



The Practice of Deceit

Elizabeth Benedict

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In this razor-sharp novel of marriage and divorce gone awry, Elizabeth Benedict navigates the turbulent waters of love, power, and vengeance with biting wit and penetrating insight.

When the Manhattan psychotherapist Eric Lavender meets the sexy, stylish lawyer Colleen O'Brien Golden, his bachelor life suddenly loses its long-standing appeal. Soon he moves to Scarsdale to join Colleen and finds a life of domestic bliss as a husband and father with a new baby and an adorable stepdaughter. But Eric's suburban oasis is threatened when a legal conflict of interest with Colleen turns up disturbing evidence of a hidden past.

The Practice of Deceit Details

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From Reader Review The Practice of Deceit for online ebook

Katy says

3 1/2 stars! I love stumbling across a new book! I listened to this on CD and really enjoyed it-great narrator.

Eric Lavender is a successful psychotherapist in New York, and also a hard-set bachelor. When he meets Colleen Golden one day, he is intrigued by her, and the two begin seeing one another.

You'd think that's where the story would begin, but the heart actually starts a few years later, when they're settled. Small things begin to happen that don't make sense to Eric, and he begins looking deeper into Colleen's past.

One day he's arrested for child molestation of his own stepdaughter. Coincidence? I think not!

This reminded me of a psychological thriller - I would actually get the creeps when Colleen spoke sometimes. Well done, I say!

I'd like to read some more work by this author - if you read this, let me know what you thought!

Janine Flood says

Despite this not being one of best written psychological suspense novels that I have read, I did enjoy it. The first person male narrator started out strong, which made it easy for me to quickly become engrossed in his story, but as the narrative conflict picked up, he became less believable. The climax left a lot to be desired. We never got to see the narrator confront his antagonist, but instead we're inundated with a barrage of updates from lawyers and detectives who informed him (and us) of conflicts and resolutions.

I hate to bring up the ever-popular GONE GIRL, as a comparison, but I have to say that this novel would have definitely benefitted from such an alternating POV style. I would have loved to have been able to get inside the head of the antagonist, Colleen, who the narrator, Eric, constantly laments about not really knowing. She seemed to be much more interesting than Eric Lavender, the sensitive psychotherapist and I would have loved to have heard her point of view, as warped as I am sure it would be.

All in all, good, not great. A quick fun read and I don't regret having dedicated a few days.

Rachel Brady says

This reminded me of Fatal Attraction, only with a divorce at the story's center instead of an affair. Elizabeth Benedict wrote the story from a man's POV, which I imagine was tricky to do, and that was done well. The characters are well-developed and unique, and the methods by which Eric Lavender, the protagonist, gets to the bottom of what's going on are clever and well-paced. Still, the circumstances of the book were sad for me--I just felt badly for the poor guy--and that brought me down most of the time I was reading it. This is a well-thought-out look at what divorce means for everybody: husband, wife, kids, extended family, and even

professional contacts and the community as a whole.

LJ says

THE PRACTICE OF DECEIT (Psychological Thriller-Scarsdale, NY-Cont) – G+

Benedict, Elizaeth - Standalone

Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005-Hardcover

Therapist Eric Lavendar was a confirmed bachelor until he met Colleen O'Brien. Suddenly he's married with a young stepdaughter, new baby, living in the suburbs, and happier than he imagined. When he suspects his wife is not exactly who he thought and begins investigating her past, he finds himself arrested and charged with abusing his stepdaughter.

*** This is suspense, not mystery—no body. It is an unusual and intriguing story that involved me at the first page and I read straight through. It wasn't as suspenseful as I'd have hoped in that the deceit unraveled fairly quickly. But it was very well written in the first person with humor and introspection from interesting and fully dimensional protagonist. Recommended.

Ashley says

I have two novels by Elizabeth Benedict on my bookshelves that I have kept for 20+ years -- books that I loved and whose characters I'd connected with, when they and I were just out of college (Slow Dancing and Beginners Book of Dreams, fyi). So, when I saw a more recent novel by Benedict at a used bookstore a couple of years ago, I picked it up, with high hopes that I'd meet another kindred spirit inside.

This is a good book, and a page-turner, but didn't contain a friend as I'd hoped. That's a pretty high bar for a book to meet, and it's probably unfair as well.

The novel is the story of the relationship of Eric, an urban professional in his late 40's and serial-dater-of-much-younger-women, and Colleen, a single-mom attorney who is much more his equal. It's not your typical relationship story, and I'll leave it at that to avoid any spoilers.

The plot is excellent and suspenseful, and the characters are interesting. The writing isn't as good as I remember from her other books -- though I haven't read the others recently enough to really compare. Benedict was a bit too heavy handed in her emphasis on gender roles, gender identity, etc. -- especially for a book published in 2005. I would have been more tolerant if this had been published in the 80's. We hear repeatedly how Eric feels inferior to his older sister, how uncomfortable he is with his older sister's lesbian identity and partner, how what his sister and wife do is "man's work" whereas what he does (psychotherapy) is "woman's work", etc. Enough with the gender politics.

So, this book won't be joining Benedict's other novels on my shelf to be re-read later -- it's heading out the door. Not a bad book, just not a keeper for me.

