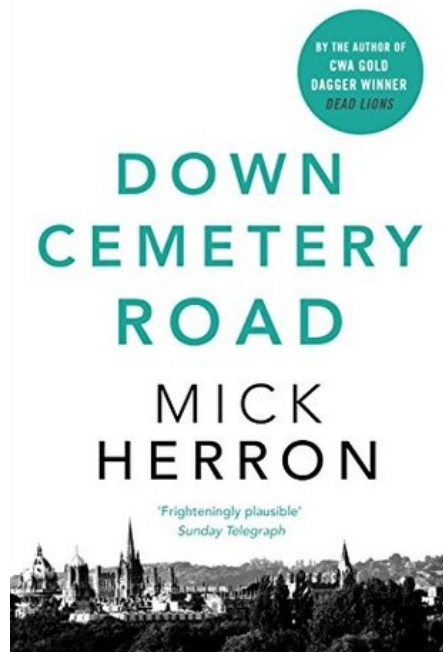




Down Cemetery Road

Mick Herron

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When a house explodes in a quiet Oxford suburb and a young girl disappears in the aftermath, Sarah Tucker - a young married woman, bored and unhappy with domestic life - becomes obsessed with finding her. Accustomed to dull chores in a childless household and hosting her husband's wearisome business clients for dinner, Sarah suddenly finds herself questioning everything she thought she knew, as her investigation reveals that people long believed dead are still among the living, while the living are fast joining the dead.

What begins in a peaceful neighbourhood reaches its climax on a remote, unwelcoming Scottish island as the search puts Sarah in league with a man who finds himself being hunted down by murderous official forces.

Down Cemetery Road Details

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Author : Mick Herron

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Spy Thriller, Espionage, European Literature, British Literature

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From Reader Review Down Cemetery Road for online ebook

Dave says

4.5 *

Sandi says

A really well written conspiracy type thriller that had just the right mix of suspense, paranoia, and plot twists along with some truly memorable characters.

John says

Oxford housewife Sarah is in the terminal stages of the dinner party from hell, forced upon her by her would-be financial whizkid Mark, when the house down the road explodes, killing the two adults therein; their small daughter, however, escapes unscathed . . . only shortly thereafter to disappear off the face of the earth as if she'd never existed. Sarah, diagnosed by one of her husband's obnoxious dinner guests that evening as suffering from Bored Housewife Syndrome, takes it upon herself to try to track down the child, little realize that she's taking on one of the UK's nastiest covert divisions, a group largely manned by sociopaths that's charged with clearing up the messes made by the security services by "disappearing" people and the truth alike. Doggedly persistent, Sarah dodges death through a combination of naivety, luck and simple goodheartedness even as the bodies pile up around her. In so doing she gradually unravels the horrific crimes the UK government is committing supposedly in the name of that country's citizens.

This was a book slow to start, and the tedium was barely helped by the author's frequent habit of using cheap narrative tricks to pull the wool over the reader's eyes -- as example, we're made to believe at first it was Sarah's house that exploded and then, gasp, a few pages later it's revealed with a sort of arch cackle that, no, the text was ambiguous and really it was the nearby house that went bang. That's cheating, in my opinion. (I've committed this crime myself on occasion, but I educated myself out of it years ago.) This sort of smartassery continues all through the book; late on, there's an example of it that's supposed to offer a fiendishly cunning twist whose stupidity is revealed when you ask yourself: *How would you film this?* You couldn't, of course, because the twist wouldn't work if you could actually *see* what was going on. Even so, after its sluggish start the narrative really does pick up a compelling head of steam; the pages started turning at a blurring speed. I'm still not certain if this adequately compensated for the irritation I felt over the artificiality of those "cheats".

Gram says

Bored housewife hires private detective to find a missing girl and crosses the path of British Government sanctioned contract killers who blew up her neighbour's house. Having read Mick Herron's "Slow Horses" series - which I thoroughly enjoyed - I decided to give his earlier books a try. This one was first published in 2003 and has a slow build up which fans of the aforementioned spy series may find difficult to stay with. While I think "Down Cemetery Road" would have benefited from judicious editing, I found it a decent thriller.

