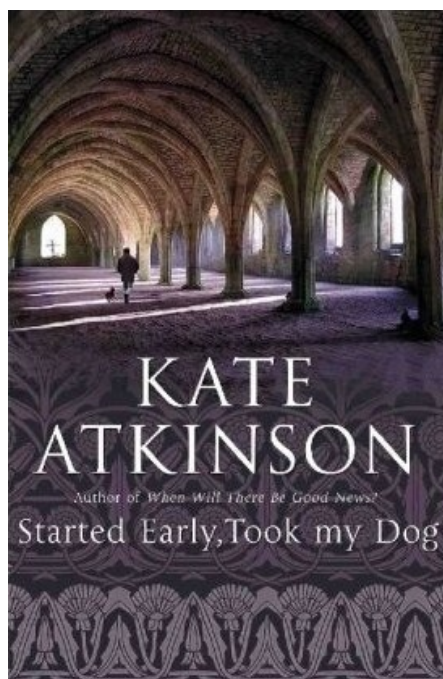




Started Early, Took My Dog

Kate Atkinson

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Tracy Waterhouse leads a quiet, ordered life as a retired police detective - a life that takes a surprising turn when she encounters Kelly Cross, a habitual offender, dragging a young child through town. Both appear miserable and better off without each other - or so decides Tracy, in a snap decision that surprises herself as much as Kelly. Suddenly burdened with a small child, Tracy soon learns her parental inexperience is actually the least of her problems, as much larger ones loom for her and her young charge.

Meanwhile, Jackson Brodie, the beloved detective of novels such as Case Histories, is embarking on a different sort of rescue - that of an abused dog. Dog in tow, Jackson is about to learn, along with Tracy, that no good deed goes unpunished.

Started Early, Took My Dog Details

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Author : Kate Atkinson

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From Reader Review Started Early, Took My Dog for online ebook

Shonna Froebel says

I love Kate Atkinson's novels. She is such a good writer. Everyone I read amazes me. She has great characters, with interesting complexities. Her plots are interesting and unique. This new novel is no exception.

Jackson Brodie is back again, this time looking for the missing past for a woman. But he isn't the only one searching for something, and there are parties interested in keeping it all buried.

A new and interesting character here is Tracy Waterhouse, retired police detective superintendent. She is working in mall security now, until she witnesses something that triggers action in her. Her choice changes her life forever.

There is Tillie, an aging actress sliding into dementia, haunted by a loss in her past.

And there is Courtney, agreeable, content, with her growing pack of remembrances.

Atkinson's turn of phrase keeps jumping out at me too. Some of my favourites:

"Some women were destined for widowhood, marriage was just the obstacle in their way."

"It used to be the poor who were thin and the rich who were fat, now it seemed to be the other way around."

"...couldn't feel sorry for someone who was so imperfectly equipped to deal with any drama that they weren't themselves the centre of."

She is just a great writer, and tells a great story.

Josie says

I regret to say it, but I didn't like this book as much as the three previous Jackson Brodie novels. The writing felt looser, not as polished. There was lots of rambling and POV-switching, which sometimes made it hard to keep up with what was going on. I also disliked the characters reminiscing so much, as the narrative would skip between the past and the present without always signposting it. And how annoying were all those descriptions of Jackson "tapping in" an email on his phone to Hope McMaster?

I also wanted answers at the end, which I didn't get. Some mysteries were solved, but Courtney's identity and Kelly Cross's murder -- two major threads of the plot -- were left unresolved, which was frustrating.

Jackson's unexplained ~revelation~ at the end was clearly that Courtney's birthmark matched the list of distinguishing signs in Mitch's missing children folder, but that doesn't answer anything -- it just confirms that she was a missing child, and not Kelly's daughter.

But I did like Tracy Waterhouse, and Courtney's papal gestures with her silver fairy wand. Their story carried the whole book along and made the other bits more bearable.

Huw Rhys says

I'm sure there was a good detective novel trying to emerge from this morass, somewhere...

