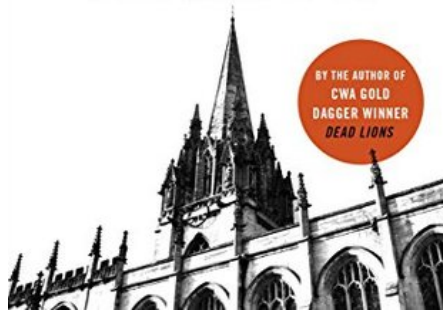


'Mick Herron never tells a suspense story in the expected way'
New York Times

WHY WE DIE

MICK
HERRON



Why We Die

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Why We Die

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Why We Die Mick Herron

When Zoë Boehm agrees to track down the gang who knocked over Sweeney's jewellery shop, she's just hoping to break even in time for tax season. She certainly doesn't expect to wind up in a coffin. But she's about to become entangled with a strange collection of characters, starting with suicidal Tim Whitby, who's dedicating what's left of his life to protecting the pretty, battered Katrina Blake from her late husband's sociopathic brothers, Arkle and Trent.

Unfortunately for Zoë, Arkle has a crossbow, Tim has nothing left to lose, and even Katrina has her secrets. And death, like taxes, can't be avoided forever.

Why We Die Details

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From Reader Review Why We Die for online ebook

Michael Martz says

Mick Herron's 'Why We Die', the 3rd in his Oxford Investigations series, is a clever mystery that leads us down a path that has a bit of an abrupt departure at the end. Walking, running, and driving that path isn't a bunch of laughs to begin with, as it's lined with various criminals, sociopaths, a physical freak, murderers, and simpletons, but the journey is worthwhile for the reader.

The series stars the indefatigable Zoe Boehm, private investigator of a certain age, who just won't give up once she latches onto something. In 'Why We Die', she's hired by a dodgy pawn shop owner to find out who robbed him. Although the police are likewise investigating the robbery, he couldn't necessarily divulge to them all that was stolen from him because, well, most of it was stolen property he was fencing. That's why he needs Zoe. Zoe needs him because she has a big tax bill to settle up on and needs a payday. Oh yeah, and during the robbery a bystander was shot....with a crossbow. That's important in the action that follows.

Coincidentally, at about the same time a young man who intends to commit suicide due to the depression he's felt after his wife died in an accident sits in a bar getting hammered. He's approached by a beautiful young lady who appears to have been battered by someone, they enjoy a bit of a chat, and he continues his drinking while wondering who could've abused her. He returns home, drinks himself into a stupor, and forgets to off himself.

In relatively short order, with the help of a freakishly-built young lady who's 'on the inside', Zoe determines who did the robbery, but complications arise. The leader of the 'gang' dies after being stabbed by his abused wife, he was the financial guy for the group and had hidden all the loot, and lots of players are trying to locate the spoils. The abused wife has been arrested but is getting the 'abused wife' treatment from the police and the press, but the rest of the gang, including the psycho leader who is a cross-bow aficionado, thinks she knows where the loot is stashed. In the meantime, our erstwhile suicidal guy, not the sharpest tool in the shed, begins his quest to locate the abused young lady who he'd conversed with at the bar. I won't go any farther on the plot.....

I've grown to really enjoy the Zoe Boehm character through the course of this series. She's smart, glib, fearless often to the point of recklessness, physical, a bit older than you'd think.... in short, a complex personality that's been expertly developed by the author. Herron's a tremendous writer, particularly with dialogue and understated Brit humor, and he creates plots that'll keep moving forward with a lot of quirks thrown in for good measure. His Slough House series is great and these Oxford mysteries are excellent as well. Both series are character-driven and totally enjoyable.

KK says

I believe this to be the best book in the Oxford Investigations series so far. It's definitely my favourite, anyway, because it reads more like a private detective novel. Zoe's character and Herron's style of writing are certainly growing on me now, and though some reviewers found Why We Die somewhat depressing, I thought it was far more lighthearted than the previous book. The plot was enjoyable despite being predictable, and the characters complex enough to keep it interesting.

Kim says

Why We Die sees Zoe in a different, grittier situation than her last outing. Her previous experiences surely haven't endeared her to people but this little adventure will, most certainly, keep her from any thoughts of doing kindness for strangers. No good deed goes unpunished...that seems very true here!

