



The Pretender

HelenKay Dimon

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“Sexy, emotional, funny . . . Dimon gives it all to her readers.” —*New York Times* Bestselling Author Jill Shalvis

They say it takes a thief to catch a thief, and Harrison Tate is proof. Once a professional burglar, he now makes a lawful living tracking down stolen art. No one needs to know about his secret sideline, “liberating” artifacts acquired through underhanded methods. At least until one of those jobs sees him walking in on a murder.

Gabrielle Wright has long been estranged from her wealthy family, but she didn’t kill her sister. Trouble is, the only person who can prove it is the sexy, elusive criminal who shouldn’t have been at the island estate on that terrible night. She’s not expecting honor among thieves—or for their mutual attraction to spark into an intense inferno of desire.

Under the guise of evaluating her family’s art, Harris comes back to the estate hoping to clear Gabby’s name. But returning to the scene of the crime has never been riskier, with their hearts and lives on the line.

The Pretender Details

Date : Published December 26th 2017 by Avon

ISBN :

Author : HelenKay Dimon

Format : Kindle Edition 368 pages

Genre : Romance, Romantic Suspense, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance, Suspense

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From Reader Review The Pretender for online ebook

Christina says

3.5 Stars - 3 Flames

These guys are amazing. I've really enjoyed meeting each of them and diving in to their lives. Whether be the lives that lead to them become who they are, or their love lives.

While working on a job (a thief job), Harris literally stumbles on to a crime scene. Not just any crime scene though. One that is completely graphic and horrible. A scene that he inadvertently contaminated while stumbling on it. And now? Now he's been forced back to the scene to help prevent an innocent woman from going to jail. But it ends up costing him more than he bargained for.

Gabby has been a victim her whole life, but not the kind that you might be thinking about. Well, maybe. She's been kidnapped, her parents have died and now her sister was brutally murdered. So why is Gabby the victim? Because her uncle seems to think that she's responsible for everything and she just can't seem to prove him wrong. That is until Harris shows up on the island. He seems to be the only person who actually believes her.

First, I have to admit that the suspense in this story is top notch. The way it unfolds and presents itself is well done. But even though the story was great, I found the chemistry between Gabby and Harris at a level 6 out of 10. I'm all for chemistry and lust, but for some reason, I had a hard time "relating" to their relationship. So let's not focus on that. Back to the story. Pretty cool. The mystery. The drama. The intrigue. The awesome banter between the characters. These are the things that kept me turning the pages of this book. And now I can't wait for Damon's story. Bring. It. On.

Scandal (Scandalicious Book Reviews) says

Oh man, I enjoyed this twisty turny tale! Check out my full review on Scandalicious Book Reviews: <http://bit.ly/2wrH5I0>

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Harris has changed his ways to become a Robin Hood thief but his latest mission has him embroiled in a murder.

Gabby is the rich girl no one wants to feel sorry for and when her sister is murdered, even her uncle thinks she could be to blame.

Harris knows Gabby isn't guilty but he can't reveal himself, however, with help from his friends he's going to work to clear her name.

Old secrets and new attractions will be exposed.

"You ever make a mistake and feel like you'll probably spend a lifetime trying to fix it?"

Third in the series, *Games People Play*, we have Harris the art thief as the star. I haven't read the others in the series yet but I didn't have a problem following along. There are obviously past characters, Harris' "boss" and future stars, Harris' friend Damon but each relationship was fleshed out enough to provide a good understanding of the group's world.

As with most of Dimon's books, the story is full of danger, mystery, and sex. I thought this started off intense and grabbed my attention right away with a murder that leads to a tightly controlled whodunit. The story takes place on an island with only a handful of characters. Our hero and heroine's characters start off a bit in the shadows as Harris' background takes a while to be revealed and Gabby's past and motivations are kept hidden in favor of extending the mystery. I felt Gabby's story was dragged out for too long and her past reveals had me, as the reader, feeling a bit lost in terms of her character. While getting to know the characters felt stagnant and hidden, their attraction for one another felt too swift. It was hard for me to get into their first sexual encounter because of how leery they still seemed to be with one another and how I didn't really feel like I knew them yet.

