



Matinicus -- An Island Mystery

Darcy Scott

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Praised by Kirkus Reviews as "The kind of book readers will tear through, only to find themselves hungry for more," this century-spanning double mystery steeped in Maine island lore pits a renegade fishing community against an unhappy child-bride of the 1820s, a defiant twenty-first-century teen, and a hard-drinking botanist—Dr. Gil Hodges—who escapes to the island of Matinicus to avoid a crazed ex-lover and verify a rumored 22 species of wild orchid, only to find himself hounded by the ghost of a child some 200 years dead.

If Gil's hoping for some peace and quiet, he's clearly come to the wrong place. Generations of infighting among loose-knit lobstering clans have left them openly hostile to outsiders. When a beautiful, bed-hopping stranger sails into the harbor, old resentments re-ignite and people begin to die—murders linked, through centuries of violence, to a diary whose secrets threaten to tear the island apart.

Discover why Cruising World Magazine calls Gil "The best male protagonist to come along since Lee Child's Jack Racher!"

Matinicus -- An Island Mystery Details

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From Reader Review *Matinicus* -- An Island Mystery for online ebook

Rachel says

This book has a great setting - a close-knit lobster fishing community of about fifty people on an isolated island. This book had a good plan - unearthing a historical mystery while another mystery unfolds in the present. Unfortunately the main character is a sex-crazed scandalized college professor out to run away from his past, but stumbling into pretty much the same mess all over again.

The first few deaths look accidental... to everyone. NO ONE has a clue that anything fishy is going on. The reader can only guess that something is probably up because of the book's blurb. No progress is really made on the modern-day mystery until around 65% of the way through the book. Most of what's taking place before that is Gil Hodges (sex-crazed scandalized prof.) is learning the meaning of life in an island community, eating a lot of home-made pie, staying in an old crush's house while she's on vacation, and trying unsuccessfully to repress "the old me" as he calls it while mingling with the islanders.

It was an interesting read, but not if what you were really looking for was unraveling a mystery. The mystery doesn't really unfold over the course of the book so much as it blows up in the last 25% of the book (and not in a fabulous way - more like an "oh yeah... this should probably get going soon" kind of way). It does have a good twist at the end, definitely a surprise, but almost too much so. Not quite enough of being able to get that make you catch your breath that now all the pieces you've been given all along fit together and it gives you that great creepy feeling that you can't believe you missed it.

I will give credit, you get a great sense of the close-knit community that takes care of its own business. Kind of reminiscent of the Stephen King mini-series *Storm of the Century* in that aspect. It's an enjoyable read in that regard - you really feel like you're kind of living there for the summer too.

Jen Blood says

Botanist Gil Hodge arrives on the Maine island of *Matinicus* intent on cataloging trees and nursing his wounds after a physically and emotionally explosive affair on the mainland. Rather than a respite, however, Gil finds himself staying in a haunted house with a very unhappy ghost, trapped on an island where members of the general populace are suddenly dropping like flies. As he reads through the journals of Hannah, the woman of the house back in the eighteenth century, Gil slowly unravels the mystery of who his specter is, how she died... And why she is suddenly up in arms again all these years later. What he eventually learns about the *Matinicus* murders is a startling commentary on island life, vigilante justice, and the yearnings of the human heart.

Matinicus is the kind of mystery that stays with you long after you've read the final pages. The characters, the setting, and not one but two haunting storylines had me eagerly turning pages from the very start. The novel is told from three perspectives: first person from the laconic, oversexed-but-trying-to-change Gil Hodge; through journal entries penned by Hannah in the eighteenth century; and third person from fifteen-year-old Tiffany. Scott manages each perspective flawlessly — Gil is hilarious, appropriately damaged, and complex enough to easily carry the trilogy the author has planned, and Scott's insight into the psyche of the average fifteen-year-old — self-absorbed, stubborn, and yet achingly vulnerable to the last — is truly

impressive. Hannah's journal entries and a chilling ghost story add layers and the kind of anticipation that kept me reading deep into the night with most of the lights in the house on.

Beyond ticking all the right boxes when it comes to creating a compelling mystery — spooky setting, intriguing characters, a labyrinthine plot, plenty of unexpected twists, and a monster of a surprise ending — Scott also has a phenomenal way with words. Her descriptions, dialogue, and humor are always pitch perfect; *Matinicus* is that rarity among books today, a great piece of literature that is still fun, quirky, and one hell of a mystery. This is without question one of the best books I've read in recent memory, easily earning five stars and an instant recommendation from me to anyone who enjoys mysteries.

Tahlia Newland says

This is a terrific, well written mystery with richly drawn characters and a surprising and thought provoking conclusion. *Matinicus* is one of those stories that, like the subtle flavours of an excellent meal, stays with you long after it ends.

