



Mr Dixon Disappears

Ian Sansom

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Israel Armstrong, one of literature's most unlikely detectives, returns for more crime solving adventure in this hilarious second novel from 'The Mobile Library' series.

The second in the 'The Mobile Library' detective series, 'Mr Dixon Disappears' once again features the magnificently hapless Israel Armstrong – the young, Jewish, duffle-coat wearing librarian who solves crimes, mysteries, and domestic problems all whilst driving a mobile library around the coast of Northern Ireland.

Dixon and Pickering's, County Antrim's legendary department store, is preparing to celebrate its centenary. But the elderly Mr Dixon – a member of the Ulster Association of Magicians – has gone missing, along with one hundred thousand pounds in cash. It smells, pretty badly, of a kidnap.

Israel becomes a suspect in the police investigation and is suspended from his job by his boss, the ever-fearsome Linda Wei. He's having to fight to clear his name.

Does Israel's acclaimed five-panel touring exhibition showing the history of Dixon and Pickering's in old photographs and artefacts perhaps hold the key to Mr Dixon's mysterious disappearance? Will romance blossom between Israel and Rosie Hart, the barmaid at the First and Last? Will Linda Wei stick to her diet? And has nobody here heard of Franz Kafka? All will be revealed in this hilarious and endlessly inventive sequel to 'The Case of the Missing Books'.

Mr Dixon Disappears Details

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Author : Ian Sansom

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Lsexton says

I was hoping for more from book 2 of the Mobile Library Mystery series.

Israel is back, as incompetent as ever, and still living in a chicken coop on George's farm. This time he is being framed in the disappearance of local mogul, Mr. Dixon.

I think this book relied too heavily on the funky characters and Irish setting. There's not much interesting about the mystery. Is Israel being set up by the cops? Why? The evidence is so shaky, it's unbelievable, even for a spoof. The solution at the end that supposedly makes everything right again, is feeble.

Very blah ... We are going to need some reason to want to keep up with Israel. He, himself, is such an unsympathetic character that I fail to feel sorry for him. He is self-pitying, irritable to his customers, and slow to learn. The only thing I like about him is that he likes books too.

Kirsten says

The Mobile Library series is a very cute "detective" series. However, if you're looking for bloodshed, you won't find it here. It is a very British series. I don't know if you get this in many American books. The "fish out of water". Our detective is a librarian, who runs the Mobile Library in a small town in Northern Ireland.

His name is Israel and he's a vegetarian, a Jew (not observant), and from London! And here's he thrown in an exceptionally non-diverse Irish town (village) to run the Mobile Library. Warnings: hilarity will ensue!

In this book, he gets mixed up in the disappearance of a local businessman/amateur magician and the police decide he's the culprit - even if they're not really sure what the crime is!

Samuel Langer says

ES EVEN BETTA

Hans says

Second book in a (nominally) "mystery" series that is really more about a fish-out-of-water (re)building a life in a foreign place: vegetarian Irish/Jewish librarian from England conned into driving a bookmobile in northern Ireland. This second volume has a great cold open about library fines. It also gives some space for the local residents to develop as complex characters. I also appreciate the friendship developing between our librarian and Ted. (Plus a few interesting darker turns to close out the book, which most likely carry us into book 3 of 4.)

Why this/why now: As mentioned, a friend recommended these books around 2008. I've had the first two

volumes on the bookshelves for at least a year. Time to clear a few books off the shelf because I just picked up a few more to eventually get through (Lawrence Block's Keller series...probably not as heart-warming as the mobile library series).

Sheila says

The continued adventures of mobile librarian Israel Armstrong, pretentious intellectual and all-around wet rag. Armstrong has managed to develop a bit of spunk since his first adventure (The Case of the Missing Books), but he still finds himself the hapless victim of circumstances beyond his control. Once again, this is a book that will probably appeal to those who love a good cozy, but - again - don't expect a bunch of dead bodies. The ending was a little ho-hum, but like the first one, most of my reading pleasure came from the charm of the sad-sack main character. If we could give half stars, I would probably give it 3.5, because four is really too much, but I'm not sure I would give three stars to a book I enjoyed enough to read the next in the series, which I plan on doing.