As I mentioned, this is a tight intimate story with only a handful of secondary characters that are mostly red herrings to keep you guessing until the end. Gabby's uncle plays the out in front villain but as the story goes on, he feels pushed to the side and starts to feel more like a villainous outline rather than a fully filled out character. There are three other characters that shadow the sidelines until the end where the mystery suddenly speeds up and our villain's reasons and motivations are thrust forward. Harris' friend Damon plays a good sized role and he has next hero written all over him.

Having this set on an island provided a sense of danger and the small cast kept the mystery intimate. Gabby and Harris' attraction feels a bit sudden and their sex scenes start to take over in place of depth and moving along the mystery side; the middle drags. However, if you're looking for some sex and mystery, Dimon never fails to deliver.

Sandy S says

4 stars

ABOUT THE BOOK: Release Date December 16, 2017

They say it takes a thief to catch a thief, and Harrison Tate is proof. Once a professional burglar, he now makes a lawful living tracking down stolen art. No one needs to know about his secret sideline, "liberating" artifacts acquired through underhanded methods, at least until one of those jobs sees him walking in on a murder.

Gabrielle Wright has long been estranged from her wealthy family, but she didn't kill her sister. Trouble is, the only person who can prove it is the sexy, elusive criminal who shouldn't have been at the island estate on that terrible night. She's not expecting honor among thieves—or for their mutual attraction to spark into an intense inferno of desire.

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But returning to the scene of the crime has never been riskier, with their hearts and lives on the line.

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REVIEW: THE PRETENDER is the third full length instalment in HelenKay Dimon's contemporary, adult GAMES PEOPLE PLAY erotic, romance series focusing on a tight knit group of life-long friends, known as the Quint Five, whose business it is to investigate and 'fix' whatever has gone wrong for the rich and famous. This is former professional thief Harrison 'Harris' Tate, and Gabrielle 'Gabby' Wright's story line. THE PRETENDER can be read as a stand alone without any difficulty. Any important information from the previous story lines is revealed where necessary.

Told from dual third person perspectives (Gabby and Harris) THE PRETENDER focuses on the hunt for the truth. Fourteen months earlier, while on 'assignment' to procure a missing piece of art Harrison Tate walked into the aftermath of a fatal attack against Tabitha Wright- a woman left for dead by an unknown assailant. Running from the scene of the crime Harrison will come face to face with Gabby Wright, the victim's sister, and the woman with whom he would fall in love. Fast forward to present day wherein Harrison must return to the Tabitha Island to prevent Gabby's uncle Stephen from destroying her life, having blamed our heroine for everything that went wrong. What ensues is the building relationship between Gabby and Harrison, as they endeavour to uncover the truth, along with Harrison's partner Damon Knox, about the death of Tabitha Wright, and the potential fall out when the truth about Harrison's presence, and his appearance fourteen months earlier, that could have stopped months of grief and accusations against our story line heroine.

Gabby Wright has struggled to come to terms with the brutal murder of her sister but as the primary suspect our heroine is no closer to proving her innocence in light of the truth. As her uncle Stephen continues to accuse our heroine of killing Tabitha, an investigator /auditor is called in to itemize the contents of the house on Tabitha Island, and find evidence that will prove Gabby is guilty of the heinous crime. Harrison Tate, a man whose guilt about that day fourteen months earlier, found our hero on the run, in the hopes that his identity would not be revealed but Harrison's friend and 'fixer' Wren forces Harrison to face the woman in an attempt to prevent further harm or accusations thrown her way. As Gabby, Damon and Harrison search for the truth, a series of break-in, fires and threat aimed at our heroine begin to take their toll.

The relationship between Harris and Gabby is one of mutual and immediate attraction but Gabby suspects Harris is lying about his true reasons for coming to the island. Their physical relationship begins soon after Harrison arrives on the island, a relationship that could be destroyed by the truth. The sex scenes are intimate, seductive and intense, without the use of over the top, sexually graphic language and text.