Marianne says

Down Cemetery Road is the first book in the Oxford Investigations series by British author, Mick Herron. Her career stalled, Sarah Tucker is an unenthusiastic housewife when, during a painful dinner party with someone her husband is trying to impress, a bomb blows up the house down the street. Young widow Maddie Singleton and an unknown male die in the explosion, but four-year-old Dinah miraculously survives.

Sarah is unsure why she wants to know the child's fate, but she goes looking, and keeps hitting brick walls: at the hospital and at the police station. She ends up talking to Joe Silvermann at Oxford Investigations. Joe can't find Dinah Singleton, but he does learn some other intriguing facts. These facts, and some educated hunches set them on a path they may regret. Joe's partner, Zoe Boehm eventually has no choice but to get involved.

Herron gives the reader an excellent tale in this, his debut, novel. If it seems like it starts a bit slowly, that's probably just Herron's way of setting up the story, the characters and the general atmosphere. The plot is easily believable, with quite a few twists and red herrings before a very exciting climax. There are plenty of bodies, not all of them dead, as well as guns, razors, helicopters, boats, pills, soldiers, lovers and dental floss.

Joe seems to be a bit of a bumbling detective whose manner belies his abilities; Sarah takes hold of the wrong end of the stick and is reluctant to relinquish it; Zoe proves to be a capable investigator, so it is no surprise that she features in the next three books of the series. Readers familiar with his Slough House series will already be aware that Herron does not hesitate to kill off a character when the plot requires it, so perhaps don't get too attached to any of the characters too soon. Fans will be eager to read the second instalment, *The Last Voice You Hear*.

Deanna says

I almost rounded up to five. Outstanding in many ways, but there was significant sag after about the 60% mark when the POV character switching ramped up in speed and volume, including new characters, the irregular importance of one POV character, and an over-emphasis on the pursuing characters rather than the protagonists. A bit messy and diluted.

But for me to still be tempted to five this one means it was pretty great otherwise. Smart, strong writing. Imperfect but not pitiful, ridiculous, grating characters. Poor decisions felt real and tension building rather than head-slapping stupid.

Keen observation with fresh language that isn't arty, self-conscious, or otherwise distracting.

Significant blurring in the good-guy bad-guy distinction is a hallmark and strength of Herron's books.

Never felt predictable. Sometimes I wondered why some things did not feel unbelievable to me, but Herron can make what might otherwise not work seem just right.

That this is his first published novel makes it all the more surprising. Knowing his later books are even more solid, his fandom for this author is intact.

Polly says

Down Cemetery Road is a slow burn of a read. The pace intensifies gradually until it becomes a good page turner. However, the main character, Sarah didn't quite sit right with me. The various plot twists and reveals were interesting but left me wondering if a thirty something suffering from BHS (Bored Housewife Syndrome) would really be driven to follow up a lead as intensely as she did. In the end, I'd much rather read another of the Slough House series than another in this series.

Jim Durrett says

Mick Herron's first novel, I believe, 1st of 4 in a series. Having started with his Slow Horses and those that followed, it was interesting to see his early style. Definitely Mick Herron. Good read.

Eadie says

Book description:

One quiet evening in Oxford a house near Sarah Tucker's suddenly explodes. The cause is later reported to be a gas leak, but when a child disappears in the aftermath, Sarah — a young married woman, bored and unhappy with her life — becomes obsessed with trying to find her. Very soon she's left wondering whether she has really ever known anybody or anything at all, as her attempts at investigation reveal that people long thought dead are still among the living, while the living are joining the dead. Her own life however, becomes distinctly less boring. What begins in this peaceful suburb comes to a compelling climax on a remote and unwelcoming Scottish island, as the hunt for the missing child takes Sarah out of her marriage and into a journey with a companion who himself is being hunted by murderous and apparently official forces. This acclaimed first novel sets a cracking pace with a satisfying denouement.

I really enjoyed Mick Herron's debut novel, Down Cemetery Road, so much that I have ordered all of his other books. His writing is quirky and keeps you interested and is a real page-turner. A little slow in the beginning but never stops once it gets going! I love his characters and his dialogue which is very articulate and intelligent!

