



## Let The Dead Lie

*Malla Nunn*

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## Let The Dead Lie Malla Nunn

The second in a crime series set in 1950's South Africa when apartheid laws were first introduced.

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 1953. Forced to resign from his position of Detective Sergeant and re-classified as 'mixed race' after an incident involving a young black woman, Emmanuel Cooper winds up powerless and alone in the tough coastal city of Durban, mixing labouring with surveillance work for his old boss, Major van Nickerk. Patrolling the freight yards one night, he stumbles upon the body of a young white boy and the detective in him cannot, or will not, walk away. When two more bodies - this time an older English woman and her maid - are discovered at his boarding house, he unwittingly becomes the prime suspect in a triple murder case.

## Let The Dead Lie Details

Date : Published April 20th 2010 by Washington Square Press (first published January 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781416586227

Author : Malla Nunn

Format : Paperback 382 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Cultural, Africa, Crime, Southern Africa, South Africa, Historical, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review Let The Dead Lie for online ebook

### Carolyn says

I enjoyed this second in Malla Nunn's Emmanuel Cooper series. Not only has Emmanuel had to give up his job as a police detective and moved to Durban but he has been reclassified from white to mixed race. He has had to take a lowly paid job on the Durban docks but is putting in some overtime doing contract surveillance work for his old boss Major van Niekerk. When he comes across a murdered boy down at the docks he is given 48h to find his murderer or be arrested and charged with the crime himself.

This novel takes us to the gritty, seamier side of South Africa during the time of segregation as well showing the moral and political corruption that was rampant in South Africa during the 1950s. Emmanuel stays true to himself, seeking out the truth and refusing to be compromised.

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### Skip says

Detective Emmanuel Cooper has lost his job, but not his passion. Working ostensibly as a nightwatchman at the Durban docks in South Africa, he is moonlighting for his former boss, Major von Niekerk when a young slumdweller/gofer dies from a slashed throat. Befriending a working girl, with a myriad of underworld contacts, Cooper is arrested for the murder and then released for 48 hours to solve the crime and bring those responsible to justice.

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### Lois says

This suspenseful novel from award-winning author Malla Nunn is taut and tightly paced. Set in 1953 in South Africa, a country that surrounds Nunn's country of birth, Swaziland, the detective novel masterfully blends all elements that are required in such a text. Whether it is read as a sequel to Nunn's impressive debut novel, *A Beautiful Place to Die*, or by itself matters little, but that it is most definitely worth reading by anyone interested in the detective genre is a cert.

The action in *Let the Dead Lie* centers around the deductive work of a former detective sergeant, Emmanuel Cooper. Emmanuel was earlier forced to buy his release from the police force on pain of otherwise being dishonorably discharged for an action that, under a more just system than the reigning apartheid regime, would not have been necessary. Within 48 hours, Emmanuel has to solve a crime without the backup of the resources that would have been available to him as a matter of course if he had been part of the conventional police force. Not only does Emmanuel have to cope with the thugs and criminals that formed part of the underworld of the time, but he also finds himself up against those who would, prior to his disgrace, have been his colleagues. With the threat of a jail sentence hanging over his head if he does not solve the crime, involving the murder of a young white boy, which rapidly escalates into the murder of three victims, in time, Emmanuel has no time to waste. Each page is more gripping than the first, as Emmanuel's deadline looms ever closer.

In addition to those striving to outwit or outrun him, Emmanuel also has his own inner demons with which to contend. As a demobbed soldier who has survived the burned out battlefields of Western Europe, Emmanuel

is constantly besieged by ever-present imaginary figures, such as a brutal and callous Scottish sergeant major, who appear to him in the form of pounding migraines, from whom he can only escape by resorting to taking whatever drugs are at hand.

The description of the low-life types that frequent the Durban docklands are fascinating, as are the range of prostitutes that tread these pages. The social inequalities of the time, which were entrenched in the National Party's legislative approach to the governance of multiracial South Africa, are revealed in full. The use of such a background is an effective means of keeping alive the memory of the horrendous deeds that were perpetrated by the apartheid state. However, at no stage does Nunn dictate what the response of the reader should be to such inequity and violation of basic human rights. Her primary intent is to tell a first rate story, peopled by three dimensional, credible characters, and this she achieves to the full.

Let the Dead Lie is a well rounded, believable novel that should gain a wide audience, as well as being a work in which contemporary historians and those affected by post-traumatic stress disorder should take an interest. [Reviewer for BookPleasures.com]

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### **Judy says**

Let the Dead Lie takes the reader to post-WW I South Africa. Emmanuel Cooper, a recently re-classified former detective, finds himself doing surveillance work for his former army officer, Major van Niekerk. Emmanuel's *problem* of helping others in trouble and curiosity land him in a world of trouble in this mystery novel.

