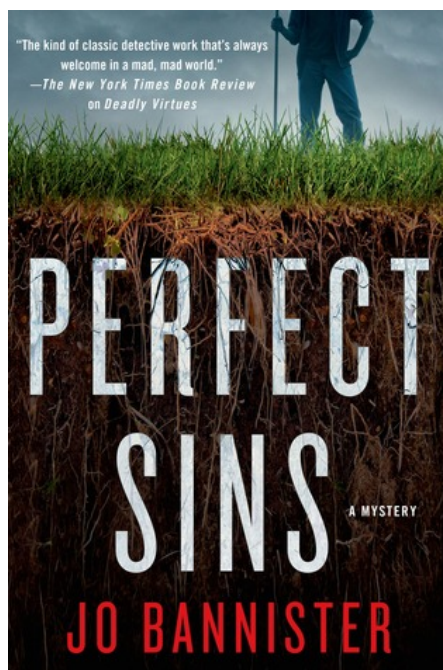




Perfect Sins

Jo Bannister

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Four years ago, Gabriel Ash was working with the British government investigating hijackings in Somalia. But when his wife and sons disappeared, presumably taken—and probably killed—by pirates, his life fell apart. He has sudden reason to hope when a senior policeman suggests that his sons might still be alive—until that policeman is murdered. Still, there seems to be some link to a local operation, and Ash, no longer a government agent, is determined to find it.

Meanwhile, his friend Hazel Best has been having a tough time of her own. A police constable whose last case ended with her shooting someone dead, she is just beginning to regain her balance. Hazel and Ash are both beginning to take more of an interest in the outside world, when a neighboring archaeologist decides to dig up a curious mound of earth near the ice house on his land. It might be a burial mound, he thinks. It is, but not the ancient one he expects; it holds the bones of a little boy from perhaps thirty years ago, carefully laid to rest with twentieth-century toys. As Hazel is slowly drawn back into police work, Ash finds himself under threat from someone who must think his investigation into his family's disappearance is finally getting somewhere...

Jo Bannister's police procedurals have been widely praised not only for outstanding plotting and suspense, but also for their brilliant and compelling characterization and with *Perfect Sins* she again proves that she is "one of the genre's best." (*Booklist*)

Perfect Sins Details

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Author : Jo Bannister

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From Reader Review Perfect Sins for online ebook

Lisa says

The camaraderie between Hazel and Gabriel is expanded further. They come to trust each other more while working a case thrust upon them.

Kathy says

I am forced to read the next book in this series because of the cliffhanger ending on this one. This is a very slow moving and emotion-driven book featuring a female constable, Hazel Best, and a man she apparently rescued in the first book I did not read. This man, Gabriel Ash, has a wife and four sons who were kidnapped four years ago by those (pirates?) who steal weapons being shipped...

This entry spotlights the discovery of the skeleton of a young boy on the property of a country house that blows up what everyone thought they knew about the aristocratic family that has ruled there since 1450. Yup....good ol' secrets and lies.

Janet says

Well written, easy read

Ms. Bannister never fails to delight in her writing. Her characters are well developed and her plots entertaining. I look forward to her next book.

Heather says

A different kind of tale that seems full of interesting characters - but maybe too many characters? When the ending became clear, it made me sad.

Karen says

I think I liked this even better than book one, so make that four and a half stars.

It involves a past murder, recently uncovered.

We get to meet Hazel's father and the estate where she grew up. Learn a bit about her mother and the current Earl and family.

There are not too many suspects, and those who are still around after several decades have past, are not always good remember-ers. As this is a police procedural, the right questions are asked and the involved

parties are revealed.

Nicely written.

My only concern is the ending. Where will this lead them in book three?

I borrowed a copy from the public library.

Henry McLaughlin says

Four-and-a-half stars.

This is the second book in the Gabriel Ash and Hazel Best series.

In this story, a trip to Hazel's childhood home to visit her father turns deadly when a child's skeleton is discovered in a make shift grave. Reunions with friends from her earlier years include the sparking of possible romance for her.