Laura Rodd says

I love reading the well crafted sentences of Ian Sansom. You may not become enamored with Israel Armstrong but you develop a healthy empathy for the big boob. Israel is in another pickle of a situation this time being a prime suspect for robbery, kidnapping and possible murder. Just when he was beginning to fit in somewhat now he thinks with nostalgia of Tumdrum (its cold soaking rains are now seen as "refreshing", his shabby/barely habitable "home" in a former chicken coop suddenly signifies all of the warmth of hearth and home, he even begins to mourn the fact that the book mobile will have shorten runs without him) as he faces the bleak prospect of a jail cell in the northernmost tip of Northern Ireland.

Given a week to prove his innocence he scrambles (literally) around without a car, without a rusty-brakeless bike (it's pinched) or even good shoes as his leather loafers disintegrate with rot from the constant rain. Hobbled he forges on, blindly missing clues while stumbling onto others. Israel's quest to clear his name is successful but not due to any contribution of his own.

Hapless, Hopeless, wonderfully incompetent Israel Armstrong. I can't wait for Ian Sansom's next installment.

Lemar says

Is there just one detective who can not beat up multiple thugs, who does not go it alone while leaving a trail of broken hearts? Yes, there is Israel Armstrong, a reluctant participant in almost anything, an affable guy, a nice person, not deliberately offensive...a librarian.

In this second of a series we find Israel treated abominably, accused of crimes and often not even offered tea. Yet our hero struggles on, living life and solving mysteries in his way, a gentle, honest and bumbling way. I like Israel, and would rather find myself in his company that in that of Bond, James.

Magrathea says

Freddo di chiamata

E' un modo di dire che non so quanti di voi conoscono. Sta ad indicare qualcuno che, nonostante venga sollecitato, non risponde al richiamo, non mostra reazioni. Il libro si legge scorrevolmente, la scrittura è tipicamente "british" con qualche ripetizione tipo "tic nervoso" un pò sfiancante. Non è terribile, ma non lascia il segno. A parte alcune interessanti riflessioni del protagonista, la situazione paradossale che si crea nella storia ha dei rimandi kafkiani, ma molto meno complessi. Il finale non al livello della suspense creata non è un difetto. Come dire, il viaggio sta nel mentre e non è soltanto il raggiungimento della mèta a determinare la bellezza di un'avventura. Tutto sommato, senza infamia nè lode. Non mi convince proseguire le orme dell'autore.

Starry says

This series of novels by Ian Sansone tell of Israel Armstrong, an agonizingly self-questioning, almost-30-year-old London man who moves to a remote village in Northern Ireland. Israel lives in a not-yet-converted chicken coop on a farm (a home he doesn't really like) and drives the book mobile (a job he doesn't really like) and spends most of his time feeling out of place and introspective (ie, self-centered) and vaguely depressed, like everyone his age apparently feels these days.

Comments:

These books are billed as mysteries but shouldn't be read as such -- meaning, you'll be frustrated if you are looking for a great mystery. The solutions are simple, the process is non-existent (no one goes about solving it rationally; many important questions go unanswered), and the main character spends most of his time navel-gazing and haplessly getting into binds. The mystery, like the book mobile, is merely a vehicle for telling a story about Israel Armstrong.

These books can be very funny. The author works in some hilarious dialog and reflections of a Jewish, vegetarian Londoner on the culture/dialect of Northern Ireland. However, I often found myself reading along, thinking "this is so funny" or "I will highly recommend this book" -- and then the author took it too far or carried on for too long until it was no longer funny, like a little kid that gets a laugh from her parents so she says her funny line again. And again. And again. All the same, I did get some good laughs from this book.

Be forewarned that the author is also a literary critic. Sometimes this can be funny and insightful, but other times it borders on offensive and seems almost like taking advantage of the reader to air his opinions.

I also was confused by the author's impressions of the religious culture in North Ireland. Sometimes, he has the local minister give the straight-up gospel (and I'm not sure why he includes long quotations from the sermons; are they meant to be satirical? or simply recording what one might hear?), other times the minister lapses into the very humanist "I-don't-really-believe-this-stuff-but-I-say-it-because-it's-nice-and-makes-everyone-feel-good." Ugh. Sorry, but that's a pet peeve of mine.