There is a small ensemble cast of secondary and supporting characters including Gabby's uncle Stephen, estate groundskeepers Burton Kramer and his son Ted, ferry service owner Craig Pak; as well as Harrison's friends Damon Knox, Garrett McGrath, Levi 'Wren' and Emery Finn (The Fixer). Damon's story line is next in THE PROTECTOR.

THE PRETENDER is a story of romance and suspense; of mystery and betrayal; of forgiveness and falling in love. The premise is entertaining and engaging; the characters are edgy and tragic; the romance is energetic and passionate. My only complaint is the lack of background information about our leading hero. THE PRETENDER is a provocative, moving and intriguing story line.

Copy supplied by Edelweiss

Lana ❄️Dirty Girl Romance❄️ says

3 STARS

He had changed everything.

HelenKay Dimon was one of the very first contemporary romance authors I read back in the day, right after Lori Foster and Jill Shalvis. But it's been a hot minute since I've read one of her books and I couldn't even tell you why. The synopsis for *The Pretender* caught my eye right away, and felt like just the right book to dive back into my love affair with this author.

While I haven't read the first two books in this series, I had no trouble jumping into the third. I felt there was a lot of history with the characters that I missed out on, but everything I needed to know for this story was carefully laid out and explained.

If you like your romance with a dash of mystery and suspense, *The Pretender* will surely do the trick. As a matter of fact, it's the one thing that kept me reading. Unfortunately, I didn't feel a connection the main characters or their romance. It felt rushed and sudden, like it came out of nowhere. Though Harrison actually knows the heroine from a job went wrong over a year ago, they had no other connection. When he comes back to the island to help clear her name of a murder he has proof she didn't commit, the sparks fly. Where I struggled is believing those sparks. Yes, they had chemistry, but it was just too sudden considering everything else going on.

There's quite a bit of intrigue and red herrings thrown into the mix to truly throw the reader for a loop and it certainly did the job for me. The identity of the bad guy kept me guessing right until the very end. When I thought I knew who it was there was a heck of a plot twist thrown in that certainly livened things up a bit from what seemed to be a predictable end.

Even though the romance left something to be desired for me, I enjoyed the mystery and suspense quite a bit. It was definitely enough to hook me to want to read the rest of the series.

ARC courtesy of author in exchange for an honest review

Find me on:

Sarah says

I was given a copy of this book to read and review for Wicked Reads.

This is a wonderfully classic murder mystery and I loved the psychological suspense in this story. A wealthy

heiress is murdered and everyone on the secluded island is a suspect. There is a bitter family feud and dark secrets for Harris and his high tech team to unravel.

I love the characters. Harris is a brilliant anti-hero. He's a slightly reformed art thief turned investigator with secrets of his own. Gabby is everyone's favourite suspect and she doesn't help herself with the secrets she holds close. Add in her scheming uncle, the island's caretaker and his family and the man who ferries guests and residents between the island and mainland and the author has created a diverse group of suspects worthy of an Agatha Christie novel.

I didn't figure it out until the end. And I love that. It was hard to invest in the romance between Gabby and Harris when I didn't completely trust either of them - but I kinda loved that too. I haven't read the two earlier books in this series but I don't feel like it detracted from this story but I will definitely go back and read them both.

I've been a fan of this author's m/m books for a while but this is the first of her m/f stories I've read. And I'm impressed. I love the quality of writing here. The story has been carefully crafted, tightly edited and perfectly polished. Highly recommended!

Pavitra (For The Love of Fictional Worlds) says

Actual Rating 4.5 Stars

I honestly fell in love with HelenKay Dimon with *The Negotiator* ([Read My Review](#) and I haven't looked back since: she writes in a way that grabs hold of your attention and doesn't let go of you until you reach the very end.

Harrison Tate is a modern day Robin Hood - a man who steals art/artifacts when provenance can't be proved but on his last job everything went topsy - turvy. But that also means that he lived in a limbo for 15 months of his life; until he had to go back to where everything went wrong.

Gabrielle or Gabby Wright is a woman who has lost everything that ever mattered to her - and 15 months before she lost her baby sister; and if that wasn't enough her own Uncle was hell bent on proving that she was the one who murdered.

When everything comes to head; it brings Harrison head to head with Gabrielle.