But family secrets and hurts and anger run deep in the soil. And the investigation uncovers both sadness and deep unresolved grief. Some will go to any lengths to keep their secrets. Even murder?

An attempt is made to kill both Gabriel and Hazel. The alleged assailant may be someone who never existed, a myth of the village. Or is there a deeper, more sinister force operating here?

Their investigation leads to the dark path Gabriel is just emerging from with Hazel's persistent help. The path that drove him from his job as a security analyst for the government. The path that began when his wife and two children disappeared. The path that led him to the depths of depression and withdrawal. But he can't ignore the signposts.

Jo Bannister does a masterful job of weaving both storylines into a strong, unified narrative. We discover more of what makes Hazel Hazel. And we experience more of Gabriel's recovery and the strong bond that exists between the two. And we taste the fear arising at the end of the book as they learn more of what happened to Gabriel's family.

This is a novel that will have you turning pages and staying up nights. And the ending will have you searching for the third book in the series.

Highly recommended.

SHERRY says

My favorite new series.

Val says

Book two of this series. This is a series which is important to read in order. I found that out the hard way. Hazel and Ash retreat to Hazel's home turf to heal after their first adventure together ends in the death of the chief of police. While they are exploring the grounds of the local manse, Hazel's childhood friends discover an old burial mound. When they dig it up they discover it isn't ancient as they thought, but contain the skeletal remains of a child from the last thirty years or so, given that the grave also contains plastic toys. The search for the identity of the missing boy also intertwines with Gabriel's search for his missing family.

Dana Stabenow says

Interesting premise for a continuing series. Four years ago security expert Gabriel Ash lost his wife and children to Somali pirates in retaliation for his thwarting their hijackings. Or did he? In the interim he has not recovered, physically, mentally or emotionally, although his therapist made him get a dog, a lurcher named Patience who provides a chorus-like commentary on the action, and he made a friend from the first book in the series, Constable Hazel Best.

Both are recovering from the consequences of the first book in the series at Hazel's father's home, the gatehouse on the estate of Peregrine (Pete), Lord Byrfield. The earl and the copper grew up together with David Sperry, village boy turned archeologist, who gets Pete to allow him to dig into a mound on the estate. Which of course yields a body, this of a boy killed by a shotgun blast to the face twenty years before. Who the boy was, who killed him and why provides a nice little puzzle for Ash and Hazel to solve, except it's not so nice when someone runs them off the road and tries to kill them with, you guessed it, a shotgun. In the meantime present action is bookended by Ash's attempts to discover if his wife and sons are truly dead, or if the corrupt police superintendent was just having his revenge as he lay dying at the end of the last book.

Nice plotting and characterization, and what feels like a better explanation of *noblesse oblige* and the hereditary duties of the British peerage, which includes marrying to the benefit of your inheritance and not yourself, which holds true if you're *noblesse* or not, than I've read elsewhere. Recommended.

Gary Van Cott says

Unfortunately, it has been a while since I read the first book in this series and could remember very little about it. The author doesn't provide much information about what happened in that book. She does something interesting in that this book begins and ends with one story (leaving a cliff hanger) but most of the book is about another story which is resolved. While these books are OK I do not like them as much as the Brodie Farrell series. Also the author has a tendency to occasionally use very long sentences which take some examination to unravel.

Christine Zibas says

While some of the activities in this latest in the Gabriel Ash series by Author Jo Bannister follow on from

earlier events (most notably the kidnapping of Ash's wife and children), most of the story in "Perfect Sins" focuses on the discovery by a local archaeologist in the English countryside. Ash's friend, Constable Hazel Best, has brought Ash and his dog, Patience, to the country house of the Byrfield family, where her father serves as a groundskeeper.