I found it a little slow to start, but that is probably because I usually read young adult books where major action generally starts early in the story. Here, we take time to get to know Gil, the main character, and the others on the island. They're a motley crew, lobster fishermen united by their island birth and long family history there. Gil is an outsider, a summer tourist but tolerated because he's been there before and is a good bloke. His collection of baseball cards in particular endears him towards the owner of the local food and drink establishment and they strike up a friendship.

The island is so well described (and never over done) that I could almost smell the ocean and feel myself on the path between Racheal's house, where Gil is staying, and the town. He's staying there alone, apart from the ghost that inhabits the upper floor. I loved the vividly written scene where the ghost appears and Gil stumbles out of the house.

There are many layers to this novel which links the modern day and the time of the ghost through a diary that Gil finds in the house. The diary is written by a teenager with a dodgy past who has been forced to marry a widower and take on the care of his children while he sails off to fish. When people start dying in strange circumstances, Gil begins to wonder if the ghost is trying to tell him something, but what? Who is responsible for these deaths and what has it got to do with the past?

The islanders are an insulated lot who take care of their own business with little input or interference from the mainland, and it is this that as the book nears its conclusion, raises questions about justice and leaves Gil with a difficult moral decision. We are forced to consider whether he did the right thing and wonder if we would do the same under the circumstances. This theme gives the book a depth that many books lack.

The ending has a great twist. I didn't see it coming and like all good mysteries, once you know, in hindsight it all falls together beautifully. This isn't a fast paced novel, it builds at an easy pace which allows you to really enjoy the world and the characters. Gil's growing insight into himself and his struggle with his addiction to risky women adds further depth and excellent character development.

Thomas III says

As someone who lived in Maine for almost twenty years, there are so many cultural differences from the rest of the country--even within the state itself--and Scott nailed them. However, the author was wrong with the sub-title reading "An Island Mystery." There are multiple plot lines and mysteries weaved within this gem of a book. Any mystery reader will refuse to put it down as they will be embroiled in the twists and turns. The historical fiction parallel was smoothly laid in and had me instantly connecting the dots between past and present. The strongly developed characters hold up their own story lines, while the protagonist keeps them together like any Mainer would--with duct tape and spit. The woven tapestry develops a real-life look into island living that most of us can't relate to but can't wait to read more about. Even though everything points toward a surprise ending, Scott made the journey to get there just as important to simply have the bottom drop out of every assumption going through my head. - Thomas B. Dowd III, author of "The Transformation of a Doubting Thomas: Growing from a Cynic to a Professional in the Corporate World" and "From Fear to Success: A Practical Public-speaking Guide"

Peach says

This is an eloquently well written mystery novel with multi-faceted characters. Though it started slow where the readers got introduced to an array of characters, the story was enticing with a slight paranormal element. The main character was Professor Gil Hodges (Jeff Bridges lookalike) who was hiding out in Matinicus, an island with population of 50, from an affair gone wrong with a crazy grad student. On the island, he found himself in a grand adventure - being spooked by a ghost, confronting a growing list of murders as well as entertaining the pursuits of a lustful widow. I found the book highly entertaining and the characters and the ending were just twisted.

Gina's Library says

I received this book for a fair and honest review.

This book for me is kind of slow. I really had to force myself to read it.

Gil goes to Matinicus that is described in a way that I think of as a long forgotten hidden town. It's in the middle of no where without any real civilization although they do have people living there and people coming to visit.

The author is able to describe the area in a way that you stop reading to think of a place you can picture this story taking place in. I instantly thought of a place like China Beach for some reason.

I feel its a unique twist to have a murder mystery themed book with the past and present intertwined together with perfection.

Kirsten McKeown says

You can do it: List great books from the genre of "creepy island murder mystery with historical geneology subplots." (The Weight of Water, The Shipping News, And Then There Were None, etc.)

Now go ahead and add *Matinicus* to the top of this list! I loved this one best because it doesn't use just one tone to convey the terrifying story--but deftly moved from the expected spine-tingling and somber narrations to downright hilarious internal monologues and ludicrous circumstances. That is to say, the writing knows and loves its subject very well. And, happily, the book doesn't feel clumsy trying to navigate the "from the island" vs. "from the mainland" stream of characters; rather, people just are who they are, apprised on a case-by-case basis. There is also restraint in this story--the author delightfully doesn't feel compelled to connect every dot...

Matinicus is that most solitary dot off the coast of Maine--farther out than Monhegan, or Isle au Haut. Far enough out so that a plot can twist into tight sailor's knot upon knot one hazy August, and feel entirely plausible. The main character, a boozing Jeff Bridges look-alike professor of dendrology, is our fantastic guide to all *Matinicus* wild life. And he's just as lost and admiring as we are.