Recommendation: I recommend these but not as mysteries. And don't read too many in a row.

Rachel says

Well, it's really more of the same from Ian Sansom with this second book in the Mobile Library series. And for that, I love him! This book goes a bit deeper than the last, brings a few more of Israel's (and the rest of Tumdrum's) complications, flaws, and redeeming qualities to light. And despite the fact that Israel is still decidedly *not* Irish yet, you see the flavor of Tumdrum seeping into him a bit more each day, as though by osmosis. But Samson holds true to what worked so well in the first book: a mystery, a bumbling librarian, and some likable, eccentric villagers who seem to love and hate Israel at the same time. Pitch perfect!

Jen says

I love love love this series, and I'm not even a mystery fan. The Mobile Library Mystery series is a spoof on sort of Agatha Christie novels. The narrator does little more than bumble around and fall in and out of trouble. Great, fun reads -- can't wait for the next one!

I reviewed this book for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Bibliophile says

The second of Ian Sansom's "Mobile Library" mysteries about the half-Jewish, half-Irish Israel Armstrong, the mobile librarian and fish completely out of water in the small Northern Irish town of Tumdrum. Like *The Case of the Missing Books*, this was a quick entertaining read, and I particularly enjoyed both Sansom's horrifying description of a bibliophile who feels that he may have erred in his lifelong devotion to books as quoted below.

"He had always believed that reading was good for you, that the more books you read somehow the better you were, the closer to some ideal of human perfection you came, yet if anything his own experience at the library suggested the exact opposite: that reading didn't make you a better person, that it just made you short-sighted, and even less likely than your fellow man or woman to be able to hold a conversation about anything that did not centre around you and your ailments and the state of the weather.

"He shivered.

"Could all that really be true? Did it matter? That the striving after knowledge, the attempt to understand human minds and human nature, and stories, and narrative shapes and patterns, made you no better a person? That the whole thing was an illusion? That books were not a mirror of nature or a mark of civilisation, but a chimera? that the reading of books was in fact nothing more than a kind of mental knitting, or like the monotonous eating of biscuits, a pleasant way of passing time before you died? All those words about words, and texts about texts, and all nothing more than tiny splashes of ink ...

"Nothing to read: nothing to be read."

Judy says

This is the second in the Mobile Library Series and I'm official in love. Israel Armstrong is a 29 year old, bumbling, overweight, vegetarian, Jewish librarian who moved from London to a small town in Northern Ireland only to find out that the library has been closed and his job is to drive the bookmobile. While setting up a five panel exhibit in the Dixon and Pickering department store on the history of the store, the security guard comes to tell Israel that the store has been robbed and Mr. Dixon is missing. Ever helpful, Israel puts his fingerprints all over the empty safes trying to understand what has happened which leads to his arrest for robbery and kidnapping. If you want a book that is plot strong, this is not the book. Instead, it is focused on characters--and these are quite the characters--that populate the small town of Tumdrum and situations in which they interact. After Israel is released from jail on bail, he and Ted Carson, the owner of the local taxi service, try to find out what really happened. My favorite parts of the book were Israel's rant about the excuses that people give for bringing back their library books late or not at all (I've actually used some of those same excuses) and his constant comment on why he couldn't be involved in the crime, "But I'm the librarian". Perfect.

Kerry says

Odd, odd, odd. I thought this series sounded nice. A librarian who finds himself in precarious situations in Northern Ireland. However, the narrator is such an odd duck. Maybe I needed to start with the initial book to get the lay of the land and I may give it a shot because the plot is still appealing. I do really like the voices of the supporting characters and their tales which provide a juxtaposition to the main characters dullness. I just think the main character's voice is rather annoying. It seems to be saying life just happens to me, I don't control it. In addition, the main character seems ho-hum and rather apathetic. I would NOT have him over if I was having a dinner party to say the least. I should give this a little higher ranking...maybe 2.6, and will try another one in the series. We'll see.

Lisa Rector says

Poor Israel, he does get the bleepy end of the stick, doesn't he! The usual shenanigans take place in the twisted little town he's stuck in, but he muddles through somehow. I always enjoy his observations on books, people, and whatever else happens to set him off. I'm looking forward to the third book in the series.