But it was hidden between too many unnecessary characters, too many unfinished tales, too many completely pointless streams of consciousness, too many attempts at being a South American "magic" novel of the 1970's/ 1980's, too much cataloguing of "nasty murders that happened up north", and too many ridiculous coincidences - just too much fog and unfinished waffle in general.

Cut it down by 100 pages or so and tidy it up, cut a lot of the sylphs out and it might have been a decent read. As it was, it rambled too much, it had far too many superfluous characters and just more words than it needed.

Parts of it were written really well though; some of the action was taut, some of the characterization believable and attractive, and there really was a decent story hidden in here somewhere. It just had the feeling that it lacked a really good editor who would have cut away a lot of the chaffe that sadly ruined what might have been a good yarn. Shame.

Kim says

My friend Jemidar and I put off reading this, the fourth of Kate Atkinson's novels featuring former police officer and former private detective Jackson Brodie, because we heard it ended in a cliffhanger. We don't like hanging from cliffs and thought we'd wait until the next Jackson Brodie novel was published before putting ourselves in that situation. Turns out that Atkinson is not planning to write any more books in the series in the foreseeable future, so we decided to delay no longer. As it happens, we were also wrong in thinking that this novel ends in a cliffhanger. Although the ending's not tied up in a neat bow, it does have a sense of completeness to it, all the while leaving open the possibility that Atkinson could change her mind and return to writing about Jackson Brodie at some point in the future.

This installment in the series is set in and around Leeds and in Whitby in Northern Yorkshire. Jackson is trying to track down the birth mother of a woman in New Zealand. His investigation leads him to chance encounters with a retired policewoman working as a security officer, a small child, an elderly actress in the early stages of dementia and an abused dog. From those encounters spins the story of a murder which occurred in 1975, police corruption and child abduction. However, the crimes are not the point of the novel. As she does in the earlier Jackson Brodie novels – and, for that matter, in her standalone works – Atkinson uses the plot to explore themes of grief, loss, loneliness, dysfunctional family relationships and mortality.

Atkinson's characters are not happy, or if they are happy it's unlikely to last. They are vulnerable, damaged and lost, looking for connection and only sometimes finding it. For them, loving is fraught with danger, being loved is temporary at best, but they still strive for both. This sounds grim, and it is. And yet, Atkinson's elegant, ironic prose, her deft characterization and the intelligence, compassion and humour of her writing make her novels a joy to read. The most poignant and haunting scenes in this novel involve the secondary characters: little Courtney with her collection of belongings, her magic wand and her fingers forming stars; Tilly as she slowly sinks into dementia, the loyal Yorkshire terrier rescuing its new master.

A reader who expects a simple mystery or detective story from the Jackson Brodie novels will probably be disappointed. Atkinson eschews a conventional linear narrative. Instead, she jumps around in time and uses interior monologues that at times border on stream of consciousness to advance the narrative. In addition, the work is full of literary allusions (the title is a line from an Emily Dickinson poem) and allusions to quantum mechanics (Shrödinger's cat appears more than once). Atkinson is not afraid to use improbable coincidences in the plot, a technique that has the potential to annoy fans of more traditional crime fiction. However, the effect of chance encounters and the seemingly random choices people make are themes that run all through Atkinson's writing and reinforce the sense she gives of the unpredictability of life.

If this is indeed the last Jackson Brodie novel, then it is a fitting end to his career. While I'd like to see him return, I completely understand if Atkinson decides to retire him permanently. At least he'll have that lovely dog to keep him company on his travels and to stop him from feeling too sorry for himself.

I love Kate Atkinson's writing and it has been a joy to read this particular novel with Jemidar.

Lisa says

Atkinson is a thinking persons writer, who is also not caught up in using big words to discuss big concepts. This is extremely difficult to pull off, as many authors try to either dumb down their ideas to fit a certain reading genre or they inflate their work with self-importance. Atkinson digs deep into the human psyche and weaves tales upon themselves and over again, and everything in her books is connected. There is a reason for everything she does and everything falls into place, one by one, as the story unfolds.

