the author co-opts us into sympathizing with him and nearly championing him. Mina brilliantly unravels his doom through his thoughts and language and choices. I found him so fascinating as a person that I almost hoped he would not be caught, even though Mina makes it clear from the beginning that he will be. I was surprised to see him in jail. Although he is now fatherless and for all practical purposes motherless, I still hoped that someone would provide salvation or at least try to salvage him. But this is a bleak story of family psychological abuse and the ruthlessness of social order. Crime abounds; but there is little justice.

In fact this is a fairly grim piece all around. Morrow's life is fraught with difficulty at work and at home, with her husband and with her birth family. And that is the main reason I gave the book only 3 stars. The persistent negativity is just a bit hard to take.

There is one bright light in a minor character, Kay, a cleaning woman and high school friend of Alex

Morrow. She provides consistency and a bit of light in this uneven novel.

Although not up to Mina's standards, this title is worth reading if only for the inside view of the miscreant's mind during and after the killing.

Thomas and Kay are the only characters from this book that I would like to see again.

Donna says

This book is what I would call an intelligent police procedural. It is not a "who done it," rather, a "why done it," as the criminals' identities are known to the reader from the start. They are portrayed as three dimensional characters, not slavering, psychopathic rabid dogs, but people with past, present, and future lives. And while the author does not seek sympathy for them from the reader, her humanizing them makes it difficult not to empathize with them, though never as a reason to excuse their crimes.

This is the second book in the Alex Morrow series. And it is even better than the first one, *Still Midnight*. This time up, Alex and her husband have resolved their marital problems. Not only that, they have grown closer for them and are expecting twins. Meanwhile, Alex's nemesis, Bannerman, is now her boss, and he is worse than ever in the bureaucratic department. He is inspiring a quiet mutiny among the men answering to him, with Alex caught in the middle. But she is having none of that. She is busy investigating the brutal murder of a woman who was horribly disfigured during the crime, with Bannerman thwarting her investigation practically every step of the way.

All the characters in this book--good guys, bad guys, victims, and witnesses alike--are given equal weight and development in the story, something unusual for this genre. And it is carried out deftly by the author with some great writing. There is even a clever metaphor concerning the wasps carried through from the beginning to the end. I highly recommend this book for the characterizations, and for the threads of the story that are intricately woven together. I am awaiting the third book in the series due out next month: *Gods and Beasts*.

Kathy says

I feel I gave this book a fair chance. First time I tried to read it had to put it down and read another book where I could follow the plot. Came back to it, had to put it down, read reviews by other readers, then tried again. Now if I construct enough two-word sentences you might get a sense of the rhythm of the book. Is it the planned intent of author to present helter/skelter thinking and actions or lack thereof without framework of reason? I had nothing to hold on to here.

Maybe the characters are actually stick figures...that could be the answer? Nothing gels for me. Ignored little rich boys? Boys and parents and priests without conscience?

Here is just small taste:

"Thomas sat on the sofa in Ella's sitting room, facing the big window. A brutal shaft of light was coming over the lawn. He thought sometimes of moving. Getting up, getting a drink. He was hungry too. But there was so much to do that he couldn't move."

Just not for me.

Dorian says

I was grumpy about the first book in this series (see my review) and probably only picked this one up at the library because Jenny Davidson mentioned it in her blog. How delightful, then, to read this dark but never dour, complex work. The book uses the financial crisis to good effect. (I suspect we will get a lot of good crime fiction out of that mess, at least.) It's got a much better plot than the previous text. But what really makes it so terrific is the presentation, via the protagonist, now perhaps a tad more sympathetic due to her pregnancy, of police politics. I found Mina's analyses of the motivations of difficult people, and ways to use them (the difficult people I mean), avoid them, and often get screwed over by them to be all too relevant to the academic world in which I work.

Jaime says

I really enjoyed Denise Mina's second novel with the central character, Alex Morrow. If you enjoy police procedural novels then this book is for you. I enjoyed the storyline and I felt more of a connection to Alex Morrow. The book could've been shortened just a bit. Other than that it was a really great read.

Brenda says

In Glasgow, a young woman, still grieving the death of her mother only a few short months previously, is brutally murdered, seemingly at random. DS Alex Morrow who is five months pregnant with twins, is called in to investigate the murder, and even the hardened cops have trouble coping with the horror of Sarah's last few minutes.