I adored Gabrielle and Harrison together - they are hilariously adorable together; where Harrison is charming, Gabby is sarcastic and they are sprinkled with the quips of Damon as well.

There are particular plot-holes in the story, major of them was a glaring issue that I wish had been handled better (*No spoilers, I promise!*) - but I still enjoyed reading this one, just because of Harrison and Damon together; even more than Harrison and Gabby! :D

But this has to be my favourite of this series; if only because I am more excited of Damon's book now
<3

For more reviews visit For The Love of Fictional Worlds :)
Do come join us at For The Fictional Worlds Facebook Page

Laura says

ARC Provided by InkSlinger PR via Edelweiss

3.5 Stars

Harrison and Gabrielle have an incredibly difficult relationship. His past, her past, the things that are happening in the present and the ties that they have to one another in the near past.

And, that is all I can say without giving away the plot of the story. This is a romance, absolutely...but it is between 2 people who are a little suspicious of one another, and who don't totally trust one another. They keep secrets, they tell partial truths...and, they fall in love. But, really, all I can say is that.

The writing was strong and the pacing moved the story in such a way that it kept my interest in the mystery...but it lost me a little in the romance, as I felt for most of the book that they were convenient to one another, not that they were together because there was no one else they would want to be with.

I did enjoy this overall, but more as a suspense and a mystery with some romance than as a romantic suspense.

Christi Snow says

My Review:

The first thing you need to know is that if you haven't read the rest of the series, you will be perfectly fine reading this book as a standalone. I haven't read any of the others and never had a single moment of confusion. The author does a really good job of giving you the info about the setup of the group that you need.

So, the premise of this book is that Harris stumbled upon a murder. He didn't see who committed the murder, but he knows it wasn't Gabby. He's the only one who believes that she's innocent. When it looks like she may be going to jail, he steps in with his group of friends to help set things straight...and immediately finds himself more than a little intrigued with her.

Gabby has spent her entire adult life being blamed for things she didn't do. She's always the guilty-looking party in a series of awful tragedies that have left her basically alone in the world. But the murder of her sister is the most devastating. So, when Harris shows up and actually believes in her, she's just thankful to have a seeming-ally even if she is sure that there's much more to his story than he's telling.

Overall, I enjoyed this story. My heart broke for Gabby and all that she's lost and has been stolen from her. The cold way she was treated after her kidnapping was awful. This poor girl!

I had no idea who the bad guy was until the very end although the cast of possibilities is very limited. The

two main characters bonded over their troubled family life during their childhoods, and I liked those ties that bound them. Although there were moments when the story seemed to lag a little bit. Nothing wrong with the story line per say, I just think it could have been tightened up a bit. It felt like there was a lot of internal dialogue that was repeating throughout the story.

But other than that, I did enjoy this book. I need to check out the rest of the series. I'm curious about the Quint Five...

I received a complimentary copy of this book in return for an honest review.

Sofia Lazaridou says

After reading the Negotiator, I knew I had to continue reading the series. As it turns out it was a great decision. I almost fell in love with the story. Something prevented me from doing so though and I am not exactly sure what it was. Maybe it was the reason why the hero was on the island the night Gabi's sister was murdered. It was mentioned in the blurb, but I didn't like that he kept it from Gabi for so much time.

Gabi is such a nice person. Sure, she made mistakes in the past that still haunt her, but she is a changed person now and she is trying to do the right thing in her life. She has her evil uncle who is blaming her for everything, so it was easy to like her and want to defend her from the moment I met her. Harrison is not a bad character. He wasn't able to win me over, but I didn't dislike him and he had his good moments.

I feel like the pace was good. It wasn't rushed and the story wasn't dragging. The suspects are limited, but everything felt right in the way things were progressing. My heart broke a little when some truths about Gabi's sister were revealed and I wanted her to rise from the dead (though that would change the genre of the book).

Overall the book was good and so were its characters. It's a definite recommendation for those who have read the previous books in the series and a strong suggestion for those who haven't since this book can be read as stand alone.