She's also an economical writer, one who will use the right word or phrase at the right now. She doesn't skimp: everything is well placed and thought out. Reading Atkinson is always a great reminder why I love to read: To be placed in the story, to witness the characters successes and triumphs, and to feel as though you are not a voyeur, but an eyewitness to the story's tale.

After a long personal hiatus with reading, diving back in with *STARTED EARLY, TOOK MY DOG* was a joy. Atkinson reaffirms my faith modern literature and makes me hungry for more.

?Karen says

This is a series I quite enjoy, although peppered with unlikely coincidences and an excess of characters that really do make it hard to follow in the beginning. As usual, though, once Jackson Brodie arrives on the scene, it's an instant improvement. In England, Jackson is hired long distance by a New Zealander to find her birth parents. It proves to be not an easy task and downright dangerous when he starts asking around about the past. What exactly happened all those years ago, when a prostitute was murdered and she and her son were not found for three weeks? What does this have to do with Jackson's case? Is it tied to ex-cop Tracy who just purchased a little girl in a shopping mall for 3000 pounds?

Right after Jackson makes an appearance, he beats up a thug who is abusing a dog and threatening to kill it. Jackson takes the dog, and the little fella becomes his constant companion and proves to be his salvation many times over. A nice touch.

I listened to this in my car and walking around the neighborhood, and had to laugh out loud many times. The neighbors likely think I'm daft. There were some things left unanswered in the end, but I still liked it.

Pattie says

Another Kate Atkinson arrived at our library, and lived up to my sky-high expectations.

Here's the thing: if you want everything tied up in a neat package: no. If you want a linear narrative: no. "Easy read": no.

But if you love interesting, complex characters, complex stories and delightful writing: yes. Part-time private-eye and semi-successful womanizer Jackson Brodie, and cranky retired cop Tracy Waterhouse are the centerpieces of this book. Jackson spends the book confused, chasing several people that he believes may

have the answers for an adopted client. Tracy also spends the book confused, running away from people she thinks are chasing her after she "purchases" an abused-looking child from an angry petty criminal. Atkinson tackles the themes of identity, confusion, and family while following these two constantly-moving characters.

My only complaint is about the amount of time that Jackson spends brooding about his ex-wives/girlfriends. Also, there are some loose ends (Atkinson tends to tie up her convergent stories by the last page). This leads me to the happy conclusion, though, that we haven't seen the last of either Jackson or Tracy.

Anna says

Rating: 4.5 stars

This fourth (and possibly final) outing in the *Jackson Brodie* series is my favourite. Jackson shares his tale with lonely retired Superintendent Tracy, dotty old actress Tilly, an adorable little girl, an equally adorable little dog, and a motley crew of retired coppers who graduated from police school with Gene Hunt, but who shirked the classes that gave Gene his gruff charm. They're all linked by an event that happened in the 1970s, and as Jackson searches for the truth, so the past comes together to keep it hidden.

The plotting of this event is intriguing, making this the most mystery-based book of the series, but as with the other *Brodie* books, characterisation is key. As ever, the magnetic Jackson pulled me in, forever destined to take one step forward and two steps back. But it was little Courtney and The Ambassador who stole my heart, so beautifully drawn with their against-the-odds resilience and loyalty. This continuing theme of loss and identity is reflected in all the threads of the story, giving it a haunting poignancy. As ever, I loved the way Atkinson captured the human soul in all its complexities - heartbreaking and gorgeous, all rolled into one.

If this is indeed the final *Brodie* book, I'll really miss him and his assorted associates - a wonderful, touching, quirky series, one of the best I've ever had the pleasure of reading.

Felice says

Kate Atkinson is close to my heart. Her idiosyncratic outlook, her canvas of eccentric, damaged, funny and sad characters are not things I want to be without.

In her mysteries, Atkinson's detective is Jackson Brodie. He comes standard with a chunk of the classic crime solver attributes: a disastrous personal life populated by ex-wives, children he doesn't see enough of and great loss. He is secretly sensitive, intuitive and has a healthy disregard for authority but Brodie has more than enough individuality and quirky colleagues and acquaintances to make him unique. Something else that Brodie has to set him apart from other detectives is an author who routinely writes about his cases through the eyes of multiple narrators. This is more the trick of a novelist than a mystery writer. Atkinson's use of various points of view heightens the reader's stake in her characters lives and how much they have to gain or lose.