Gorgeous descriptions of island scenes, beautiful historical interweavings, great characters. I will be ordering a paperback version directly from the author's website to give as a non-eReader gift very soon! Looking forward to the next two in this series... Summer is here!

P. Christopher Colter says

In *Matinicus*, Darcy Scott has written a novel that is not only an outstanding murder mystery, but also a fascinating picture of life on a real and quite isolated island off the coast of Maine.

I am hesitant to give too many details here, as I always am when reviewing a mystery. In short, this is the story of Professor Gil Hodges, who makes a summer trip to *Matinicus* Island under the guise of cataloging the variety of flora there, but more accurately to find himself again and do battle with some of the personal demons troubling him. Somehow, Gil winds up entwined in the community on the island, knee-deep in a string of murders, a lobster war, and even a haunting. Along the way, he discovers an old diary, which gives him insight into both the past and present of the island.

As with all good mysteries, *Matinicus* is full of fascinating characters, unexpected twists, and of course red herrings galore. I truly did not know "whodunnit" until the very end. Being a frequent visitor to the Maine coast, I was especially fascinated with the carefully researched facts of what life is like on islands like *Matinicus*, as close-knit communities deal with the harshness of the environment, changes in the world as we know it, and the extreme closeness they have to each other.

Matinicus by Darcy Scott is a classic mystery which I would recommend to any fan of the genre, or of Maine-based fiction in general. I am looking forward to her next novel featuring protagonist Gil Hodges, which I believe is set for release soon.

Beth Cutwright says

Wow, Mantinicus is an absolutely must read for anyone who loves a good mystery and characters you can totally relate to. I get that small towns and islanders are a lot alike in that they each know everybody's business and have their own peculiar ways of dealing with things. And Darcy Scott sets the reading stage to perfection. Our protagonist, Gil Hodges, has his flaws, although he is trying to improve himself, drinks a little too much, is an outsider, and he has a conscience, albeit, it is often GUILTY! But he's one of those guys you just gotta love! And he tries to help solve the island murders, but isn't prepared for the island justice that follows. Nor is he prepared for the twisted surprise ending which was awesome. One of the best mysteries this year in my humble opinion! It took a bit of reading to get to the hook, but from then on, I couldn't let it go and I'm not one bit regretful of this fascinating story by an excellent story weaver!

Dawn Edwards says

3.9 stars

Ms. Scott has woven a terrific pair of mysteries as to who the serial killers were, the plot gluing the killers together by a small background ghost. She has skillfully woven the plot into the background of living on a small island off the coast of Maine, supported mainly by the lobster industry.

The protagonist, Gil Hodges, has gone to the Island (Matinicus) to catalog several species of orchid that grow there. As an outsider, he manages to gain partial respect of the residents who do not take kindly to strangers. But he also becomes one of the suspects in the current series of killings, based solely on the fact that he is an outsider.

The ghost of a child killed by a serial killer a couple of centuries earlier, Mary, has limited means of communicating to Gil the happenings and the bad guys in the current century.

Gil winds up actually solving the current and the past murders, and exonerates himself as a suspect in the end. However, he is never fully accepted on the Island.

This book is a well-written mystery and a good read.

Dawn Edwards, the Kindle Book Review

The KBR received a free copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review. We are not connected with the author, publisher, or Amazon in any way.

Sheridan says

I really enjoyed reading Hunter, Huntress by this same author. So I was excited to read her next book.

This was a good mystery, I didn't want to put it down. I didn't love the swearing throughout the book, but it

is probably true to how the characters would have spoken.

I liked the main character and am happy to see that this is a series.

Susawuorinen says

If you want to get inside an island's mind...especially a Maine Island, and pile a wicked good mystery on top of it...this is a book for you!

Amy says

I'm not a huge mystery reader and picked this up for book group. It is by a local author and we'll have here speaking to us at the discussion which will be great. I like the Maine local flavor and thought she did a nice job with conveying island life and the code between these people who live so closely together. I had figured out the culprits pretty early on. I wanted more of the historical back story but that's because I like historical fiction more than mystery and I found that story line fascinating. The only thing that was distracting for me was the constant talk about the sexuality of the main male character....after a while I was just sick of hearing about his womanizing ways and wanted the story to move on. Overall, an enjoyable read for those who like mystery, a little history too, and local flavor. There are two more in the series for folks who get hooked as well!

Tina says

Scott gives us a tightly plotted, expertly populated ghost story set in the present and the past on one of the most renowned but unknown islands of Maine.

The plot is so fantastic that reviewing it is going to be a bit of a tip-toe but I'm going to try to explain why I'm such a cheerleader for this one without giving it away.