Dísir says

'The Pretender' is HelenKay Dimon's third foray into a group of mysterious men who do mysterious things and it's one of those books that tend to leave me (as the previous books in this series have) with a very unfulfilled sense of ending, because of the very nature of these men and women who are frankly, difficult to get into.

It isn't a slight on Dimon's writing at all, because that itself is quite polished and I love this particular bit about Dimon that keeps me coming back for her books. In fact, the beginning chapter sucked me in straight as a watching art thief gets embroiled in a vicious murder, whose presence—should he confirm it—would exonerate a woman accused of many things. But from there onwards I found myself putting down and picking up the story so many times over the span of about a week or so, just unable to get deeper into the mystery that didn't unfold as quickly for me as I liked.

There is a boat load of things going on, as there is a weird claustrophobic feel of the island setting as characters find themselves as potential pawns and suspects, but the pieces of this puzzle are doled out piecemeal and very sparingly in the first half.

It was tooth-clenchingly hard to get them put together, and I was frustrated when the pacing stuttered because the protagonists chose sex over talking too often, leaving half-truths on the table as trust is treated almost as secondary to passion. There is some form of continuing deception and dishonesty on both Harris and Gabby's sides while a murderer is running loose, and this proves ultimately not only distracting but puts the whole relationship on shaky foundation that consequently made it hard to get invested in.

But because 'The Pretender' tried to juggle the whodunnit element of a mystery thriller with the obstacles of what deception might do a relationship that began on the wrong footing, there were parts where the mystery was going nowhere when motives didn't generally become that much clearer even as the story went on. Unfortunately, I found myself disappointed with this one—the difficulty in finishing the book was enough proof of it.

*ARC by the Publisher and Edelweiss

Sabrina says

NOW LIVE!

Amazon US *Amazon UK

HelenKay Dimon is one of my pre-Goodreads authors that I somehow lost track of and now need to catch up on everything she's written since then. Because *The Pretender* brought back all of the reasons I loved reading her books in the past. She writes characters that captivate me and stories that have me leaving the real world and entering whichever one she's created.

Harrison and Gabby had an attraction to one another almost immediately and I liked seeing how they came together. They had to help each other figure out who the real murderer was and at the same time their chemistry was bringing them closer and closer to one another. In the end they actually helped each other in a bigger way than with just the mystery surrounding them. I love characters like Gabby and Harrison who can find the romance in such a complicated time.

While this is the third book in the Games People Play series it can definitely be read as a standalone. I didn't have any problem jumping into the series with the third book, though it did make me want to go back and read the previous books right away.

Maria Rose says

HelenKay Dimon has made a name for herself writing romantic suspense stories with male/female and male/male couples. I've read a handful from a few different series and they've all been exciting, sexy and entertaining romances. In *The Pretender*, the third book of the Games People Play series, a murder mystery

plot keeps the reader guessing right until the dramatic conclusion. It also serves up the romance of two people with plenty of secrets of their own.

Harrison Tate used to be an art thief. Now he helps track down stolen works of art, while also getting his thrills in a less legitimate way by ‘liberating’ goods that have ended up in the wrong hands. On one such case, a painting in an estate on an island is his target. After spending several weeks casing the place, he makes his move. But in a cruel twist of fate, he stumbles upon a dying woman in the library that holds the painting. There for her last breath, he can do no more than watch in horror as she bleeds out on the carpet. It’s imperative that he make a quick escape lest he be blamed for the murder, but in doing so, he leaves the sister of the dead woman, who finds the body after him, under suspicion. He knows she’s not the killer but to reveal that he’d been there when victim died would invite too many questions. When the opportunity arises to return to the island under the guise of an estate appraisal, he takes the chance to see if he can help unravel the mystery and find the real killer.

Gabrielle Wright may have been estranged from her family but she loved her sister. As an older teenager she had endured a kidnapping that her parents thought she’d planned, resulting in the loss of their trust and support. Then they’d died in a plane crash, leaving Gabby and her sister alone except for an uncle, who believes Gabby murdered her sister. He’s hired a series of investigators to look for clues to prove that Gabby is guilty, and the latest includes a man who says he’s there to value the art on the estate – but who clearly has another agenda.