The newest Brodie mystery is *Started Early, Took My Dog*. As with the other books in this series being at the wrong place at the right time for plot reasons gets the mystery started. The semi-retired Brodie is

traveling, seemingly seeing the sights and musing over his messy life. Nearby a former policewoman, Tracy Waterhouse, turned private security manager witnesses a Mother mistreating her young daughter. Minutes later Tracey has purchased the child. This is the first time in Started that a child is separated from its parent but it won't be the last. Children who have been abandoned either by choice or by chance litter the landscape of this novel. They are the common denominator that brings Brodie, the police and the victims together.

Atkinson will occasionally rely on coincidence to advance the plot in Started. The mystery in her mysteries in general are interesting puzzles but not as tightly plotted as say an Agatha Christie or P.D. James. Atkinson does share their deceptively straight forward writing style but instead of her mysteries being a Who Done It, they are more like a How The Hell We All Got To This Point and are all the more complex for that perspective.

The strengths of Atkinson's novels (mystery or otherwise) are characterization and sophisticated, intricate relationships. In that way there is no such thing as a minor character in anything by Atkinson. In Started, Brodie and Waterhouse carry the bulk of the action but their characters are not allowed to go it alone. The amazing interweaving of people, their histories and agendas into complexities that you can sink your teeth into is exhilarating. Atkinson fills us up with bad local TV actors, sketchy cops, prostitutes, Polish contractors, new pets, over reaching government officials and former lovers all struggling for happiness around the Leeds area where Brodie was raised. What gets them each attached to the crimes and overlapping in each others lives in this novel is believable and important to the plot. No one dances through this book for the sake of mere entertainment, every appearance has a consequence.

Started Early, Took My Dog is Kate Atkinson quenching! How deliciously fabulous is that? Unfortunately I doubt that nice full-up feeling will last me the year or more until her next book comes out!

Paul E. Morph says

Nnnnnnnnnngh... GAH!

OK, OK... Let me gather myself...

This, the fourth book in the Jackson Brodie series, delivers what you'd expect from the earlier books in the series: an extremely clever jigsaw of interlocking plots, some brilliantly well-developed characters, moments of horror, happiness, misery and hope... Everything that makes Atkinson such a brilliant writer.

It's a very moving book, dealing as it does with murder, kidnapping and child abuse. I admit to having shed a couple of tears while reading it.

BUT... am I going insane or does Atkinson leave a few major plot points completely unresolved? Spoilers for specifics:

(view spoiler)

I initially thought I was being thick but I've spent the last hour trawling the Internet trying to find answers to these questions and all I've managed to find is a host of bewildered readers with the same questions I have and no answers.

I'm now really, really hoping these questions will be answered in the next book in the series. My concern is that they won't be, as Atkinson has never left unanswered questions dangling at the end of the previous three books. I now have an image in my head of the author banging her head against her writing desk shouting 'The answers are all there but you can't find them because you're all SO STUPID! STUPID! STUPID!'

Bill Khaemba says

"Fiction had never been Jackson's thing. Facts seemed challenging enough without making stuff up. What he discovered was that the great novels of the world were about three things - death, money and sex. Occasionally a whale."

I can't believe it's the last in the installment

Utterly stunning, *totally beautiful*, I love this series so much and I cannot believe it's over at least I hope **Kate Atkinson** is writing another installment...

"He wondered what a visitor from the past would make of it. It used to be the poor who were thin and the rich who were fat, now it seemed to be the other way round."

If you have been following me in the past **3 months**, I have been devouring this crime series as if my life depend on it. The **stream of conciseness writing style** with absolutely **beautiful prose** and characters depth that is executed fabulously was just jaw-dropping to say the least. I want to shove the whole series in everyone's hand because it is amazing.

"She registered the look of alarm on his face and laughed. "God created Man," she repeated. " And then he had a better idea."