I love Zoe. She is a touch cookie but genuinely good to have around if you find yourself in a difficult situation. Here, she goes looking to discover who is behind a recent theft, and shooting, and finds herself in deep water on the wrong side of wrong-doers.

This is classic Mick Herron that gives us a cheeky peek into the underbelly of society and the code that guides most baddies - greed. A terrific read, as ever!

Board in Malibu says

Not my favorite Mick Herron book but the writing is superb. Huge Herron fan, this is one of the Oxford series. It's a convoluted story and unfortunately our usual heroine, Zoe Boehm is not a big part of the story until the final chapters. As always, humorously written.

Tony says

WHY WE DIE. (2006). M. Herron. ***.

This was my first taste of this author. If this novel is typical of the rest of his work, you can probably start off on page 45 of any of them and not miss much. The author uses these early pages to dip into a little bit of the various plots and sub-plots that he uses in his story. It was only after these first few pages that I got any idea of what might have been going on. It was a reading experience akin to channel surfing on your TV. Here are a few of the plot tangents: a man is drinking in a hotel bar, nursing his dour mood. He meets a young woman who asks to share his table. He has a drink with her, while trying to figure out how to start and carry on a conversation. Doesn't work. He goes up to his room and tries to sleep. Next we meet a group of men who have just, apparently, pulled off a robbery at a jewelry store. They are arguing among themselves. The topic seems to be questioning the need for shooting a man who was accidentally in their way when they were exiting the store with the loot. Finally, we meet a young woman who is in conference with a financial advisor. She has just learned that she owes a significant amount of money to the tax people and is trying to figure out where and how to get it. She is, presumably, an ex-cop who is now a P.I. She is stumped, but a possible way turns up. Now – let the characters interact and the story begin. This can be a clever way to start off a story, but the reader should have his crystal ball in front of him.

Helena Aarons says

I like this author and this is the second of his books I have listened to. You do have to occasionally suspend

belief around how unlikely are some of the connections between characters and why they do things. I found this in his previous book too. I will continue with his books though and would recommend them.

Marianne says

Why We Die is the third book in the Oxford Investigations series by British author, Mick Herron. The story starts with a widower, a debt-ridden PI and a bunch of thugs. Arkle, Baxter and Trent have decided they can make easy money, just not in the family gravel business. Tim Whitby, still grieving the loss of his wife, checks into a hotel, planning to check out (of life) but is distracted by a bruised-looking Katrina Blake.

And Zoë Boehm's old red Nissan Sunny is stolen and set on fire, something arranged by someone she's recently upset, meaning she has to resort to a borrowed orange VW beetle for transport. The same someone also arranged scrutiny of her finances by Inland Revenue, resulting in a bill of almost five thousand pounds, forcing her to take on an investigation for a crooked robbery victim.

Some tedious surveillance and an encounter with an unusual chauffeur gives Zoë the information she needs, but her interest is piqued, and she heads to Totnes to dig a little deeper. While there, she finds herself rescuing Tim Whitby from a crossbow-wielding Arkle with an apple.

In the action that follows, Zoë effects another rescue, is rescued twice herself, climbs up a wall, brandishes a chair, assists more than one assailant downstairs, kicks and king-hits, is knocked out by a torch and ends up shut inside a freezer. Several people are stabbed and the crossbow gets quite a workout. The hood ornament of a hearse plays an important part, and several people are seeking a certain bag with a lot of money in it.

As usual, Herron gives the reader a plot with some great twists and, of several red herrings, one that will have readers familiar with his style wondering if he has indulged in his tendency to kill off a regular character without qualm or hesitation. Fans will be eager for the fourth and final book of the series, Smoke and Whispers. Excellent British crime fiction.

Gavin Simms says

Good, even though I saw the twist coming long before it happened. The usual improbable things I've come to expect with the series. Still, on to number 4.

Ian Brydon says

I am always intrigued by the manner in which we discover authors who go on to join the ranks of our favourites. Earlier this year I chanced upon Mick Herron's marvellous series of espionage thrillers featuring the glorious Jackson Lamb, who leads the troop of 'Slow Horses', intelligence officers who have been condemned to serving out the remainder of their careers with MI5 at Slough House. Several years before embarking on that series, Herron wrote another featuring Zoe Boehm, a down at heel private investigator from Oxford.