With the investigation bringing up more questions than answers, Alex is discovering a tangled web of lies that are becoming harder to untangle! Her own past is threatening to intrude, a life she's kept deeply hidden herself.

When Thomas Anderson is taken home from boarding school, because his father Lars, who was a very well off banker, had committed suicide by hanging himself from an oak tree in their garden, he is conflicted with emotion. He didn't like his father, in fact no-one liked him, and his passing wouldn't be missed. But what would happen to him, his mother and sister now?

Suddenly the investigation is speeding up, the simple conclusion Alex's superiors thought was there, doesn't appear to be, and Alex finds herself the only one convinced there is more to it all than meets the eye! With the multi-layers throughout this novel, the moving back and forward between two scenarios, the crime was centred round the selfishness of some of the characters, and the confusion they encountered.

I found *The End of The Wasp Season* a little drawn out and tedious at times, but the plot was a good one.

Nigel Bird says

A young woman is awoken in the home of her recently departed mother by a couple of teenage boys who

seem to have a bone to pick with her. Though it soon becomes clear that they are picking the wrong bone, the woman finds herself in grave danger and makes her bid for freedom. Sadly for her, she doesn't make it and the boys lose control as they stamp out all of her facial features.

DS Alex Morrow is sent along to investigate. What the reader picks up from the early encounters with Morrow is that she's from a complicated working-class family, that she's no fan of her superiors and that she's pregnant with twins. She also cares about her new victim and has to fight with the men around her to get to see this as the murder of an innocent rather than simply another paid-by-the-hour job.

The story unfolds wonderfully.

The teenage boy killers attend a private, very exclusive Scottish school. Thomas and Squeak are soon separated when Thomas leaves for home after his rich and infamous father has committed suicide. Lars Anderson has been losing the money of many in the recent financial crash, a crash that impacts upon many in this novel.

Morrow encounters an old friend in the form of Kay, the cleaner who once worked for the victim and her mother and continues to clean for other families in the area. This opens the doors to a range of complications which make rather uncomfortable reading in a pleasure/pain sort of way.

The resolution of the story is for you to find out. All I'll say is that it winds up with a growing sense of the need for justice and an accelerated desire to reach the end and find out what that might be. There was no let down when I finally got there, just a perfectly formed moment that I genuinely hadn't expected, one that passes comment on a world that so often doesn't seem fair.

It is a police procedural, but it has a huge amount to offer beyond that. The stories seem to me to be about people and the way they are affected by crime as much as they seem to be about the serving of justice, after all justice as offered by the legal system will rarely have the power to redress the injustices of our society.

Mina has a great empathy with her characters. Seems to really see the subtle ways in which they interpret the world and are formed by their experiences of it. Can paint detailed pictures of the lives of her characters by sketching in minor details that are striking in way they expose the inner workings of the people in this book. She also explores identity in a number of ways. No one is as they seem, each person has a life beneath the veneer of their stereotypes or the first impressions they create. Class, religion, personal flaws, successes and tragedies are all brought to the surface in a book that refuses to leave human beings as two-dimensional items.

It's a very engaging read that's written with real skill and feeling and I'll definitely be reading more of Mina's work in the future. Very good indeed.

Skip says

Sarah Erroll is brutally murdered by gawky teenage boys after recognizing one of them. Her life comes under a microscope: her questionable lifestyle, and care for her deceased mother, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. DS Alex Morrow is called to sort things out, and there are many suspects, including a school friend of hers, who was the mother's primary caretaker. One of the boys, Thomas Anderson, is told that his father Lars has hung himself, to avoid responsibility for his sleazy business dealings. There are lots of politics in the police department, and Alex is also dealing with family issues and her pregnancy with twins. I did not

connect with any of the characters.

Karen says

The second in the Alex Morrow series, *THE END OF THE WASP SEASON* is a book that it would be possible to read before the earlier. The opening chapters of the book introduces the reader to the three women at the centre of this story - DS Alex Morrow, Kay Murray who worked for Sarah Erroll and Sarah herself, 24 years old, murdered in a house that she rarely used.