The **4th installment** got crazier and juicier than the previous ones and added a glimpse of a horrible crime that took place in the past and how it's catching up with the present. From kidnapping, death of prostitutes and shocking moments that just happens to involve our lovable Jackson Brodie. This was my favorite in the series because the mystery aspect was a lot more complex and it had at the edge of my seat.

I don't know how to sell this to you but if you haven't picked this up

Literary Crime fiction at its peak

Nikki says

Read for a reading challenge, and that's the only reason I stuck with it. At all. The prompt for this one was "set in your hometown", and Leeds was the closest I found. So I knew the Merrion Centre, where part of it was set, etc. I wasn't impressed, though; the narration was really meandering, not always on point at all, and it takes ages to really get started. I kind of have difficulty with the idea of Tracy buying a prostitute's daughter in this casual way, and I rooooooollled my eyes at all the stereotypes about her being fat, a battle-axe, looks like a lesbian, etc, etc. And the stereotypical elderly lady, starting to succumb to dementia.

So I started off on a bad foot with this book, and stayed on it. I didn't settle into the style at all — the book nearly hit the wall at some points, I found it so frustrating.

Very much not for me, in any sense. I hesitate to say it's a bad book, because there's no accounting for taste and all that, but it really wasn't something I'd recommend.

Originally posted here.

Suzanne says

Because of all the buzz about Kate Atkinson and the great reviews my GR friends gave this book, I decided to give Started Early, Took My Dog a spin. I couldn't decide if the title was a turn on or off. I was pleasantly surprised.

In the beginning, I couldn't tell who the main character was. I'm still not absolutely sure. Everyone talks about Jackson Brodie, so I'll make a safe bet on him, though Tracey is pretty important as well.

I 'm counting four conflicts, though they're all variations on a theme, so I guess we could call them foils.

Each set of characters are conflicted by children who have been kidnapped or stolen. That's not exactly true. Some characters are raised in biological home environments, but these homes were so bereft that their childhoods were stolen, even if they weren't.

The stolen children all turn out better than I would have expected. I'm not sure how Courtney will manage with Tracey, but as long as Courtney has her magic wand, I'm betting she'll prevail.

The structure kept me reading. The confusion abated quickly. The stories wove in and out and then in again.

My greatest concern is whether I should read the first three in the set or just jump on the bandwagon and read her highly acclaimed new novel.

Trish says

Kate Atkinson outdoes herself in this new novel featuring Jackson Brodie, private detective. He's back in England, doing some desultory checking on the parentage of a woman living overseas who had been orphaned in the 1970s. The story is braided with several threads, i.e., an aging actress suffering from dementia, a young child so heavy as to seem "dense as a small planet," and several other retired police. Atkinson handles it masterfully, bringing it all to a neat knot in a train station. This is bad news for Brodie,

as he has a nasty history with trains.

The trenchant sense of humor for which Atkinson is known is on display and she describes with clear-eyed compassion and humor our ridiculous, and sometimes hideous human condition. Motives and choices, the bobs and weaves of persons doing wrong, all have the ring of truth, as do the intentions and interventions of well-meaning, over-worked coppers on the beat. Set in Leeds, the story gives one a distinct sense of cold, cruel, rough, and distrusting. One wonders how anyone gets out of there with their psyche intact. Perhaps they don't, the author seems to say.

Michael says

As elegant as a Bach fugue and wise and fun at the same time. The lives of three strangers intersect briefly in Leeds in Yorkshire and then wander down separate but converging trajectories as tragic events from their lives 35 years ago drive propel them on paths of attempted resolution of their losses.

The three main characters are a retired woman cop working in mall security, an elderly actress with growing dementia, and a detective looking for the birth mother of a woman in New Zealand. Luckily, the latter is Jackson Brodie, the hero of the series, this being the fourth. He is licking his wounds from a former wife who fleeced him and disappeared, and his loneliness is manifest by continually hearing two previous wives talking in his head and by boldly taking a dog from an abusive owner.