Romel says

SPOILERS

Eric Lavender, a psychiatrist whose listening skills have been honed, meets a woman named Colleen O. Golden in the late 1990s. She is a divorce lawyer living in the very real and very tony Manhattan suburb of Scarsdale, N.Y., together with her 11-month-old daughter, Zoe. Colleen's husband leaves her after a decade-long marriage because he did not want to raise their child.

Colleen's first husband is a shadow figure at best and a literary nonentity at worst. Colleen is just as spectral because the book she purports to have written was actually penned by a ghostwriter. Eric foolishly trusts her implicitly; Colleen is ruthless, unlikable and very selfish and demanding.

Eric, on the other hand welcomes and accepts Zoe unconditionally; he delights in the child calling him "Daddy" and says he sees no harm in that and that if the child's natural father re-enters the picture, then they'll work something out. He is equally delighted when daughter Sarah-Rose is born in the new millennium.

Eric puts his profession and reputation in jeopardy when he accepts a client who has used Colleen's services regarding a rather acrimonious divorce. In short order, Eric is taken from his home in handcuffs and serves time. Real streets and towns such as Fenimore and Cooper in Scarsdale and the penitentiary in Valhalla, New York add to the locale's authenticity.

Colleen is a she-wolf; a barracuda and a slithering serpent all rolled into one cruel, predatory creature. She manufactures an image by lying about her past and trumps up false charges against Eric. That leaves Eric to unravel the tangled webs of deceit this creature has woven and save his career, children and reputation. The 1980s Duran Duran classic "Hungry Like the Wolf" fits Colleen like dental patterns and DNA testing.

Colleen was so odious that it was a delight to see her dethroned and Eric's good name restored.

Melissa Porter says

This book was a waste of time. It sounded so much better than it really was. Now I know why it was on the \$2 table.

Sabrina says

Too something..... makes you wonder about people..... and if there are some really twisted souls out there.... scary and sad.

Karen says

The story kept me on the edge of my seat, but I was disappointed in the ending.

Andrea says

I was surprised at how much I liked this by the end of it. The audio narration was good.

Drpsychorat says

A very good, fast paced, psychological novel about manipulation and relationships. Although I didn't much care for the ending, it was a very human reaction. As a psychologist myself, the book was moving, engaging and disturbing. At the same time, I'm glad I read it.

Kathy says

Good book, had me reading every spare minute. Really liked the author's style and will look for her other novel.

Chelsea says

A little odd in places but otherwise it held my interest and made me stay up past my bedtime to finish reading it, to figure out what happened. Slightly anticlimactic but ?????

La llave de plata says

Entretenido desde la segunda mitad. No me ha fascinado pero, siendo algo distinto a lo que acostumbro a leer, me alegra que no me haya decepcionado como pensaba que lo haría. Tal vez no me convenció del todo por los temas que trata: Matrimonio, psique humana, la formación y el declaimiento de una pareja, etc. En este preciso momento no me llama la atención ese tipo de lecturas, tal vez en un futuro sí lo haga.

Lo de que es "entretenido desde la segunda mitad" no es tan así, en realidad a partir de la segunda mitad se pone bastante mejor, ya que logra llegar a la verdadera trama del libro. Las primeras cien páginas están puestas con intención de preparar todo el terreno para lo que en realidad se quiere contar, no es que sea aburrido (no del todo) pero tampoco es la gran cosa durante las primeras cien páginas.

A partir de que comienza la verdadera trama levanta un poco el vuelo. Me sorprendí a mi mismo enganchado en sus páginas y pensando en como seguirían los siguientes capítulos cuando terminaba uno, pero esto sólo en los últimos 4 o 5.

En fin, a alguien que le gusten este tipo de temáticas seguramente le gustará más que a mí. No ha sido malo, sólo que no es lo que me gusta en realidad.

Carol Waters says

The story of a female divorce attorney and a male psychotherapist and a relationship in peril.

What a disappointment this was.

The therapist tells the story. Badly. He's grieving the death of his deadbeat dad, meets a redhead who in an hour or so after the first chance encounter is met once more while she is breastfeeding by the pool and then every damn thing goes wrong.

I was tempted to go back and count the number of times he related therapy as being "women's work" and law as men's. Or his comments about his Lesbian sister the pediatric heart surgeon. Or his rows of dolls in his therapy office that is in the backyard of his house.

Noooooooo. I'm a therapist. My spouse is an attorney. We both work really hard and I cannot imagine either of us wanting to endanger our licenses, our reputations, or our marriage by choosing to pursue a conflict of interest over keeping a client when the ethics are shady. You can't do this work and make it personal. It will devour you. And who in his right mind has his office in the back yard? Every needy client in the city would be interrupting dinner.

Toward the end it appeared that the author just ran out of steam so let the therapist tell the story via a long "my darling" letter he was writing to his incarcerated wife. He got overnight jail time for a misdemeanor child abuse report (never happen in Texas) and she got a month or so on a Class E (what is that? over watering the lawn is higher than that) and I think got disbarred before trial.

Nooooooooooooo.

Oh, and this author writes about how to write about sex. Her single sex scene in this book had to do with these two rolling around in bed while he about drowned in breast milk. On a first date, because we all know that two or three months after a baby is born we are so eager to get back at it...

Gay women should be insulted at how they are portrayed in this book. Therapists. Lawyers. I think that even sociopaths would be put off. And why didn't this therapist know about borderline personality disorder? Jeez. Or HIPAA. Or professional ethics.