Brenda says

[Herron killed him off relatively early. (hide spoiler)]

Pgchuis says

3.5 * rounded up.

Sarah and her husband Mark are hosting a dinner party when a house further up the street explodes, killing

the female occupant and an unknown male, but sparing a four year old girl, Dinah. For reasons I did not really understand, Sarah becomes obsessed with finding Dinah, who mysteriously disappears from the local hospital. Sarah employs a private detective, Joe, convinced that one of her dinner guests, Gerard, was responsible for the explosion.

I enjoyed this novel overall; the bigger picture involving covert government experiments/operations was logical and convincing and I liked the characters of Gerard, Joe and Zoe. I also enjoyed the mere existence of a character named Wigwam. The prologue section was excellent, especially in the light of what is revealed later, and I appreciated the fact that Michael and Thomas were no saints.

However, it felt over-long. Sarah's interest in Dinah was insufficiently motivated and Sarah kept making intuitive leaps in logic that were beyond me; while some of these admittedly turned out to be wrong, a surprising number of them were correct. While this was handy for the plot, it was frustrating to read about. The trip with Joe to the orphanage was a section that could have been cut completely. The body count was also exhaustingly high.

I didn't really warm to Sarah; her backstory had an enormous gap between her recovery from the fall and the now of the story, which made it difficult to imagine what her marriage to Mark had been like. Unless I missed it, we never even found out what her lost career had been. I gather there are further novels in this series featuring Sarah and Zoe; hopefully more Zoe than Sarah!

Phrynne says

Having read all the available books in the brilliant Slough House series I had to check out Mick Herron's other books and apparently Down Cemetery Road is his debut novel. It is also the first in the Oxford Investigations series.

It is not as incredibly good as any of the Slough House books but it is still good and very entertaining. Herron's style is there, the slightly outrageous characters, the black humour, the way apparently important characters are suddenly killed off. As far as this author is concerned everyone and anyone is disposable. No complacency allowed for readers here!

I liked the main character of Sarah Tucker. She certainly showed hidden depths. Zoe Boehm also has great promise for future books in the series. Many people died in many varied ways throughout the book and it was action packed.

Overall I enjoyed it very much and felt that it was a book where Herron was finding his feet in preparation for the best to come.

Terri says

The is one of the better books I've read in a while. The book begins with a bored housewife, serving dinner to impress her husband's new client (he hopes), and explosion down the street and goes on from there.

It's not a fast-moving story line, but once it got my attention, was difficult to put down. Combines ordinary people with spies and government-sanctioned killers. There are a lot of twists that I didn't expect. The story does make you wonder about things..could this really happen? Yes, I expect it could, and wouldn't be

surprised if it had.

I have not read any 'spy' novels in a long time, and had not expected it here. But it's more. The author's debut novel. I hope to read more.

SueKich says

Dialogue to die for.

Rising banker Mark has invited a potentially lucrative new client to dinner - much to his wife Sarah's annoyance. Even more irritating is the man's arrogance, peering down his nose at their other guests. A huge explosion demolishes a house at the end of the road and abruptly puts an end to the dinner party. The assumption is that this was caused by a gas leak. So why does the obnoxious Gerard Inchon refer to it as a bomb? It later emerges that two people have died in the blast and a little girl has gone missing. Sarah becomes curious...dangerously so.

The dialogue positively crackles with smart one-liners and witty put-downs. It doesn't sound remotely believable, of course – who in real life talks as though they're in a Billy Wilder movie? But who cares? It's fun to read. However, when the storyline develops into black ops and high-level cover-ups, the plot takes precedence over the interplay of the characters and one's interest wanes. Sarah's voluntary involvement is just too silly for words and the denouement is eked out for far too long. But the writing is a notch above the usual crime fare and if you enjoy Herron's Slough House series, then you might find this book from his back catalogue worth catching up on.

Kim Kaso says

Mick Herron tells his story in an unexpected way, draws the reader in and keeps him/her guessing. The excerpt from Nobody Walks piqued my interest, and I am already seeking out the next volume in the Oxford series, as well as the Slough House series. It is a great day when I find a new author that has a plethora of books to add to my towering "to-be-read" pile, it is money in my book bank. I heartily recommend this author.