When his apparently simple case stimulates a number of people to devious and violent reactions, he is not in any mood to quit until he gets to the bottom of it. Lots of great dialog, interior monologue, and zinging cultural references make for a lively narrative. Recurring metaphors from Emily Dickinson, the Schrodinger's Cat paradox from quantum physics, and the message of delayed consequences in the ditty beginning "For the want of a nail the shoe was lost, ..." helps keeps the reader engaged with the illusion that some deeper meaning is at play. Or maybe they helps reveal that the illusion of connections of past and present is something this delightful author likes to play with.

Patrick Neylan says

I'm in a rowdy pub, watching England play Slovenia. It's crowded, so I have to park myself right under the wall-mounted screen, my book resting on the shelf. Towards the end of the match, with the restless crowd running short of things to shout and despairing of a second goal, a voice starts chanting: "If you love Kate Atkinson, stand up!"

I'm already standing up. So is most of the pub. We all love Kate Atkinson. She is becoming one of Britain's most popular authors, and with good reason, and with 'Started Early, Took My Dog' she maintains that quality.

'Started Early' brings us back to some of the characters we met in Case Histories, with the Scottish private investigator Jackson Brodie bringing his peculiar brand of gruff humour to a collection of apparently unrelated mysteries. Where Atkinson shines, as always, is in creating a large cast of perfectly realised characters, each of whom is unique and sympathetic, or at least understandable and human.

Early on, the novel does demand slightly too much faith from the reader that all the disparate characters will come together to make a coherent story. Tilly is a particularly peripheral character: separated from the action

and with a role that only becomes apparent at the very end. She justifies her place in the novel, but only just. But Atkinson's readers have learnt to trust her, and that trust is rewarded.

To be honest, it's not as strong as her earlier work, and plausibility is stretched a bit far in places, especially at the end. But it's still brilliantly written and highly entertaining, so it looks like Atkinson will have another hit on her hands. Unlike England's footballers, hers is a talent that can be relied on.

Denise says

I don't think it's possible for me to love Kate Atkinson books more than I do. I want to go to Edinburgh and hang out with her (and when I said this on Twitter, some inn owner in that lovely, gloomy city said I should stop on by; they have a shelf full of Atkinson books in their cottage!). Anyway, this is Atkinson's fourth Jackson Brodie mystery, and I read this book as I was also watching the PBS Masterpiece Mystery series, *Case Histories*, in which a very watchable Jason Isaacs brings Brodie to life. TV hasn't done this latest, and good thing so far because I think I need to read it again first, and really digest the way Atkinson deftly draws characters and layers on their history and weaves stories from past and present together. All these books, as well as her first novel (not a Brodie mystery) are at their heart about lost little girls. If you like mysteries that have as their central feature not the mystery but the people, their motivations, their histories -- you have to read these books. She's also hilariously funny.

Amy says

I liked this book. I like Kate Atkinson. I like how characters are introduced slowly, and I don't always know instantly whose point of view I'm reading. Sometimes, I recognize connections between characters in the later books and characters or actions happening in current books. And I like how some mysteries are left unsolved at the end of the book.

I am starting to have difficulties with Jackson Brodie. I can believe in improbable things happening....a little bit of chaos theory in action. That's probably why I'm able to read so much romance and mystery. But Jackson Brodie is starting to stretch the limits of my belief.

Julie Christine says

Kate Atkinson does this thing that I love, it's a thing director Alexander Payne ("The Descendants" "Sideways" "About Schmidt") and my favorite girl, Jane Austen, do that I just eat up. These artists excel at creating anti-heroes, be it Atkinson's Jackson Brodie, Payne's Miles (though lion's share of credit should go to writer Rex Pickett for *Sideways*), or Austen's Elizabeth and Darcy, who aren't afraid to mock their own bad luck and bad moods. There is always a steady stream of wit and irony coursing through the narrative that keeps grim circumstance from becoming maudlin.