Somehow, however, the focus of the book seems to be Lars Anderson, millionaire banker, disgraced financier, suicide hanging himself from a tree in the garden of his house. Father in a family that's about as dysfunctional as it can possibly get, his son returns from school to a family falling apart, not necessarily just because of his father's suicide, somehow the man's life seems to have had a more profound affect on a son, wife, daughter and mistress.

Needless to say this is an intricate tale weaving together a tangle of lies, deceit, damage, power, influence and moral ambiguity. Mina is renowned for her ability to create a well-drawn, complex and memorable cast of characters - from the main protagonist through to many of the lesser cast members. There's no sign of that ability flagging in *THE END OF WASP SEASON*. The other element that I've come to expect, particularly following on from the first Alex Morrow book, is a sense of restraint, contemplation, almost a reluctance to get into the evil that human beings can do. That's enhanced by the fragility of so many of Mina's characters. From Kay Murray, childhood friend of Alex's, Kay is a battler. She's not had an easy life, and somehow the tension of her embarrassment at her circumstances viewed by Morrow; her reaction when one of her children is briefly a suspect for the killing of Sarah; her pride and her vulnerability were beautifully executed. As was the character of Thomas, son of Lars, a young man pulled from school to confront the reality of his father's legacy, and the implosion of his family and everything that he thought life was supposed to be. Even down to the surreal experience of he and his mother discovering freezers of food, and working out how to actually prepare a meal - Thomas grows up in front of the reader's eyes, and there's something really quite sad about the way that has to happen.

The restraint of the storytelling in *THE END OF WASP SEASON* is the thing that really stays with me since I've finished the book. There was also something there - perhaps something about the way that sex and sexual politics started to play such a big part in the potential resolution, stacked up against Morrow's mostly male colleagues seeming disregard for this particular murder that could very well have been telegraphing something pointed. It could also be that I'm reading in something that wasn't ever supposed to be there, but there did just seem to be a little tale of attitude being told here, purposely underplayed, purposely observational and not conversational.

It is, however, not a book that's necessarily devoted to solving the crime. That aspect of the plot, whilst investigated by Morrow, is somehow less important than the why, and the way that circles of influence emanate from the rich and powerful. Perhaps it's a plot for a post GFC world? The way that the ripples of one person's life choices, and influence based simply on their wealth and ruthless use of the power that money can bring, can have repercussions in the most unexpected places.

The problem with picking up any book by Denise Mina is that she has hit so many heights with those that have come earlier, that somehow, sub-consciously there's always an expectation that perhaps this book could be the one that's not quite as good. For this reader, this wasn't that book. Denise Mina continues to write engaging, thought-provoking and always interesting stories.

Mary Gramlich says

THE END OF THE WASP SEASON by Denise Mina
09/11 - Little, Brown & Company - Hardcover, 400 pages

By burying your past, do we resolve present issues and our future relationships?

Detective Inspector Alex Morrow has a suicide, murder, and pregnant with twins to contend with, which is all in a day's work for this woman. She is a sharp and articulate member of the police force that never lets any detail, regardless of how small get past her even when they involve old haunts and ghosts from her own past. A dark background may plague her but Alex is not going to let any of taint her ability to solve this present day set of crimes.

Today she is dealing with the gruesome and brutal murder of a young woman who came to a horrific end while dealing with her late mother's estate. The only clues are shoe prints with a distinctive mark, but nothing else that makes sense, including the large amounts of cash left sitting on the kitchen table. There are allot of theories and too many suspects but none with motive, intent, or knowledge of the cash sitting right under their noses.

In another city, a man's family is dealing with his suicide and coming to terms with the complete dysfunctional behavior of the family and entire situation. The only son 15 year-old Thomas has lived under his father's shadow and grueling expectations but now it seems he has to be the man of the family and pull his mother and sister together. Yet Thomas knows a terrible secret about his father's secret life of lies. It may have nothing or everything to do with his questionable business dealings.

No one could ever see how these two dissimilar cases could influence one another. They took place in two different locations, families with nothing in common, and two different distinctively different types of death. However, when Alex puts the pieces together and shows that the cases not only relate but also collide into each other, the explosion is heard in every corner of the country.

This story is like a spider's web – intricate, detailed, and exquisite when you see the completed project. The reader is drawn in and this story will not let go of you until you know how all these characters are interrelated and just how close are they to knocking on Alex's door.