Its been a while since I read a mystery, so this was a pleasant change of pace. If I read mysteries more often, I wouldn't have given this the 3.5 stars that I have because most of the plot and characters are predictable. There wasn't an overwhelming sense of "What's going to happen next?". However, I *loved* the cultural aspects and learning about South Africa. The book takes the reader to the seedier sections of Durban and Johannesburg where money can buy most anything including justice. I loved the personalities even if their actions were cliche.

3.5 stars

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### **Shelleyray at Book'd Out says**

Let the Dead Lie is the exciting second novel from Malla Nunn featuring Detective Emmanuel Cooper series, following on from A Beautiful Place To Die. This crime series, set in Southern Africa in the 1950's, has a gritty, dark realism that explores the political and social system of the period.

Detective Emmanuel Cooper is working on the docks in the port city of Durban having been forced to resign his position and accept a reclassification as 'mixed race' after the events in Jacob's Rest. Despite his status, he has been recruited by Major van Niekerk to surveil criminal activity at the dock, which leads him to discover the body of a young boy with his throat slit. Emmanuel doesn't have any faith that the police will solve the murder and begins his own unsanctioned investigation but his curiosity turns him into a prime suspect after

his landlady and his maid are murdered. Emmanuel has just 48 hours to solve the crimes or be arrested and charged with the triple homicide. Unraveling the mystery sees Emmanuel face international intrigue, police corruption, turf wars, smugglers, and his own ghosts.

In Let The Dead Lie, Emmanuel struggles against himself as much as he does the corruption and crime of Southern Africa. The body of the dead boy affects him so strongly partly because Emmanuel was once a child of the slums, struggling to survive poverty and violence. Emmanuel is not the type of man to ignore a brutal murder, even when it is in his best interests. Led by his conscience, with a moral compass that chafes against the restrictions of 1950's South African society, Emmanuel is determined to find justice for the murdered boy, no matter the personal cost. Even with just 48 hours to exonerate himself his focus remains on finding the murderer responsible for the child's death, rather than the man who could set him free. It's a subtle distinction but an important one because of what it tells you about Emmanuel's character. Emmanuel would likely do as he pleased and damn the consequences if it wasn't for the fact that others would be the ones to pay the price for his behaviour. Emmanuel believes himself to be irredeemably flawed and seems to court punishment, which he feels he deserves because of his failure to save his mother and his experiences during the war. He is constantly surprised by the loyalty of Constable Shabalala and Doctor Zwigman. He doesn't recognise the positive traits within himself that the men respond to with respect.

The action in Let The Dead Lie is fast paced with the bulk of the action taking place within the 48 hour window Emmanuel has to solve the crimes. Suspects are considered, some dismissed quickly, others studied for longer, but as the case grows more complicated the tension mounts. Investigating the boy's murder leads Emmanuel into the middle of a turf war between Indian drug smugglers and an Underworld boss, and a Secret Police search for Russian traitors while staying ahead of the police who want their pound of flesh. Emmanuel is convinced the connections are there but can't figure out how everything fits together. The plot is multilayered and complex but the links resolve into a satisfying conclusion.

The urban setting for Let The Dead Lie is as vivid as the stark country side of Jacob's Rest, from the bustling, seedy port, to the Durban slums to the gated houses of the white aristocracy. The cultural framework of the novel though is what really sets this series apart from other crime novels. The tenants of apartheid makes my skin crawl and Nunn accurately and honestly portrays the disturbing racism and inequality of Southern Africa at the time. The characters that populate her novels are very much the products of such a twisted regime. Having experienced life with status and without, Emmanuel is more sensitive than most to the unfairness of the social system that determines every aspect of life by the colour of a person's skin.

Once I had started Let The Dead Lie I found it difficult to put it down, engrossed in the thrilling action, strong characters and fascinating setting. This is a terrific, fast paced read that I highly recommend for readers of crime fiction. Personally I was so eager to prolong the experience I dived straight into the third installment, Silent Valley and wasn't disappointed.

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### **Kathryn says**

I listened to this as an audiobook and it's always enjoyable to listen to Humphrey Bower. It was also good to read more of Detective Sergeant Emmanuel Cooper's story. Unfortunately I was a bit distracted when I was listening at the end, so although I got the idea of what happened, the details are a bit sketchy, but I wasn't worried enough to go back and listen to the last half hour or so again, and that is all entirely my fault and not the author's!! 3.5★

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## **Karen says**

The second Detective Sergeant Emmanuel Cooper book LET THE DEAD LIE has now been released, following on from highly praised A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO DIE.

LET THE DEAD LIE takes Cooper into different physical circumstances, working in a very bleak city, doing menial labour and nightly surveillance work, there's a sense of loss and depression surrounding him. This rapidly changes to desperation as he is implicated in further murders and has a limited time, and difficult circumstances in which to clear his own name.