Of course, a deeply-flawed protagonist in crime fiction - whether she be a private dick or he a DI - is par for the course. What makes Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series so compelling is the author's brilliant prose. She takes the rote scenario - a tossed-about, lonely, erudite investigator solving mysteries more through happenstantial coincidence than skill - and injects it with unexpected but delicious detail in syntax that

delights. It's like being told grilled cheese is for lunch and being presented with just-melted burrata, fresh tomato and basil on grilled pagnotta. Comfort food with panache.

Started Early, Took My Dog - Atkinson's fourth featuring former soldier and policeman Jackson Brodie - offers far more in the satisfying character department than handsome, lovelorn, brooding Brodie. I will fully own my sucker's heart for The Ambassador, Jackson's foil who doesn't object to being trundled about in a large sack. Senile actresses, slimeball cops, meth-ed out prozzies are vivid and compelling fodder. We are introduced to mall security guard Tracy Waterhouse, she of size extra-large slacks and size extra-large heart. I hope like hell we see more of brave and hilarious Tracy. She is more than Jackson's match in ironical survival. And her small but fierce appendage will break your heart a hundred times over:

"Courtney, on the other hand, had made more of an effort, dressing herself from a selection of yesterday's new clothes. Some of them were on backwards but she had got the general idea right. Tracy's efforts at hairdressing the previous evening weren't entirely successful. In the cruel light of day the kid looked handmade. She had finished her cereal and was staring, Oliver Twist-like, at the empty bowl."

I did feel a twinge of annoyance at the messy nature of Jackson's personal relationships; he is too easily cowed by the women he has loved and with whom there is a history of mutual neglect. Jackson has a hard time moving on, but Atkinson uses these relationships as a plot device to give her characters context and to ground them in the present.

As important of features as wit and irony play in Atkinson's narrative, they do not overshadow the intelligence and humanity that run deeply through her stories. Perhaps more than the three novels that preceded it, *Started Early...* challenges the moral centers of its characters and readers. They and we are compelled to question the rights of parents vs. the welfare of children, the nature of identity and family, and the true victims of drug dependency and prostitution.

The crimes and misdemeanors at the heart of *Started Early...* stand alone for those uninitiated to Ms. Atkinson's Jackson Brodie oeuvre. But do yourself a favor, partake of the whole rich banquet.

And how could I not love this story, when its title was inspired by Emily. Dickinson, that is:

I started Early – Took my Dog – (656)
BY EMILY DICKINSON

I started Early – Took my Dog –
And visited the Sea –
The Mermaids in the Basement
Came out to look at me –

And Frigates – in the Upper Floor
Extended Hempen Hands –
Presuming Me to be a Mouse –
Aground – upon the Sands –

But no Man moved Me – till the Tide
Went past my simple Shoe –
And past my Apron – and my Belt
And past my Boddice – too –

And made as He would eat me up –
As wholly as a Dew

Opon a Dandelion's Sleeve –
And then – I started – too –

And He – He followed – close behind –
I felt His Silver Heel
Opon my Ankle – Then My Shoes
Would overflow with Pearl –

Until We met the Solid Town –
No One He seemed to know –
And bowing – with a Mighty look –
At me – The Sea withdrew –

Source: The Poems of Emily Dickinson Edited by R.W. Franklin (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Beth says

Definitely my least favorite Jackson Brodie novel.

I've seen others rate this book very highly, and to each their own -- but I thought it pretty much sucked. I usually like Atkinson's typical method of having multiple storylines going on at once, and true to form, they did manage to blend together about 3/4 of the way through the book ... but I got extremely irritated with all of the pointless internal dialogue that did nothing to contribute to the story. Having multiple characters is only good if the characters and their stories are actually interesting -- and I could've done without most of the extra backstory junk. Also, I think every page in which the character Tilly appeared could've been deleted altogether, as she served no purpose whatsoever and was an absolute bore.

I realize that the entire story couldn't have been about Jackson -- but this book would've been a lot better if it focused more on him, and him solving the 'mystery'.

Oh, and also -- storylines that don't get resolved irritate me. Others may be fine with it, but I think it's annoying. How hard would it have been to tell us who Courtney's Mom really was? And maybe a bit of resolution from Hope's end (i.e., what did she do with the information, how did she take it?), and not just Michael's, would've been nice.