Harris and Gabby have the same goal – to prove Gabby is innocent – even if Gabby doesn’t know it. And Gabby’s behavior and actions lead Harris to believe that even if she isn’t guilty of murder she’s clearly hiding something. It doesn’t stop them from being attracted to each other though. For a few stolen moments they can forget the reason they are on the island and indulge in some passionate and steamy sex. But will the secrets they hold ruin any chance of a happy ending?

From the start this story is pretty intense! Harris discovers the dying woman and hears Gabby’s cries during his frantic escape from the island, scenes that set the tone for the rest of the novel. Fourteen months elapse between that time and Harris’ return in his new guise. It’s also a return for Gabby to the scene of the crime, though we quickly find out she has another reason for being on the island. The story has an abundance of twists and turns with a small cast of characters, so you know that one of them must be the guilty party. The author does a great job of providing some red herrings and making the ultimate reveal an exciting one.

The romance between Harris and Gabby proceeds fairly quickly on a physical level, but slower on an emotional one. It’s not a surprise, since are both keeping some pretty serious secrets from each other, not least of which is the fact that Harris was there when Gabby’s sister died, a secret that eats away at his conscience as he falls for this spirited woman who has dealt with so much tragedy in her life. He can offer her a physical shoulder for support but knows it’s pointless to expect anything real with her unless he tells her the truth. The sex scenes add a touch of more lightheartedness to an overall serious story, as do their banter and conversations.

The same can be said for Harris’s friendship with Damon, the investigator hired by Gabby’s uncle who belongs to a small group of longtime friends under the leadership of Wren, known as the Fixer (and hero of book one of the series). It was Wren who had helped Harris escape from the island and cover his tracks, inadvertently destroying some of the evidence that would prove Gabby’s innocence. I’m partial to scenes of true friendship between men and/or women and it’s clear that Wren, Damon and Harris have a strong bond that they will protect with their lives.

The Pretender starts with an interesting and unique premise and then adds in enough other mysteries to keep the reader turning the pages until the final scene. Along the way, Harris and Gabby find in each other kindred spirits who've got an abundance of baggage – and a partner willing to carry the weight. It's a sexy and intense romance, and I've already put the rest of the series on my to-read shelf.

This review also appears at All About Romance: <https://allaboutromance.com/book-revi...>

A copy of this story was provided by the publisher via Edelweiss for review.

Kate's Corner says

3 – 3.5 Stars.

A lie by omission is still a lie.

Characters & Chemistry.

Harrison Tate is a liberator of items that need to go back to their rightful owners. Part of the Quint Five there are very few he trusts. On one job he runs into a murder the tail end of a murder. He tried to resuscitate but to no avail. To remove all suspicion from himself he tampers with the crime scene but through his actions he makes Gabby the prime suspect.

I neither liked nor disliked Harris. He was just there you know? He is a good Hero but as I wrote a lie of omission is still a lie. He kind of redeems himself but not enough for my liking.

Gabby Wright's world turned upside down 14 months ago. She still hasn't managed to catch a break. Being the prime suspect for murdering your sister kind of puts a dampener on life. Gabby has had it tough with her family and now with her uncle being the only Wright left accusations are being flung without no one believing her.

Now I liked Gabby although she was strong I didn't like the fact that she succumbed to Harris so quickly. But as a heroine she is strong and has a strong sense of loyalty although let's face it the people she is trying to protect don't really deserve it. But hey I'm more vengeful than most people.

They have chemistry which never is lacking when it comes to Ms. Dimon's books but compared to her other books I felt that there was a lot more sex in the book than in the previous books. Which I wasn't entirely thrilled about.

Writing, Plot & Pace.

I am a fan of this author's writing. The story and characters are engaging and I loved getting to know them. The plot is unique and the pace is fast paced, smooth and kept me entertained. To be honest I don't know why it didn't quite work for me. Oh well, can't win all of them. Am I right?

Verdict.

Not my favourite but still a great addition to the series although based on cold cases this case wasn't cold enough for me. Although it is connected to an older case. I felt slightly disappointed.

lauroooou says

3.5 stars