Readers of the first of the Cooper books will be aware that this series is based within apartheid South Africa in the early 1950's. That's a very bleak, uncomfortable and disturbing location and timeframe for readers to be pushed into. It's made even more discomforting with the move to the urban setting - somehow there's a loss of a sense of some beauty, probably because there's less of the natural world. The vast majority of people that Cooper encounters in this book are down-trodden or controlled totally by their "racial situation". There are some rare exceptions to that of course, and there's certainly some signs of people making the best of an appalling situation - but sadly there are also signs of depravity and prejudice and tensions within racial groups. Somehow this makes the whole apartheid situation, and the nature of South Africa in that time darker, more depressing, more disheartening.

Cooper himself remains an interesting, challenging character. Not quite an unreliable narrator, he's certainly a flawed human being. Which is something that really appeals to this reader - central characters that engage, make you think, wince or even dislike on occasions. Especially as Cooper has a good streak - his motivations are good, perhaps his methods less clear and sometimes his own relationships are at best hamfisted or at worst manipulative. But it's that sense of manipulation that is strongest in this book - from the "State" manipulating people's rights and opportunities based on a mindlessly arbitrary classification of "race"; through people within those race groups manipulating their own situation, and those around them; to the way that the race groups do (or do not) co-operate or respect each other as well.

Where the circumstances of the setting of the book are so overwhelming, it can sometimes be that the narrative can get a little lost in the crowd. It's an interesting thing that in LET THE DEAD LIE, there is sufficient description and background to the world in which Cooper is operating to give a clear indication of what it must have been like, without losing too much impetus in the investigation. That investigation also twists and turns nicely and quite realistically giving the reader a sneaking suspicion that whilst some things are obvious, others may not be as they seem.

Undoubtedly reading these stories isn't a particularly easy or pleasant task. The world is unpalatable, the society confrontational and profoundly shocking. Cooper himself isn't a knight in shining armour. He is, however, a great survivor and let's hope this series survives with him.

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## **Calzean says**

I got a bit tired of the constant reminder that Cooper had been in WWII, that he kept bumping into the right/wrong people at the right/wrong times and that a happy ending was inevitable. I did enjoy the insight into life in Durban at the start of the apartheid era and how people seem to work around the artificial barriers being implemented by the Government.

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### **Anne Forrest says**

The second in this series of crime novels set in South Africa in the 1950's. Great detective work, fast moving plot, set again the political & social issues of that time. Once again read beautifully by the talented Humphrey Bower.

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### **Beverly says**

Malla Nunn is my new literary crush. While not perfect, this second Emmanuel Cooper novel delivers. Nunn is great on place: now I have to go to Durban. And she so well describes the darkness and chaos that must be part of any city's underground, and Cooper is the perfect noir hero. Nunn is the scribe of sadness and loss. In this venture Cooper has lost his detective card and is working under cover in Durban, South Africa investigating police officers for the morally ambiguous Major van Neikerk. The murder of a street child sets off Cooper's moral compass, and the investigation leads to more murders and more colorful characters including an amazing femme fatale.

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### **Brenda says**

Hidden between two boxcars in the freight yards of Durban Harbour, Emmanuel Cooper could see the lights of a docked cruise ship across the water. The fact that he was doing night surveillance work for his old boss, Major van Niekerk after having to resign his Detective Sergeant position when his previous case went horribly wrong, made him realize how low his life had tumbled. But even though the words of his boss – *do not intervene; do not show yourself* – rang in his head, when he heard sounds of distress, he found himself moving toward that sound. And what he found caused his life to spiral out of control; the danger to his very existence was immediate ...

Suddenly Cooper was caught up in not one but three murders – and the evidence all pointed to him being the killer. Trapped in the cells with the hangman's noose beckoning, his thoughts were grim. But then, for a reason Cooper couldn't fathom, he was released into Major van Niekerk's custody – the police were furious, but there was nothing they could do – not for 48 hours anyway. Then all bets were off...

The race was on for Cooper to find the real killer and save his own life. With no-one to help him – most certainly not the police – he found himself deep in the underworld of Durban; drugs, prostitution and violence – it was all there. But when he met the preacher woman, then the delectable Lana Rose who was cunning and knew the streets inside and out, a strange alliance was formed. Would Cooper be able to find the real killer before the 48 hours was up? Or would he end up languishing in prison, awaiting the noose? Not if he could help it he wouldn't!

This is the second in the Detective Sergeant Emmanuel Cooper series by Aussie author Malla Nunn and I

loved it just as much as the first. An extremely fast paced novel, with twists and turns throughout, the tension and suspense were gripping. As with the first novel, Emmanuel is a great character, and I enjoyed Lana's character as well. Hopefully we might see more of Lana in the next book (which I will get to soon!) I have no hesitation in recommending *Let the Dead Lie* highly.