I feel a certain sense of relief because if I had read the Zoe Boehm novels when they were first published, I might not have bothered the Jackson Lamb books, and would have missed out on a rare treat. That is not to say that this was a bad book. Herron always constructs his plots well, and there is something appealing about Zoe Boehm's jaded perspective on life. In this story, Zoe is commissioned to investigate an armed robbery on a local jeweller's shop. The police are, of course, already investigating the case, but the jeweller expects little success from them. He also indicates to Zoe that the items stolen already had a questionable provenance. His shop was a staging post for local criminals fencing off stolen property, and he needs either to recover the stolen items as soon as possible or face the wrath of the organised criminals who had left them there.

Zoe pursues her investigation assiduously, despite various tribulations including the theft and burning out of her car, and unwelcome run-ins with a former policeman whom she had crossed in a previous novel. The plot moves forward swiftly, and Herron builds up the intensity adeptly. All in all, I am struggling to work out why I can't get more enthusiastic about the book – all the various components of a good and entertaining novel were there, but somehow I never quite managed to engage with it. Perhaps I had simply read too many books by Mick Herron within too short a space of time.

Colleen says

Zoe Boehm (pronounced 'beam') owes back tax money so she takes a job tracking down who robbed stolen jewels from a fence. Three 'brothers' pulled it off. The tall crazy one, Arkle, shoots a pedestrian outside the jewelry store with his crossbow. The handsome brother, Baxter, has the brains and the pretty wife. Trent is the short obedient drunk brother. Zoe suspects the thieves would know the jewelry store owner can't claim the jewels in his safe on his insurance claim so she starts tracking them down and runs into the 'brothers'. For 3 adopted sons they've managed to be completely loyal to each other well into adulthood, even while being the leash on psychopathic Arkle. Terrifying escapes and captures.

Deanna says

I think this is my first 4 star Herron. Losing a star may be more about my preferences than about the writing, which remains solid and suspenseful. This book really doesn't feature the protagonist. She is there, she has a role, but she's absent more than present and the real cat and mouse game only involves her occasionally.

Since this is a book about a set of bad guys, pseudo bad guys, pseudo good guys, and their relationships with each other, I would have liked to enjoy all that time spent with them more than I did. Most of the bad guys, especially the prime one, were plenty scary but still flat. It got old. And there was more violence here than usual. It's just a grittier novel, which isn't necessarily bad, but it felt a little one-off, and wasn't as enjoyable for me as his others.

Christopher Williams says

I have enjoyed the Zoe Boehm books a lot. Maybe not quite hitting the heights of the Slough House series but pretty good all the same. Set in Oxford this starts out fairly simply as a tale of a heist at a jewellery shop

and Zoe asked by the owner to find the perpetrators. It seems some of the goods stolen were not official merchandise i.e. stolen goods. Won't give to much away but there is an excellent twist in the story towards the end that I did not see coming!

David C Ward says

Genuinely scary. A crime story that is also a horror story (crazy man with cross bow; being put alive in a coffin, etc) with a late reveal about who the main villain really is. A jewelry robbery sends oxford PI Zoe Boehm after the thieves, three socio pathetic adopted brothers, one of whom abuses his wife. He ends up dead - killed in self defense by his wife - and the story then really takes off and includes the unfortunate intervention of a nice guy, Zoe stalked by an ex cop, and a hard bitten newspaper woman who isn't as hard as she thinks she is. Herron keeps all the crooked plot lines straight and throws a final twist in just for fun. Also remember Chekhov's maxim, "If there's a pamphlet on crock pot cooking mentioned early on, it will be important later."

Sandra says

Populated with a miscellany of vivid characters each in a dance of their own until dragged into this story to become part of a race for a sort of justice and for money, hoping all the while to evade both it and death. Not always succeeding. So many glowing insights threaded through the tale in typical Mick Herron fashion.

Sandi says

This is the third book which features Oxford PI Zoe Boehm and was just as good as the others. I really like the author's style, find it very readable, and Zoe is the kind of smart, capable, and pragmatic character that I enjoy.