"Pete" Byrfield, the most recent earl, has commissioned a friend, a local archaeologist, to survey the estate. When a particularly promising mound is chosen to be excavated, it turns out that what lies buried there is not some ancient artefact but the bones of a child killed just a few decades ago. How did the child end up there, and what connection (if any) does it have to the family that owns the estate or to other locals?

There are layers of secrets surrounding the grave, and things even begin to get dangerous when Ash and Best begin to explore the possible connection to an Irish traveler (gypsy) who was once married to a local artist now living in one of the cottages on the estate. It turns out, however, that this red herring relates to the earlier Ash search for his own missing family, and the story ends with a promising lead in that regard...and what will surely be the beginning to the next book in the series.

For those unfamiliar with the Gabriel Ash character or earlier books in the series, PERFECT SINS can still be enjoyed as a stand-alone mystery. However, the experience is much richer for those who have followed this former British intelligence agent and his most recent adventures tracking Somali pirates, with which the novel begins and ends.

Review first appeared on ReviewingtheEvidence.com.

Margaret Dee says

This series just gets better with each book. This is a book club read and everyone wants to continue with the series even after the the book club discussions are finished.

Grace says

First book I've read by this author but it won't be the last one. She's writes a great story. The only thing I didn't like about the book was the ending. I wanted more.

Ubiquitousbastard says

Altogether I liked this less than the first book in the series. There was something about this that was...off. Kind of as though it was an interlude instead of a book in its own right. I mean, the mystery (which was not difficult to figure out for the most part) was not all that important and there was really just a slow, country feel to the whole thing. Maybe I'm such a city girl that modern books not set in the city bore me, or maybe it really is just that the author wanted this book to be a bit more calm, slow and leisurely.

Also, cliffhanger ending? Not cliffy enough since I've waited two days to even think about reading the next book. The best way to get me interested in reading sequels is to write a good book, not leave the ending

hanging. This wasn't a bad book, it just didn't get me interested the way that the previous one did.

Gloria Feit says

In the first book of this new series by Jo Bannister, the highly recommended “Deadly Virtues,” the reader met Gabriel Ash, in his mid-20’s, “an intelligent, astute man who had once been highly regarded in national security circles,” a well-educated insurance investigator and later a Government analyst before the traumatic events of 4 years ago when his wife and two young boys had been taken by persons unknown, their present whereabouts a complete mystery.

The follow-up book takes place two months later, and reunites Gabriel with Hazel Best, a 26-year-old rookie cop, now on probation after the events which took place in that earlier novel, during which she had saved his life more than once. As the book opens, Gabriel is accompanying Hazel to visit her father, the gatekeeper at Byrfield estate, the lord of the manor being Lord Pete (“Peregrine”) Byrfield. Also present is David Sperrin, Hazel’s old friend and an archeologist who lives with his mother on neighboring property, who shortly embarks on an excavation on Byrfield land resulting in the discovery of what is determined to be the body of a ten-year-old child in a makeshift grave, apparently dead for over 30 years. DI Edwin Norris is the cop assigned to the ensuing investigation into the child’s murder, and the identity of the murderer. In the process we learn a lot about British aristocracy, much of it fascinating.

Of course Gabriel’s family’s whereabouts, and the question of whether they are even alive, is always in the forefront of his mind. Their disappearance during Gabriel’s investigation into African pirates’ hijacking of British arms shipments has him still continuing that investigation.

The writing is wonderful throughout, in particular the author’s descriptions: “I don’t know what Guy would have grown up to be. An entertainer, possibly. Or a politician. Something where the ability to tell barefaced lies is a major advantage.” And a shopkeeper: “an elderly woman with a froth of white hair and the apple cheeks of the terminally jovial.” As in the earlier novel, all the characters are very well-drawn, especially Gabriel, Hazel, and DI Norris, and the relationship between Hazel and Gabriel seems to be evolving into something more intimate. The suspense keeps building, right up until the very last page, which ends in a cliffhanger which makes me all the more anxious to read the next book in the series, “Desperate Measures,” due out in December, 2015 – can’t wait!

Highly recommended.