First there's the setting: Matinicus Island is the furthest out of Maine's populated islands with an official population of about 50. It is not someplace one just drops in for an afternoon of sightseeing. The families who live there are close-knit, often related, and depend almost entirely on lobstering for their income and each other for their survival. There's a single general store, a unisex barber/hair dresser, some satellite dishes, an assortment of unregistered and unlicensed objects that pass for transportation devices, numerous dogs of unknown parentage, no local law enforcement, no doctors or lawyers, (there are two EMTs), and sporadic plane, boat and ferry service (when the fog is lifted) between the island and "America."

Then there are the characters:

-- A disenchanted teenaged girl (is there another kind?) who is waiting for the mother who abandoned her 10 years ago to return.

-- The hard working couple who run the island store/restaurant/bar/post office, etc etc, etc;

-- A visiting college professor on sabbatical, who is ostensibly counting trees and cataloging orchids, but who in reality is hiding out from his latest disastrous sexual conquest.

-- A raucous assortment of crusty, hard-drinking lobstermen...boat owners, sternmen, and wannabes.

-- A ghost who is haunting the 1799 residence where the college professor is staying.

-- A drop-dead gorgeous widow(?) who arrives in her gazillion \$\$ yacht with an unquenchable libido, a propensity for sunbathing au naturale, dancing on pool tables, and whose wealthy husband has apparently fallen overboard on the way.

These propel an incredible plot:

The college professor finds an old diary in his haunted house detailing the massacre of passengers of a shipwreck off the coast, the love life of the original occupants of the house, and some other details that can't be revealed here without giving you the whole enchilada.

The local lobstermen are in the midst of a "lobster war" - a snarling fight over territorial rights that periodically breaks out in violence as locals try to keep those "from away" out of their perceived private fishing grounds. Although the State law allows anyone with a license to fish anyplace in Maine waters, the Matinicus population has tended over the years to ignore that little piece of legality and enforces its own brand of island justice to repel the outsiders, who often find their expensive traps have suddenly "gone missing." At the time of this story, there's a full-scale dust-up a-brewing.

At the same time the professor arrives, all hell seems bent on breaking loose, and dead bodies keep appearing...usually found by said professor. Is he responsible? Are they related to the lobster wars? Is there a serial killer loose on the island? How come the ghost seems so agitated?

Throw in some good old fashioned Maine foul weather, some very crusty and rough language, some fairly explicit sex scenes, a little pot, a lotta booze, and you've got a rip roaring, page turning tale.

Then top it off with an absolutely "I never saw that one coming!" ending, and we have here a winner! This is being sold as the first of the Island Mystery series, (and includes the opening pages of the next installment). I certainly hope Ms Scott can follow through, because it's going to be hard to follow this one! ()

Lavanya Karthik says

Parallel mysteries separated by a century unfold in 'Matinicus', Darcy Scott's engrossing new book about life – and death - in an isolated fishing community. Alternating between the perspectives of three very different characters, nothing is quite what it seems in this page turner that blends impeccably plotted mystery with a gritty examination of human frailty and desire.

A disastrous fling with a student has botanist Gil Hodges fleeing to the remote island of Matinicus in Maine for a spot of tree cataloging. All Hodges hopes to find is peace and quiet, and second chances – in his career, as well as with Rachel, the enigmatic islander who has lent him her house. What he finds instead is intrigue, multiple murder, century old secrets – and ghosts. Rachel's house harbours the troubled spirit of a young woman, who soon steers Hodges towards the century old journal of Hannah, a child bride resident on the island. As he tries to unravel the secret of his spooky housemate's identity through Hannah's impassioned writings, Hodges realizes that nothing much has changed on Matinicus since her time. For, cut off from the mainland and ignored by the police, Matinicus has evolved into an insular community with its own code of justice and prejudices, torn apart by bitter fighting among its rival clans, and simmering with the repressed

desires and frustrations of its inhabitants. Matinicus is, in effect, a ticking bomb and all it takes is the arrival of the seductive Kirtley for the island to explode in a frenzy of violent deaths. As the body count rises and his ghostly companion becomes increasingly agitated, Hodges realizes that the key to solving the murders and his own haunting just might lie locked within Hannah's story.

'Matinicus' is that rare thing, a clever mystery that has you by the throat from go, admirably sustains its pace and atmosphere, and manages to surprise right up until the end. Hodges, Tiffany and Hannah, the three flawed narrators telling us this tale are well crafted characters. Author Scott invests each with a very believable voice – Hodges is wry, self deprecating, and utterly in thrall to every woman who will have him; Hannah, at once bitter and pitiful, Tiffany, your typical whiny teenager. Essentially unlikeable as they are, they also stayed with me long after I had finished the book. I blame Scott's deft hand entirely.

For the legions of fans I fully expect 'Matinicus' to gather, there is good news - this book is first in a mystery trilogy starring reluctant detective Gil Hodges. Definitely a series I look forward to.