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### **Carla Ford says**

Having thoroughly enjoyed the first novel by the same author, I was looking forward to this one, and I wasn't disappointed. As a matter of fact, this one was easier to read because I had already learned so much about the race classifications for this era in South Africa from the first novel. The main character, Emmanuel, is wonderful, and such a good guy that it is easy to get caught up in the solving of the mystery. The plot takes so many twists and turns that it isn't possible to guess the outcome, even though it makes perfect sense. I love that the ending alluded to another novel to come, where we may learn more of the background on Emmanuel, who is still surrounded by much mystery himself.

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### **Diane Brown says**

I did not read the first of the books in this series. Perhaps I should have done so first to get a better handle on the Detective - and understand his character more.

This story takes place in Durban South Africa during apartheid South Africa. It is about a detective who has to solve a murder case on the docks in a limited time period

Nunn unfolds the case well and I found myself eager to find out what happened next

It attempts to deal with race and classification. I think this area could have been explored on a deeper level, as well as some of the cultural contexts mentioned in the book. She managed however to show the power that police and security personnel had over people, by reclassification

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### **Lewis Weinstein says**

Malla Nunn has created a fast-paced exciting crime story set in Durban, South Africa. This is the 2nd in a series (there are now 4) featuring Inspector Emmanuel Cooper struggling in the early stages of an emerging apartheid world. Nunn handles a multiplicity of characters deftly, without confusing the reader, and her ability to sustain an action sequence is impressive. Many of the characters could be (and probably are) continued in subsequent novels.

Nunn's questions for discussion and her own interview at the back of the book reflect her seriousness about South African issues which she seamlessly integrates into her novel without a smidgeon of preachiness.

My wife and I met Malla last week at the Key West Literary Seminar and she is personally outgoing and

charming. She is a bright new light in the genre of historical crime fiction.

See ... <http://www.amazon.com/Malla-Nunn/e/B0...>

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### **Helene Young says**

Let the Dead Lie, by Malla Nunn, is set in 1953 in Durban, South Africa, with World War 2 as a bleak backdrop. I've always had a fascination with Africa as a whole and have devoured stories by Wilbur Smith, Beverly Harper, Tony Parks, Katherine Scholes and a recent find, Margie Orford so I was predisposed to like it.

From the back cover : 'In Let the Dead Lie, Cooper is a changed man. Forced to resign from his position of Detective Sergeant and re-classified as mixed race, he winds up powerless and alone in the tough coastal city of Durban, mixing labouring with a bit of surveillance work for his old boss, Major van Niekerk.

Patrolling the freight yards one night, Cooper stumbles upon the body of a young white boy and, the detective in him can not, or will not, walk away. When two more bodies – this time black women – are discovered at his boarding house, he unwittingly becomes the prime suspect in a triple murder case.

At van Niekerk's behest, Cooper's given 48 hours to clear his name and – unofficially – solve the three murders. And so, temporarily back to being a European Detective Sergeant, he launches headlong into Durban's seedy underworld, a viper's nest of prostitution, drug running and violence run by a colourful cast of characters including wannabe Indian gangsters; a mysterious figure who drives a white De Soto convertible; a Zion Gospel preacher, and the exquisite yet streetwise Lana, who also happens to be van Niekerk's mistress...'

I wish I'd read 'A Beautiful Place to Die' first simply because I prefer to read series in order, but I didn't feel that I lost anything for reading 'Let the Dead Lie' as a stand alone.

From the opening scene, Ms Nunn took me to a seedy, segregated world where white was right and anyone else was fair game. Ex-detective Cooper is the sort of hero I love – a man broken because he has integrity and now on the wrong side of the law, but still incapable of total moral decay.

The book is peopled with characters Ms Nunn finely crafts with the deftest of touches. 'A flash of hot pink sari crossed Emmanuel's eye-line and a dozen glass bracelets chimed. An India woman in her fifties with sinewy greyhound limbs grabbed Parthiv's ear and twisted until his knees buckled.' That image of the Indian matriarch stayed with me for the story.

The plot is convoluted, turning back on itself in dead-ends and empty promises, but time ticks on relentlessly leaving Emmanuel Cooper with a diminishing number of options. Lana is not a traditional heroine and I was left feeling as though her story is yet to come. She is street-wise and cunning, but courageous with skills beyond her years. Her vulnerability shows through just enough to make me cheer for her (and wish for an impossible happy ending...)

Durban was a character all of its own with the setting being more than just another waterfront town with a transient population. The palpable fear, but edgy defiance from so many characters, and even the buildings,

added to the desperation in a town where no-one was what they first appeared to be.

Let the Dead Lie is good, gritty crime-fiction with compelling characters and a fascinating setting.

My rating – 4.5 Stars

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